

Simon's Night. Jon Hassler. Ballantine Books, 1979.

Dramatis personae:

- Simon Shea
- Hatch
- The Indian, Smalleye
- Spinner and Leep
- Mrs. Kibbikoski
- Mrs. Valentine Biggs
- Hattie Norman
- Tess (the Indian's daughter)
- Doctor Jean Kirk
- Kermit and Felicity Odmer
- Douglas
- Barbara Stearns
- Jay Johnson
- Linda Mayo
- Fr. Kerwin
- Ignition Jones

Monday

"... an afternoon that promised rain but gave none." [3]

"Simon lacked five days of being as old as the century." [3]

Norman House = a small institution in a small town. [3]

"... one made do; one passed one's days with Hatch and the Indian." [3]

"Simon was struggling by force of will to overcome his boredom." [3]

Believed that if he ever lost his mind, it would happen in this room, facing this wallpaper and listening to this prattle. [3]

"how suddenly his life had turned empty" "His soul had bone slack." [4]

40 years as a professor - "reading and writing and walking and cooking and fishing and more reading." [4]

Hatch talks of drought and the Indian wants to shoot a goose. [4]

Cloudy days - dining room dreary. [5]

"... bonds of lassitude." [6]

"Mrs. Valentine Biggs was sixty-nine and a flirt." [6]

Indian: "There aren't any cowboys and there aren't any Indians anymore." [7]

Mrs. Kibbikoski: "long acquainted with grief or regret or loneliness of some other spirit-dulling force." [7]

Re: Simon – "was it not his inescapable calling as a human being to endure the speech of his companions?" [8]

Simon would listen. He thought of it as a vocation." [9]

"By a trick of fate or the grace of God, age had led him to the Norman Home, where these six people were summing up their long years at the end of that longness." [9]

"... he would listen like a brother." [9]

"... he believed that when he was born into the human race he had somehow given his tacit approval to this arrangement whereby he would spend his last years learning about the Great Droughts of the Twentieth Century." [9]

Might be better to die to the sound of prayers, "but the monks were a long way off." [9]

His wife Barbara had run off long ago – he'd renounced lover Linda Mayo in 1957. [9]

Hattie Norman "ran the Home with a reckless efficiency and a voice like a hungry steer." [9]

Simon "detested the prairie" – he'd lived in the hills "where more was left to the imagination, where distant landmarks were memories and the weather building in the West was a mystery." [10-11]

The Norman Home stood "at the edge of town" – his window faced away from town. [11]

"... everyone's emotional changes were rung by the weather." [11]

"... at the mercy of nature." [11]

Give me bluffs... "Here, at a glance, is more than a man should see. Here, against the endless reaches of soil and cloud, I am puny." [11]

Simon = tall – slight list to the right "as though from a lifetime of bending his ear to people shorter than himself." [11]

Simon's stereo "played an Edgar concerto – a cheerless piece mourning the passing of the Edwardian era." [12]

Simon's room was "hopelessly crowded" – "mess." [12]

Persian rug from his parents' home in South Dakota – still lustrous, and Simon still enchanted with it as he had been as a boy. [12]

An overcoat he had bought in Galway. [12]

The river he loved was "unrecognizable" in Ithaca Mills. [13]

"To quote Housman,' he said to the river, "'we both would be where we are not.'" [13]

On the way to the Doctor, Simon "walked past the small church where he had gone to mass yesterday morning" with Spinner and Leep. [13-14]

“... a florid-faced priest had delivered a rousing sermon on patriotism, this being election week.”
[13-14]

Clinic (with a Doctor from elsewhere) used to be a restaurant – The Busy Squirrel. [14]

“The nurse asked him twenty questions.” [14]

... his flesh seemed to be getting away from him” – eroding. [15]

“... while he had never set great store by the shape of anyone’s mortal flesh he was dismayed these days to see himself naked.” [15]

Dr. Kirk = a beautiful girl: “A joke?” – mortified to be seen by “this young and lovely girl.” [16]

“Doctor Kirk looked him intently in the eye, and he was enchanted.” [17]

“... charmed by a face” – “... moved something in his breast.” [17]

“To enter the home, what did he give up: “Only my freedom.” [18]

“He felt suddenly very sad. He felt like weeping. *At nightfall weeping enters in.*” Psalmist.

“... unable to face the compassionate blue eyes of this girl without losing control.” [18]

Concern = loss of memory. [18]

Time getting lost: “my native sense of direction deserted me.” [20]

“That was the night I first decided to rejoin my fellow man.” [20]

He asks Dr. Kirk if she’s unconvinced. “Yes.” [20]

Dr. Kirk: “You and your poetry course have become a legend.” [21]

“Oh, the joy.” “Smile warmly at an old man and tell him he’s not forgotten and his heart races with happiness.” [21]

Yeats = Simon’s specialty – “Insofar as I specialized.” [22]

“It’s Yeats I love.” – still reads Sexton, but gave up on Plath. [22]

A poetry tutorial for the Doctor – Simon quotes Yeats: “I spit into the face of time / That has transfigured me.” [23]

Dr. Kirk “probed and listened at places where he was ticklish.” [23]

Dr. Kirk: “And if you’re really concerned about your memory, Mr. Shea, you’ll leave the Norman Home.” [24]

He wanted Dr. Kirk as a friend – walks – “he would tell her about his wife. Doctor Kirk would be interested in Barbara, for who could resist a love story, whether a tale of love requited or love gone wrong?” [26]

His neighbors, the Odmers, loved the wilderness, “But of human nature they were wary.” – “... if you brought up love, ambition, or grief their eyes went glassy.” [26]

Dr. Kirk to nurse, re: Simon – “He’s a man living among aliens. He needs someone to talk to.” [27]

Simon had heard the nurse call him a “windy old bird” – thought Dr. Kirk might have been the one to say it, and felt “pain.” [27]

Hearing loss: “now he couldn’t tell a crow from a loon.” [28]

Thought back on wounds – and they were healing. “Wasn’t that the lesson in adversity? That we survive? What were our scars but notchmarks enumerating our struggles and testifying to our strength?” [28]

“... that was the primary challenge of old age: to maintain your dignity no matter what fix you find yourself in.” [29]

Stops in a bay, has a whiskey. Served by the Indian’s daughter. The Indian’s name is Smalleeye. “If you got a name, you ought to be called by it...” [29]

“One thing we never understood was why he wanted to sit on his ass out there on the reservation all his life.” [30]

Simon needed the memory of an old wound – military exam of 1918. [30]

Redbank SD – “an amplitude of sunshine and peace.” [30-31]

Troop train comes through – band music, Sousa – Simon and a friend decide to enlist. [30-31]

Military Doctor to Simon: “Sorry, you don’t weigh enough, and your feet are flat.” [34]

Simon: “I can’t go home!” – “Instead of suicide, Simon tried Minneapolis.” [35]

After a year at the University of Minnesota, Simon went home for a visit – Redbank seemed “small and remote” – he couldn’t understand how the place had meant so much to him – townspeople’s opinion of him didn’t matter very much. [35]

Walking home from the bar, “The sun had slipped down from behind a fringe of purple cloud and was looking him full in the face.” It was “too close” – stopping at the river, he laughed at the memory of his military exam, but “windy old bird” still hurt. [37]

Hatch hears chopping wood – “fascinated by all forms of manual labor” – Simon walks with him, “lured not by the prospect of sniffing wood but by Hatch’s delight.” [38-19]

Simon “sees” his father and himself” – “So engulfing was this plunge seventy years backward that it took Simon’s breath away.” [39]

“This memory came unbidden and all in a rush.” [39]

He hungered for his father’s approval and his mother’s pot roast – “both hungers were certain to be satisfied.” [40]

Then came Hattie’s call, “bellowing.” [40]

Simon compliments Hattie on the dessert: “It was high time he cast his attention over on the agreeable side of life.” [42]

Phone ringing in Simon's cottage – Barbara calling – “she was coming north for a change of scene and one of the first sights she wanted to see was her husband.” (They had spoken only once in 33 years of separation.) [43]

Tuesday

Simon slept late and heard the Indian in the next room “opening and closing the drawers of his bureau, where he stored the remnants of the life he had lived outside the Home.” [47]

“... he found his last remaining shotgun shell.” [48]

Simon offers his arm to help the Indian: “There was no precedent in the Indian's memory for such an offer of aid.” [49]

“This was going to be a grand day. It was that time between the last cold spell of fall and the first cold spell of winter when summer, given up for dead, seems to be gathering its strength to reappear.” [50]

Try as he might, Simon could never love winter as he had the other seasons: “He was certain that one of these winters – most likely on some bleak, sterile day around the end of February and the beginning of Lent – he would die.” [50]

Simon votes – he knew next to nothing about Minnesota government – voting machine = small town was “overmechanized.” [51]

“Never before had Simon voted in favor of so much.” [51]

He “felt like a radical” – his distrust gone. [52]

For president in this bicentennial year, “Simon had decided to vote for Franklin Pierce, a man after his own heart and dead a hundred years” (friend of Nathaniel Hawthorne). [52]

His first vote had been for Coolidge – the only time he'd voted for a winner. [53]

He had “maintained his faith in the system for most of those years” – now “he was fully struck by the meaninglessness of his vote.” [54]

“... seventy-six years was an awfully long time to believe in anything short of the Holy Trinity – and 200 years was a long time for a government to last – and the fire had left Simon convinced that “he was soon to die, and inherent in the thought of a man's own death, is the suspicion that not much of what he holds dear can survive for very long without him.” [54]

“Simon feared that he and America were going down the tubes together” – he to life everlasting, America to a museum. [54]

“... the overexamined life was equally wretched.” [55]

Simon writes long-delayed review of three young poets. [56]

Smalleye gets shotgun from bar – talks with daughter. [58]

“... a desire to be surrounded by the printed word.” [59]

Insulation. [59]

Smalleye had been married 60 years but didn't wear a tie to his wedding as his wife had wanted
- "I gave her sixty years of my life. Isn't that enough, without putting on a tie besides?" [59]

Tess's only ambition is to be white - he thinks she'll have a tie on him when he dies. [60]

Simon to Smalleye - "it's against the law to shoot a gun in town" - "It's a damn fool idea." [61]

Smalleye: "I don't need a license. I got a gun and a shell and a taste for goosemeat." [62]

"... the significance of the Indian's act was dawning on him [Simon]." [62]

"... pointing his shotgun into the face of Time." [62]

Young man visits Simon - Simon: "In a home for the elderly the goodness is all on the side of the visitor"
- Simon had never been lonely in his cottage, but at Norman Home he was. [63]

Douglas dates Dr. Kirk and wants to rent Simon's cottage. [64]

Simon takes Douglas to dinner - Douglas's dog smiles to see Simon. [66]

At the Open Soon Café, they "were served, in a manner of speaking, by a morose teenage girl who had plucked out one set of eyebrows and penciled in another." [67]

They hear the sound of a shotgun blast. [67]

Simon, re: Dr. Kirk: "She's going to examine my innards by telescope." [68]

"The Indian stood up and took aim" - didn't waste a shot like he once would have, for "now he had only one shell" - "He sat down again to wait" - "his aching joints told him he would never make this climb again." [69]

Flock of geese come - in early darkness - the Indian fires - the chimney collapses and the gun falls down the chimney hole - residents fear "bombs" and call police. [70-72]

Cop says re; Indian: "This poor son of a bitch is dead." Indian responds: "Like hell I am." [73]

Hattie's "jewel box was playing 'Some Enchanted Evening.'" [75]

Dr. Kirk: "If he lives through the night he stands a good chance of recovery." [75]

Simon: "I can explain." The responsibility makes him sick, and he vomits ("retching"). [76]

Dr. Kirk: "The Indian's in good hands" Simon: "All we can do is hope and pray." He then pours himself a drink of Jim Beam. [78]

Douglas wants to spend tomorrow with Simon: "He's one old man I can relate to." [78]

Dr. Kirk: "I love the idea of spending a winter in the wilds." Doug says she'll only be there half the time.

Dr. Kirk: "Half is the best we can do till..." [78]

Simon's guilt that his forgetfulness hurt the Indian. [79]

Losing memory "feels like death" - "it feels like every alternative in life has been taken away."
[79]

“... if you go ahead and do a certain thing, you may be upsetting some balance that all the world is aware of but you have forgotten...” [80]

“You feel unable to act and unable not to act.” [80]

“Giving yourself up entirely to the care and mercy of others” – Hattie/God. [80]

Dr. Kirk: “If he’s going to get over his loss of memory, he must not be prevented from facing it.” [81]

Dr. Kirk to Simon: Get out of the Norman Home, or you’ll catch atrophy. .. “You’re of two minds about being here.” [81]

Simon: “two fragments of a mind.” [81]

Having noticed that Hatch was one of those “rare men” to wear his belt above the waist, Simon asks: “At what stage in our lives do we decide how to wear our belts?” [83]

Simon prays a psalm: “Have mercy... blot out my iniquity.” [83]

Maintaining religious faith by prayer – “this habit of beginning with a psalm and then improvising...” [83]

“... when you drink a lot, you miss a lot. You miss the beacons and alarms of life.” [83]

“The beacons, O Lord, let us dwell on the beacons.” [84]

Jean and Douglas have rescued Simon “from the slough of despond.” [85]

Simon prays about his relationship with Barbara. [85]

Simon suspects his listening to the Norman Home residents is like what God hears. [85]

I “went to the window and saw the moon over the dark, dry prairie.” [85]

September, 1940: Simon “chose his bank as carefully as a man might choose a wife” – Barbara was “the treasure of Northern Federal” – her beauty “caught Simon’s eye.” Last name = Stearns. [86]

She seemed “too small” – childlike. [87]

She approached him (#2) and “looked down at her breasts to see how they were firing. They rode beautifully, he thought.” [87]

Barbara: “Come with me.” – Simon didn’t look out the window (as usual) because “now this lovely girl filled his vision.” [87]

Her fingernails “heavily chewed.” [88]

“What sort of life did she lead, he wondered, and what were her terrors, her defeats, that she should nibble so fiercely at her fingers?” [88]

Simon dreamed about her that night – “curious sense of intimacy” – “lovers.” [88]

Next time they met (Mercy Hospital) he... “Protecting her from the rain” with his umbrella. [88]

Her presence “excited him – he tells her about his dream.” [89]

Simon and Barbara go to her (and her mother's) house – for cookies – he describes the faculty and makes her laugh. [90]

A group of people who looked so much like the cast of a third-rate horror film.” [91]

Chairman wanted Rookery State College to become “the Princeton of the West.” [91]

“... these three gargoyles.” [91]

“... out of the Dark Ages.” [92]

Simon asks colleagues about showing students the pleasures of literature. [92]

Simon vows to let sunshine into his classroom. Barbara: “I love vows.” [92]

In that department, “Simon himself was the sunshine.” [92]

It was an easy vow to fulfill. [92]

Popularity among students. [92]

As Simon prepares to leave, Barbara surprises him with a kiss. [93]

Jay Johnson, new acquaintance to Simon at Rookery State, about Barbara – he’s looked her over – to Simon: “You’re a newborn babe in these matters, Simon; you’re the next thing to a monk emerging from his cell.” Jay thinks Barbara is “a chunk.” [95]

Later, he changes “chunk” to “oval” – Jay teaches geometry. [95]

Simon “unhesitatingly became a devoted student of her ovalness.” [96]

Simon “seemed to be living his life backward” – he had felt old at 30 and young again at 40. [97]

An “egghead” – his emotions had withered. [97]

He had written his thesis on the mystical poet Thomas Crashaw. [97]

First teaching position at St. Andrews (Benedictine). [97]

He fell naturally and happily into monkish habits.” [97]

Attended morning mass and evening compline. [97]

“borderline mystic.” [97]

Chapel liturgy = “as vital to his daily living as food and sleep.” [97]

“some rigorous habits of personal prayer.” [97]

Simon worked hard to make himself into the image of a certain kindly and ponderous professor.” [98]

“... so deliberate in thought and deed.” [98]

“an old man long before his time.” [98]

Atmosphere at St. Andrew’s had made it easy for Simon to grow prematurely old, also made it possible for him to grow young again. [98]

Benedictine habit of self-study. [98]

Balance required of a teacher – students, scholarship, and himself – hard to balance the first two if absorbed in the third. [99]

Replaced lecture with conversation. [99]

Jay Johnson tells Simon that Barbara is married to a man in a coma. [100]

Simon is drunk: “I have always loved widows. God bless widows and orphans. God bless holy monks and hermits. I think I’m about to be sick.” [100]

Barbara tells Simon the story with little feeling. [101]

Simon wonders if she is dispassionate or benumbed. [101]

Women had told Barbara’s mother – be thankful she didn’t marry a Catholic or a Negro. [102]

Motorcycle accident – when Barbara went to hospital, a “nun in white (who) rushed to Barbara’s aid.” [103]

Barbara thinks Donald must be okay since the sister is smiling. [103]

But Barbara is informed that Donald will die. [104]

Barbara visits Donald (unconscious) – “strangely consoling.” [105]

Barbara is visited by bank president Henry Hamilton and his wife (he = “a wealthy old lecher with a bad case of asthma”). [106]

“... imagine lust in a man this old.” [106]

“Helping the unfortunate made him feel profoundly good and he wished he had started earlier.” [107]

“... how do we measure charity after all if not by the euphoria of the donor?” [107]

Barbara gave up hope – “there was a certain relief in giving up.” [108]

“like a nun at prayer...” Barbara focused on Donald. [108]

“... some kind of mysterious communion with the stranger on the bed.” [109]

“she began to examine her own responses to what she was saying” to Donald – “an exercise in self-awareness.” [109]

Barbara: “I don’t believe in being tight about the small things.” [110]

Growing confidence and self-respect. [110]

“... she must learn to live a different life.” [110]

Simon now knew what he felt: love. [110]

Simon visits Donald with Barbara – she holds hands with both men – two days later, Donald died. [111]

Simon gives Barbara a diamond ring for Christmas. [112]

Barbara becomes Catholic – married on Saturday after Easter. [112]

Ovals – in reference to the wedding. [112]

Barbara watches election returns (Ford-Carter) disinterestedly as she plans her trip to Rookery. [112-113]

“Did one retain, at sixty, anything of one’s youth?...” [114]

Barbara “was puzzled by mysteries of her own.” [115]

“She was leaving on impulse, driven by a strong conviction that now, at sixty, she must break out of the routine of the past twenty years and fly across the country.” [115]

“She would keep going until she found somebody who was glad to see her.” [115]

Wednesday

Simon getting a physical – “... as the instrument inched intestinally deeper.” [119]

“Strange how we hate to witness the grief at a funeral, and yet a funeral without that grief is somehow unsatisfactory.” [125]

“... the only real grief was mine.” [125]

Douglas and Simon to the cabin and hear “the babbling Badbattle” ... “calling to him like the voice of a loved one.” [126]

A kingfisher dropped into the pool like a ball of blue lead. [127]

“Here in the hills there’s always something to see ... and hear.” [127]

Simon agrees to introduce Douglas to neighbors and to the man at the lumber yard who “flunked freshman English in the late forties.” [128]

Simon felt “an aimless urgency, a vague dissatisfaction with the world...” [129]

Simon’s first book review = “surely the only time in history that Scott Fitzgerald and Hilaire Belloc were brought together in the same article.” Fitzgerald = too complex / Belloc = too simple. [129]

Another review – dismal violent stories due to the Atomic bomb? [129]

“In a stroke, man was diminished.” [130]

“What a short time he and Barbara had spent in this bed together.” [131]

Barbara was “free to feel bad – “She kept a certain area of her consciousness roped off and devoted to Donald.” [133]

“their quarrels diminished while their silences grew longer” – “their latter-day spats were like memorized rituals, imitations of spirited fights gone by.” [133]

Jay Johnson was their one regular visitor: “With Jay present, Simon and Barbara were at their best.” [135]

“It was the sort of painting Simon most admired, representational and slightly romantic and tending to blue.” (Evert Metz) [135]

“... Barbara and Evert discussing the pains and ironies of love.” [137]

“Good Lord, for a married man he had certainly spent a lot of his life alone.” [137]

Simon: “I’ve had more than enough time with my memories.” [137]

Kermit and Felicity Odmer: “I like to have a place for everything and everything in its place.” [138]

Simon played a game, trying to get Kermit to look him in the eye, but never succeeded. [138]

Kermit’s “deep, wet voice” like someone chewing vegetables. [139]

“Was there a more dim-witted look in the world than that of a puzzled cow? Their faces reminded Simon of a class he had once lectured by mistake.” (Lecturing on Yeats’ view of the French Symbolists to students gathered to plan the Spring formal!) [141]

Simon: “Here it is, my favorite view of the world.” [141]

The view reminded Douglas of Vietnam. [142]

Douglas’s marriage and divorce: “I was married for a year, and what I got out of it was five hundred dollars and a bus ticket north.” [143]

Back from Nam, Douglas lived on the streets of Minneapolis – his only job training had been “picking off Southeast Asians.” [144]

“... my training was overspecialized.” [144]

“Funny how you can go along practically unconscious for a week or more.” [145]

“And here I sit on a rock in a field and everything is just fine.” [145]

It will take three days to fix Simon’s cabin. [145]

Douglas’s mind is “all over the place... fragmented.” [146]

Douglas had been in Rookery State Hospital – met Jean and became a parttime counselor. [146]

Simon encourages Douglas to write a letter a day (to overcome fragmentation). [147]

Douglas had lived 12 places since age 18. [147]

Douglas to Simon: “Man, you’ve got a weird marriage.” [148]

Simon: “The mind is equipped to drug itself.” [148]

“memory... doesn’t run in a continuous line.” [148]

Barbara = “a forty-five minute recital of hopelessness.” [149]

Simon, re: Barbara: “I could hardly arouse her to love or to anger.” [149]

Their eating and lovemaking = perfunctory. [149]

Simon: "Now that I've started on this tale, I'm determined to see it through to the end." [149]

"It's a quality of this hilltop – the perspective you get on your life." [150]

Simon is "haunted" because he thinks, had he been more patient, their marriage could have lasted. [150]

"My Catholicism... permits only one marriage vow per person." [151]

"It's a law I've chosen to live by." [151]

"... you might be surprised how many people live by the rules of their faith." [151]

He avoids "the turmoil of a troubled conscience." [152]

Douglas: "if you ignore your conscience long enough, it will disappear." [152]

Simon: "I have a very durable conscience." [152]

"Your life has direction, a destiny in eternity." [152]

Simon as a "servant" of his conscience. [152]

Simon's obligation to himself – and his fidelity may have inspired someone else. [153]

Simon: "I sometimes wonder if my conscience has been reliable." [154]

"The road ahead was barely discernible between the dark trees on either side." [154]

Simon's relationship with Linda Mayo in Ireland – 8 days. [154]

"I turned my back on her... now I wonder." [154]

"My guide has always been my Church." – ".... That mammoth collection of moral guidelines." – "reliable." [154]

In old age Simon wonders if God might speak directly, as well as *exclusively* through the Church. [155]

Simon to Douglas: "You overestimate the power of regret... No pain lasts forever. Live long enough and your life becomes a textbook – an outdated edition, full of fusty old exercises." [155]

Jeans first look at the cabin area: "Lovely... Just lovely." [156]

Barbara arrives: on "a tracking operation." [157]

"... that intangible factor of personality, that indefinable turn of mind, that flash of recognition in the eye, which are the rare signals of unforeseen and immediate friendship." [158]

Barbara's "first stop in a tour only vaguely mapped out in her mind." [158]

Barbara = "a pioneer in the field of unmarried cohabitation." [158]

"... certain group therapy sessions where hope ran high." [158]

Simon keeps his Waterford "in an ordinary kitchen cupboard." [158]

"I'd rather step into Simon's life in person." [159]

Simon: "If you gave Mr. Chips a shot of adrenaline..." [160]

Jean thinks Barbara is just the person to get Simon out of the home – she has come “at the ideal time.” [160]

“You’ll know what to do. You’ll say the right things.” [160]

“Your husband is saying good night and it isn’t even his bedtime.” [160]

Barbara: “I’m totally without direction – by choice (entirely without plans”). [161]

“... decade birthdays” – Barbara turning 60 – some exploring. [161]

“I decided to shake loose for awhile” “I’m on indefinite leave – for indefinite reasons.” [161]

Barbara has two cocktails “as though eager to loosen her tongue and hear what it had to say.” [162]

Barbara, re: Simon – “... his strictness, his self-denial, is so much a part of his nature that I maintain he was born with it, and it just happened to fit in nicely with his religion.” [162]

“I swear he was born a monk.” [163]

Jean asks Barbara if she’s Catholic – “I don’t know.” [163]

“Imagine Simon’s opposite, and you’ve got Evert.” [163]

Simon never understood Barbara’s resentment: “I wanted Simon to curse the world with me, but he never would.” [164]

Re: Evert: “We saw ourselves as two lost souls in the big cold universe.” [164]

“I needed a man who was capable of a damn good fit of temper once in a while, and Simon wasn’t the man.” [164]

Simon once invited Barbara back: “he’d have to go on waiting.” [165]

“... all this talk about Simon has made me love him again.” [166]

“All the way North today, I had this intuition that I was doing precisely the right thing, and yet I felt nothing in my heart.” [166]

Barbara enlisted in Jean and Douglas’s plot: “show me the way to go home.” [167]

Thursday

As Simon walks through town in morning, he sees people in houses tired – “as though their night’s sleep had been as exhausting as a day’s work.” [171]

Café: “an atmosphere of consternation.” [171]

Simon’s car needs to be toured and he rode in the car: “Simon rode backward.” [175-176]

People kept looking/pointing at Simon, who tipped his hat to them. [176]

Heading to Olympus (Mall) to see a mechanic. [176]

“How fitting... that I should be transported to Olympus in this humble position, my eyes to the ground, my back to the gods.” [176]

“Simon’s knowledge of engines was negligible, and he thought it marvelous that these men should understand such mysteries.” [177]

“... oracles and prophets.” [177]

He has to wait: “Olympus is a good place for killing time.” [177]

Simon’s tour of the mall – he perceived “something unearthly, and nameless that carried with it the faint aroma of dry goods and popcorn and nervous breakdowns.” [177-178]

He imagined the sounds of a fountain to be the Badbattle in Spring. [178]

Security guard complains to Simon about his life – “Holy Christ.” [178-179]

Simon read Leonard Woolf’s biography on the bus – buys volume 2 in a mall bookstore. [179]

His “power of concentration... restored.” [179]

As Woolf “was opening a sacred tabernacle containing Buddha’s tooth,” – another man talks to Simon about being old: “Old people want to talk to young people, but young people want nothing to do with old people.” [180]

Another old man: “I pissed my life away” – passed up a chance to go to Julliard because his parents needed his help – and because he “got lazy” after his Father died – his Mother had died “yesterday” – his eyes “devoid of emotion.” [182]

He and his mother had “lived in seclusion” and he doesn’t expect anyone to visit the funeral home. [183]

Simon “was moved,” but “something unconvincing about the man.” [183]

Young couple sits down and asks if the man is all right, and he talks to them. [183]

Simon’s adaptability: “he was as willing to take Holy Communion in the hand as on the tongue, but Christmas shoppers on November 4 “took him off guard.” [184]

“... indoor plants marked down from eighty-five cents because they were dead.” [185]

Simon, buying a chair, to a checkout girl: “Advent is early this year, isn’t it?” [185]

She “frowned at him, an old guy in a black coat and a gray hat, carrying a briefcase and buying lawn furniture in November.” [185]

He’s holding up the line; she says, “Jesus!” [185]

“In his book he returned to Ceylon and the early years of the century.” [185]

Another man talks to Simon about his daughter’s wedding. [186]

Simon to mechanic: “I think you mechanics sometimes lose track of your important place in our society.” [188]

Reading volume 3: “two parallel catastrophes of 1914 (the breakdown of order on the Continent, the breakdown of reason in Virginia’s mind).” [188]

Simon had forgotten to call Hattie, who “was stewing” – Barbara is eating with the residents. [188]

Mrs. *Valentine* Biggs to Barbara: “It’s a story book ending” (re: her coming back to see Simon). [189]

Jean to Hattie: “Simon is perfectly capable of finding his way home.” [191]

“... the empty life lived by these wretched people...” [192]

Barbara spends the night at the Home – Hattie talks about a sleep-walking resident she’d had – “what a curse old age is.” [192]

Residents re: Barbara: “what an ingenious and daring idea, an evening walk” – but “the pull of TV was irresistible.” [193]

Barbara recalls Simon quoting literature in conversation... “as though conversation were an exercise in matching life to books.” [193]

Barbara looking at the moon, which “was too cohesive to come apart” – but its reflection “scattered its pieces across the black water like chips of ice.” [194]

Barbara reading “Agatha Christie’s latest (and last) mystery.” [195]

She “fell into a deep sleep, at the bottom of which was a nightmare.” [195]

Barbara standing in a river – night – trying to deep dangerous ice from flowing past – Donald, afraid, downstream – “Ice floated past her and people died.” – she grew weary of the responsibility and tried to find out where the ice came from: “Whose ice is this?” [195]

Simon, in his hotel room bed, praying: “... tonight I am full of questions... What accounts for the unbroken series of complaints and sorrows I have run into since early this morning?” [196]

“Are days like this caused by atmospheric pressure, or are they a hint of your displeasure with the way the world is going, Lord?” [196]

“I have been to Olympus, and something is wrong.” [196]

“... like a priest in the confessional...” [196]

Priests should set up confessionals in shopping centers. [197]

Humanity: “least confident and most unsteady, seems about to weep for mercy.” [197]

The list of the dead “has brown far too long for me to remember.” [198]

Simon reflects on writing autobiography – recalling his earliest memory: a sled. [198]

Simon is thinking of Linda Mayo. [199ff]

“Linda Mayo entered Simon’s life through his nose.” [200]

Linda in Simon’s creative writing class. [201]

Class of 12 included 4 writers: “All four were deeply troubled and they found writing therapeutic.” [202]

“... the most logical and interesting words Simon had ever read.” [203]

Simon on Linda’s essay: “Let’s see a little of your soul.” [204]

“Now in mid-semester, love was bringing the writers and non-writers together.” [205]

“... these original twelve apostles of love” – precursors. [206]

One older student’s eventual memoir: “... a Proustian remembrance of ninety-six years of minutiae.” [207]

Linda in Poetry 400: “they grew very fond of each other.” [308]

“Poetry absorbed her...” [208]

After graduation, Linda wrote letters to Simon – Postcard from Dublin (on Bloom’s Day). [208]

Simon is honored for teaching (contribution to the Good Life in Minnesota). [208]

Simon “pondered the irony of his being so lucky in the classroom and so unlucky in love” – “... a great emptiness on the emotional side of his life.” [209]

Linda was at the awards banquet. [2090]

Linda’s smile “made him tremble slightly with joy.” [210]

Simon’s faithfulness to his vows. [215]

Barbara mailed Simon a card each Christmas, but she “had quit believing in vows of any kind.” [215]

Barbara tried to “convince Simon of the possibility of leading a normal, satisfying life outside the sacraments.” [216]

Each year, Barbara and Evert seemed to be living in a different place. [216]

Evert died in 1956; on Christmas, Simon called Barbara to invite her back – she declined (at age 40), “full of plans for the second half of her life.” [217]

Barbara to Simon: “... you’re talking like that priest who gave me instructions.” [217]

“Simon, you’re a dear man but you talk like a damn textbook.” [218]

Simon: “if you ever want to return...” [218]

Simon gets annual St. Pat’s Day card from Linda. In 1957, Simon travels to Ireland. [219]

“He said a prayer for the beggars of Dublin, for beggars everywhere...” [220]

Linda surprises Simon at a pub, and “kissed him quickly on the mouth.” [221]

“You’re alone in this land and you obviously need a guide.” [221]

Re: Linda – “It was a clear laugh of pure joy.” [221]

Simon: “I think I’ve been in love with you since 1944.” [222]

“Simon was amazed at how right and natural it seemed for him to be holding Linda Mayo in his arms on a Dublin bus. Was this love?” [223]

“I love high places.” Linda: “I know a lot of high places.” [224-225]

They “ate supper in one of the six pubs in a town of twenty houses.” [225]

“In the restroom, a rosary hung on a nail over the toilet.” [225]

“They undressed by moonlight – Linda guided Simon over her high places and eased him into her valleys.” [225]

Linda’s sadness, knowing it won’t last. [226]

Linda and Simon recite Yeats – “She sensed that he was caught up in something sacramental.” [227]

At Knock. Linda remains outside the Church – and realizes the Church to be her rival. [228]

Pilgrims oblivious “as though their prayers had put them in touch with a distant world.” [229]

“... the road, which separated the sacred from the profane.” [229]

“merchandisers of mysticism.” [229]

“it was Linda herself who left Knock more solemn.” [229]

“the mysterious magnetism of this place.” [229]

Cashel, where St. Patrick converted King Aengus. [232]

Re: Simon: “in his eye was a mixture of awe and purpose.” [233]

From high in the cathedral, Simon views the cemetery. [233]

“In his heart Simon felt a wrenching sensation as powerful as the surge of joy that Linda had brought.” [233]

A vision of time – tradition. [234]

“In his fifty-seven years, Simon’s most durable possession had been his religious faith” –

“... it was a frame through which he viewed the world and his place in the world.” [234]

Simon loved Linda; “... yet running even deeper in Simon’s instinct was a current of longing for God and a love of His rigorous ways.” [235]

Confession. [238]

“It was emblematic of Simon’s undivided mind and absolute faith that not for a split second did he doubt the power of this boy to remit his sin and save him from the fires of hell.” [239]

But he dreamed of Linda Mayo – anguish – tears. [239]

Friday

Back in his Twin Cities hotel room, Simon checks the phone book for Linda Mayo – nothing. [245]

Comments on T.S. Testor's frustrated memoir writing. [247]

He had "taken an unsuccessful opus to the point of no return." [247]

Simon stops at funeral home and is mistaken for Uncle Francis. [252]

Wrong funeral home. [247]

At the right funeral home, Simon wants to pray, but finds it difficult. [256]

"... no pictures or other symbols suggesting eternal life." [256]

Deceased's son to Simon and the cab driver: Where were you when Mother was alive and needed help (Mt 25.9). [257]

Simon, back at the mall, meets a crying woman. [258]

Grandmother crying – tears of joy that feel like sadness. [259]

"Where have all the years gone?" [260]

Simon: "Myself, I've misplaced three quarters of a century." [260]

"The woman's recovery was instantaneous." [260]

Simon reading "alas, Virginia's suicide" – "He read until he felt hungry." [260]

Listening to two teenagers, "Simon felt a revelation coming on." [261]

Previous revelations had changed his life: "sudden, clear-eyed insights into the meaning of life generally and the like he was leading in particular." [261]

"... pricklings and urges below the level of consciousness." [261]

"... whispers from nowhere." [261]

"In each case his revelation had led to an act of rejection: -- turning his back on a way of life he had thought desirable." [262]

"... as though his random thoughts and impressions... were building toward a momentous conclusion." [262]

He had looked death in the face. [262]

"He had seen the tears and sensed the anxieties and heard the complaints of strangers..." [262-263]

He had met people "in touch with life." [263]

He saw that the Norman House was wrong for him. [263]

The Indian = the home's only "champion of life." [263]

"... he would work a transformation on the Norman Home." [263]

He would "challenge" the residents. [264]

Driving home, on the radio = "news of small consequence and music painful to the ear." [265]

“... he patted the dashboard... as though to convey his gratitude to the mysterious pistons and gadgets.” [265]

“... he had come down from Olympus with important advice.” [265]

Barbara meets Simon at the Home: “He was stunned.” – “... she was drawn to him involuntarily. And he to her.” Barbara was “oval.” [266]

They “studied each other” and their eyes became “teary.” [266]

Barbara traveling around to see if she’s “missing something.” [267]

Barbara re: the Home: “... this houseful of ghosts.” [269]

“I’ll be that companion. I’ll be your wife again.” [269]

Mrs. Valentine Biggs: “Oh, look, the lovers have found each other.” [270]

Spinner: “Terrible things are happening and it’s the wrath of God.” [272]

Simon: “... we are all capable of living fuller lives.” [273]

Hattie: “Old folks are *supposed* to sit around... God made TV to keep old people quiet.” [274]

“He [Simon] was a teacher again.” [274]

Two Catholic residents are “concerned about the deposition of (Mrs. Kibbikoski’s) foot.” [276]

Catholic hospital, but “Not all nuns believe alike anymore.” [276]

“How could he presume to judge the rightness or wrongness of other people’s goals?” [277]

Simon and Barbara’s conversation. [278]

Barbara: “Let’s go back to the river, Simon.” ... “‘Yes,’ he said.” [279]

Simon prays for Wisdom: “explain to me the signs and nature of love.” [280]

“Everyone needs to be taken seriously...” [280]

“Barbara throws me off course.” [281]

“To leave the security of the Home and risk independence...” [281]

“... joy, pride, anxiety, desire.” [281]

“I am weary unto death.” [281]

Saturday

Mrs. Biggs feels like she’s on a Crusade “to bring back the body parts of saints” – “... now I think I could be born again if the opportunity presented itself.” [285]

“... Catholics always served the best family-style dinners ... and they didn’t care if you smoked.” [286]

“Lo, it had rained in the hills.” [286]

Simon: “the curse is lifted... We are delivered.” [286]

Niche in hospital that used to hold a blue Madonna now held Blue Cross pamphlets. [288]

It was the hospital where Barbara's Donald had died. [288]

Simon: "It seems like yesterday." Beverly: "It seems like a thousand years ago." [289]

Simon had "misread... yesterday's revelation." [289]

"Simon was sure of himself now" - "... he felt weights shifting in his head and the scales tip." [290]

"He imagined..." x, y, and z. [290]

"The grail we seek is a human foot." [291]

"Sr. Theodore is always doing this." [294]

Simon almost falls in the cemetery and regains his balance by holding onto (statue of St. John." [297]

Gravedigger is "astonished to see living people standing shoulder to shoulder with the figures of Calvary." [298]

"What little Ignition Jones knew about priests had always mystified him." [299]

Leg is buried in Mrs. Kibbikoski's new grave (without anyone knowing she had died. [300]

Simon bids farewell to the prairie, where "he could see thirty miles in every direction... and he was puny." [301]

Simon asks the priest about "the psalm about deliverance ... 'you changed my mourning into dancing.'" [302]

"... the human soul longs for more than food and warmth. The human soul seeks refuge from wickedness, and you are basically a wicked person. Goodbye, Hattie Norman." [303]

Simon to Spinner and Lee; "I admire your orthodoxy." [304]

Simon: "I'm repeating myself" - 40 years ago he had also gotten old, but then took a wife. [304]

Simon meets the Indian in a bar: "I think I shot one." [305]

Heavy rain falls. [306]

"I went to the Home thinking that between life and death there was a intermediate form of existence... There is no intermediate existence, Barbara. Short of death, there's no alternative but life." [307]

"And short of despair, there's no alternative but hope." [307]

Simon writes the first paragraph of his memoirs. [309]

Rain... [309]

"Rain fell across the land as unbidden and broad as the hope for good harvest, it fell onto everyone's roof like a blessing, it fell into everyone's life like the promise of love." [310]