

From the deep recesses of the universe he woke to find himself gumming the blue lead paint from the top rail of his crib, blissfully unaware of the crack in the Liberty Bell, or the Liberty Bell itself, for that matter; Mussolini in Abyssinia, Schicklgruber, in Guernica or the Rhineland, Tojo in China, or any of the crazy problems of the age into which he had been dropped. The lead paint was delicious and maddening, and would, no doubt make a mad poet of him. He looked around and for the first time saw other humanoids (oops, hominids), much bigger, but basically the same. They, also, wobbled on two legs, holding drinks to their lips, as he held his empty baby bottle's nipple to his. One fell back into a faded, flowered easy chair, in what seemed, even to his innocent eyes, a flat, shabby and small, compared with whatever had been before. Years later, photographs would tell him who they were. Someone had taken several Brownie snapshots. Here was his young Aunt, a fourteen-year-old schoolgirl, who hooked to the City of Brotherly Love to help with her new nephew, the young Master, her big sister's first child. An older boy would have noticed the beginnings of her breasts, and that she was a pretty young thing with startling blue eyes and chestnut waves piled up, but he was unaware of these uplifting attractions. The woman was his Mother. Later he would understand that at that point in her life, made-up and Marcelled, people said that she looked like the actress Mary Astor, except for her harlequin-shaped glasses. The central figure, the one who had collapsed in the overstuffed chair, his well-tonsured dark hair staining the antimacassar, a dry-state half-empty bottle of gin on his lap, looked like the famous-at-the-time Arrow Collar Man. Well, that was his old man, tall, dark, and handsome alcoholic, Depression-fallen from Wall Street stocks and bonds salesman, to selling The Wonder Book of Knowledge, or some such, door-to-door in the territory assigned him in the deep middle of the Depression by the New York based Publisher's Guild. His young Aunt stuck a rubber nipple in his mouth and quickly the picture faded.