

Thou Art The Spoiler

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"The leaves shall fade, and the branch shall plummet earthward, and with its thundering shalt the spoil be abolished."

I first read those words when I was a child of ten. I was living with my grandmother Nell for the summer months. Among a vast selection of old volumes hidden away in her attic, I came across that phrase, and then it meant nothing.

I adored staying those quickly passing months at my grandmother's. I loved the walks, the small paths which took a child of ten into glorious worlds filled with unspoiled enchantment. I worshiped everything about her place, but above all I worshiped the woman herself.

My grandmother was not a kind woman. Her life had been unhappy. With the untimely death of my grandfather and Emy, their adopted daughter, in an auto collision she became embittered towards life, and life held no new fancy for her. She was content in her own world of past shadows and in this shut-off existence selfishness was master. When her only son, my father, left home she took the duty upon herself of caring for me during the summer months, as Mother was always too busy to concentrate upon my varied moods, and no governess could, or even tried to understand me. I was immensely happy in the country.

My grandmother was possessor of many moods, but none was so exciting or thrilling as when she became angry. She was a master of every mood, and always seemed to know when to exhibit a new phase to excite me. Her anger would become untamable, as fast and furious as the North Wind, but she knew exactly

when to calm it. True emotion, I feel sure, never more could flood her being. She was filled with strange stories of wild, carefree, and absolutely unconventional people, and at night when I was in bed—not asleep, for the corners of the room held many wonders — she would enter, slowly, set a candle by the bed and begin her stories. Some were happy, many fantastic, and very many filled with impassioned souls and flaming desires.

Perhaps the majority of people would think it crude for her to fill the mind of a child with these tales of burning hearts and passions, but I wanted them. My soul ached to know more, and from these days I set forth in life determined to bar convention, and to reach hidden meanings.

There was a tree in the apple orchard of my grandmother's home beneath whose boughs I would sit and think about life, my world, and myself. I was bound to the tree. This wondrous treasure was always the same, was the symbolical thread which was to weave so perfect a pattern throughout my life. I would sit under the tree and talk to it as if I were speaking to a person. I told the tree all my hidden desires, fears, loves. Into the tree I implanted my soul, and always it remained the same, straight, solid tree; unaffected by any pettiness which might surround it. It always remained the same cold, austere monument.

I visited my grandmother every summer, even until I had finished my college career. The tree, my monument, was always there and forever the same. While in college I learned very much, but in many cases it was the hard way.

I learned how senseless, petty, and over-emotional the majority of supposedly

well-educated beings are. I discovered how snobbish the world was in general, and how unhappy I was — at first — because I was not accepted into the grand, emerald-studded cliques, which now show the inevitable traces of decay. I detested formality and abhorred those who practiced it. They were mere puppets on a puny wire only waiting for their cue so that they could begin their tritely animated performances, which had been so often performed.

At first I was not happy while in college, but I stayed on. To have left would have been defeat. Defeat is so permanent while humiliation is merely a passing spark, and only ignites the weakest of timber. I stayed, I studied, and I graduated. I attended no social functions while at school. I knew of other hideways more enthralling than exposing myself to a group of plush animals crawling to gain recognition.

There was talk and the usual stories about my supposedly reckless escapades and strictly informal activities, but these were mainly delivered by poor, degenerate souls who knew nothing of the intrinsic offerings of a lifetime — the tinsel worshippers.

After my studying was over I gained immediate recognition as an author. My books, stories, essays were often referred to as "most unusual, and sometimes shocking in content." My stories were different. They were actual embodiments of decaying life. No holds were barred, and my

writing was in definite contrast with the painted, ornate glimpses of an imaginary loveliness.

I accepted fame, not for the mere pleasure of having one say, "his stories are those that—well." No I was not content with this. I ignored all press clippings, publicity of any kind. Life was too profound to spend with babbling children. I had dedicated my life to becoming known, recognized, untouched by any emotion, neither good nor bad, and I felt that I had succeeded. I was godless and this thrill was an obsession, often sensual. I was sure that I had mastered my life, my entire being. I had no god, no fear, and again no extreme joy. I was now the monument.

It was while I was in my studio, correcting an essay, that the news of my grandmother's death arrived. Of course I left immediately for the farm. Besides myself, my work, she was my great love. While motoring past the apple orchard, I glanced sideways to glimpse the tree. It was gone. My tree, my monument, gone.

After the proper respects had been paid I rushed out into the wind and hastened to where the tree had been. All the time my soul was filled with the greatest remorse. The tree was not there. A decayed, wrapped stump was all that remained. Evidences of lightning, the streak of fury from the unknown I had so carefully blacked out, were apparent. My world had collapsed and I was completely alone.