

THEA

The approach of summer hit me hard. It would be an understatement to say that I had become thoroughly undone by my studies and that I needed to take a rest. My body needed to go in a deep freeze. I decided to focus on the Indiana University summer workshop on Narrative and Language. I headed off to Bloomington with the ostensible project of giving myself the requisite time for a regeneration. Little did I know that my time would be spent in portraiture of one of Bloomington's shining stars, Dorothea Harken. Or by making her privilege to the wisdom of W.D. that I would create a monster whose aspirations would have no bounds.

The confines of Bloomington would seem to define the limits of Dorothea's reach. Sure, she had stretched the limits. But how far could she go in a one-horse town—plenty far. She had graduated high school with all the adulation of her peers. Who could embody the charms of nature so consistently? She dazzled her rather provincial audience with the definitive proof of providential intervention. How could a newcomer contradict such indubitable evidence? At best, I could only observe her wiles in action. After a year in college, she decided that she did not need the abstract deformation of her natural appetites. More to the point, the academic community could not bear the assaults of her superior wit or her sheer natural marvels. The world would have to wait for her stupendous discoveries until after she had traced their concrete evolution. So I felt that I could only enhance the talents of this wonder, almost like a damn redirecting the forces of powerful river. I accepted that challenge.

—I know that you mean well. It's not as if it's my tutor. College just wasn't for me. Someday I'll go back. It'll just be a snap for me. But for the time being, I just want to pursue my destiny on my own.

—We could say that you're reckless

—I think it's almost a skill.

She gave me that insane smile, something that almost seemed acrobatic.

—Don't think that you're going to make me feel guilty about something. I wouldn't call you a friend if you'd leave me that vulnerable.

—If you have a natural talent, you just have to use it.

—I guess that I do.

I felt truly that any more time at IU would only prove disastrous for her. She needed an Institute just for herself. An intellectual playground. For the time being the Bloomington social scene might provide her stimulation. But I was afraid that she might exhaust the appeals of the locale before the summer was out. Perhaps that was my vocation. To instill in her a thirst that she could not quench. To eventually feed her ambitions in a way that only the world would do. As such, she could live up to the destiny that was obviously already hers.

From quite early in her adolescence, she was afraid that her physical appeal might be her ruin. She had to guard herself against succumbing to the easy victories that the small town offered. She had seen girls whose dash had been so fleeting. Where the fires of youth burned out in the mundane demands of the East River Mall. Sure the Chanel counter had its mysteries, but too many girls had drowned in these fragrances. Boys who went down around them lulled by the pungent aromas.

Disaster were sure to accompany her if she gave in too easily to the immediate delights.