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# The Great Man's Lady

By W.L. River

Every day for 35 years  
she's been  
sitting down there  
in that  
infernal rocking chair  
right under my nose.  
Hannah Hoyt, Hannah Sempler,  
whatever her right name is.  
Rocking and smiling  
and keeping the truth about  
Ethan Hoyt all to herself.  
And now,  
today of all days,  
Ethan Hoyt Day.  
The day they are  
dedicating his statue  
in the city square.  
She has to hide inside  
the house somewhere  
and pretend she doesn't know  
it's any different  
from 10,000 other days.  
What is it?  
Eastern reporters, huh?  
On the square, huh?  
Call off  
my bloodhounds.  
Who's watching  
the back of the house?  
Burns.  
Tell him to hop over  
to the square.  
Eastern reporters, hmm?  
They're up to something.  
Hello?  
Yes.  
No.  
No. Not a sign of life.  
You bet.  
Yeah, right away.  
Who's watching  
the front of the house?  
Pierce.  
Tell him not to let

those Eastern reporters  
out of his sight.  
I bet the old lady's  
going to talk.  
Hello?  
Depth bomb.  
Yeah, this is Pierce.  
Yeah, I've been  
watching all morning.  
No, just a few  
glasses of beer.  
I'm practically there.  
All clear.  
And so, my friends,  
it is only fitting and proper  
that we celebrate  
the anniversary  
of the birth  
of a great American.  
A man who founded  
this great city of ours.  
Who served unselfishly  
in our country's  
halls of Congress.  
A man who died here  
with the shining armor  
of his ideals untarnished.  
That's Froman of the AP  
over there near Forbes.  
That's Paula Wales  
from Washington.  
The other guy's Quentin  
of The New York Times.  
united in peace...  
You know, they're  
not here for buttons.  
The chief was right.  
I'll bet she's gonna talk.  
to a man  
who devoted the last 30 years  
of his colorful life  
to an unselfish fight  
for the weak  
against the powerful.

Even at the expense  
of his own personal fortune.  
My friends,  
I give you a great man,  
a great American,  
Senator Ethan Hoyt.  
Hannah Sempler's.  
Miss Sempler's, please.  
The Sempler woman's home.  
Miss Hannah Sempler's house.  
Follow them.  
Hey, wait for me.  
This is my cab.  
Be a sport,  
share it.  
Where are you going?  
Miss Hannah Sempler's.  
Shake. The whole world's  
going there.  
All right, Forbes.  
Bring up the artillery.  
Well, that's one way.  
I say, old boy,  
that's a little unsporting.  
If you want a story,  
you get it.  
She's not just news  
anymore, she's history.  
Tell the old lady  
she's got guests.  
Impatient guests.  
Oh, the old boy himself.  
To what do I owe  
this peculiar honor  
may I ask?  
That's fine.  
Hold it, Mrs. Hoyt.  
My name is  
Hannah Sempler.  
May I ask  
why you intrude here?  
Well?  
Miss Sempler,  
I'd like to apologize

for all of us  
for our rudeness  
in breaking in  
like this.  
Very well, you may go.  
The fact is, Miss Sempler,  
forget our rudeness.  
It's the public  
who's broken in.  
The public who has  
the right to know.  
The public, in who's eyes  
Ethan Hoyt has grown  
to the size  
of a national hero.  
The public, sir?  
You are the public?  
Miss Sempler,  
you misunderstand.  
We come here  
humbly as it were,  
seeking the answer  
to a great human enigma.  
A matter of history.  
Were you married  
to Ethan Hoyt?  
Why did he die  
in your home?  
Was his real wife there?  
You and he had any children?  
Where are they?  
Your claims, if true,  
would make him a bigamist.  
We ask you  
to prove these claims  
in the public interest.  
The public, sir?  
You aren't the public.  
The public is made up of  
millions of private homes  
like mine.  
In our homes,  
we draw inspiration  
from the memory

of our great men.  
Like Senator Hoyt.  
You seek to destroy  
that memory.  
You break in here  
with cameras  
and threats...  
If that thing  
goes off again...  
You seek nothing  
but scandal.  
You'll find none here.  
I bid you good day.  
She can't prove a thing.  
Because her story is nothing  
but a pack of lies.  
She's just an old windbag  
trying to crash the limelight.  
Stop it! Stop it.  
Leave her alone.  
You should be ashamed  
of yourselves.  
Whether her story  
is true or not,  
what right have you got  
to persecute her like this?  
Can't you see  
she's helpless  
and all alone?  
She's a very old lady.  
Yes, it's true.  
I am old. Very old.  
But I've made no claims,  
I've told no lies.  
Whatever I know is a matter  
of my own private history.  
I am content to remain silent  
the rest of  
my few days on Earth.  
That is all.  
Well, you came  
with the rest of them.  
What are you  
waiting for?

Because...  
Because I...  
Yes, I know.  
Got a public, too?  
Not yet.  
Of course not.  
You're just a child.  
But I will have.  
I'm a biographer.  
A what?  
I'm writing on the life  
of Senator Ethan Hoyt.  
Ah!  
Nice job.  
You like your work?  
I think  
he was one of the most...  
Well, the most wonderful...  
So do I.  
Guess I ought to  
know about that.  
Then you have to help me.  
Please, Miss Sempler.  
I've spent three years  
writing my book.  
All the money I could raise.  
I've got to know  
what part you played,  
were you married to him...  
All sorts of things.  
My book is worthless  
without your help.  
That's why  
I had to see you.  
Look away, girl.  
Look all you like.  
There's nothing much to see.  
Just a hundred years  
of memories.  
Some good, some bad.  
I ought to have been  
buried years ago.  
But you know, I...  
I can't really say that.

I'd like to live  
to be 200 years old.  
Then you and I'd  
both be old ladies  
and we could  
compare notes.  
That is, if you had  
any to compare.  
Now, you run along  
and leave me alone.  
You come back  
in a hundred years  
and I'll talk to you.  
You go along now.  
Hmm.  
One of the meanest things  
about growing old.  
You forget how important  
everything seems  
to young people.  
Hey, girl.  
Scat. Go on.  
I'm all right.  
I'll go now.  
Nothing of the sort.  
Listen, I have something  
very special upstairs.  
Twenty-year-old stuff.  
Now, come on.  
We'll have our own drink  
to Senator Hoyt.  
Over here.  
Now you give me a hand.  
That's a girl.  
I'm as wiry  
as the devil,  
mind you,  
but a climb  
gets me down.  
That's a girl.  
You know, girl,  
you need more gumption  
and spirit.  
Yes, that's what



you need.

Oh!

Where'd you say  
you learned about  
Ethan Hoyt?

Books.

You'll never learn  
a man out of books.  
Or a woman either.

Books.

Psst.

Ah, yes, girl.

Men were different  
in those days.

Men like Ethan.

A drink in one hand,  
and luck in the other.

Open the door, girl.

There was a band  
playing in his heart  
and the devil  
in his eyes.

And I...

I was a very young lady  
in a stuffy  
Philadelphia house.

In the year 1848.

Well, I must say.

What's the matter?

Making a public spectacle  
of yourself.

Mama says...

Oh, don't be stuffy.

Did you see  
how he smiled?

A gentleman  
would never  
have dared.

You mean, like  
my Mr. Cadwallader?

Mama says...

Because I dare say  
he's never smiled  
in his whole life.

But I almost died laughing  
when he proposed to me.

"Miss Sempler, I...

"I have the great honor  
to address myself  
to your favor.

"I am quite willing  
to overlook the fact

"that you have grown up  
without a mother

"to instruct you  
in the duties  
of a proper wife.

"But your father and I  
are thoroughly agreed  
that..."

That's not right  
and proper.

What's not?

Making fun of the man  
you're betrothed to marry.

Oh, rats!

He's really betrothed  
to my father.

Hannah Sempler...

Well, they made  
the agreement, not I.  
Parents know better.

How do I look?

I think he likes me.

Who?

Ethan Hoyt, of course.

Hannah Sempler!

Well, he smiled,  
didn't he?

He always smiles.

Every time I see him,  
he smiles.

That's because  
he's a ne'er-do-well.

A what?

It means he lives  
with the Indians...

Mama says...

...and smells dreadful  
like a buffalo.  
Prove it.  
He makes his clothes  
from dead animals.  
Oh, that isn't buffalo.  
It's all the same.  
Well, then I think buffalos  
must smell lovely,  
like the fresh air  
and the sun.  
Where are you going?  
Downstairs.  
But you can't.  
Why not?  
He's down there.  
That's why I'm going.  
Where are you going, honey?  
Downstairs.  
Don't you go  
in the library.  
Why not?  
There's a big private  
confabulation in there.  
But, Delilah,  
I need a book.  
You gonna need two books  
when your father  
catch you eavesdropping.  
And they ain't going to be  
in your hands neither.  
Don't you go.  
Gentlemen, I wish  
I had the power to make  
you see it with my own eyes.  
Two great rivers  
coming together  
like an arrow.  
Like a sign  
from the Almighty,  
gentlemen.  
Pointing out  
the natural site  
of a great new city.

And the public buildings,  
gentlemen,  
all grouped around  
a great square  
filled with fountains  
and trees.  
And behind  
the city, a hill.  
And on the hill, homes.  
Homes, gentlemen.  
Filled with light and air.  
And the country  
itself...  
Oh, if I only  
had the power.  
A virgin land,  
like a poem.  
Like a young maiden,  
just awaking  
from a long sleep.  
As beautiful and as lovely  
as an unexpected smile.  
I'm sorry, Father.  
I thought you might  
like some brandy.  
Miss Sempler.  
Mr. Cadwallader.  
My daughter, Hannah,  
Mr. Hoyt.  
Miss Hannah.  
Mr. Cadwallader is betrothed  
to my daughter.  
I see.  
Leave the room,  
Hannah.  
Yes, Father.  
To your health.  
I'm sure  
you'll be very happy.  
Leave the room at once, miss.  
We've had enough  
of your childish pranks.  
Yes, Father.  
You were saying, Mr. Hoyt?

Oh.  
Yes, I was saying...  
Well, the truth  
of the matter is,  
Mr. Sempler,  
I need your help.  
Money and supplies.  
You have a branch  
in St. Louis  
and I came to you  
because... Well...  
Because no other business firm  
would carry your risk.  
Because you knew my father,  
Mr. Sempler.  
Yes, and I had great respect  
for his judgment.  
Great respect.  
That's why I have  
listened to you.  
I've named the city for him.  
Hoyt City.  
He was a man  
of great vision.  
Exactly.  
Enough vision to say no  
to a venture like this.  
Exactly.  
Well, then you mean...  
I mean no.  
But there's talk  
of a railroad.  
Don't you wild men realize  
what you're doing?  
Talk of expanding  
the country.  
All you're expanding  
is the national debt.  
Larger army, more taxes.  
The country's large enough  
as it is.  
Well, you listen to me  
Mr. Sempler.  
You too, Mr. Cadwallader.

This country's  
going to be bigger.  
A whale of a lot bigger, too.  
There are  
2,000 miles of America  
out beyond the Mississippi.  
Land and riches  
beyond belief.  
And it's not going to belong  
to men like you.  
Men who won't take a risk.  
It's going to belong to men  
that aren't afraid.  
Men with luck in one hand  
and risk in the other.  
Oh, you're so right.  
You're so absolutely right.  
Excuse me, please.  
You think  
he's really going to...  
I do, indeed.  
Then you really  
believe in...  
She's a very headstrong  
young girl, Mr. Hoyt.  
And I suppose  
after your marriage  
you really intend to...  
Oh, yes, indeed.  
It helps maintain  
the home.  
Of course,  
out where I come from...  
You have women  
out West?  
Oh, yes. Some.  
Yes, but mostly  
Indian squaws,  
I presume.  
Mostly.  
Only the Indians  
have them.  
I've heard otherwise.  
Well, don't let me

influence you.

Exactly. I thought so.

I suppose that you...

Rope them.

You what?

Rope them, Mr. Cadwallader,  
and brand them with hot irons  
and hang them  
on forked sticks  
over a hot fire.

Who?

Cows, Mr. Cadwallader.

Oh, I thought  
we were talking  
about women.

Women?

Why, if we had women  
like you have back here,  
we'd treat them like queens.

Mr. Hoyt, I'd ask you  
to remain  
for supper, only...

I understand.

Now, just  
one thing more.

About the matter of risk.  
I don't want you to go away  
with the wrong impression.

A good safe risk  
is another story.

We take risks  
every day.

Why, right this very year  
it's a fair risk  
that we'll make  
only 10% profit  
instead of 12.

Exactly.

That's all right,  
gentlemen.

I think you both  
lost something.

My odds are all or nothing.  
Good night.

I done  
warned you,  
honey lamb.  
What?  
About the books.  
Appears like to me  
you need  
the whole library.  
Oh, that.  
It didn't hurt.  
Then what you  
standing up for, child?  
Delilah.  
Yes, honey?  
Were you  
ever engaged?  
I ain't telling.  
I mean, engaged,  
it's not like  
being married, is it?  
Sakes, no, child.  
Engaged is maybe.  
And married is done done.  
Then if a girl got married  
she'd have to  
let him kiss her?  
Who kiss who?  
What all this nonsense?  
Mr. Cadwallader.  
That little Cadwallader  
been trying to fun around?  
Oh, of course not, Delilah.  
Then what for  
you worrying?  
You don't fool  
Delilah none, honey.  
Oh, Delilah,  
I'm in love.  
Foolishment.  
Were you ever in love?  
I ain't telling.  
You're the  
"ain't telling-est"  
person.



Ain't telling  
is ain't fooling.  
You're just a child.  
No, Delilah, not now.  
I'm in love. I...  
Fum-de-diddle.  
Get in bed.  
Good night,  
sugar lamb.  
Please go away.  
In the morning.  
For goodness sake.  
I mean,  
I'm going for good.  
Oh!  
But you'll wake everyone.  
Father...  
I warn you.  
I'll wake the dead.  
Are you mad?  
Stark, staring mad.  
I believe you are.  
Then come down here.  
Oh, I can't.  
Then I'll come up there.  
Oh, no, no.  
Oh!  
It's...  
It's night.  
Mmm-hmm.  
It's  
quiet.  
Awfully quiet.  
Uh-huh.  
But it's...  
It's public.  
Awfully public.  
Uh-huh.  
Well...  
Well, sir?  
Well, then.  
They say a full moon  
makes people  
do strange things.

Yeah, I guess so.  
Like it's not me here,  
not really.  
I think we'd  
better go back.  
Do you  
feel strange, too?  
Uh-huh.  
You're afraid  
of something.  
Uh-huh.  
Of what?  
I don't know.  
Indians?  
No, there aren't any.  
I know, but pretend.  
Pretend what?  
That there are Indians.  
There really are. Listen.  
How do you  
stalk them?  
Do what?  
Stalk, you know,  
like hunting.  
Well, different ways.  
Show me one.  
Go on.  
Well...  
Go on.  
That's fine.  
Get down.  
They're coming.  
For goodness sake.  
You shouldn't  
be here.  
Well, of all things.  
I mean...  
Go on.  
You know what I mean.  
I can't imagine.  
I love you.  
Indeed.  
Believe me.  
Maybe.

Oh, but you have to.  
I'm going away.  
You love me?  
Maybe.  
Oh, please,  
you know you do.  
Oh, Ethan, yes.  
You don't smell  
like a buffalo.  
Well, not exactly.  
You're crying.  
Here.  
May I keep it?  
Yes.  
To take with me?  
Something of you.  
Oh, Ethan.  
Take me with you, too.  
Storm a-coming.  
For the good Lord  
strikes asunder what man  
would join, yea verily.  
I can't find  
the place.  
Just read the high spots.  
Rain's almost here.  
Maybe I can do it  
without the book!  
Do you take this woman  
to be your  
lawful wedded wife?  
I do.  
And do you...  
...take this man to be  
your lawful wedded husband  
till death doth you part?  
I do.  
Then let no one put asunder  
whom God hath joined.  
I pronounce you man and wife.  
Plain one's two bits,  
pretty one, a dollar.  
Of course, the only difference  
is the flowers and things.

I'll take  
the plain one,  
please.  
Flowers fade, anyway.  
Yes, flowers fade.  
Name?  
Ethan Hoyt.  
All right. Let's go.  
Come on.  
We've got to  
find shelter.  
Forgot to  
kiss the bride.  
"Forever," the man said.  
That's right, forever.  
This looks like a good place  
to camp for the night.  
But, Ethan, it's only  
three more miles.  
Look, Hannah.  
There's something  
I've got to tell you.  
Won't it wait?  
Well, I mean,  
you take the morning.  
Things look brighter.  
What do you mean?  
Hoyt City.  
Oh, don't worry about that.  
The way I feel right now  
Hoyt City will look  
like Philadelphia almost.  
That's what I mean.  
You mean, it won't.  
Well, not exactly...  
Well, I don't expect it to.  
But just imagine.  
A real bed to sleep in.  
People, lights,  
hot water  
and clean clothes.  
I know, Hannah,  
but...  
A home on the hill

overlooking the city.  
A public square  
filled with fountains  
and trees.  
What kind of trees, Ethan?  
Well...  
Oh, don't tell me.  
I like surprises.  
That's fine.  
Hoyt City.  
Oh, I can't wait.  
Come on, Ethan.  
Well, here we are.  
Everything  
has to start  
somewhere.  
I'm sorry, Hannah.  
I wanted to tell you.  
I know how it  
must have sounded,  
like I'm just  
a plain liar.  
A great city  
can grow here.  
You really think so?  
We'll build it, Ethan,  
you and I.  
You bet we will.  
People will help us.  
That's how I meant it,  
what it can really be like.  
A city glittering in the sun  
with towers  
like silver and gold.  
And people, Ethan.  
Thousands of people  
building something  
all new and shiny.  
Just like you said.  
It wasn't  
all talk either.  
Look.  
That's where  
we're going to live.

There's a start.  
Hoyt City is nothing  
but a jumping-off point  
for the gold fields.  
But if the railroad  
came here...  
My dear Mr. Hoyt,  
railroads cost money.  
Can you raise any?  
No.  
So, you see...  
Yeah, but I'll get  
the money somewhere.  
I'm afraid  
that's not enough.  
Then what do you want?  
Hoyt City.  
A fair share of it.  
Say three-quarters  
of the land.  
But you can't.  
It's mine.  
Sit down, Mr. Hoyt.  
You're in no position  
to argue.  
Now play fair with us.  
Take my advice.  
Three-quarters  
or nothing.  
No, I can't.  
Why not?  
Indians?  
My wife.  
Rabbits again  
for dinner.  
Look here, Hoyt.  
You'll make money  
on this deal.  
My wife won't  
listen to it.  
Well, what's that  
got to do with business?  
She owns half.  
Then get her

to see it our way.  
It's to  
her own advantage.  
Now listen, Hoyt.  
I happen to know her father.  
Fine man.  
Fine Philadelphia home.  
What's she becoming  
out here?  
A crack shot,  
among other things.  
She deserves better.  
Give her back  
what she had.  
A real home, clothes,  
social position  
like my wife and daughter.  
Get her to  
sign over the land.  
You don't want her to  
turn into one of these  
prairie women, do you, Hoyt?  
Hannah, this is  
Mr. Frisbee.  
Howdy.  
Got to clean these  
here rabbits, Ethan.  
Uh, Mr. Frisbee  
wants you to sign this  
little paper, dear.  
Uh, let the  
rabbits wait, dear.  
This is important.  
Nothing ain't important  
as vittles, Ethan.  
You see?  
Please, dear.  
Stop this foolishness.  
It's just a matter  
of signature.  
It's a land transfer,  
Hannah.  
You mean  
you want me to

sign it, Ethan?

Yes.

But I forgot

how to write.

Well, here.

Just make your mark

on the paper there.

Oh.

There you are.

Hannah.

Well, I must say.

Scat!

Go on. Get out.

Get out and stay out,

you miserable, little, sneaky,

little, stuffy, little...

You rabbit!

Now he'll never

come back.

You mean

you really wanted me

to sign it, Ethan?

It's not a matter

of what we want.

It's a matter of fact.

Hoyt City's a failure.

I don't believe it.

Don't believe what?

That you can

change like this.

Give up so easily.

But it's not me, it's...

Look.

Oh, I don't mind.

I want to fill it

with diamonds and gold.

Ethan.

Yes?

I had a dream.

So did I.

No, I mean

a dream about gold.

Oh, maybe it sounds silly,

but I really did.



A misty sort of dream  
about a mountain of gold.  
A black mountain  
with a sunny peak,  
like a beckoning finger  
in the sky.  
But I thought  
you said...  
I've changed my mind.  
You mean we'll go?  
Tomorrow.  
Hannah.  
But, Ethan.  
Yes?  
We'll come back.  
With our pockets bulging.  
Gold flowers for your hair.  
No, I mean to Hoyt City.  
To finish what we've begun.  
You bet we will.  
We'll come back and lick  
Dawson and Frisbee and the  
whole Western Railroad crowd.  
I'm off.  
Where?  
Down to see the boys.  
Get things organized.  
What's up?  
We're off.  
Where for?  
California.  
How much gold  
you need, Ethan?  
Fifty, maybe  
a hundred thousand.  
Dawson and the railroad gang  
got millions.  
Then make it a million.  
Million-dollar Hoyt.  
A mountain of gold, boys.  
Well, it takes money  
to get there.  
How much you got?  
\$100.

Right over here, friends.  
Try your luck  
with Steely Edwards.  
Turn your dollar  
into 100.  
Turn your 100  
into 1,000.  
How much did  
you say you had?  
Got \$100.  
Here's your chance.  
I got to get home, boys.  
Get things organized.  
We could use that \$1,000  
he's talking about.  
Turn your 1,000  
into a million.  
You can't lose  
without trying.  
It's all in the cards  
three-card monte,  
gentlemen.  
I want your money.  
The game's crooked,  
the cards are fixed.  
You can't win.  
But who's got the money?  
I take no bets from widows,  
paupers, orphans or cripples.  
Now, who's got the money  
to bet on the ace?  
The winning card,  
the ace of hearts.  
Watch closely,  
the hand is quicker  
than the eye.  
And you're beaten  
before you start.  
Come, come, gentlemen.  
Who's got the money?  
I got \$100.  
Eye on the ace, friend.  
Watch closely.  
Here it is.

Now here. Here.  
And now where?  
I told you,  
you can't win, friend.  
Try it again.  
For what stakes?  
My horse.  
Eye on the ace,  
friend. Watch it closely.  
Here it is.  
Now, here, here.  
Now where?  
Two horses.  
Two cows.  
Six pigs.  
Chickens.  
Hannah Hoyt.  
I wasn't counting  
on you, madam.  
But I assure you after  
I get the animals bedded  
down for the night...  
I didn't come here  
to talk nonsense.  
You better be careful.  
That thing might go off.  
It might.  
You're a very  
frightening young lady.  
I want everything back.  
But a very lovely one.  
You heard what I said.  
Naturally.  
But that's contrary  
to the sport.  
Sport? You call it sport  
to cheat a man.  
To take advantage  
when he...  
He was only  
slightly, madam.  
As a matter of fact,  
I'm drunk, too.  
Completely intoxicated

by the mere sight of  
the loveliest little assassin  
that ever had designs  
on my heart.  
Stop that silly talk  
or I'll shoot.  
I believe you might.  
Then do as I say.  
Madam, you're welcome  
to the animals.  
But as for the money...  
I want that, too.  
We need it.  
It's all we have in the world.  
It means we can go away.  
I'll tell you what.  
I won't give you the money,  
but I'll play you for it.  
Against what?  
A kiss.  
Just a little one.  
Otherwise,  
you'll have to  
shoot me, I guess.  
You deal.  
I'm on the wrong side  
of the table this time.  
Wow.  
Hannah.  
Yes?  
Aren't you gonna  
say something?  
Supper's almost ready.  
Better wash your hands.  
No, I mean,  
aren't you gonna say  
something about...  
No.  
Eat your supper, Ethan.  
There's a lot of work to do  
if we're going  
to be leaving tomorrow.  
We were as young as you  
in those days.

All three of us.  
Ethan and I  
and Steely Edwards.  
He tagged after me  
for eight long years.  
The gambler?  
The man.  
He was the other man  
in my life.  
"Gambler."  
Things don't turn out  
the way you expect.  
Just like we thought  
we'd find that mountain  
of gold  
and come right back here  
to Hoyt City.  
But Senator Hoyt  
discovered silver.  
In a way he did  
and in a way he didn't.  
But that was  
after eight years.  
Eight wonderful,  
terrible years.  
Wandering up and down  
the whole Pacific Coast,  
wherever there was  
a mountain.  
Wonderful times,  
when Ethan and I  
were alone.  
Terrible times  
when he was away.  
Every time he came home  
there was Steely Edwards.  
You mean  
you and Steely Edwards?  
Hold your horses, girl.  
I don't deny  
there were moments.  
Hmm.  
There was something  
pretty nice about Steely.

But that's as far as it went.  
I loved Ethan too much.  
That was when Ethan  
was in the Washoe Mountains,  
a place called Virginia City.  
Yes, I was running  
a boarding house  
in Sacramento and...  
I bought two tickets  
for the concert.  
I can't go, Steely,  
but thanks.  
That's what  
you always say.  
By this time  
you ought to know  
what I mean.  
I don't know.  
All I know is...  
Do me a favor.  
Anything.  
Go down to the faro house  
and leave me alone.  
Thought you said  
you didn't like gambling.  
I don't call it  
working for a living.  
Thanks. I suppose Ethan  
never gambled in his life.  
He's got nothing  
to do with it.  
That's just  
the point.  
For eight years he hasn't  
had anything to do  
with anything but himself.  
Except when  
he comes home  
for a bath or a...  
Oh, Steely,  
forgive me.  
It's just that...  
I'm not quite myself.  
You see, Ethan and I,

we're going to  
have a baby.  
Take your hands  
off my wife.  
Ethan!  
Steely, please go.  
Not till  
we settle this  
once and for all.  
That's all right  
with me.  
Ethan, please.  
Every time  
I come home...  
You don't know  
what you're saying!  
I know  
what I see.  
I never  
carry a gun,  
friend.  
Lucky for you.  
Get out and stay out.  
Go on, Steely.  
Go on now, please.  
Ethan,  
come eat something.  
In the morning.  
I can't help  
wondering.  
About what?  
Steely.  
You know better.  
I'm sorry.  
But there's  
something else.  
Will it keep?  
Mmm-hmm.  
Well, then save it  
till morning, will you?  
I'm tired. Dog tired.  
Got a spare bed for a miner  
down on his luck, Mrs. Hoyt?  
Mmm-hmm.

Fine.  
Nothing?  
Same old story.  
A little gold,  
but you can't get it out  
of that blue stuff.  
Sticky-as-pitch  
blue stuff.  
Some people  
claim it's silver,  
but they're crazy.  
It just gets in the way.  
Oh, look out.  
It's all over my boots.  
Strange country  
up there,  
Virginia City.  
A black hill called  
the Sun Mountain.  
Like a beckoning  
finger in the sky.  
Sun Mountain.  
Like a beckoning finger  
in the sky.  
Great Scott! It's silver!  
Literally solid!  
It'll run \$5,000 a ton.  
We're rich.  
We're rich!  
We're rich!  
We're rich!  
Who is rich?  
Steely!  
Your humble servant.  
Who's rich?  
It's Ethan that's rich!  
On his boots,  
silver, gobs of it!  
Big feet  
but a small mind.  
Steely, lend me  
some money.  
Why?  
You know why.



For him?  
For me.  
I'll pay it all back.  
Every cent  
from the Hoyt House.  
I'll cook, I'll scrub.  
Oh, Steely,  
I'll pay it all back.  
You mean  
you're going to  
stay here?  
Yes.  
And he'll let you stay?  
He doesn't know about me.  
I couldn't tell him, not now.  
Then he wouldn't go.  
Not if he knew.  
You wouldn't go, Steely.  
No.  
Oh, don't you see?  
It's his big chance.  
It's what  
he's been looking for.  
Grubbing and digging  
his way through the mountains  
for eight years.  
He's got to go, Steely!  
Alone.  
You know, if some woman  
felt like that about me,  
and her name was Hannah...  
Steely.  
Oh, Steely!  
Silver! Solid silver,  
I tell you! Richest ore  
I ever saw in my life.  
Silver! Silver!  
Who found it?  
Ethan Hoyt.  
His wife!  
Silver! Silver! Silver!  
Ethan!  
Huh?  
Ethan, wake up!

Hmm, what is it?  
Silver.  
That blue stuff  
on your boots!  
Solid silver!  
Oh, Ethan, hurry.  
Here, get out  
the back way. Hurry!  
What's that?  
Money to buy mines.  
Money to buy...  
Where did you get it?  
Hurry, don't argue.  
Where'd you get it?  
Steely Edwards.  
That's what I thought.  
You're coming with me.  
No.  
Why not?  
I can't.  
Why not?  
I can't  
tell you, Ethan.  
Oh, you can't tell me, huh?  
Or maybe I can guess.  
Look at me.  
Yes, Ethan.  
Straight in my eyes.  
Yes.  
You can't tell me?  
No.  
Then I know.  
Oh, Ethan, please.  
You can't go like this  
thinking what you do.  
Well, what else  
am I to think, Hannah?  
Ethan, you have to go.  
Answer me.  
Oh.  
All right, I'll go.  
But I'll never come back.  
Good luck, Ethan.  
Why don't you go, too?

Like all the others,  
over the next hill?  
Because I've already  
come over that hill, Hannah.  
This is all I want.  
Looks like everybody is  
getting out of Sacramento  
as fast as they can.  
They're all going down  
to the boat, Mr. Steely.  
You better throw away  
this horse and get back  
to San Francisco.  
Maybe you're right.  
Go on back and  
save my place on the boat.  
Armor's Diggings,  
Salmon Flats, Placerville  
and Carson City!  
Connections for  
the Washoe stage, Cold Hill  
and Virginia City!  
Last stage out of  
Sacramento, mister.  
The flood's coming.  
Do you connect  
with the stage  
for Virginia City?  
Yeah, at Carson City.  
Get in.  
Not for myself.  
For a lady  
and two small babies,  
for Virginia City.  
Steely Edwards,  
you're a Godsend!  
Had no idea  
it was this bad.  
Here, take the babies.  
Help us down to the boat.  
Boat?  
Yes, we're going  
to San Francisco.  
What's the matter?

Nothing.

Well, come along.

You always said you wanted  
to take me on a trip.

If you wait any longer,  
it'll be too late. Come on.

It's been too late.

Ever since the first time

I met you, Hannah.

What do you mean?

You're not going  
to San Francisco.

You're going  
to Virginia City.

Oh, no, Steely.

No, I can't.

Why not?

Well, I've never  
heard from him.

Look, Hannah, you love him,  
that's all that matters.

All your life  
you've swallowed your pride  
and gone back to him.

You can do it again.

All aboard.

Oh, I almost forgot.

I got something  
for Mary.

Oh!

I got Ethan a horse.

A what?

It's on rockers.

Little one.

It's up on the roof.

Oh, Steely!

All aboard.

Whoa!

Giddyup!

My sweet babies.

You know, if they  
were alive today,  
they'd be 76 years old.

My children, 76.

Goodness, I must be  
the oldest woman  
in the world.  
Mrs. Hoyt.  
Hmm?  
Perhaps you're tired.  
Steely thought  
I was dead, too.  
That's why he went up  
to Virginia City.  
One snowy night  
way back in 1860  
or '61...  
Whiskey.  
Leave the bottle.  
Look out.  
Save your money, stranger.  
Have another bottle on me.  
When Ethan Hoyt  
buys drinks,  
he buys them all.  
That right, boys?  
That's right, Ethan.  
Million-dollar Hoyt!  
A mountain of silver  
and Ethan Hoyt on top.  
You hear that, stranger?  
A mountain of silver  
and Ethan Hoyt on...  
Stop where you are.  
Take your hand  
out of your pocket.  
You know  
I never carry a gun.  
Drop that bottle.  
I only came to  
tell you something.  
Then start talking.  
It's about Hannah.  
What about her?  
She's dead.  
He killed my wife.  
That's what he did.  
My wife, Hannah.

I know now what you meant  
when you said,  
"Come back in 100 years."  
A hundred years  
of greatness,  
heartbreak, sorrow.  
Only in spots, girl.  
That's the way life goes.  
You get used to it  
after a while.  
Hello, Martha.  
Hello, John. How are you?  
Glad to see you.  
Oh, there's Mary.  
Be with you  
in a minute.  
The lady's bag.  
That's it.  
One more bag.  
I thought  
you were dead.  
I am.  
Ethan thinks  
we're both dead.  
Ethan?  
He shot me.  
Where is he?  
He went back  
to Hoyt City.  
Hannah, he's married.  
He married again.  
To whom?  
A girl named  
Martha Dawson.  
Hmm.  
It's all my fault, Hannah.  
I sent you on that stage.  
I wanted to go.  
I'll win some money.  
I'll send you back east.  
No.  
But, Hannah,  
he doesn't know  
you're alive.

Better this way.  
I can't stop him now.  
He's doing what he wanted.  
What I want him to do.  
To build a great city.  
To be a great man.  
He will be, Steely.  
I can't stand in his way.  
Hannah, you can't  
do this to yourself.  
I don't matter.  
But if my babies...  
I buried them, Hannah.  
Where?  
Where...  
Where little angels sleep.  
Then we're all dead  
for him. All four of us.  
That's how  
it was meant to be.  
Steely.  
Yes?  
That's the boat  
to San Francisco.  
You said it was  
too late one time.  
Now it's too late  
for anything else.  
One of our very finest  
show places, sir.  
Just as modern  
as 1868 itself.  
A credit to the city  
of San Francisco, sir.  
Erected by  
Mr. Steely Edwards.  
Save your oratory  
for the Senate.  
For the Senate.  
You say the woman  
who calls herself  
Hannah Hoyt works here?  
That's right,  
Mr. Sempler.

Well, come along.  
No, let me  
handle this,  
please.  
And why?  
Because if Steely Edwards  
knows what you're after,  
you'll never get  
past the door.  
Come right in, gentlemen.  
Try your luck  
with Steely Edwards.  
Friends of mine, Steely.  
From the east.  
They're interested in seeing  
your establishment.  
Delighted to  
show you around,  
Senator.  
You know, gentlemen,  
it's a peculiar thing.  
But the more I tell people  
that the game is crooked  
and they can't win,  
the more they seem  
to enjoy losing.  
Of course we let them  
win once in a while.  
But they lose it right back.  
If it isn't faro,  
it's hazard or three-card  
monte or roulette.  
Fascinating game,  
roulette.  
You can't lose  
without trying, gentlemen.  
Why not test your luck?  
Delighted.  
The special table  
with the most beautiful  
croupier in the business.  
She'll help you lose  
your money with  
the greatest of pleasure.



But she won't help you  
spend any of it.  
No more bets,  
gentlemen.  
Keep your eye  
on the little ball.  
Don't expect miracles,  
gentlemen.  
Lose with a smile.  
Excuse me, sir. Hannah?  
Father.  
Is there some place  
we can talk?  
Steely, take my place,  
please.  
All bets down, please.  
All bets down.  
Forgive this clutter.  
It's Steely's office.  
I straighten it up  
myself every day,  
but you know how men are.  
Oh, tell me  
all about yourself.  
About sweet old Delilah  
and Bettina and Persis, too.  
I bet you married one of them.  
Which one, Mr. Cadwallader?  
"Mama says."  
I mean Bettina.  
Father, I'm so glad  
to see you.  
Now stop it, Hannah.  
There's a time and place  
for everything.  
I came here  
with a business proposition,  
nothing more.  
A what?  
Everyone thinks you're dead.  
So did I, until today.  
I want you to  
remain dead, legally.  
But I...

I don't know  
what you mean, Father.  
You still call yourself  
Hannah Hoyt?  
Yes.  
I don't suppose  
you're married to this  
Steely Edwards fellow?  
I'm married to Ethan Hoyt.  
But he's married to  
J.B. Dawson's daughter.  
I know it.  
He has a fine reputation.  
Fine home.  
Two fine children.  
Two children?  
So I want you to  
change your name and go away.  
Far away somewhere.  
I'll make it  
worth your while.  
It means  
everything to me.  
Everything.  
Then if you won't do it  
for me, do it for Ethan.  
You owe it to him, Hannah.  
He got nothing  
but wild ideas  
from you and failure.  
He's come a long way  
without you.  
The least breath of scandal  
would ruin him.  
Dawson and I need him  
in Congress.  
He's running against  
a hothead from Hoyt City.  
A dreamer who thinks  
that building Hoyt City  
is more important  
than building a railroad.  
Why, great Scott,  
if Ethan's not elected,

I hate to think what  
it would mean for all of us!  
Please go.  
I might have known.  
Get out.  
For the last time...  
Get out of here!  
Get out!  
The house wins, gentlemen.  
The house always wins.  
What's the matter?  
I'm going back  
to Hoyt City, Steely.  
No more bets, gentlemen.  
Ethan?  
Double O.  
The game is  
against you, gentlemen.  
You can't win.  
Better luck  
next time.  
Better luck yourself,  
Steely Edwards.  
My friend Ethan Hoyt  
says that if he's not elected,  
the Western Railroad Company  
will change its plans  
and cross the river  
10 miles south of here.  
This is a threat, folks.  
Ethan Hoyt never  
used to talk like this.  
He used to say  
like all the rest of us,  
"Give us the railroad  
on fair terms  
or we'll build one ourselves."  
Now he tells us,  
"Boys, give the  
Western Railroad  
"three-quarters of everything  
in sight, or we'll ruin you  
and your city forever."  
Oh, if I only had

the silver tongue  
of Ethan Hoyt...  
I object to that last remark  
as a mean and  
unprincipled slander!  
I meant no slander, sir.  
If the word "silver" bothers  
your conscience in any way,  
suppose I say "golden."  
If I had a golden voice  
like Ethan Hoyt's,  
I would use it  
to tell the truth.  
I would use it  
to speak for all of us.  
We're the little people,  
but we're trying  
to build something big.  
Ethan Hoyt.  
Friends, I beg your indulgence  
for just a few final remarks  
in reply to  
my old friend and rival  
for Congress, Hank Allen,  
who reminds me of a dog  
I had when I was a boy.  
The dog's name  
was Hank, too.  
Well, one day Hank...  
The dog, mind you.  
One day  
Hank caught a squirrel  
all by himself.  
It was a pretty miserable  
little old squirrel,  
but it was a squirrel  
just the same,  
and I needed  
a piece of its fur  
to finish a hunting cap  
I was making myself.  
That poor squirrel  
was no good at all to Hank  
because he didn't know

what to do with it.  
But do you think  
he'd let me have it?  
No, sir.  
He just growled and barked  
and kept it all to himself,  
till it was no good  
to anybody,  
not even himself.  
That's what Hank Allen  
is trying to do.  
I founded this town.  
I and others.  
But the time has come  
when we must face the facts.  
Hoyt City is nothing  
but a jumping-off place  
for nowhere.  
The railroad would put  
Hoyt City on the map.  
I came back here  
a month ago  
to live in the same  
little cabin I built here  
21 years ago in 1847.  
I am one of yourselves.  
True enough, I own  
a great deal of land here.  
I don't deny it.  
But most of this land  
I shall have to deed over to  
the railroad, the same as you.  
I shall be poorer, not richer.  
Hank Allen to the contrary.  
My friends, I take my stand  
for the Western Railroad  
Company and progress.  
And now for Mr. Frisbee.  
As for you Ethan Hoyt,  
guilty conscience, huh?  
No wonder you thought  
you saw her  
there in the crowd.  
Hank Allen was right.

"Silver-tongue Hoyt."  
Remember  
the moonlight, Ethan?  
Hannah.  
What a strange,  
lovely night.  
And we rode away,  
you and I.  
All the wide, bright way  
to the Pacific sea.  
Then it was really you  
this afternoon.  
Yes.  
Yes, I didn't die.  
I was bringing you  
our babies.  
They were as tiny  
as kittens.  
Little twin kittens.  
Steely found them  
after the flood.  
He thought I was dead, too.  
And after he came back  
from Virginia City, he...  
He told me about you.  
And then I went away  
with him.  
Oh, God.  
Forgive me, Hannah.  
Forgive me.  
I failed you.  
I've always failed you.  
Oh!  
Oh, my goodness, Ethan.  
Get up off the ground.  
There are no Indians  
to stalk around here.  
I remember.  
And then I...  
And then I went away with you  
for 12 glorious years.  
It's chilly.  
Come inside, Ethan.  
Light your candle

again, Ethan.  
I'm like  
a blind man, Hannah.  
A man in the dark.  
That's why  
I came back.  
You'll see again, Ethan.  
You'll see  
what Hank Allen sees.  
What you yourself  
used to see better  
than any man on Earth.  
A fine, bright world.  
We started  
to build it once.  
But it's not as simple  
as all that, Hannah.  
I've changed.  
I came back here alone  
and tried to build  
what we dreamed together.  
You and I.  
But it was no good  
alone, Hannah.  
The heart was  
gone out of me.  
Oh, I don't want to make  
any excuses, not anymore.  
I guess I just took  
the easiest way.  
Just like I've always done,  
except when you've been around  
to keep me straight.  
I'm in this thing  
just as deep  
as the rest of them.  
Corrupting judges  
and legislators  
to get what we want.  
Money is a great  
power, Hannah.  
And my money is tied up with  
the Western Railroad Company.  
So, you see,

if I fight Dawson  
and those people,  
I'd really be  
fighting myself.  
But that's right.  
That's what you must do.  
Then you've got  
to help me, Hannah.  
I can't do it alone.  
Without you  
I've been lost.  
You're not alone, Ethan.  
You have a family.  
Yes, a little boy  
and a little girl.  
But there's  
you, too, Hannah.  
I'm all mixed up.  
No, you're not.  
I've divorced you.  
When?  
Before I came here.  
Not because I don't love you,  
because I always will.  
But because our marriage  
was the only weapon  
they could use against you.  
But I can't  
let you do this.  
You've got to  
do it, Ethan.  
Speak for all the things  
we dreamed together.  
Speak for the truth  
and fight for it.  
Speak for  
all the people to hear.  
Help them to  
build something  
fine and free.  
A country that  
your little boy and girl,  
that all our children  
will be proud



to inherit and live in.  
I'll do it.  
I know you will, Ethan.  
If only we were  
beginning all over.  
Spring never comes  
again, Ethan.  
Perhaps in the Indian summer  
we'll meet once more.  
Now, go.  
Go, Ethan.  
And don't look back.  
Good luck, Ethan.  
And so he rode away  
on his horse.  
Just like he rode  
into my life on one.  
Right straight down  
that hill.  
Well, where there  
used to be a hill.  
He rode down it  
into greatness  
and glory. Yeah.  
The other man in my life  
turned out pretty well, too.  
Poor old Steely.  
I guess I must be  
the only person  
in the whole world  
who really  
remembers him.  
He died the same year  
as Ethan, in 1906,  
in the San Francisco fire.  
He died the way  
he always lived.  
Helping other people.  
Help me down  
the steps, girl.  
I get a bit creaky  
at night, it seems.  
Do you mind  
if I say something?

No. Speak ahead, girl.  
I think the wrong person  
is on that horse  
in the square.  
It ought to be you.  
Oh. Nonsense!  
Girl, I'm nobody.  
Just an old lady  
who talks too much.  
Fum-de-diddle.  
What was I saying now?  
Mmm... Oh, yes.  
I wanted you to know how  
men like Ethan climb a long,  
hard road to greatness.  
They need help, mind you,  
and then all of a sudden,  
there they are.  
Up there on their own.  
You see, Ethan's light  
never went out again.  
He used it like a torch  
against all the dark,  
unscrupulous things  
that men like Dawson  
and Frisbee do.  
He used it like a beacon  
to give men hope,  
men building  
a place of their own.  
Hoyt City and  
a thousand other places  
all over the 48 states.  
Yes. That's what  
he did, girl.  
And he did it  
all alone.  
Taxi!  
I never saw him again  
until he came back home  
to die in 1906.  
Then he was all alone  
again in the world,  
like I was,

and he came back here  
to die,  
a bright spring day.  
His truth is marching on  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
His truth is marching on  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Come out of that.  
Haven't the likes  
of you newspaper cubs  
any shame at all?  
Oh, let me go, Murphy.  
I want the news.  
Is the senator dead?  
What's he doing  
in Hannah Sempler's house?  
The public must know.  
I want to get  
at the bottom of things.  
The bottom of it, is it?  
Sure, and I'll be glad  
to help you along.  
Come on,  
get along with you.  
And let a great gentleman  
die in his own proper time  
as he likes.  
Hannah.  
How'd I do?  
Fine, Ethan. Fine.  
You gave me  
the strength.  
And the courage.  
But you did it  
alone, Ethan.  
All alone.  
No, Hannah.  
Not alone.  
You were with me  
every step of the way.  
I...  
I wanted you to

be proud of me.  
I am proud of you, Ethan.  
Prouder than a cat  
with a dozen kittens.  
Hannah?  
Yes, Ethan.  
Come closer, girl.  
Just...  
Just one thing more.  
A kiss.  
And now, there he is.  
Up there on his horse.  
And nobody is ever  
going to change it.  
He stirs the heart  
like a challenge.  
That's it.  
That's what  
he always did.  
Wherever  
there were people  
trampled by life,  
wherever men  
wanted to rise up in all  
the bright glory of hope,  
he lifted them up.  
He still does.  
He always will.  
I...  
I'm kissing  
my biography goodbye.  
Now run along.  
You've got 100 years  
of your own to live,  
if you can take it.  
But I'd better  
help you home.  
Oh, listen, girl, I've been  
getting home on my own  
since Abe Lincoln died.  
But thank you  
just the same.  
Run along.  
Forever, Ethan.

Now no one can change it.  
Forever.