When Anne's feet were pedalling a treadle sewing-machine, she felt that she was going somewhere. And when she found the right sewing machine, she actually did go somewhere—though it was not at all the sort of journey she had expected.

WINDOW TO THE WHIRLED

by Barry Stevens

ANNE WAS YOUNG AND SHE WAS lovely—sweeping blonde hair, sea green eyes, ivory skin, and a body that didn't need to be changed anywhere. A girl like that, and the two things that she wanted were a treadle sewing-machine and her grandmother. Why, she could have been a TV star or just about anything that most girls would give their souls to be. Anne said she'd be bored. What could be more boring, they asked her, than a sewing machine and a grandmother? That wasn't Anne's view at all.

Her grandmother had had a treadle machine and she had let Anne use it sometimes. When Anne's feet were on the treadle, one forward, one back, pedalling away, she felt that she was going somewhere. Grandmother had always had the same feeling. She wouldn't switch to an electric machine because, she said, she couldn't bear to stay in one place. Anne had never been bored when Grandma was around. They were always going somewhere together even when they sat in the living room with everyone else. Then one day Grandma disappeared, and Anne wept. But then she stopped her tears and went off to find Grandma. By the time she got to New England in search of her, she was feeling very discouraged, and when she saw an auction being held in front of a barn she stopped for diversion, unable to bear her despair.

No one knew what would be brought out of the barn next and held up for everyone to see and bid on. . . . And then there was an old treadle sewing machine. Anne started off the bidding with a quarter. Nobody else bid, and she got it for that. And suddenly she felt as though her lungs had stopped breathing. A treadle machine! Maybe *that* was the way to find Grandma.

When the men brought it to her, she got to work on it at once, looking in the little drawers, two on each side, and sure enough! There was an instruction book in one of them, tattered, but showing how to thread the machine. In another drawer there was a little wooden shelf with holes for bobbins to set in, and there was a bobbin in each one, with thread on it—blue, green, white, red, yellow. The colored threads were oddly luminous. She'd never be able to match them, but she couldn't bear to waste them, so she used the bobbin that had some white thread on it. There was a spool of white thread too, so she threaded the upper part with that. Then she took a handkerchief out of her pocket, folded it, and stitched the two sides together. Sunlight filtered through a big elm and dappled Anne and the sewing machine with light and shade. She used the handkerchief now for a cleaning rag. There was an oil can in one of the drawers, with oil still in it. It smelled awfully good for oil—more like perfume; in fact, more like flowers. *Why* hadn't Grandma taken Anne with her? That hurt when she thought of it, and the pain crippled her so that she couldn't do anything. So then she thought about it in another way, without emphasis, inquiring, "Why didn't Grandma take me with her?" And that way it had an answer even if she hadn't yet figured out what it was.

She began to realize that she had been too logical. Grandma wasn't. And she had been trying too hard, which Grandma had always said was bad. "You just *do* things," she had explained, "and then they come out the way you want them to." The way that it had happened just now, in fact. If she hadn't stopped chasing Grandma she wouldn't have noticed the auction and wouldn't have found the machine to start her thinking in the right direction. . . . If she could have listened *only* to Grandma, Anne thought. But there were all the other people telling Anne that Grandma was out of her mind.

The sewing machine was sparkling now like the shine on well-used railroad tracks, beckoning her on to . . . When she thought about that 'to' and where it might lead, she shook her head, tossed the hair back from her forehead, and went on with her sewing. Grandma said that anything you could think about was puny by comparison with what could happen if you let it, and that thinking about what you wanted narrowed things down so that only little, usual things could happen. Then people said, "Of course. That's all there is to life. What did you expect? Flying carpets?" When Anne was inside herself and Grandma, she did, but when

she was inside of other people she made up her mind to be reasonable and not expect too much. She was feeling less and less reasonable now—or more reasonable in a different way.

When the sewing machine had been adjusted so that it hummed instead of clacked, Anne asked the men to put it in her car, and drove away. When she came to a fork in the road, she took the one that pleased her. In passing through a town she noticed a store and went in and bought a bedroll and a little icebox without realizing that she had changed her course from the months of sleeping in motels and eating in restaurants like everyone else. She just knew that she was strangely happy and that she wanted to get back west. But she was in no hurry about it. She stopped when she felt like it, and used the sewing machine. The things she made were more beautiful all the time. People wanted to buy them but she gave them away, saying that they were too precious to be sold because of what was sewn into them. She didn't know herself what she was talking about but she knew it was right.

People wanted her to stay, and offered her a fine place to work in, but she always sooner rather than later put her sewing machine in her car and went to another town. And another town. And another town. Until she sometimes wondered if she were making any kind of sense or just re-living a fairy tale absorbed in childhood. Sometimes it seemed to her that the fairy tale had been telling people how to live, but at other times she was doubtful about this. Then she would remember "Don't think!" and she would stop, and then she enjoyed everything around herself again.

Eventually she got to California where the weather was usually mild, and she began taking her sewing machine with her on trips to the mountains, the desert or the lakes, and there she would sit in the sun and treadle away, which wouldn't have been possible with an electric machine which tied you to a wire and a generating plant. She would leave her machine to take a swim, or to climb a mountain, and she was becoming stronger and more flexible all the time. She was also becoming more beautiful—perhaps radiant is the word—but she didn't notice that: she was too fascinated by the fact that she was learning. Things kept coming into her head. She began to understand mathematics and physics and lots of other things she hadn't bothered with because she had thought them dull. She thought of moving on to a place where there was a university, so that she could go to college, but when she spoke of this to a man who was visiting in the town, a professor from Berkeley

named Stan Blanton, he said, "Heavens no! You'd lose what you have, and what you didn't lose you'd be fifty years old before you'd begin to know." This was Grandma talk, and Anne felt at ease with it—and with him. He was a nice sort of person, but somewhat sad. He was fifty years old and hadn't done half the things he wanted to, because of all the things he had had to do, and he wasn't sure that the ones he had done were worth doing. This made it difficult for him to keep on doing them, so he was tired all the time, which he thought was because he was growing old.

He was very conscious of his age, so although he felt younger with Anne than he had for years and she was the nicest thing that had ever happened to him, he went away.

Anne was then a little sad, for he had seemed to have possibilities that other people didn't have. She felt separated from something. But she could always get together inside herself by working things out with the sewing machine. She might use one of the attachments that she hadn't tried, she thought. She fitted one to the machine, and took a long thin strip of material to try it out on. But no matter how carefully she sewed in a straight line, and kept the two ends of the strip apart, it always wound up with the ends together, like a belt with a twist in it, so that the outside went inside or the inside went outside until you couldn't tell which was outside or inside.

She thought she would play with the threads that she had been saving, so she took the bobbin with the yellow thread and put it where bobbins go, and took the green one and put it on top where the spool should go, so that the yellow and green threads would intermingle like buttercups in a field. But when she started to treadle, the cloth slipped out from under the foot—and the green and yellow threads went on spinning themselves together. There didn't seem to be any end to it. The two bobbins were always full. And instead of threads, it was now becoming a piece of cloth. "Oh, how I should love to have a cape of this!" she thought, and went on treadling. And the material grew. But now it was growing into a piece of very special shape, and she began to see the outline of her cape, although it was a little confusing the way the inside and the outside kept changing. Then she seemed to have done the cape, or the machine had, or they both had, for she wasn't sure how much of the spinning had come out of her and how much out of the machine, and sometimes she felt that maybe she and the machine weren't two things anyway. Machinery wasn't like

nature, she had always thought. Nature you could feel your way into, and know what it was to be a tree or a rock or a pool. But machines! Even treadle machines weren't something she could get *inside*. They weren't natural. But now she wasn't so sure about that. A bird's nest was natural. It was made by the bird. A beaver's dam was natural. It was made by the beaver. And machines were made by men even when they were made by machines because men made the . . .

When the cape was done, she snipped the threads which held it to the machine, feeling that she was cutting an umbilical cord. Then she stood up, started to fling the cape over her shoulders to find out how to get into it, and it wrapped itself around her.

There was a knock on her door, and she called "Come in!" And there was Stan Blanton. "What a beautiful cape!" he said, which wasn't at all what he had come two hundred miles to say. "Isn't it?" said Anne. "But I can't decide which side is inside and which side is outside or which one I am in!" She gave the cape a little flip as she said that, and it seemed to mix up its inside and outside in a quick flashing movement, and then it was gone. So was Anne.

Stan couldn't tell what he felt first, or whether they rippled all over each other like the colors on a dying dolphin. He was astonished, dismayed, puzzled, delighted, and a number of other things that he didn't bother to sort out. But when the rippling stopped, he was bereft. It had taken a tremendous effort to overthrow the forces of convention which said that he should stay away from Anne, and to break loose and come to her. And now she was gone! He sat down on a chair with his head in his hands and his elbows on the sewing machine, and tried to figure out what had happened. The answer seemed so tantalizingly near. But suddenly he began to think of other things. Anne had disappeared. Missing young girls and elderly men were meat for scandal. He'd better go back to Berkeley in a hurry. Quickly he went down the stairs and out to his car and drove home. Maybelle wasn't there. He sat down in the living room trying to think what to say to her when she came in and asked where he had been. His head ached. What *could* he say?

When Maybelle came in he looked up and said, "Hello, dear," as usual. She said, "Hello dear," also as usual, and went upstairs as usual.

This made him mad. "After all I've been through!" he thought. And then he got even madder as he realized that he hadn't been through anything but a lot of nonsense that hadn't happened anywhere but in his head. He

dashed out of the house and down the street, feeling like a fool, after all the years he had sat quietly in a chair resolving his problems in a mature way and arriving at sane conclusions. Now he suddenly saw all those years as submission to something he really didn't give a damn about, and how *mature* was that? He had felt that he was taking things into his own hands when he left Anne's place abruptly, but he had been a puppet, pushed around by all the stuff that he had no use for. He should have *stayed,* and tried to find Anne.

Anne was back in her room right after he left, actually—if by 'actually' you mean according to *our* time. *She* had been gone for weeks, and found this very refreshing. After that she spent more and more time looking into other places, and her absences began to be noticed by the neighbors. Next time she disappeared, someone called the police and said she was missing and foul play was suspected. No one thought anything of the kind, but they wanted to find out about Anne, and 'foul play' was a signal you used to get the police moving into other people's affairs. Stan was the only conceivable 'man in the case', so they tracked him down in Berkeley. Maybelle left him, which was both satisfying and convenient.

Anne's picture appeared in the papers, along with Stan's, not that there was evidence that he had anything to do with her disappearance but it made a good story. Stan, disgusted, yelled, "It's phoney! *Everything's* phoney!" which of course people did not wish to believe because it included themselves, so he 'told all' just to show them. After that, he was permitted to stay at home but he was examined by psychiatrists. He was lying in bed one night, far from sleep, when . . .

Anne suddenly appeared beside his bed and said, "What do you mean, talking about me that way, as if I were a curiosity!"

Stan wasted no time on words, which could come later, and were more likely to if he acted first. He reached out, grabbed the cape and whipped it over her head, saying, "Stick around for awhile."

Anne laughed. "I've been places and learned things," she said—and disappeared.

Mournfully he spread the cape on top of the bed and leaned back against the pillows. Before his eyes, it whipped off the bed and wrapped itself around Anne, who was suddenly there laughing at him again. "I can only disappear without it," she said. "I can't go anywhere." Now that she had the cape, she did.

Stan was coming to his senses, now that he wasn't trying to do or be or live up to anything in particular. He dressed and went to

the place where Anne had lived and claimed her sewing machine. In the nearest motel, he started studying how to use it. When he got as far as the moebius strip, the rest was easy. Then he went to Anne's room 'to look for something.' It would be perfectly easy to find Anne. All he had to do was start from where she had been and glide down the strip to where she was. He put on his cape, and gave it a flip as Anne had done.

It was wonderful in nowhere, the place between everything. He hadn't known it would be this glorious—like being the only ship on an ocean, or the only skater on a frozen Lake Michigan. He had had dreams like this, but had dismissed them as thinkless wishing. Swooping, swerving, curving—and all on nothing, so that there was no possibility of falling off. He began to feel a zestful eagerness, a curiosity about where he might find himself when he slid off the strip and into Anne. Would she be surprised!

Zing!

He was in his own room, right at the spot where Anne had been. But Anne was not there. What a fool! He tossed his cloak on the bed and sat on it, and pulled his hair with his hands. He was so oppressed by failure that it didn't occur to him that all he had to do was take off again. Where *would* she have gone? Past and present, future too, and she could be anywhere in anywhen of them. He'd been so *sure* he had got it figured out, and all that he had done was to follow himself home. He had a sudden harrowing thought that maybe that was all he could do.

He got up from the bed and paced the floor, then went downstairs, not that it made any sense but he had to do something so that he wouldn't be so certain that he wasn't doing anything. He sat down in a chair and rubbed his eyebrows with the heels of his hands—*hard*. This time, he wasn't going to start with *any* preconceived ideas. As they arose in his mind, he wiped them out, one by one, until there was nothing left. But what help was a blank? He shook his head angrily, then thought "The hell with her. I'm going to do something *I* want to do." And he ran upstairs, swirled his cloak over his shoulders, and went skating down the strip through the clouds of nowhere to somewhere he had always wondered about.

It was morning when he arrived. A bright clear beautiful morning, crisp and sharp as autumn and with the soft warmth of summer in the air. Tall buildings, towering in isolation, stood out against the sky. Around each of them were areas of low buildings, with lawns and trees. People walked the streets in clothes as soft and bright as flowers, making his own conspicuously dull.

Quickly he got back on the strip and returned to the motel where he had left the sewing machine and let it weave new clothes for him. Putting them on, he replaced the cape on his shoulders and skated forward to where he had been, where he was inconspicuous now. But even so, he felt a sense of loneliness. At moments, in passing close to someone, this loneliness departed, but then it returned. He wanted to join with other people, and since some of them were going toward one building, he went there too. It seemed to be some kind of theatre or hall. There were no posters or canopy signs, so he walked a little closer to the man nearest him and asked, "What's playing today?"

The man stopped, and a smile began to play about his face. Then he said quickly, "I'm sorry, I thought you were one of us. I don't quite know the words to use to explain to you. This is a sort of playground, I suppose. Would that be right?" Stan looked baffled, so the native tried again. "We drop in when we want to, and listen or otherwise take part in the play as we like. There's nothing written down. We just . . . I really don't know how to say it because I've never had to before. We take part in it when we like and drop out when we like. It's great fun."

"Fun!" said Stan. "It's confusing! How do you know where the play begins or ends or is going?"

"What a strange view," mused the native. "What ever begins or ends, or knows where it is going? . . . Although I suppose that one could see things that way if one took a very limited view. But how unrealistic."

"Unrealistic!" said Stan, out of great confidence that he knew what realism is. "Why, you're just *drifting!*" But his own very recent life came into his mind then, and he wasn't so certain. Still, he couldn't quite yield, so he said magnanimously, "That's just in your plays, of course."

"Well, no. As a matter of fact, our playing partly serves to keep us in touch with reality. I don't mean that is why we do it. We enjoy the play, and that's reason enough. But also we carry over some of the spirit of reality into our work, and this keeps us from becoming too serious about what is, after all, very transient and limited."

Stan turned this over in his mind. It took a good bit of turning. "Are all your plays like this?" he asked. "No hard-working actors giving their lives to their profession?"

This time, the native looked confused. "Why on earth," he said at last, "should anyone give his life to a *profession?*"

"To make things better," said Stan.

"And did it? I think that you must be from *then,*" said the na-

tive. "A most tragic era—all misunderstanding."

"What did we misunderstand?" asked Stan with eagerness. The native said nothing. "Don't tell me that 'If you gotta ask, you'll never git to know' " Stan cried.

"No," said the native, "I could, but I won't. But tell me, how did you get here?" and he moved away without waiting for an answer. He looked back at Stan as though inviting him to follow, but Stan did not notice. His mind was a massive ache from ideas that seemed to be standing on their heads. Then they went into a tumbling act in which everything moved so fast that he couldn't tell which was upside down and which right side up. Anne was suddenly his only possible anchor in chaos. He started walking rapidly down the street. If he could just find her! Then he slowed. That's what he must get out of his mind—finding Anne. He felt a twinge as he realized that if she had passed him then she would have recognized where he was—or wasn't—and would have gone by without speaking to him. He restrained himself from turning to see if she were behind him, and brought himself into the *now* of all his senses so that he was noticing everything in the instant in which he lived. Then, he noticed that he was hungry. What could he do about that, when his money couldn't be used here? What about numismatists? There were phone booths around so he went into one. The directory seemed awfully small. He looked in the front for instructions and happily discovered that all he had to do was dial Numismatists for the information he wanted. A screen in the wall lighted up, and there were all the numismatists listed. Continuing to follow instructions, he took a piece of paper from a peculiar pad beside the telephone and held it in front of the screen. In an instant, the information was transferred, and he left the booth with the paper in his hand. A thought struck him, and he went back into the phone booth and dialed "coin dealers." The same list appeared on the screen. Now *that* was intelligent.

All the dealers were on the same street, so all he had to do was find the street. The first man he asked said courteously, pointing with his hand, "Go two blocks down, and ask again." When he asked again, the man pointed in another direction and said, "One block down, and ask again." At the next stop when he asked, the man pointed down a street and said, "Lane on the right side, halfway down the block."

It was so blessedly simple!

He walked into the first store that appealed to him, since he didn't know anything about any of them anyway. The man behind

the counter looked at the money Stan gave him and handed it back, saying, "Third store to the right. He'll give you a better price than I can."

Stan looked at him in astonishment. "Why?"

"He has a customer who'll pay more."

"But don't you want business for yourself?"

"Certainly," said the man, "but that's no reason you shouldn't get all you can for this."

Stan went out of the store a little unbelieving. There was a woman ahead of him in the next store, and he noticed that she was offering the same kind of money that he had. He'd probably get less for his, now, if he got anything at all. There didn't seem to be any bargaining going on. The woman and the clerk were both admiring the money, and then the clerk put her money in a box under the counter, opened another box and counted out some other money into the woman's hand. She took it and walked toward the door. As she passed him, Stan noticed her eyes. They reminded him of someone a little, but not entirely. Maybe the eyes were the same and the hair was different, which made the eyes look different. Anyway, he didn't know anyone here. He went to the counter, and the clerk took the money and said happily, "Two in one day! Sometimes we have to wait for years! I can give you a little more for this than I gave Mrs. Chumley because Mr. Sringo will be so happy that he doesn't have to postpone his journey any longer. He has enough now to make the trip."

"But where can he use *this* money?" Stan asked.

"In the twentieth century, of course. You people who come from the past are all right because old money is real, but when we go into the past, our money is phoney."

Stan took the new money the clerk held out, and walked toward the door. As he passed the spot where he had noticed the woman's eyes, several things clicked together at once. "Anne!" he thought. But no, that wasn't right; this woman was much older than Anne. He was putting two and two together and making twenty-two. Still, there was a nagging at the back of his neck, insisting that he was at least a *little* right. He went back to the clerk. "Do you have Mrs. Chumley's address?"

"No more than I have yours."

Stan started toward the door again, and the clerk called after him, "She did say something once about 'the children' in a way that made me think she might be a teacher."

There weren't any conspicuous signs of restaurants along the streets, but here and there on what looked like a private house there was a discreet sign saying

"Diners welcome." He walked into one of them and found himself in a small hall, from which he could see a room with one large round table in it, at which a number of people were seated. The food on the table looked and smelled awfully good, and made him want to walk right in and take a vacant chair, but the people were all chatting like old friends. That made him want to join them too, but on the other hand . . . He hesitated, standing there in the hall, but the sign *had* said "Diners welcome," and he couldn't see anything else to do but walk in and sit down. So he did.

"Hello there!" said one of the men, in a friendly but quite unbumptious way. "We were just talking about . . ." cueing him in on the conversation. Food was passed to him. The talk was about affairs strange to him, but as it went on, he began to feel at home in it. As some people finished eating, they left, leaving some money at their plate. A maid came in and took their dishes and the money, glanced over the table to see which serving dishes needed to be refilled. Other people came in and sat down, and the conversation rolled right along, covering a most astonishing lot of ground. And as he got his bearings, he began to say something now and then, for it was possible sometimes to point out a fallacy even though one didn't really know what they were talking about. He had noticed that as a child, but then no one would listen to him. Here, they did, and laughed when he showed up a mistake. Correcting the mistake, they took up from there, and went on. There were pauses, too, when no one was talking, which seemed to be the times when they were listening most of all. He got something from these pauses. It was as though his mind cleared and information came into it in a nice uncluttered way. When Stan went out into the sun, he felt refreshed and free and living in a larger world than he had known before.

Mrs. Chumley left the store where she had exchanged her money and went back to school, humming. She'd done it again. There must be a time in the past when her luck would run out, but it hadn't yet, so she was enjoying it.

The children greeted her with joy. They were special children, but no one knew that but themselves and Mrs. Chumley. They were listed at the School Board as exceptional children, a term carried over from the mid-twentieth century when 'exceptional' was first used for children who were not. She took out the money and put it on the desk, and the children came up and each one of them put some of it in their pockets. Then they went outside and scattered, each in a different di-

rection, and each one of them bought something insignificant—just usual things that any parent might send his child out to buy, parts to fix a copter or a house conditioner or a speedplane.

When they returned to school, they all got together in a room that already had something in it partly made, and went to work, adding the new parts in places which would have astonished the people who knew all about copters and house conditioners and speedplanes. Mrs. Chumley watched. She enjoyed the children at work, intent on what they were doing. When she first started working with them, she had pretended to be baffled. It was good for them. For some time now, she hadn't had to pretend.

When the doorbell rang, Mrs. Chumley wondered who on earth that might be. She got up to go to the door, while the children left their work and scattered around the room and picked up books and began reading. They were all arranged in small groups, with older ones pointing things out to younger ones, the way that any good public school was run. There was The Machine, yes, but Mrs. Chumley had begun with usual machines, and explained that she was using them to teach the children, and when they got more complicated it would have taken an expert or a simpleton to notice that they were different.

"Mrs. Chumley!" said Stan. "I'm so happy to find you!" And he looked so happy that Mrs. Chumley was happy too. Besides, this seemed to be something different, and to something different there was only one possible thing for Mrs. Chumley to say, and she said it: "Do come in!" As she led him to the classroom she said, "I'd rather hoped that someone else would find me, my granddaughter, but I guess she's not as bright as I thought she was. Sometimes I've thought I should have brought her with me, but then she never would have found her own way." She sighed. "I guess she didn't, anyway."

Stan looked at Mrs. Chumley more intently, particularly at her eyes. "Anne?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mrs. Chumley, "that's my name. Ohhh! You mean *Anne!*"

"I think I do," said Stan. "I wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for her."

"I'm so glad!" said Mrs. Chumley, sinking into a chair. "I thought I'd given her enough to go on, but it *is* difficult to hold your own back there, so sometimes I wondered if I had been wrong. But as long as she's got started, she's all right, even if she hasn't arrived. Who has, after all? Tell me about it." And Stan did. That is, he started to, but then he became aware of the children listening. Mrs. Chumley waved to him to

continue. "We have no secrets," she said. "That is, I don't have any from them."

When Stan had finished, Mrs. Chumley explained about the children and herself.

"I thought this was an *enlightened* world!" Stan exclaimed.

"Oh, it is," said Mrs. Chumley," but they've got so used to it they've forgotten that it could be *more* enlightened."

"So you're getting things out of a rut, I suppose."

"Well, I suppose I am." said Mrs. Chumley, "but that's not *why* I'm doing it."

Stan walked over to the machine, and the children gathered around him, with expressions on their faces that he was trying to understand. He tried to look intelligent as he asked, "And what is this to be used for?"

"It already has been," said one of the older boys. He looked around at the other children. "Has everyone got it?" They all nodded their heads or said Yes, and he checked them over one by one to see that no one was left out. Then, "Okay!" he said, and the children began taking the machine apart, stacking the pieces in neat rows on the floor.

Mrs. Chumley watched, delight on her face. "They've really got it!" she said.

"What?" asked Stan.

"I don't really know," said Mrs. Chumley, "but they haven't tried anything with interstellar travel, so that might be it."

"You said they'd got it," protested Stan, "so surely you must know what it is."

"They've got the basic idea," said Mrs. Chumley. "It's sort of like doing arithmetic problems on paper so you can then do them in your head. After that, you don't need paper. Sometimes I thought they never *would* work it out."

"Why didn't you tell them?"

"Because then they would have been able to make use of it only in a limited way. They'd never get *beyond* it if they didn't figure it out for themselves."

Stan looked bewildered. Mrs. Chumley looked sad. "You *could* understand," she said, "if you'd just let go of what you think you know. Everything you can do outside, you can do inside—that's where it came from. Most people stop at outside. That's why Berkeley, California, 1961, still has telephone wires and stuff."

"It seems to me," said Stan, "like a mental moebius strip."

"You've got it!" she said.

"Oh, no, I haven't," he corrected.

"But you have—you couldn't have said it outside if you hadn't had it inside, and now all you have to do is get it back in." She turned to the children. "I'm going home, now. I assume you're not. Tell me about it when you get back."

"Don't they even thank you for all you've done for them?" asked Stan.

"Why should they?" asked Mrs. Chumley. "Do you know, at this moment I haven't the faintest idea what I'll be doing next?"

Stan was beginning to get the feeling of it as he held the door open for her, then walked beside her to the street. How wonderful that he had arrived just when she was about to start on something else! What fun to go along!

But at the corner she left him, saying "Goodbye" as casually as if she would see him tomorrow.

"But about Anne!" he called after her, trying to hold her. "I'm sure she's on her way!"

"I'm so glad," Mrs. Chumley's voice wafted over her shoulder.

"But where shall she find you?"

"How do I know, when I don't know where to find myself until I'm there?" And she was gone.

All the adventure went out of him again. He rushed back to the school and asked the children, "Where does Mrs. Chumley live?"

"Wherever she feels like," they told him.

"I've got to find her!"

The children looked at him curiously, as though he were a person who had got pushed out of shape. Then a trace of compassion appeared on the face of one of the girls, and she said gently, "How did you find her the first time?"

At the store! . . . But she might never go there again. He was missing some piece that was there but he wasn't seeing it.

"Let go of it," the girl said, "and it will come to you."

And then the missing piece came into his mind: he had been taking care of the need of the moment when he ran across Mrs. Chumley. But it might be so long before their paths crossed again.

"When there's no other way," the girl said, "that's the only way there is."

Stan felt humble before this child. She knew so surely, so completely, what he only glimpsed at times and then lost. "Thank you," he said, and left.

He had a lot to think about, and he wished he knew what it was. It began to come into his mind that with both Annes he was just riding along with them, like an old man trying to recapture his youth through the youth of someone else. When they left him, he was old again. But he *had* recaptured it in and by himself for awhile. How had he done it?

He wandered the streets, not knowing where he was going or what was around him, until he came to a basking place. There was a long wall, facing the sun, and there were benches against the wall, all of the same material that caught the warmth and held it. He sat down on one of the benches, then stretched out on it, letting

the warmth from beneath and above seep into him so that his muscles relaxed, and in letting go off his body he also released his mind.

Why was it so difficult for him to be *on his own?* It seemed so easy for Anne and her grandmother, and when he was with them, he . . . No, when he was with them, he went along with them, but he wasn't *free* as they were.

Someone came and sat quietly at the end of the long bench. He didn't open his eyes. But he let go of his thoughts for awhile, and listened. He heard little crunching, crackling sounds, and then the wings of birds as they came fluttering down, then their feet on the pavement, and their beaks pecking, their little jumps as they bumped into each other and then stepped back, only to move forward again. "They do everything so easily," he thought. "Why shouldn't that be true for people?" People had to work for a living and raise children, to be sure, but why was it so *difficult?* Shouldn't it be as easy for humans in their way as it was for the birds in theirs?

Why were people so *stupid?* he asked, as he let roll into his mind all the things that he had been keeping out of it. Graduate School, he suddenly realized, was probably not the isolated, special group that he had thought it. Probably everywhere else was the same, with its enshrined incompetents of which he had been one. Oh, he had recognized the others. The one he had failed to recognize was himself. He hadn't started out that way. He was never going to be like his professors.

He groaned as he remembered a graduate student, bright but rebellious (Stan winced now, at that 'but'), who had designed and used a seal that had on it an opened book and a lighted candle, with the words: Help Stamp Out Graduate School. Stan had talked ot the student about 'professional dignity.' The student had said, "I don't like that word 'dignity.'" Stan realized now that the 'dignity' that he had recommended was nothing but pretentiousness. The student had told him so, but he hadn't heard. Not at the time. The student had said, "You're just being *nice,* and *polite.* Can't you be *human?* And Stan had said, so reasonably (so smugly, it seemed to him now), "You'll see things in a different way, later on."

"I hope not!" the student had said, as most students did not. "What I don't understand," he went on, "is why you won't let people *think.* When anyone does, you clip his wings and think you've tamed him—if he stays. But what you've taken *out* of him is how to fly."

"The requirements of research . . ."

"I don't want to do *re*search,"

the student had interrupted. "I want to *search*. But it's submit or get out, so I'm getting out."

Again Stan shuddered in the sun. What *was* man? When he was young, he had been trying to find out. Then he had accepted a role, had become an actor on a stage with an assigned part to play. Assigned *by whom?* When he was young, he had seen another destiny for himself. And as he reunited with that youth now and let it sweep over him, he ached with a new and different kind of pain. He sat up and blew his nose because otherwise there would be tears in his eyes, and men don't cry.

Putting his handkerchief back where it belonged, he sat leaning forward, with his hands clasped between his knees, remembering things he didn't want to remember. For what he had taught was courage, but what he had *lived* was bowing to 'the rules.' Once he had heard one student say to another. "And another stone idol topples into the steaming jungle," and they both had turned away.

How had he got into this mess? At first he had submitted to the rules to get through grad school, so that he would have a degree and people would listen to what he had to say. But when he got his Ph.D., he saw that he would have to get into the upper brackets: *then* people would listen. But when he had got a Name, by sacrificing most of himself for twenty years, people listened only when he said what they expected him to say. Any deviation was dismissed as brought on by age or overwork. The holidays when he met Anne were the only time he could remember when he had truly spoken from himself—out of his *own* knowledge.

He sobbed. Let anyone think what they wanted to think, or thought that they should think. What mattered was what he knew in himself. The more he sobbed, the clearer it became, like a child who cries his way out of confusion and into sunlight again.

He began to be aware of things around him, of passing feet, of the pigeons still fluttering around him. A pigeon flew onto his shoulder, and he turned his head slowly toward it, feeling no difference between himself and the pigeon. Then, "Mrs. Chumley!" he exclaimed to the woman sitting at the end of the bench.

"It isn't miraculous," she said. "I went back to school for a book and the children said you looked as though you'd stop at the first backing place."

"You walked away from me, before."

"Wasn't that a good thing, too?"

He burst out laughing with the glory of a child, a cosmic laughter that embraced so much more than words could say that he made no attempt to say them. "I feel so

small and so big," he said, a little later.

"When you feel small and big in the right places," said Mrs. Chumley, "you're just where you belong. I'm hungry."

At dinner, people were making the most wonderful sense and fun until someone mentioned the children who said they'd been to the stars when they'd only been gone for awhile between school and supper. Mrs. Chumley put her hand reassuringly on Stan's thigh. "Don't be bothered," she said. "The children knew what to expect. Probably they told the truth to find out if I knew what I was talking about. Now they'll believe everything I told them. I hope I was careful."

"I thought it was *better* here!" Stan said *sotto voce.*

"It is. It won't take them long to discover their mistake and they'll laugh and zoom ahead."

Anne had skated into town earlier, and it had been easy to guess who the 'teacher' was that the children said had shown them the way to the stars. She went to the school and got the feel of Grandma and wandered around until she got a whiff of her through an open window. That is, she heard Grandma's voice. Walking in, she joined Stan and Grandma at the table saying, "And how do you do, Mrs. Chumley? Where did you pick up that name, by the way?"

"From an Englishman," said Grandma. "He said he would be proud to give me his name, so I took it. Sit down and eat. There's something I want to talk over with Stan." And to Stan she said, "You're going back?"

"Of course," he told her. "I've got to clean up a mess I made. I thought I would begin by rounding up all the students who wouldn't listen to me."

Mrs. Chumley shook her head. "They'll have fallen for the same thing somewhere else where it looked different. You'll be just an old man, now, who's out of his mind. When you sell yourself down the river, you have to like the river. Then you like spinach even though you hate the stuff. There's going to have to be a new school, and everyone's tired of 'new schools' and getting nostalgic for Emerson, so you might call it Heisenberg College—he's sort of bringing Emerson up to date. It will take money. There's a reasonably young man—never even got a Master's—who's now president of one of the big foundations. . . ."

"What do you know about *now?*" asked Anne. "I mean, now *then?*"

"I haven't stayed here *all* the time," said Grandma, "and even if I had, I'd know more about now *then* than is known there now. There's a lot of nonsense in the history books, but some things do

come through later which weren't seen at the time. You could see the same thing in your own life if you'd look," she rebuked Anne. "I've been back several times. I worked for Schraffts, and they cater to the big foundations—luncheons and stuff. I've been in on *lots* of luncheon meetings, and had trouble holding my tongue, too.

"This man's more open than the others," she told Stan. "I'll give you a list of people who've been writing—all saying the same thing but in so many different ways that people haven't got them together yet. You get them together, scoop the cream from what they have to say, and present it to this man. . . ."

"Grandma!" protested Anne. "You're tampering with the past!"

"Tampering!" snorted Grandma. "That's the word people use when they mean 'Don't grease the wheels, we might get somewhere.' Besides, it's already happened, so how can I be tampering?"

She turned back to Stan, and began scribbling names on a piece of paper. Stan looked over the names and registered mild shock. "*Those* men!" he protested. "They don't give credit to the men whose shoulders they stand on!"

Anne, with a forkful of salad on the way to her mouth, stopped her hand in midair. "Maybe you mean whose umbrellas they got out from under?"

"I'm sorry. How long does it take to get over being a professor?"

"You've changed!" said Anne with delight. "Oh, Stan!"

"You can talk to him later," said Grandma. "Now what you do, Stan, is . . . and I'm not telling any secrets or pushing you around, because you could read this part for yourself if you went to the library. There's still a lot you have to work out on your own because history is also full of the way things didn't happen." She went on scribbling names, and he was surprised how many of them there were. He knew the work of most of them but had dismissed it for one 'reason' or another, like not citing sources, going against established authority, too mystic, in some cases they didn't even have a doctorate. Now, their work was rearranging itself in his mind, and he could see what the founders of religions had been trying to get at appearing in another form, a form much more comprehensible to the Twentieth Century. And it was coming through in so many different places! He looked again at Grandma's continuing list, and put out a hand to stop her writing. "Those people write science fiction!" he said. "They're escapists!"

Grandma sat back and laughed. Anne took out a cigarette, made a pass with her hand over the tip of it,and the tip burst into a glow. "It's a trick," she said, "That I learned in the future."

Stan's laughter burst over theirs. "All right, Grandma. Go on."

"That's all, really. The rest you have to figure out for yourself." Then she turned to Anne: "Have you started working on the mental hospitals yet?"

"That was to be my surprise!"

"It will surprise Stan," said Grandma, "and I'm interested too, because no one seems to know just how it started."

"I worked in several of them before I found the right one to get things moving," Anne told them, "but it's going well now. Some patients have got themselves transferred to other hospitals and are beginning to work things out there. It was quite simple, really. It always is, when you find the place to begin. We just expand everything a little more, and a little more, so nobody notices, so they don't pay any attention to the *direction* of the expansion. The head men are too busy writing papers, anyway. By the time they notice what's happened, they'll think they did it themselves. Probably they still won't notice that it's a school—no degrees, no credits, no teachers, everybody just learning from each other and from everything else, and not for anything but the people in it.

"The 'patients' come from all kinds of jobs, so when they go back to work, everything changes a little. They're changing the work . . . I mean . . . Oh," she said with annoyance, "what does it matter what's changing what? It's *changing*."

"But how do people from your hospitals manage to work in the places that are filled with the old ideas?" Stan asked. "I should think they'd crack up."

"Some of them do," said Anne, "but they get sent back to us then and in a sane society they're all right, and as soon as they're strong enough they go out again. And sometimes, it's easy. They're train . . . Won't we *ever* get over using the wrong words?" she asked herself crossly. "They're given a chance to become themselves, and that's what a lot of other people want to be too. One woman went to work in a place just before Christmas, and she found that for thirty years everyone had been giving everyone in the place Christmas presents. She thought she would go crazy if she got into that, so she went around telling everyone, 'I'm not going to give you anything for Christmas, so don't you give me anything for Christmas or I'll be embarrassed.' She wasn't trying to change anything. She was just speaking for herself. And pretty soon everyone was going around saying to everyone else, 'I'm not going to give you anything so don't you . . .' They said it was the *nicest* Christmas they'd had in years. They were happy clear through January."

"Everyone?"

"Well, no. There was one old biddy who did a lot of the hiring and firing, and she was the one who told new employees about the custom, so they thought they had to follow it. She's still upset—other things aren't going her way either—and I hear she's developing cancer. I mean, she really is, and probably won't live very long, but that's better than *everybody else* developing cancer."

"It's going to be fun, going back," said Stan.

"Sometimes you won't think so," Grandma told him. "You'll think that none of these things are happening at all, that you built it all up to make life endurable, that it's all imagination. You'll doubt yourself and your own sanity. Maybe you'd better take along some of those cigarettes Anne has found, so you can wave your hand over one of them and know it's real."

"Couldn't I use you, instead?" Stan asked. "You're the most reassuring thing I know."

Grandma said nothing.

Anne said, half-miserable, half-enchanted, "You aren't coming back with us?"

"There's *nothing* in the history books about me," said Grandma. "I'm completely free."

"And . . .?" Stan was trying hard to guess but was fairly sure he couldn't.

"There's a blank space somewhere ahead. I've been farther than that, so I know. Nobody knows what happened."

"So you're going there, to find out. Isn't that risky?"

"I hope so," said Grandma.