

the Great Girard

In the early hours, the protagonist reflects on signs of destruction in Gold, Ontario, having witnessed a significant geological event. He recounts how a once bustling town has become a ghostly ruin, noted through a vivid imagery of the shoreline and a muted landscape. The sudden eruption of chaos begins with an ancient dog howling in warning, leading to a collective awakening among locals, marked by strange occurrences and disarray. The narrator, aboard a boat, escapes this chaos, mentally wrestling with the juxtaposition of beauty and desolation as he sails through the rhythmic embrace of the sea, occasionally indulging in moments of solitude, reminiscing about Lark, a significant figure in his life.

As he continues his journey, the tranquillity of the waters contrasts starkly with his unsettling thoughts. A violent storm disrupts this peace, forcing him to navigate through a microburst that capsizes his boat momentarily, revealing both the fragility of his vessel and an internal struggle with a mysterious noise that unsettles him. The next destination is the town of Jolie, which he approaches with apprehension, pondering its current state—whether it has succumbed to the same fate as Gold.

Upon arriving, the sense of neglect and abandonment is palpable, yet he finds a semblance of warmth in a cafe where a friendly yet harried waitress serves him breakfast. News of recent tragedies weighs heavily on him as he reads about suicides and lost hopes, pulling his thoughts back to Lark, who understood the depths of despair surrounding them.

In town, the protagonist encounters Stevie, a mechanic who offers to repair his boat in exchange for music at a benefit concert for a terminally ill man named Nils. He accepts, drawn into the local community's fabric while reflecting on their shared struggles and aspirations. Stevie informs him about the locals' sentiment towards Nils's plight, emphasizing an acceptance of harsh realities where hope feels overshadowed.

Moreover, he receives medical attention from Dr. Girard, who is not only concerned about his physical well-being but shares his own tragic story of loss, drawing a connection between their lives. The duo—Girard and Evelyn—bond with the narrator, revealing their past sorrows and providing a sanctuary that contrasts his lonely journey. As he prepares to leave for the Slate Islands, he grapples with the possibility of reconnecting with Lark, wearing garments from Evelyn's deceased brother, symbolically allowing the past to guide him toward potential reunion or reconciliation with his lost love .