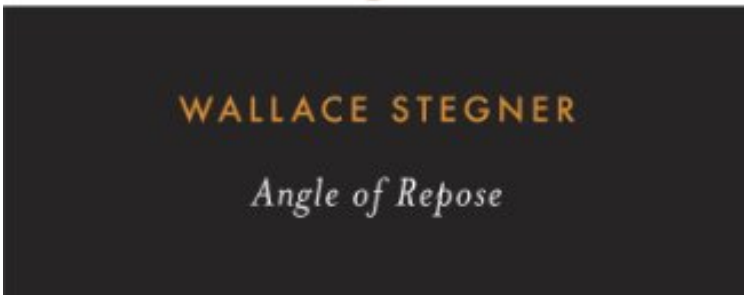


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Angle of Repose



PENGUIN CLASSICS



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Description : Description du produitIn Wallace Stegner's American classic, first published in 1971, wheelchair-bound historian Lyman Ward decides to write about the frontier lives of his grandparents at a time when he has lost con-nection with his living family. Of his relationship with his son, he says, "That is no gap between the generations, that is a gulf." It is an enterprise that will cast as much light on the lives of the members of succeeding generations as on the grandparents'.The Atlantic Monthly described Angle of Repose as "a superb novel with an amplitude of scale and richness of detail altogether uncommon in contemporary fiction," and the Los Angeles Times wrote:"Two stories, past and present, merge to produce what important fiction must: a sense of the enhancement of life."Last year, Angle of Repose was selected by the board of the Modern Library as one of the hundred best novels of the twentieth century.

Presentation de l'auteur Stegner's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of personal, historical, and geographic discovery. Confined to a wheelchair, retired historian Lyman Ward sets out to write his grandparents' remarkable story, chronicling their days spent carving civilization into the surface of America's western frontier. But his research reveals even more about his own life than he's willing to admit. What emerges is an enthralling portrait of four generations in the life of an American family. "Cause for celebration . . . A superb novel with an amplitude of scale and richness of detail altogether uncommon in contemporary fiction." *The Atlantic Monthly* "Brilliant . . . Two stories, past and present, merge to produce what important fiction must: a sense of the enchantment of life." *Los Angeles Times* This Penguin Classics edition features an introduction by Jackson J. Benson. For more than sixty-five years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,500 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

Extrait *Grass Valley* Now I believe they will leave me alone. Obviously Rodman came up hoping to find evidence of my incompetence--though how an incompetent could have got this place renovated, moved his library up, and got himself transported to it without arousing the suspicion of his watchful children, ought to be a hard one for Rodman to answer. I take some pride in the way I managed all that. And he went away this afternoon without a scrap of what he would call data. So tonight I can sit here with the tape recorder whirring no more noisily than electrified time, and say into the microphone the place and date of a sort of beginning and a sort of return: Zodiac Cottage, Grass Valley, California, April 12, 1970. Right there, I might say to Rodman, who doesn't believe in time, notice something: I started to establish the present and the present moved on. What I established is already buried under layers of tape. Before I can say I am, I was. Heraclitus and I, prophets of flux, know that the flux is composed of parts that imitate and repeat each other. Am or was, I am cumulative, too. I am everything I ever was, whatever you and Leah may think. I am much of what my parents and especially my grandparents were--inherited stature, coloring, brains, bones (that part unfortunate), plus transmitted prejudices, culture, scruples, likings, moralities, and moral errors that I defend as if they were personal and not familial. Even places, especially this house whose air is thick with the past. My antecedents support me here as the old wistaria at the corner supports the house. Looking at its cables wrapped two or three times around the cottage, you would swear, and you could be right, that if they were cut the place would fall down. Rodman, like most sociologists and most of his generation, was born without the sense of history. To him it is only an aborted social science. The world has changed, Pop, he tells me. The past isn't going to teach us anything about what we've got ahead of us. Maybe it did once, or seemed to. It doesn't any more. Probably he thinks the blood vessels of my brain are as hardened as my cervical spine. They probably discuss me in bed. Out of his mind, going up there by himself . . . How can we, unless . . . helpless . . . roll his wheelchair off the porch who'd rescue him? Set himself afire lighting a cigar, who'd put him out? . . . Damned old independent mule-headed . . . worse than a baby. Never consider the trouble he makes for the people who have to look after him . . . House I grew up in, he says. Papers, he says, thing I've always wanted to do . . . All of Grandmother's papers, books, reminiscences, pictures, those hundreds of letters that came back from Augusta Hudson's daughter after Augusta died . . . A lot of Grandfather's relics, some of Father's, some of my own . . . Hundred year chronicle of the family. All right, fine. Why not give that stuff to the Historical Society and get a fat tax deduction? He could still work on it. Why box it all up, and himself too, in that old crooked house in the middle of twelve acres of land we could all make a good thing out of if he'd consent to sell? Why go off and play cobwebs like a character in a Southern novel, out where nobody can keep an eye on him? They keep thinking of my good, in their terms. I don't blame them, I only resist them. Rodman will have to report to Leah that I have rigged the place to fit my needs and am getting along well. I have had Ed shut off the whole upstairs except for my bedroom and bath and this study. Downstairs we use only the kitchen and library and the veranda. Everything tidy and shipshape and orderly. No data. So I may anticipate regular visits of inspection and solicitude while they wait for me to get a belly full of independence. They will look sharp for signs of senility and increasing pain--will they perhaps even hope for them? Meantime they will walk softly, speak quietly, rattle the oatbag gently, murmuring and moving closer until the arm can slide the rope over the stiff old neck and I can be led away to the old folks' pasture down in Menlo Park where the care is so good and there is so much to keep the inmates busy and happy. If I remain stubborn, the decision may eventually have to be made for me, perhaps by computer. Who could argue with a computer? Rodman will punch all his data onto cards and feed them into his machine and it will tell us all

it is time. I would have them understand that I am not just killing time during my slow petrification. I am neither dead nor inert. My head still works. Many things are unclear to me, including myself, and I want to sit and think. Who ever had a better opportunity? What if I can't turn my head? I can look in any direction by turning my wheelchair, and I choose to look back. Rodman to the contrary notwithstanding, that is the only direction we can learn from. Increasingly, after my amputation and during the long time when I lay around feeling sorry for myself, I came to feel like the contour bird. I wanted to fly around the Sierra foothills backward, just looking. If there was no longer any sense in pretending to be interested in where I was going.

I could consult where I've been. And I don't mean the Ellen business. I honestly believe this isn't that personal. The Lyman Ward who married Ellen Hammond and begot Rodman Ward and taught history and wrote certain books and monographs about the Western frontier, and suffered certain personal catastrophes and perhaps deserved them and survives them after a fashion and now sits talking to himself into a microphone--he doesn't matter that much any more. I would like to put him in a frame of reference and comparison. Fooling around in the papers my grandparents, especially my grandmother, left behind, I get glimpses of lives close to mine, related to mine in ways I recognize but don't completely comprehend. I'd like to live in their clothes a while, if only so I don't have to live in my own. Actually, as I look down my nose to where my left leg bends and my right leg stops, I realize that it isn't backward I want to go, but downward. I want to touch once more the ground I have been maimed away from. In my mind I write letters to the newspapers, saying Dear Editor, As a modern man and a one-legged man, I can tell you that the conditions are similar. We have been cut off, the past has been ended and the family has broken up and the present is adrift in its wheelchair. I had a wife who after twenty-five years of marriage took on the coloration of the 1960s. I have a son who, though we are affectionate with each other, is no more my true son than if he breathed through gills. That is no gap between the generations, that is a gulf. The elements have changed, there are whole new orders of magnitude and kind. This present of 1970 is no more an extension of my grandparents' world, this West is no more a development of the West they helped build, than the sea over Santorin is an extension of that once-island of rock and olives. My wife turns out after a quarter of a century to be someone I never knew, my son starts all fresh from his own premises. My grandparents had to live their way out of one world and into another, or into several others, making new out of old the way corals live their reef upward. I am on my grandparents' side. I believe in Time, as they did, and in the life chronological rather than in the life existential. We live in time and through it, we build our huts in its ruins, or used to, and we cannot afford all these abandonings. And so on. The letters fade like conversation. If I spoke to Rodman in those terms, saying that my grandparents' lives seem to me organic and ours what? hydroponic? he would ask in derision what I meant. Define my terms. How do you measure the organic residue of a man or a generation? This is all metaphor. If you can't measure it, it doesn't exist. Rodman is a great measurer. He is interested in change, all right, but only as a process; and he is interested in values, but only as data. X people believe one way, Y people another, whereas ten years ago Y people believed the first way and X the second. The rate of change is therefore. He never goes back more than ten years. Like other Berkeley radicals, he is convinced that the post-industrial post-Christian world is worn out, corrupt in its inheritance, helpless to create by evolution the social and political institutions, the forms of personal relations, the conventions, moralities, and systems of ethics (insofar as these are indeed necessary) appropriate to the future. Society being thus paralyzed, it must be pried loose. He, Rodman Ward, culture hero born fully armed from this history-haunted skull, will be happy to provide blueprints, or perhaps ultimatums and manifestoes, that will save us and bring on a life of true freedom. The family too. Marriage and the family as we have known them are becoming extinct. He is by Paul Goodman out of Margaret Mead. He sits in with the sitter-inners, he will reform us malgr our teeth, he will make his omelet and be damned to the broken eggs. Like the Vietnam commander, he will regretfully destroy our village to save it. The truth about my son is that despite his good nature, his intelligence, his extensive education, and his bulldozer energy, he is as blunt as a kick in the shins. He is peremptory even with a doorbell button. His thumb never inquires whether one is within, and then waits to see. It pushes, and ten seconds later pushes again, and one second after that goes down on the button and stays there. That's the way he summoned me this noon. I responded slowly, for I guessed who it was: his thumb gave him away. I had been expecting his visit, and fearing it. Also I had been working peacefully and disliked being disturbed. I love this old studio of Grandmother's. It is full of sun in the mornings, and the casual apparatus and decorations of living, which age so swiftly in America, have here kept a worn, changeless comfortableness not too much violated by the tape recorder and the tubular desk light and other things I have had to add. When I have wheeled my chair into the cut-out bay in the long desk

I can sit surrounded on three sides by books and papers. A stack of yellow pads, a mug of pens and pencils, the recorder's microphone, are at my elbow, and on the wall before my face is something my grandmother used to have hanging there all through my childhood: a broad leather belt, a wooden-handled cavalry revolver of the Civil War period, a bowie knife, and a pair of Mexican spurs with 4-inch rowels. The minute I found them in a box I put them right back where they used to be. The Lord knows why she hung them where she would see them every time she looked up. Certainly they were not her style. Much more in her style are the trembling shadows of wistaria clusters that the morning sun throws on that wall. Did she hang them here to remind herself of her first experience in the West, the little house among the liveoaks at New Almaden where she came as a bride in 1876? From her letters I know that Grandfather had them hanging there in the arch between dining room and parlor when she arrived, and that she left them up because she felt they meant something to him. The revolver his brother had taken from a captured rebel, the bowie he himself had worn all through his early years in California, the spurs had been given to him by a Mexican packer on the Comstock. But why did she restore his primitive and masculine trophies here in Grass Valley, half a lifetime after New Almaden? Did she hang those Western objects in her sight as a reminder, as an acknowledgment of something that had happened to her? I think perhaps she did. In any case, I was sitting here just before noon, contented in mind and as comfortable in body as I am ever likely to be. The slight activity of rising and breakfasting, which I do without Ada, and the influence of coffee and the day's first aspirin, and the warmth of the sun against my neck and left side, these are morning beneficences. Then that thumb on the bell. I pushed back from among the sun-dazzled papers and rotated my chair. Two years' practice has not fully accustomed me to the double sensation that accompanies wheelchair locomotion. Above, I am as rigid as a monument; below, smooth fluidity. I move like a piano on a dolly. Since I am battery-powered, there is no physical effort, and since I cannot move my head up, down, or to either side, objects appear to rotate around me, to slide across my vision from peripheral to full to opposite peripheral, rather than I to move among them. The walls revolve, bringing into view the casement windows, the window seat, the clusters of wistaria outside; then the next wall with photographs of Grandmother and Grandfather, their three children, a wash drawing of the youngest, Agnes, at the age of three, a child who looks all eyes; and still rotating, the framed letters from Whittier, Longfellow, Mark Twain, Kipling, Howells, President Grover Cleveland (I framed them, not she); and then the spin slows and I am pointed toward the door with the sunlight stretching along the worn brown boards. By the time I have rolled into the upper hall, my visitor is holding down the bell with one hand and knocking with the other. Though I have got handier in the ten days I have been here, it took me a minute to get into position over the brace that locks my chair onto the lift, and I felt like yelling down at him to for God's sake let up, I was coming. He made me nervous. I was afraid of doing something wrong and ending up at the bottom in a mess of twisted metal and broken bones. When I was locked in, I flipped the wall switch, and the lift's queer, weightless motion took hold of me, moved me smoothly, tipped me with the inevitable solar plexus panic over the edge. I went down like a diver submerging, the floor flowed over my head. Without haste the downstairs wall toward which my rigid head was set unrolled from top to bottom, revealing midway the print of that Pre-Raphaelite seadog and his enchanted boy listeners--a picture my grandmother might have painted herself, it is so much in her key of aspiration arising out of homely realism. Then I was level with the picture, which meant that my chair had come into view from the front door, and the ringing and pounding stopped. The chair grounded in light as murky and green as the light of ten fathoms: the ambition of that old wistaria has been to choke off all the lower windows. I tipped up the brace with one crutch, and groped the crutch back to its cradle on the side of the chair--and carefully, too, because I knew he was watching me and I wanted to impress him with how accidentproof my habits were. A touch on the motor switch, a hand on the wheel, and I was swinging again. The wall spun until Rodman's face came into focus, framed in the door's small pane like the face of a fish staring in the visor of a diver's helmet--a bearded fish that smiled, distorted by the beveled glass, and flapped a vigorous fin. These are the results, mainly negative from his point of view, of Rodman's visit: (1) He did not persuade me--nor to do him justice did he try very hard--to come back and live with them or start arrangements for the retirement home in Menlo Park. (2) He did not persuade me to stop running around alone in my wheelchair. Sure I bumped my stump, showing off how mobile I am and how cunningly I have converted all stairs to ramps. Could he tell by my face how much I hurt, sitting there smiling and smiling, and wanting to take that poor sawed-off twitching lump of bones and flesh in my two hands and rock back and forth and grit my teeth and howl? What if he could? When I am not showing off to prove my competence to people who doubt it, I can go in this chair almost anywhere he can go on his legs, and just as

safely.(3) I am not going to install a walkie-talkie on the chair so if I get in trouble I can call the Highway Patrol. He had that all worked out, and pushed it. But the only emergency I ever have is that sometimes when I am far from the bathroom and too achy to get out of my chair to perform, my urine bottle overflows. It is called the Policeman's Friend, and the cops and I might have a pleasant time exchanging yarns about awkward times when we have been caught with it full, but I doubt that any cop would take it seriously as an emergency.(4) I am not made anxious about "getting like my father." Clearly they are afraid these things run in the family, which is the sort of acknowledgment that under other circumstances I would like Rodman to make to history. Sure my father had a queer unhappy life, and sure he stayed on and on here after the mine closed down, and finally got so addled that Ada and Ed Hawkes had to look after him as they would have looked after a willful and irresponsible child. Rodman all but asks, What if he came up here some day and found me talking to myself like Grandpa? But I could tell him I talk to myself all the time, into this microphone, and sort of like the company. He knows as well as I do that when I quit making even approximate sense he can get the support of the law to take me away, as I had to take Father.(5) I am not going to ask Ed and Ada to move in downstairs. They have lived all their life in the cottage down the hill, and they are as close as I need them.(6) I am not going to give up this business of Grandmother's papers and write a book on "somebody interesting." Rodman pretends to be afraid that out of sentiment I will waste what he flatteringly calls major talents (he disparages history but was touchingly proud when I won the Bancroft Prize) on a nobody. His notion of somebody interesting is numbingly vulgar. Having no historical sense, he can only think that history's interest must be "color." How about some Technicolor personality of the Northern Mines, about which I already know so much? Lola Montez, say, that wild girl from an Irish peat bog who became the mistress of half the celebrities of Europe, including Franz Liszt and Dumas, pre or fils or both, before taking up with King Ludwig I of Bavaria, who made her Countess of Landsfeld. And from there, in 1856, to San Francisco, where she danced the spider dance for miners and fortune hunters (No, Lola, no!) and from there to Grass Valley to live for two years with a tame bear who couldn't have been much of an improvement on Ludwig. That's Rodman's idea of history. Every fourth-rate antiquarian in the West has panned Lola's poor little gravel. My grandparents are a deep vein that has never been dug. They were people. I am sure Rodman knows nothing whatever about Grandfather, nothing about his inventiveness or his genius for having big ideas twenty years ahead of their time or his struggle to do something grand and humanly productive and be one of the builders of the West. I know that his taking the job as superintendent of the Zodiac was a kind of surrender, though I don't yet know the details. Rodman probably feels that that was the sort of job Grandfather bucked for all his life and finally made. He probably thinks of him as a lesser George Hearst, neither quite crooked enough nor quite successful enough to be interesting. But it is interesting that, apparently in an attempt to comprehend my present aberration, Rodman should have taken the trouble to read some of Grandmother's stories and look at some magazines containing her drawings. Characteristically he saw nothing in them. All full of pious renunciations, he says, everything covered up with Victorian antimacassars. He cited me her own remark that she wrote from the protected point of view, the woman's point of view, as evidence that she went through her life from inexperience to inexperience. Her pictures the same. If, as I assured him with quotations from the histories of American art, she was the best-known woman illustrator of her time, and the only woman who ever did anything significant about drawing the early West, how come nobody collects her? And woman illustrator, he repeats with good-humored condescension. Yet his name is always in the papers as a defender of disadvantaged minorities, and only last week he had his picture in the Chronicle in a Woman's Liberation Front picket line. Well, Grandmother, let me back out of this desk and turn around and look at you over there in your walnut frame next to the letters of people who wrote to you as a respected contemporary. Should I take an interest in you even if you were historical, white, a woman, and my grandmother? Did all your talents, and Grandfather's, and all the efforts of a long strenuous life go for no more than to produce Rodman and me, a sociologist and a cripple? Nothing in your life or art to teach a modern or one-legged man something? A Quaker lady of high principles, the wife of a not-very-successful engineer whom you supported through years of delayed hope, you lived in exile, wrote it, drew it--New Almaden, Santa Cruz, Leadville, Michoacan, the Snake River Valley, the deep quartz mines right under this house--and you stayed a cultural snob through it all. Even when you lived in a field camp in a canyon, your children had a governess, no less, unquestionably the only one in Idaho. The dream you had for your children was a dream of Eastern cultivation. Yet do you remember the letters you used to get from isolated miners and geologists and surveyors who had come across a copy of Century or Atlantic and seen their lives there, and wrote to ask how a lady of obvious refinement knew so much about

drifts, stopes, tipples, pumps, ores, assays, mining law, claim jumpers, underground surveying, and other matters? Remember the one who wanted to know where you learned to handle so casually a technical term like "angle of repose"? I suppose you replied, "By living with an engineer." But you were too alert to the figurative possibilities of words not to see the phrase as descriptive of human as well as detrital rest. As you said, it was too good for mere dirt; you tried to apply it to your own wandering and uneasy life. It is the angle I am aiming for myself, and I don't mean the rigid angle at which I rest in this chair. I wonder if you ever reached it. There was a time up there in Idaho when everything was wrong; your husband's career, your marriage, your sense of yourself, your confidence, all came unglued together. Did you come down out of that into some restful 30 angle and live happily ever after? When you died at ninety-one, the New York Times obituary spoke of you as a Western woman, a Western writer and artist. Would you have accepted the label? Or did you cling forever to the sentiment you wrote to Augusta Hudson from the bottom of failure in Boise Canyon--that not even Henry James's expatriates were so exiled as you? We shared this house all the years of my childhood, and a good many summers afterward. Was the quiet I always felt in you really repose? I wish I thought so. It is one of the questions I want the papers to answer. If Henry Adams, whom you knew slightly, could make a theory of history by applying the second law of thermodynamics to human affairs, I ought to be entitled to base one on the angle of repose, and may yet. There is another physical law that teases me, too: the Doppler Effect. The sound of anything coming at you--a train, say, or the future--has a higher pitch than the sound of the same thing going away. If you have perfect pitch and a head for mathematics you can compute the speed of the object by the interval between its arriving and departing sounds. I have neither perfect pitch nor a head for mathematics, and anyway who wants to compute the speed of history? Like all falling bodies, it constantly accelerates. But I would like to hear your life as you heard it, coming at you, instead of hearing it as I do, a sober sound of expectations reduced, desires blunted, hopes deferred or abandoned, chances lost, defeats accepted, griefs borne. I don't find your life uninteresting, as Rodman does. I would like to hear it as it sounded while it was passing. Having no future of my own, why shouldn't I look forward to yours? You yearned backward a good part of your life, and that produced another sort of Doppler Effect. Even while you paid attention to what you must do today and tomorrow, you heard the receding sound of what you had relinquished. It came to you secondhand in the letters of Augusta Hudson. You lived vicariously in her, dined with the literary great, visited La Farge at Newport, lunched at the White House, toured Italy and the Holy Land. The daily gorgeousness of Augusta's social obligations lighted your strenuous poverty in the way you liked to illuminate your drawings, with a wash of light from above and to one side. Witness this letter I was just reading, written when Augusta was moving into her Stanford White Mansion on Staten Island: "Before you put a fire in your new fireplace, gather up your children and have them stand in it, looking up, and then, with the light falling on them so, paint them and send them to me." Where was Grandmother living when she had that sentimental whim? In a dugout in Boise Canyon. Except for her marriage she would have been a respected part of what, marrying whom she did, she had to leave behind. I think her love for my grandfather, however real, was always somewhat unwilling. She must unconsciously have agreed with his judgment that she was higher and finer than he. I wonder if there was some moment when she fully comprehended and appreciated him? I wonder if there was a time when the East and all that Edith Wharton gentility had been lived out of her as surely as the cells of her girlhood had been replaced in her body? Not that she made a fetish of her gifts, or held herself above anyone. She plunged into things with energy, she was never afraid of work. John Greenleaf Whittier said she was the only girl he knew who could conduct a serious discussion of the latest North American while scrubbing her mother's floor. She endured, and even enjoyed, considerable physical hardship on occasion. In Leadville she kept house in a one-room cabin, and in that one room presided over talk that she insisted (and she would have known) was as good as the best in America. All her life she loved conversation, discussion, company. When I was a child we were always being visited by people like the president of Yale College and the American Ambassador to Japan. They sat on the piazza and talked with Grandmother while Grandfather listened, working quietly among his roses. But that was after she had reached, or appeared to have reached, the angle of repose. I can remember her as Susan Burling Ward, an old lady. It is harder to imagine her as Susan Burling, a girl, before the West and all the West implied had happened to her. Ever since Ada left me eating supper, and went home to get supper for Ed, I have been looking through the papers covering her early years. Among them is an article that Augusta wrote, sometime after 1900, for a magazine called *The Booklover*. It is as good a thing to start with as any. Botanists tell us that the blossom is an evolution of the leaf--but they cannot say just why that particular bud should take from the same air and sunshine a fairer

substance, a deeper color, a more permanent existence, and become something at which each passerby pauses, and goes on his way happier for the sight. Why on the sturdy stem of farmers and merchants should one girl blossom into a storyteller in pencil and in words? Susan Burling comes from a line of farmers, on the father's side, who have lived at Milton on the Hudson for many generations; on the mother's side from the Mannings, merchants; but on both sides members of the Society of Friends. Growing up the youngest and darling of the family, always surrounded by the atmosphere of love and duty where harsh words and looks were unknown, she gained a certain discipline of independence by being sent to New York to study art. She

was still a very young girl, having only gone through a high school in Poughkeepsie where she had distinguished herself in mathematics. She had from babyhood tried to draw, and the little compositions of her twelfth year have quite an idea of "placing" and story. The School of Design for Women at the Cooper Institute was the only place, at that time, where anything approaching an art education could be had for a girl. The Academy of Design schools were hedged about by all sorts of restraints, and the Art Students' League was not yet in existence. It was here that I first saw her--very youthful in figure, delicate yet full of vigor. She rode well; an accomplishment that stood her in good stead in Mexico and the West, where indeed no one is really respected who cannot manage a horse. She skated on her little feet like a swallow flying, and danced with the same grace and lightness. She could outskate and outdance us all. And that's enough.

Skating, dancing. It tires me to think of all that young vitality, and makes me unaccountably sad to look at her there on the wall, an old woman who has given up vivacity for resignation. But still presenting the clean profile, the small neat cameo head, that her earliest pictures show, and lighted--I am sure she imposed this on the painter--by a dusky radiance from above and to one side. Despite the downcast eyes, there is something intractable about you, Grandmother, but I am too tired and sore to deal with it. I have been at this desk too long, and Rodman's visit was no help. Ada, come on, hurry up. I ache all over--neck, shoulders, back, wrists, stump. I want your key in the door, I will you to clatter my supper dishes into the sink and start laboring up the stairs. This house creaks and shifts in the dark. It is even older than I am, and nearly as warped, and it may ache as much. Come on, Ada, before I begin to think Rodman and Leah are right. Too long a day. I must never go this long again. Tomorrow, with the sun in the room, it will be better. Mornings, and maybe an hour or two in the evening, that's enough. Ada, come on, come on. Appear in that doorway. Let me hear your gravelly Cousin Jack voice. "Eh, Mister Ward, ain't you about ready for bed?" Mister Ward, she will say, not Lyman. Fifty years ago we used to play together, never quite with Grandmother's approval. What would she have said if she'd seen us with our pants down in the dusty loft of Attles' barn? But Ada never presumes on childhood acquaintance. None of the legendary Western democracy operated in our relations, only the democracy of childhood. Her grandfather worked for mine, and her father for my father, in this same old Zodiac whose mole holes riddle the hill under us (that's why the house has settled so crookedly). Three generations of Trevithicks and Hawkeses working for three generations of Wards. The West is not so new as some think. Bless God, she is six feet tall and strong as a man. She is cheerful, dependable, common.

She deals with my person and my problems as matter-of-factly as she would change a baby's diaper. I suppose I am her baby, as my father was in his last years. Does she wish all the Wards would die off and give her a rest, or would she be empty without one of us to look after? Does the sight of my nakedness trouble her when she undresses and bathes me? Is she given cold shivers by my stump? Turned to stone by my rigid Gorgon head? Does she think of me as an old friend, as poor Lyman, as that unlucky Mister Ward, as a grotesque, or simply as an object to be dealt with, like a caked saucepan? Whatever you think, come on, Ada. I need that bath and that bed and that bedtime bourbon. Whatever you think, I have learned to think nothing. I run by routine, I accept from hired women services that I would never have accepted from my wife before I became a grotesque. When you block the doorway with your bulk, and shuffle in on your bunioned arthritic feet making comfortable noises, my soul rushes out of me with gratitude. Already we have a comfortable rut, we go through habitual motions whose every stage is reassuring. While she starts the bath water I wheel my chair into the bedroom, just beside the bathroom door. We don't bother with the crutches. She helps her grotesque doll to stand up, and it clings to her while her gnarled hands, the end joints twisted almost at right angles, fumble with zippers and buttons. She has never complained of her arthritis to me--thinks it amounts to nothing beside mine. Grunting with effort she lifts me--she would say "hefts" me--off the chair's step, and I cling there, in pain as always, naked, helpless, while she flops a testing hand in the water. Then she returns and hefts her maimed doll bodily into the air until the last clothing falls from its foot, and lowers it with grunts and sighs into the tub. The water is so hot that it makes the cicatriced stump prickle and smart, but it must be that hot if it is to ease the aches away enough to permit sleep. Painfully she

wallows down on their knees and without diffidence soaps and rinses me all over. Her crooked fingers drag across the skin stiff as twigs. Her doll sits stiffly, pointed straight ahead at the fixtures that emerge from the wall. When she is finished she bends far over and guides its arms around her neck. Then she rears upward, and up it comes, naked and pink, her hairy baby, its stump bright red. Its dripping wets the front of her dress, its rigid head glares over her shoulder. Holding it, clucking and murmuring as she works, she towels it down as far as the knees, and then she takes it around the waist and tilts it upon her great bosom and rotates until its leg, bent to miss the tub's rim, can straighten down on the mat. Pressing it against her as intimate as husband, she towels the rest of it and eases it into the chair and wheels it to the bed. Another lift--the buttocks sink in softness. It sits there shivering in its damp towel until she comes with urine bottle and tube.

When I have attached them she checks the hookup with a casual tug. Now the pajamas, delicious to the chilling skin, and the ease backward until the body that has been upright too long is received by mattress and pillows. She sets the telephone close, she tucks up the covers. Finally she waddles over to the cabinet by the desk and gets the bottle and two glasses, and we have a comfortable nightcap together like cronies. Oh, hurry,

Ada Hawkes. I don't want to telephone. That would demonstrate something that I don't want demonstrated. My grandfather, long before your grandfather Trevithick knew him, before he put on weight and fell in love with flowers and learned to take his consolation from a lonely bottle, was an indefatigable worker. He often rode a horse a hundred miles a day, four hundred miles in a week, accepting the testing that such journeys implied. Despite bad eyes and migraines, he used sometimes to work all night on maps and reports. When he was making an underground survey of the New Almaden mine he stayed underground for twenty hours at a stretch. He would not understand, any more than my grandmother would, this weakness that yearns for a motherly bosom and a pair of warped gentle hands. "Best egg in the basket," he used to say of me when I was a small boy and wanted to help him plant and prune and prop and espalier his Burbank fruit freaks. I would like to be that kind of egg. I refer my actions to his standards even yet. If I were talking to anyone but myself I would have shut up long ago. Probably it's a mistake to complain even to myself. I won't do it. But oh, Ada, Ada, get over here, it's already past nine. And there, like a bell tardily ringing the hour, is her key in the lock downstairs. From Publishers Weekly This long, thoughtful novel about a retired historian who researches and writes about his pioneer grandparents garnered Stegner a Pulitzer Prize.

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