

美小说

NO ADAM IN EDEN

GRACE METALIOUS

AUTHOR OF PEYTON PLACE



NO ADAM IN EDEN

美小说

3232



By the same author in Pan Books

PEYTON PLACE

RETURN TO PEYTON PLACE

THE TIGHT WHITE COLLAR

CONDITIONS OF SALE

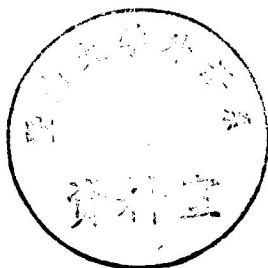
This book shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser. This book is published at a net price, and is supplied subject to the Publishers Association Standard Conditions of Sale registered under the Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1956.

1112-13 009131
Z7040

外文书库

NO ADAM IN EDEN

GRACE METALIOUS



PAN BOOKS LTD
LONDON AND SYDNEY

First published in UK 1964 by Frederick Muller Ltd.
This edition published 1966 by Pan Books Ltd.,
Cavaye Place, London SW10 9PG

ISBN 0 330 10489 6

2nd Printing 1974

© Grace Metalious, 1963

*All characters in this book are fictitious
and any resemblance to persons living or
dead is purely coincidental*

PRINTED AND BOUND IN ENGLAND BY
HAZELL WATSON AND VINEY LTD
AYLESBURY, BUCKS

This book is for the people
who have given me more happiness
than anyone else in the world

My husband, George Metalious

And my children:

Marsha and Edward Dupuis

Christopher 'Mike' Metalious

Cynthia 'Cindy' Metalious

Suzanne 'Susy' Roy

And the frosting on the cake, my grandson,
William Edward 'Billy' Dupuis

Book One

I

IT TOOK Armand Bergeron a long, long time to die and even then there was no dignity to his dying. Perhaps it was because he was still a relatively young man. He lay alone in the middle of the double bed that he had shared for over twelve years with his wife, Monique, and in his moments of lucidity he reflected sourly that the bed was no colder now than it had always been. It was a big bed and quite the most hideous Armand had ever seen in his life. It was made of golden oak and highly varnished. Monique liked things to shine and in her house everything made a reflection.

Shiny, thought Armand. Shiny and clean and antiseptic. Like Monique herself.

The bedroom smelled of disinfectant but underneath that there was the hint of vomit and blood which never quite went away in spite of Monique's scrubblings and airings.

Armand smiled deep inside himself. Last night – at least it seemed as if it had been only last night – Monique had come into the room. It was very late and Armand had thrown up again. She began to clean him and she talked aloud to herself.

'Pig,' she said. 'I should leave you to drown in your own filth.'

Armand kept his eyes closed so that she should not see the laughter there.

'Pig!'

She washed him and changed his nightshirt and all the while he made himself stay limp and heavy. And then

in her passion for cleanliness, she began to strip the bed. It was difficult to maintain the pretence of sleep while Monique worked, but Armand steeled himself. He did not really know which was the harder to do. To keep from moaning aloud under his wife's rough handling as she yanked at one sheet and put another in its place, rolling him back and forth like a ball, or to keep from laughing like a madman at the sight of her blackly enraged eyes and her rigid mouth.

But at last she was finished. She aired the room again and the cold wind coming through the window lashed at Armand until he thought that surely now a shiver would betray his wakefulness. Yet once Monique had finished her cleaning of him she did not even glance his way again. She went back and forth from the bedroom to the bathroom carrying her basins and cloths and then she took a final look round. She lowered the window a little, but it was still open a good six inches, letting in the miserable cold of February, when she clicked off the light and slammed the door behind her.

It was then that Armand stopped laughing to himself.

He hadn't fooled Monique for a minute, he realized. She knew that he had been awake and now she had left him for the night to freeze alone in bed. She had always known how he hated an open window during the winter.

Armand did not know how long he lay there shivering, the pain like hot coals in his belly, but he knew that he must have groaned and cried out. The bedroom door opened so silently that he did not even realize it was open until he saw the shaft of light from the hallway. A little figure in a white nightgown crept towards the window and closed it.

Armand could smile again now, he could let it show. The little figure was his daughter, Angelique, and she was the only human being Armand loved or had ever loved for many, many years.

'*Mon ange,*' he murmured and the child came and stood next to the bed. With a great effort, Armand moved his hand and Angelique took it in both of hers.

'Mon petit ange du ciel,' he whispered.

But his voice made no sound. Only his lips moved. The child put his cold hand against her cheek.

'Papa. Papa,' she said.

He felt hot tears on his skin.

'Non, non, ma petite,' he said. 'You must not cry for me.'

Angelique stood quietly, holding his hand for a long time until she felt him growing warmer. Then she kissed his fingers and lowered the hand gently to his side.

The door closed without a sound and the room was dark again. Armand let himself drift into the place between sleep and non-sleep. His whole body was warmer now and the pain not quite so sharp. Fragments of sound seemed to come to him from the corners of the room, and beneath his closed eyelids bits of forgotten pictures came into focus. This phenomenon had been happening to him more and more frequently of late and tonight he almost welcomed it.

'Tonight I will look at the pretty ones only,' he told himself. *'Tonight I will not listen to any ugliness nor look at anything unbeautiful.'*

But, he realized, it was not always as easy as all that. Sometimes the sounds and pictures seemed to have a life all their own and in the end they usually did what they pleased with him.

Armand Bergeron had been born and raised on a farm in the southern part of the province of Quebec, Canada, and until he was fifteen years old he had not really believed that a world existed beyond the nearest village of Sainte Thérèse. Oh, he knew the world was there all right because his grandfather, Zenophile, subscribed to the newspapers from Montreal and sometimes strangers passed through the village of Sainte Thérèse on their way to one pursuit or another on the Saint Lawrence River. But Armand was not particularly interested in newspapers and strangers were mostly a matter of curiosity and good for only a moment or two of idle speculation. The village, the

farm, the neighbours and, most of all, his own family were his life, and until he was fifteen these were all he wanted or needed from the world.

Armand was the seventh-born child in a family of six boys and five girls and they were a big, brawling, loud-mouthed group. There was a saying in the village that everything about the Bergerons was big. Not that there was anything unusual in a French-Canadian family producing eleven children. There were the Paquettes, on the next farm down the river from the Bergerons, who had fourteen children and in Sainte Thérèse there were the Turcottes. Marie Rose Turcotte had borne seventeen children before Armand Bergeron was born and before she reached the menopause at the age of fifty-one she had achieved a grand total of twenty-two little Turcottes.

No, it was not in the size of the family that the Bergerons were big. It was in other ways. Old Zenophile Bergeron was six feet tall and his son, Alcide, topped him. So did his grandsons, Edouard, Pierre, Christian, Jacques, Armand and Antoine, although the old man hated like hell to admit it. All the Bergeron men had enormous shoulders and arms knotted with muscle. They had legs and thighs like tree trunks and their strength was the strength of bulls. It was quite a sight to see them all trooping into church on a Sunday morning.

Heaven only knew, said the people of Sainte Thérèse, that the church was small enough to begin with but when the Bergerons came in everybody and everything in the building was dwarfed into insignificance.

The Bergerons were impressive enough in church but that was nothing compared to when all of them stood up in the Town Hall to dance a quadrille at the Saturday night socials. Then the whole building quivered to its very foundations and everybody had to laugh at the sight of the eight big men who laughed and clapped and yet were strangely graceful as they moved.

It was a terrible thing to boast, said the people of Sainte Thérèse, but after all the truth was the truth, and the truth of the matter was that there were no handsomer,

stronger men anywhere. Not even in Montreal were there men like the Bergerons. No, not in Montreal or Quebec City or the whole province.

In addition to their size and strength, Bergeron men had big voices. They shouted, laughed and cursed in tones that people said could be heard all the way to Ottawa. It was a town legend that once when the youngest son, Antoine, had broken his leg while hunting in the forest, it had been his lungs that saved him.

Antoine had gone out with his gun early in the afternoon. There was a light snow falling and he had hoped to find a few deer tracks. No one had worried about him until after the snow had turned into a blizzard and darkness fell.

'I have a bad feeling,' Berthe finally said to her husband, Alcide. 'You must take your father and the boys and go to find Antoine.'

'Ah, *ma petite*, you worry yourself over nothing,' Alcide had answered.

Berthe Bergeron stood five feet ten inches tall in her bare feet but from the day he had begun to court her Alcide had always called her '*ma petite*'.

Now she folded her arms over her big, soft bosom and stood straight and strong in front of the iron cooking stove. 'Not one mouthful of food for any one of you until you come back with Antoine. I have a bad feeling.'

Alcide threw back his big, dark head and laughed. Then he went to her and picked her up by the elbows, just as if she did not weigh over twelve stone. He kissed her firmly on the mouth and gave her a resounding smack on the behind.

'And what kind of a feeling does this give you, *ma petite*?' he had asked as he pressed her hand against his crotch. 'Eh, tell me that, *ma petite*. What kind of feeling?'

Berthe pushed him away.

'You are a dirty old man, Alcide Bergeron. Performing like a young stallion at your age.' But she had to smile at him and for a moment the frown of worry was gone from her face.

'Ah, so it is a good feeling, eh?' he said and began to play with one of her breasts. He could feel her nipple hardening at once through her rough cotton dress.

'Go, Alcide,' she said and moved away from his touch. 'At once now, I mean it. I am afraid for Antoine.'

'Ah, you are like an American,' said Alcide in mock disgust. 'You are like one of those skinny sticks from the States with the look of ice on your face.'

But he called his father and his sons and they all went out to look for Antoine.

The snow was very deep now and still falling in a heavy, slanting curtain. The lanterns that the men carried seemed to cast no more light than a single candle as they made their way through the woods, and after an hour even Alcide began to feel a certain uneasiness. They had gone more than five miles into the woods before they heard Antoine shouting.

'He is over this way,' Alcide called to the others and they moved towards the voice.

They found Antoine half covered with snow, his right leg twisted under him and his face scarlet with rage.

'Goddam son of a bitch,' cursed Antoine methodically as he struggled to move himself. 'Goddam son of a whore.'

Alcide stood over his youngest son and began to laugh and in a second the others joined him.

'My poor fool,' roared old Zenophile. 'Why are you lying there screaming like a woman with your gun still in your hand? You could have let go with one shot and we would have heard you an hour ago.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Edouard. 'Do tell us, little brother, why you are lying there in the snow like that?'

'You son of a bitch,' shouted Antoine. 'It's my bloody leg. Now give me a hand before I blow your goddam head off.'

'Ah,' said Pierre. 'It is a good thing that Maman cannot hear her baby talk in such a fashion. She would take down his pants and spank his bottom for sure.'

'Just wait, Pierre,' yelled Antoine. 'Just wait until I can

stand up and I'll kick the living daylights out of you.'

'Naughty, naughty,' said Armand.

They hoisted Antoine up on their shoulders, and laughing and singing dirty songs, they carried him home.

In the meantime, Berthe, with her 'bad feeling' going strong, had sent to Sainte Thérèse for the doctor, and as it turned out it was well that she had, for Antoine's leg was broken in two places.

'Well, you're lucky it's no worse,' Dr Girard said. 'The way this bunch of roughnecks brought him in here, it is a miracle the whole leg is not smashed to bits.'

The doctor had set the leg while Antoine kept up a steady stream of cursing for which his mother, this once, did not reprimand him. When it was done, Berthe dished up the supper and afterwards the men sat round the warm kitchen and got drunk.

Years later, as he lay there dying in a cold, clean bed in a small town in New Hampshire, Armand Bergeron tried to remember if the day his brother broke his leg had been the first time he had ever got drunk.

'Could it have been that day?' he asked himself. 'No, certainly, that could not have been the day.'

He did not really know when the drinking had started. In fact, when he stopped to think of it he couldn't remember a time when he had not been a drinker. But then so had his father and his grandfather and his brothers and no harm had ever come to any of them. Every year the making of wine from grapes and dandelions and berries had been an integral part of the life of his family. The women canned the fruits and vegetables and smoked and salted the meats, while Armand and his brothers, together with their father and grandfather, attended to the making of the wine. They also made beer and cider and whisky from potatoes and corn, and brandy from cherries and apricots. Alcohol had always been there, as much a part of the Bergeron table as milk and butter and meat.

It was good to look forward to that first dark, foaming bottle of beer after a hot, hard day in the fields. And at the evening meal Armand had always extended his glass

with the others when his mother said, 'Here. A bit more wine to wash down the last of your meat.'

In the village of Sainte Thérèse there was one saloon. It was called 'Le Pechoir' and it was here that the men from the farms and the town congregated on Saturday nights both before and after the weekly dance at the Town Hall.

Everybody got drunk on Saturday night, Armand remembered. Ah, but what marvellous singing and joking and fighting! Never had there been fights in the whole world to match the brawls that started at 'Le Pechoir' on a Saturday night. And if there were cuts and bruises and big heads the next morning at Mass, the night before had made it well worth while.

All these years later it seemed to Armand that he could still feel the lump on the back of his head where one of the Cormier boys had once smashed him with a chair. But that one had got his in the end. Armand had knocked him out cold and it had taken three men to carry him home.

Ah, those were sweet times, Armand thought. But at once the happy memory vanished and he remembered now the doctor who came to see him every day, sometimes twice a day. The doctor who had warned him years ago that drink was going to kill him.

The old fool, thought Armand. He never knows what the hell he's talking about anyway.

Old Dr Southworth didn't mind a taste of the bottle himself and that was a fact. And after that, how could one expect a dried-up old Yankee like Southworth to understand about the juices that ran through the blood of a French-Canadian like Armand Bergeron?

No, it would take a lot more than a little drinking to kill a Bergeron. Why, just look at old Zenophile. Now there was a man. Old Zenophile had swilled liquor like a pig and he had died at the age of ninety-one. And he hadn't died of liquor either. He had died of influenza, which he had picked up on a trip to Montreal. And what about Alcide, who could drink even more than Zeno-

phile? Liquor certainly hadn't killed him. He'd drunk like a fish all his life and had been killed at the age of seventy-six while cutting down a bothersome maple tree. The damned tree had fallen on him and Alcide had died of a broken neck. Not of liquor. No. Old Dr Southworth just didn't know what the hell he was talking about.

On Armand's fifteenth birthday, he remembered, which fell on the third of August in 1914, his grandfather had come home from Sainte Thérèse with the Montreal newspapers. Zenophile had sat quite still at the kitchen table while Berthe poured him out a cup of tea, strong tea.

The old man drank and then set his cup down very gently.

'France is at war with Germany,' he said at last.

For a long time no one had spoken and then Alcide had gone to stand by his father's chair. He had put one of his big hands on Zenophile's shoulder.

'You said it would come, Papa,' Alcide said. 'For months now you have been saying it.'

'Yes,' replied Zenophile. 'I said it, but all the while I was hoping it would not be so.'

Berthe Bergeron had not spoken but had gone to stand at one of the kitchen windows which overlooked the fields. It would be the time of harvest in a few weeks and the land was green and gold with promise. The fields promised food and warmth for her family, money for the new parlour curtains and a beautiful wedding for her daughter, Aurelie, who was going to marry Omer Cormier after the crops were in. She turned and looked at her husband and her father-in-law.

'It has nothing to do with us,' she had said at last.

Zenophile turned to her and it seemed to Armand, who was watching from across the table, that in the space of a few hours his grandfather had turned into an old man.

'It has everything to do with us,' said Zenophile. 'With me and with Alcide and with the boys. And with you, Berthe. And with your daughters. The blood that runs through your veins is as French as the blood in mine.'

'No,' Berthe had cried and to Armand it seemed as if

the words had been torn from her mouth. 'It is not true, Papa. I was born here. Not ten miles from this very house. I am a Canadian, not a Frenchwoman. I am a Canadian and therefore I am English, and England is not at war.'

Zenophile had looked away from her.

'Wait until tomorrow, Berthe,' he said. 'Tomorrow or the day after. Then England, too, will be at war.'

'And even then it will have nothing to do with us,' said Berthe and turned away to look out of the window again at the fruitful fields.

'What do you want us to do, Papa?' asked Alcide.

Berthe almost ran from the window to put her hand on Alcide's arm. 'I tell you it has nothing to do with us, Alcide,' she said and for the first time in his life Armand saw tears in his mother's eyes.

'What can it matter to us?' she demanded. 'France and England are thousands of miles away. Across the ocean. Let the war stay there. Let it stay far away from you and me and the children.'

Alcide pulled away from her.

'That's enough, Berthe,' he said roughly. 'This is a decision that will remain with Papa.'

'No,' she cried. 'The decision is not up to Papa. You are not married to Papa and he is not the father of my children. This is my home and you and the children belong to me and I will not listen to any more talk of war.'

'This was Papa's home long before it was yours,' shouted Alcide. 'Now I say that you have spoken enough and I want you to be quiet.'

Zenophile went to Berthe and put his arm around her shoulder.

'No, Alcide,' he had said gently. 'Berthe is right. This is her home. It has been hers since the day you brought her here as your bride and she has done well for you. She has given you strong sons and beautiful daughters and she has shown me nothing but love and respect.' He turned her to face him. 'But, Berthe, France is my country. I was born there and I married there and I cannot help but feel more French than English.'