

THOMAS B. AVON/18218/\$1.50

COSTAIN

MASTER OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL



BELOW THE SALT

The fascinating story of a lost princess
and a man who travelled through history

AGUILA PUBLIC LIBRARY

P. O. BOX

AGUILA, ARIZONA 85320

NOV 10 1983

JAN 18 1985 *Ke*

**AN AMAZING PICTURE SPREAD OUT
ON A TEN ACRE CANVAS . . .**

“... *Below the Salt* combines the charm of a modern love idyll with a tremendous job of historical research for background. The narrative, providing a dazzling display of literary virtuosity in both craftsmanship and writing style, is at one and the same time absorbingly interesting as a fictional experience and meaningful as a social commentary.”

Chicago Tribune

“Fanciful and entertaining reading.”

New York Herald Tribune

“A superb piece of historical and period recreation, with full panoply of 12th century England and parts of the Continent, and a convincing picture of the events and personalities that led up to the Magna Carta and Runnymede.”

Kirkus Reviews

Also by Thomas B. Costain

THE BLACK ROSE	17715	\$1.50
THE SILVER CHALICE	17996	\$1.50

Where better paperbacks are sold, or directly from the publisher. Include 15¢ per copy for mailing; allow three weeks for delivery.

Avon Books, Mail Order Dept., 250 West 55th Street,
New York, N.Y. 10019

THOMAS B.
COSTAIN

BELOW THE SALT



AVON

PUBLISHERS OF BARD, CAMELOT, DISCUS, EQUINOX AND FLARE BOOKS

AVON BOOKS

A division of
The Hearst Corporation
959 Eighth Avenue
New York, New York 10019

Copyright © 1957 by Thomas B. Costain.
Published by arrangement with Doubleday and Company, Inc.
Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number: 56-10757.

All rights reserved, which includes the right
to reproduce this book or portions thereof in
any form whatsoever. For information address
Doubleday and Company, Inc.,
277 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10017.

First Avon Printing, February, 1974

AVON TRADEMARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. AND
FOREIGN COUNTRIES, REGISTERED TRADEMARK—
MARCA REGISTRADA, HECHO EN CHICAGO, U.S.A.

Printed in the U.S.A.

BOOK ONE

Chapter I

1

JOHN FORADAY had always been quiet and imaginative, and this was the only fault his grandmother had found in him.

"Come, John," she would say in her gentle voice. "This won't do, you know. You should get out and play with other boys more. And you should read the newspaper and—well, take an interest in things. You won't get to be a successful businessman this way."

She had been right about it, of course. He had to make a good businessman of himself. It was the goal he must attain, even though at times he had grave misgivings about it. He must not disappoint his grandmother.

One morning he was sitting at the bare table where he read proof at the printing plant of McMurray and Erbank. The phone rang and Bill Sands, who shared his labors, took the call. He handed the instrument over the table. "Yours," he said.

"Hello," said John, rather puzzled that anyone should be calling him at such an hour; or at any hour, for that matter.

"Is this Mr. Foraday?" asked a feminine voice.

"Yes."

"Mr. Foraday, will you come to the office of Mr. Ross, of Ross, Cullom and Calvin, at two o'clock this afternoon?"

John stammered in surprise. Why should Mr. Christopher Carver Ross, the oldest and most esteemed lawyer in the city, want to see him? His life was not complicated enough to involve him in any legal difficulties. After spending the day at the printing plant he would go directly home to the plain dinner Mrs. Groupy would have ready for him and the whole evening would be devoted to the manuscript of his novel. He had little enough time for reading, none for recreations, and because of the austerity of this daily routine, no friends.

The call from the old lawyer's office, he said to himself, must have to do with his grandmother's affairs.

"I can be there," he said, "if Mr. Erbank gives me permission. We're very busy here right now."

"Please tell Mr. Erbank," said the voice at the other end of the line, "that Mr. Ross says it is important. Believe me, Mr. Foraday, it is *very* important."

"Then I expect it can be arranged. I'll be at your offices at two. Thank you, ma'am."

"What's all this about?" demanded Bill Sands, looking at him suspiciously. "Damned if I ever remember you getting a phone call before. Why this sudden mad rush of popularity? Some dame trying to date you up?"

"I'm to go to the office of Mr. Christopher Ross at two o'clock. I can't understand why."

"Must be a mistake. Meant for some other John Foraday. Except there isn't another!"

John had never discussed with his co-laborer the fact that his grandmother had been Lucy Congdon, who had inherited the once great Congdon hat business from her father. It would have seemed pure swank on his part; and anyway it had all been so long ago, his being brought back from Chicago to Crosswich as a boy when his father and mother had died within a week of each other, and after his grandfather, Irvin Byron Beal, had somehow succeeded in involving the Congdon factories and the Congdon retail stores in bankruptcy. His grandfather had died soon after and he had been raised by his gentle and proud grandmother, in the most straitened circumstances and in complete seclusion. The relationship between them had been such a happy one that he could not bring himself to speak of this phase of his life to anyone, particularly since her death two years before. He did not speculate any further, therefore, on the possible explanation of his appointment, for the benefit of Mr. Sands.

He went at once to the office of the general manager of the plant and made his request for as long an absence that afternoon as might be needed.

"You're to go to the office of C. C. Ross?" Mr. Erbank frowned in surprise. "Now what in hell for? To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Ross never has anything to do with clients except his old ones, or perhaps people he's known all his life. If I was to ask him to handle our legal affairs, he'd be insulted. What can he want with you?"

"I've no idea, Mr. Erbank. The call was from his secretary, I suppose."

"Old Liz Candee. She's been with him for thirty years. You'll find, Foraday, that a call at the offices of C. C. Ross is kind of social as well as business. He'll offer you the choice of a drink or a cup of tea. Take the tea. Old Liz Candee spends more time lugging in drinks and dishing up tea than she does typing letters." The head of the printing plant gave a nod as though light had suddenly come to him. "I know what it is. It'll be about your grandmother. Old C.C. knew her. I wouldn't be surprised if he knew her quite well."

"I can't say," said John. "My grandmother seldom mentioned any of her old friends."

"Be there on time," admonished Erbank. "C.C. is a stickler for punctuality."

He was on time for the appointment. At one minute before the hour he presented himself at the small reception grating at the offices of Ross, Cullom and Calvin. Miss Elizabeth Candee admitted him with a friendly smile.

"I saw your grandmother often, Mr. Foraday," she said. "Years ago, of course. You take after her a lot. Of course your hair is real honest-to-goodness red and hers was more golden—when she was young, I mean. But you do look like her. Mr. Ross is ready for you."

The dean of the legal profession in Crosswich was sitting in a creaky swivel chair behind a desk heaped high with papers. The room might be untidy but he himself was quite impeccable in a neatly pressed suit of navy-blue raw silk. He swung around and looked sharply at his visitor.

"I see you're a Congdon," he said. "Nothing of the Beals or the Foradays in you. How does it happen you are working in that plant? I would have expected you to be at college."

"I was in my sophomore year at Harvard when my grandmother died, sir," said John, rather resentful of the need to mention the circumstances in which he had been left. "I couldn't finish because it was necessary for me to earn my living."

"You must forgive me, my boy, for bringing the matter up." The old lawyer looked quite disturbed. "I assure you I had no idea how things stood. I knew your grandmother very well when we were both young but I saw her infrequently after her marriage to your grandfa-

ther. After his death she retired into seclusion so determinedly that I never saw her again. To my great regret, young sir." He sighed, as old men often do when their thoughts turn to the past. "But now, since you have been so kind as to come here today, I think we should get to business. Mr. Jacob Samuel Lynch, sitting over there in the corner, is the one who wants to talk with you. He comes from far out in the West. Move your chair up, Jake, and start to work."

John had noticed the presence of a third person in the room when he first entered, a man with a thin mustache curled up at the ends and a pleasant gray eye, who was sitting near the window. The latter maneuvered himself out of the chair and into a standing position and came over to shake hands.

"Young man, this is a pleasure," said Mr. Lynch in a drawling voice. "I've come to ask you some questions. Many questions. On behalf of a client. I hope you won't mind."

John looked at the lawyer before replying, as though seeking guidance. Mr. Ross gave him a reassuring nod.

"I won't mind," said John. "But—may I ask one question first? I would like to know who your client is."

The Westerner looked at Mr. Ross in turn. They both seemed to ponder the request and then gave each other an acquiescent nod.

"Why not?" said the Westerner. "There's nothing hush-hush about this, although Dick did want to stay strictly in the background. Well, young man, my principal in this matter is Richard Jeffrey O'Rawn."

John's eyes opened wide with surprise. "Do you mean Senator O'Rawn?"

"Yes, Senator O'Rawn himself. The great political leader from the wide-open spaces of the West. Who came so close, by the way, to being nominated for the presidency last time."

"But—but why does he want to know about me? What kind of questions are you going to ask?"

"Suppose we begin to ask 'em? You'll find out best that way."

John knew little about the famous senator except that he was still noted for the fire and humor of his speeches, although now an old man, and that he had made a great fortune in Western lands and cattle.

"I'll try to answer whatever you ask me," he said.

"Do you wish me to withdraw, Jake?" asked the lawyer.

"Of course not. On the contrary, I'll appreciate it if you'll draw a hand and sit in. You may be able to help the boy with some of his answers."

Christopher Carver Ross gave John another reassuring smile. "Nothing to be disturbed about, you know," he said. "Mr. Lynch isn't an officer of the law. I rather suspect, although he hasn't confided in me, that his purpose in coming here is a friendly one. Even that it may result in some benefit to you."

"Could, sure enough," said the Westerner.

Mr. Lynch began then to question John about his grandparents, the circumstances which had brought him back to live with his grandmother, his own likes and dislikes, his habits, and finally about his ideas for the future.

"Would you say that you are ambitious?" he asked.

John did not answer at once. "Yes, I suppose I am," he said finally. "There's some doubt as to what I'll try to do with myself. My grandmother wanted me to become a businessman and put the Congdon hat back on the market. I think it was the one regret she had at dying that she wouldn't see me succeed in doing it. She—she took the failure very hard. As though it had been her fault. But I must be honest and say that I myself have a quite different ambition."

"I think I must have been badly informed at the time of the failure," declared Mr. Ross. "I was of the opinion then that the loss of the business didn't seriously affect the private fortune her father had left her."

John hesitated. "It did, sir. She was left with very little indeed. My grandfather had been looking after her investments as well as the business and it seemed he had made—well, rather a hash of them."

"I got word of that later," said the lawyer. "But I still didn't suspect the full truth. The Congdon fortune had always seemed such a gigantic thing. Like the Rock of Gibraltar. I'm sure all of Lucy's old friends thought she could get along on what was left."

"That was what she wanted them to think, sir. I believe she kind of—of fostered the idea."

"Do you care to express an opinion of your grandfather?" asked the lawyer.

John shook his head at once. "No, sir. I never heard my grandmother say anything about him. Anything—well,

derogatory. It wouldn't be right for me to express an opinion, sir."

"Well," said the Westerner, "you seem to have been left with a rather tall order. How do you propose to go about it?"

John gave his head a doubtful shake. "I really don't know, sir. Since I've been in the printing business at McMurray and Erbank's, I've been keeping my eyes open to see how things are done. I'm afraid it's something I'll never understand. I've just about reached the conclusion that I'm not cut out for a businessman."

"In that respect," said old Mr. Ross to himself, "you're the exact opposite of your grandfather, Mr. Irvin Byron Beal. That pretentious ass knew no more about business than an unborn babe but he was sure he could run Congdon Hat better than the man who founded it."

"I don't see where I could make a start. I'm sure I'll never be able to save enough out of a salary to get things going again, although I'm trying. I suppose what I need is the capacity to go to men with money and sell them on putting up the capital for a new beginning. Well, that's beyond me. I wouldn't be able to sell the reception girl on letting me past the switchboard."

"You said you have another idea in your mind as to your future," prompted the Westerner.

John hesitated. This was difficult ground. He shrank from admitting to anyone that he hoped someday to be a novelist and that he was using every spare moment to fit himself for that work. He had even gone to considerable pains to keep Mrs. Groupy in the dark, avoiding any heading on the first page of his manuscript or even the mention of the word "chapter." He had dropped devious hints to her about setting down information on the Congdon business and the making of hats.

"It's true that I have another ambition," he acknowledged finally. His cheeks had flushed as red as his hair. "I—I hesitate to say what it is. You will think I'm very presumptuous. You see, I'm writing a novel."

"Well, I'm sure that's a laudable ambition," said the Westerner, although there was a suggestion of doubt in his voice. "It's a rather crowded field, isn't it? And I've heard you can't expect to make much money at it. I seldom read books myself."

"Your grandmother wrote verse when she was young," contributed Mr. Ross, with an encouraging bob of his

white-thatched head. "She never let any of her friends see what she wrote but it was rumored around once that a bit of it had been published in a magazine."

"She had a poem published," declared John proudly. "But not in a magazine. In a newspaper. A small country newspaper. I thought it was very good."

"Do you ride?" asked Mr. Lynch.

John shook his head. "No, sir, I don't. I've never had the chance."

"A drawback. But you're young enough to learn. Can you use a gun?"

"No, sir."

"Are you interested in national politics?"

"I read a great deal about what goes on in Washington. But I'm afraid my knowledge is superficial."

"A good word, young man. Do you know anything about the history of the West?"

"A great deal, sir. It's been almost a hobby with me."

The questioning took a new turn. "What was your father's name and where did he come from?"

"My father was the Reverend John Webster Foraday. He was born in Worcester."

"Yes, of course. Foraday Ale."

John shook his head. "He was connected with the ale people. But it was a distant connection. He was a Methodist minister."

"Tell me about your mother."

"My mother was lovely and good. She was small and dark. And always kind of gay. She laughed a lot."

"Did your father laugh a lot too?"

"Not as much. Once I heard my mother tell him he had no sense of humor but, of course, she didn't mean it."

"Where did he get his education?"

"At Harvard. He was quite an athlete. The students called him 'King,' so I think he must have been popular."

"You smiled when you mentioned his nickname. Why?"

"Well, King Foraday, you see."

It was clear that Mr. Lynch did not see, for he went right on with the questioning. "Were you an athlete too?"

"Yes, but not in my father's class. I was a sprinter. I won the hundred-yard dash at high school."

"Which do you take after in temperament, your father or your mother?"

"My father, I think. Whenever I saw him in the pulpit, he looked very tall and sober. I think I'm the quiet type. I don't laugh very much but when I do I laugh out very loud."

"When do you feel so amused that you laugh out loud?"

"Well, I don't know. I do it often when I'm reading. I laughed out loud many times when I was reading *Huckleberry Finn*."

"I hear it's very funny. Haven't read it myself. Are you interested in girls?"

"Yes."

"With one in particular?"

"No, sir. I don't know any of them well enough for that."

"Then you are still fancy-free?"

"Oh yes, sir. Quite."

Miss Candee appeared in the doorway. She glanced inquiringly at her employer.

"It's time to refresh ourselves, gentlemen," said the old lawyer, taking his cue. "Jake, will you have a drink? Or would you prefer a cup of tea or coffee?"

The man from the West drew out a biscuit-thin watch and consulted the time. He shook his head. "I must catch the plane back this afternoon," he said. "There are a few things to attend to in town and I still have some questions to ask this young man. Every minute's going to count with me so I'm afraid I must say no to all three suggestions. Most regretfully, I assure you."

Mr. Ross looked at John. "Will you join me?"

"A cup of tea, if you please, sir," said John.

"Weak or strong?" asked the secretary.

"It really doesn't matter, thank you. We get it kind of hit and miss at home. I'm used to both ways."

The additional questions were asked while the tea was steeping. Mr. Lynch then got to his feet, shook hands with the old lawyer and with John, and made his departure, after retrieving a huge briefcase from behind the first chair he had occupied.

2

Nothing was said for a moment after the Westerner had left. Then Mr. Ross smiled at his young visitor and asked, "Consumed with curiosity?"

"Well—yes, sir, I am. It's been most unusual."

"I wish I could enlighten you. But I'm in the dark myself. Lynch dropped in out of the blue and asked me to make the appointment with you. He didn't volunteer much about his purpose and I didn't feel I could question him. He did tell me he was acting for Senator O'Rawn and that gave me a pretty broad ground for assumptions. Want to know what my guess is?"

"Yes, sir, I do. I haven't been able to make any guess myself."

"Well, young man, I'll have to go back a bit into the past. Lucy Congdon, your grandmother, was an unusually pretty and sweet girl, in addition to being an heiress. She had droves of suitors. I was one. Did you know that?"

John shook his head. "No, sir, I didn't."

"I was never one of the front runners. Lucy liked me but I think she never regarded me as anything more than a faithful friend. But with Dick O'Rawn it was different. He met her at a dance in Boston and he started right in to sweep her off her feet. They were engaged in no time at all and I could see that Lucy was very happy. All the local swains were a pretty sad lot when it was announced. Irv Beal was one of the hardest hit because he had been sure he was first in line. I was a junior partner here at the time—quite junior, in fact—and it happened I had to go up to see Mr. Congdon with some papers for him to sign the morning that the announcement came out in the newspaper. The old man looked at me and said: 'You make me sick, the whole caboodle of you. Letting this outsider step in and cut you all out. I have nothing against young Mr. O'Rawn except that he'll take my Lucy away to the West. It would have suited me if she had picked one of you because then she would have lived here. I didn't want any young Lochinvar carrying her off to the other side of the world. For a time, Chris, I was pinning my hopes on you.' I was feeling so unhappy about it that I suppose I showed how I felt. 'I never had a chance, sir,' I said. 'Lucy couldn't see me with a telescope.' 'Well,' he said, 'I have one consolation. She didn't take that Beal squirt.' "

Miss Candee brought in the tea with a plate of sponge-cakes thickly covered with white icing. The first swallow seemed to have a reviving effect on the old lawyer. He sighed deeply and resumed his narrative.

"Well, the wedding day was set. About a month before

the date, Dick O'Rawn blew in from the West. It had taken him four days by train to reach Crosswich and those who saw him at the station said he looked pale and unhappy. They thought this was the result of the trip. But it wasn't the trip. He saw Lucy and took the first train back. The news gradually seeped out that the engagement had been broken. I didn't see Lucy myself but I heard she was holding her head high and saying nothing about what had happened. Her father was reported to have said at the Crosswich Club that if he had not been out of town the day Dick O'Rawn arrived that young Irishman would have gone to the hospital instead of to the station to catch his train back."

The old lawyer finished his cup of tea and his sponge-cake. He drew an even deeper sigh.

"Inside of a year Lucy married Irv Beal. I was thunderstruck when I heard she had picked him." He swung around in his chair so he could face his visitor squarely. "Now, young John Foraday, I don't want to hurt your feelings. I don't want to destroy any illusions you may be holding about the man who became your grandfather. Were you fond of him?"

It was clear that John was reluctant to answer. He studied the willow pattern in the cup with a frown. "I don't want to say anything," he began, "that Grandmother wouldn't have wanted me to say. But I think I should be honest about it. I—I didn't like him much. He lived a short time only after I came to live with them. It wasn't long enough for me to get to know him very well. But I never liked the way he acted to Grandmother. He was supposed to have suffered a great blow—about the failure of the business—and his feelings had to be considered all the time. We had to be careful about everything we said. Grandmother cautioned me never to speak of business in his hearing and never to use the word 'hat' under any circumstances. I was just a boy at the time but I was very sure that the blow had fallen hardest on Grandmother and that it was *her* feelings we ought to be considering."

The lawyer nodded his head with great satisfaction. "Then I can say what I meant to. The trouble started with a stag dinner Irv Beal gave a month or so after Lucy's father died. She had gone to visit an aunt, one of her father's sisters, because she was feeling his death so deeply. It seemed odd to all of us that Beal was giving a