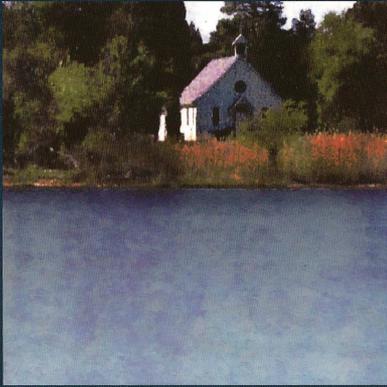


Cuckold Creek



Enis St. John

just a teaspoon of sherry, no more, and a few fresh parsley leaves, no stems, floating on top. It's really quite good."

The soup came as Lavinia described it, and they spooned and sipped at the thickish steaming liquid with attention and admiration.

"Wow," Charles said, "this is really superb."

"Thank you, Doctor; I do love my crab soup." Don said. He waved, and the waitress came over to the table.

"Let's have the white wine," he said, and she brought a bottle of wine in a stand and placed it by Don's elbow. He picked it out of the ice water, wrapped a white napkin around it, and looked at the label.

"I chose this wine myself, when we were in France a couple of years ago," Don said, "from a winery up in the high Beaujolais country. It's a Chateau de Lavernette from a little pit-stop in the hills called Leynes. The couple that own it raise Chardonnay grapes about 50 feet from the line that defines the region of Pouilly-Fuisse, but because it's not over the line, they have to call it white Beaujolais and sell it for half as much as they could get if it were Pouilly-Fuisse. I sampled it and had some cases shipped back. I keep one here at the Club." Don slipped a folding-knife from his pocket, cut the seal away from the bottle, and deftly twisted the corkscrew into the neck of the bottle. With a steady twist, he removed the cork, placed the cork and the knife on the table and poured the crystal clear wine that had a faint, slightly greenish tint.

Charles picked up the knife that Don Cynn used to open the bottle and held it in his hand. He ran his forefinger down the curve of its black ebony handle. He turned it over and looked closely at its spine. Charles was fascinated by it. He owned no weapons other than a hunting knife that had grown dull without use. But this was one of those