

C.M.:

From the Vineyard to the Sea

Now he knew that he would be counted among the vinedressers to whom the landowner sent his servants and his son to collect the fruit; if he was not the first one to pick up a stone, and his aim was as wayward as his heart, still he threw it with all his might, with predictable results—a crime translated into parable. Nor was it a complete surprise to learn that he would have followed the crowd to the governor's palace, demanding the release of another prisoner, raising his voice at the approach of the praetorian guards. He would have named names if he had been called to the inquiry (he sometimes wished he had), for he had built his house on a bluff where everything was permitted; its cornerstone was his conviction that he had done nothing wrong, harmed no one very seriously except himself; necessity was the flag he raised on his front lawn. To give up his accountant's peculiar methodology, his brother's escape route, his wife's dark secret—these disclosures were of a piece with his decision to melt down his silverware and hide the bricks in a well: a matter of self-preservation. At dusk he walked along the trail that curved around the bluff, his eyes fixed on the horizon, where a boat with black sails was coming about. He was muttering to himself, making a list of everyone for whom he had done a favor. And all for what?