The Loss Of Childhood Innocence In Montana 1948

David Hayden lived with his parents in Mercer County, Montana. A rather peaceful and quiet community, that has to deal with the harshness of the marginal land and frigid winter climate. To David, a social recluse, the rawness of the environs was a blessing as he never liked the town confinements. This traumatic story begins to erase his childhood innocence. It was in this idyllic (for David) setting, that he experienced a rather abrupt realisation of the existence of evil. Not just evil in general, but evil in the most omnipotent and confusing way. This realisation, lead David into an awareness that evil can connect with some strange ways and that there is potential evil in the best of us. This realization of the existence of evil was the pivotal point in the plot that has thrust the twelve year old David Haden into the complex and perplexing world of adults.

Late summer 148 was a happy and carefree time for young David. He enjoyed his boyhood pursuits. David loved to be with his horse, Nutty, on his grandfather's ranch where he could explore, hunt, he' killed more beer cans, soda bottles, road signs, and telephone pole insulators' than animals, and collect things important to a boy. David's mother Gail on the other hand was constantly worried about how her son is growing up. She felt it was her duty to civilise him. She thought that Montana is just too rough a place to bring up a child and longed for her tamer native North Dakota. This almost eutopic state of affairs was not going to last much longer and the change's would come from the most surprising direction.

Up to this point David has been the naïve twelve year old most children of his age are. Being completely oblivious to the sinister world of evil assured him of happy childhood, until now. The Haden's had a house keeper, Marie Little Soldier, an Indian woman of fleshy amplitude that made her look soft and strong at the same time. But now she was ill. It wasn't known at the time how significant her illness would be to the future of David and the whole Hayden family. Gail insisted that a doctor attends to Marie, but Marie was reluctant. Marie's illness and her demand for no doctor frighten David. But it wasn't so much no doctor at all, rather she did not want to see Dr Frank Hayden, David's much respected uncle. The reason for this was Frank's indecent assaults on Indian women. He would abuse his power and trust as a doctor to sexually molest young Indian women. Frank has indecently assaulted Marie before and seeing him again terrified Marie. So she spoke out to Gail. And that opened the proverbial can of worms.

Poor Gail now had the job of convincing Wes, her husband and the town's sheriff. David overheard the conversation between his parents and what a shock it was to him. As David listened he expected his father to explode but he only said, 'I wish you wouldn't have told the sheriff.' That comment summed up the dilemma Wes now had on his hands. David was getting bewildered by what was happening around him. However the biggest shock was still to come.

Frank Hayden, a doctor, a decorated war hero, his father's favourite son and cherished figure for David was about to commit the most despicable act a human being can commit, that is murder. That's right, Frank in order to save face decided to kill Marie so she wouldn't speak out. He thought he could blame the pneumonia that Marie was suffering from for her death. He might have got away with it. But David accidentally has seen him leaving his house while David was using Len the deputy sheriff's outhouse. David is shocked by the fact that anyone could do

what Frank has done. In frustration and confusion, David is longing for the freedom of going out and discharging his firearm. He shoots an innocent magpie, as he looks at the kill he feels extraordinary mixture of power and sadness, exhilaration and fear. The killing was David's way of releasing the tensions of the events up to now. He felt that 'sex and death, lust and violence, desire and degradation are there, deep in even a good heart's chambers'. This was David's pivotal experience in understanding adults and realising the concept of evil. Becoming aware that evil is in all of us no matter how good we are or appear to be. The consequence of these events was that Wes, Gail and David had to move out of Bentrock and go to live in Fargo, North Dakota.

The loss of childhood innocence was rather abrupt in David's case. The raise in awareness of the existence of evil and the associated emotions were perplexing for young David at the time. From the moment of Marie's reluctance to see a doctor, right up to the time when David left Montana with his parents, confusion seemed to have strong presence in David's mind. David is the innocent child living the almost perfect existence at the beginning of the book. As the events unfolded, all the people around him helped David to mature, to realise, to become aware and above all to understand just how cruel life can be to any human being and that is the essence of evil.