

THE STONE ANGEL

Anger and disappointment can be a source of many things. Hagar's anger and disappointment can be seen from her guilt and her criminal ways. Through Hagar's guilt she feels anger for what she did and disappointment for what could have been.

In the first paragraph of the book when she is telling about the stone angel on her mother's grave she states, "I wonder if she stands there yet, in memory of her who relinquished her feeble ghost as I gained my stubborn one...". (p. 3) Hagar's stubborn personality is the stem of most of her anger and crimes. One of Hagar's first crimes was when her brother, Daniel, was dying. Hagar was unable to grant him the comfort Matt gave. Hagar would not put her mother's shawl on because she felt that she was not like her at all. Hagar feels anger at her mother for Daniel's illness, "But all I could think of was that meek woman I'd never seen, the woman Dan was said to resemble so much and from whom he'd inherited a frailty I could not help but detest, however much a part of me wanted to sympathize. To play at being her - it was beyond me." (p. 25) Hagar's father sent her to school out east to learn how to become a proper lady. After coming back from college to become a proper lady, Hagar wanted to teach school but her father wouldn't allow it. Hagar, instead, kept her father's accounts and played hostess. Hagar meets Bram Shipley three years later and decides to marry him. Her father does not approve of the marriage, but Hagar marries Bram in a spirit of willful pride. Hagar's father does not speak to her ever again. When entering the marriage with Bram, she expected that she could change him into the image that she wanted him to be. By doing this, Hagar denied Bram the affection and sharing which might have made him less rebellious and despairing. Hagar didn't consider Marvin, her first born, her son because he was a Shipley, therefore he was not hers. Through this, Hagar denied Marvin the love that he sought as a child, impatiently dismissing his slowness of speech and lack of natural charm. After this, Hagar sought to rule the life of her son, John, trying to fashion him in the image that was desirable to her, and in the end interfered in the love between Arlene and John, ending with disastrous consequences.

Hagar, now old, treats her daughter-in-law, Doris, poorly for all that she does for her. Doris cooks Hagar's meals and takes care of her. Hagar decides to run away to Shadow Point with her pension check. When Marvin and Doris get her a couple days later, Hagar has to go to the hospital because of a serious illness. When in the hospital Hagar felt like "an exhibition in a museum" because she was in a public ward. Hagar is trapped in her bed because she is not allowed to get out of bed for anything even to go to the bathroom. Eventually Hagar gets moved to a semi-private room. In her last couple of days Hagar realizes that Marvin is really her son. One day Doris got her minister, Mr. Troy, to call on Hagar. Hagar asked him to sing the hymn "All people that on earth do dwell," Hagar was deeply affected by the last line, "Come ye before him and rejoice." After hearing this Hagar thinks

"I would have wished it. This knowing comes upon me so forcefully, so shatteringly, and with such a bitterness as I have never felt before. I must always, always, have wanted that - simply to rejoice. How is it I never could? I know, I know. How long have I known? Or have I always known, in some far crevice of my heart, some cave too deeply buried, too concealed? Every good joy I might have held, in my man or any child of mine or even the plain light of morning, of walking the earth, all were forced to a standstill by some brake of proper appearances - oh, proper to whom? When did I ever speak the heart's truth?" (p. 292)

Pride had been Hagar's "wilderness" and her fear had been the demon that led her. Hagar not only denied herself of things but other people her true feelings. Hagar had always been harsh with Doris but she did love her. Even on Hagar's last breaths she is mean to Doris, but she realizes that Doris is only trying to help

because she can do it better. Hagar insists that she hold the glass herself. She holds it in her hands with pride. And then-

During Hagar's last days she realizes her mistake in life. This is when she is the angriest at herself. She realizes that she could have led a fuller life if she wasn't worried about proper appearances. Even though she realizes how she acts, she still acts this way until her last breath.