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## APPENDIX

### 1. Synopsis of the Novel *My Mortal Enemy*

The story revolves around Myra and her husband Oswald, who return to their home in Illinois to visit their relatives. Myra was an outgoing ambitious woman, who didn't obey her uncle and eloped with her boyfriend, and then ran away with him to New York City. In eloping, Myra gave up all claims to her inheritance from the wealthy uncle who had brought her up. But Oswald was a promising man and soon he got a good job and good money for it. They were happy – Myra got everything she wanted, she made friends with different people, and everybody liked her. Successful husband and fashionable wife – a perfect marriage, from the first sight, but it was not. Myra was too jealous and Oswald loved her too much to reproach her, he never thought about himself, he did everything to make Myra happy, and she didn't appreciate it. And when Oswald lost his job they had to move to the poor accommodation, Myra felt ill and could not walk. She blamed her husband in all their problems and wished to stay with her uncle and not having married him. But Oswald didn't accuse her – she was ill and exhausted that is why she thought so.

He remembered the days when she was herself and they were happy. Life was hard for her, but also it was glorious too; she was absolutely unreasonable when she was jealous but he wasn't mad at her, because he knew that he would rather be “clawed” by her than petted by another woman. And when Myra has gone before her death he was inconsolable, when he heard that the police were looking for a woman who was out of her head, he was frightened. But it wasn't Myra.

She was found wrapped in her blankets, leaning against the cedar trunk, facing the sea. Her head had fallen forward; the ebony crucifix was in her hands. She must have died peacefully and painlessly. After her death Oswald had gone to Alaska and soon died there. That is how the story ends.

The narrator of the story – young girl Nellie, was a friend of Myra. They met when she was 15 and she was found of that charming woman who was always

kind and friendly. But Nellie also saw that Myra was double-faced person, imperious and unreasonable towards her husband. Nevertheless, she always treasured their friendship and liked to spend time with her. She listened to her stories about life, love, and friends and, of course, money, and it was a mystery for her how a person could be so contradictive as Myra was.

This woman was smart but she considered education boring, she loved her husband but called him her mortal enemy. The only thing this woman loved and appreciated was nature, she liked to watch a dawn, and there was every reason to believe she had lived to see the dawn – she has lost everything she loved – her youth, money, good friend, ability to walk, but no one could take away dawns. It was a forgiving time for her; maybe that is why she died looking at the Pacific at dawn – she was looking for forgiveness.

## 2. Biography of Willa Cather

Willa Cather was born on December 7, 1873 in Back Creek Valley, Virginia, a small farming community close to the Blue Ridge Mountains. She was the eldest child of Charles Cather, a deputy sheriff, and Mary Virginia Boak Cather. The family came to Pennsylvania from Ireland in the 1750's.

In 1883, the Cather family moved to join Willa's grandparents, William and Caroline, and her uncle, George, in Webster County, Nebraska. At the time her family included Willa's two brothers, a sister, and her grandmother. A year later they moved to Red Cloud, a nearby railroad town, where her father opened a loan and insurance office. The family never became rich or influential, and Willa attributed their lack of financial success to her father, whom she claimed placed intellectual and spiritual matters over the commercial. Her mother was a vain woman, mostly concerned with fashion and trying to turn Willa into "a lady," in spite of the fact that Willa defied the norms for girls and cut her hair short and wore trousers. While living in the town, Willa met Annie Sadilek, whom she later used for the Antonia character in her novel *My Antonia*. Indeed, many of Willa's characters are inspired by people she met in her youth: another notable example is Olive Fremstad, an opera singer, who inspired the character Thea Kronborg in her novel *The Song of the Lark*.

Willa graduated from Red Cloud High School in 1890. She moved to the state capitol in Lincoln in order to study for entrance at the University of Nebraska. In Red Cloud, she had spent time with and learned from a local doctor, and she dreamed of becoming a physician. However, when one of Willa's stories for a writing class got published, she discovered a passion for writing. In college, Willa spent time editing the school magazine and publishing articles and play reviews in the local papers. In 1892, she published her short story "Peter" in a Boston magazine, a story that later became part of her novel *My Antonia*. After graduating in 1895, she returned to Red Cloud until she was offered a position editing the magazine *Home Monthly* in Pittsburgh.

During a visit home to Nebraska while living in Pittsburgh, Cather met a woman named Edith Lewis. Lewis lived in New York City and worked as a copy

editor at the Century Publishing Company. The two women had a strong connection and by 1908 they were living together in New York. They shared a life together as committed domestic partners until Cather's death in 1947.

As editor of *Home Monthly*, Cather also wrote short stories to fill its pages, which were published in her first collection, *Troll Garden* (1905). These stories brought her to the attention of S.S. McClure, owner of one of the most widely read magazines of the day. In 1906, Cather moved to New York to join *McClure's Magazine*, initially as a member of the staff and ultimately as its managing editor. During this time she met Sara Orne Jewett, a woman from Maine who inspired her to later write about Nebraska. In 1912, after five years with *McClure's*, she left the magazine to have time for her own writing.

In 1913, Cather published *O Pioneers*, and in 1917, she wrote *My Antonia* while living in New Hampshire. By 1923, she had won the Pulitzer Prize for her *One of Ours*, and in this year her modernist book *A Lost Lady* was also published. At the time, her novels focused on the destruction of provincial life and the death of the pioneering tradition. She also wrote some of her greatest novels during this period, such as *The Professor's House* (1925), *My Mortal Enemy* (1926), and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927).

Willa Cather's fiction is infused with many of her deeply held beliefs and values. Among these values are a reverence for art, for history, and for the "pomp and circumstance" of organized Catholic and Episcopalian religion. Cather also felt strongly that peoples and civilizations who live in harmony with their natural environments were sources of inspiration. She decried materialism and the advent of modern mass culture, which she believed blunted human intellectual achievement and polluted public taste.

Cather published novels and short stories all the way until her death on April 24, 1947. At the time of her death, she ordered her letters burned and she included in her will the stipulation that any surviving documents not be published. In 1988, Cather's granddaughter, Vivian Hixon, discovered a new collection of letters exchanged between Cather and her colleague and friend, Dorothy Canfield

Fisher. These letters are now housed in an archive at the University of Vermont, and can be viewed by appointment.