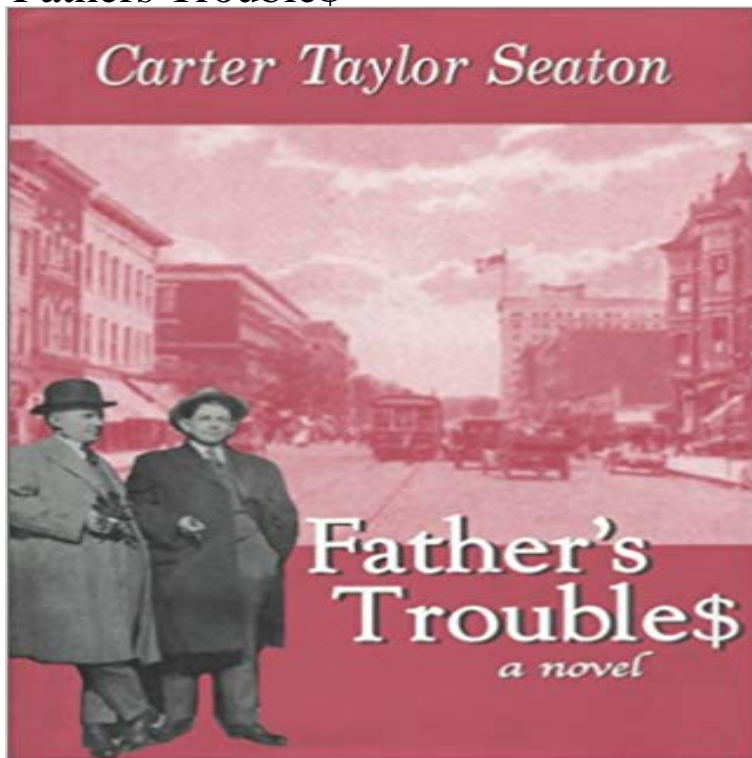


## Fathers Trouble\$



Lawrence Burgher suffers deprivation and ridicule as a child, marking him for life. Determined to make the world respect him, he sees wealth and power as a means to that end. Under the tutelage of Edward Keeley, his mentor and future business partner, Lawrence parlays inherited land in Shapely, West Virginia, into a burgeoning career in real estate and banking. By 1918, Lawrence moves his wife Anna and his family to the booming city of Huntington, West Virginia, to become Vice-President of Keeleys bank in that city. As his real estate career escalates and his family grows, so does his ambition. Burgher borrows money to take advantage of the emerging land boom. Early success leads to arrogance and arrogance to poor decisions. He leverages his property to make his purchases, spending his cash on an increasingly lavish life style. By 1924, feeling the pinch of debt which he can not repay, Lawrence resorts to making secret new loans to himself to pay the old ones. Keeley, a man with few scruples himself, calls Lawrence to task, whereupon Lawrence quits his position at the bank. When Keeley recalls Burgher, Lawrence sees it as an opportunity to oust his former partner. Soon caught in a financial trap of his own making, Burgher resorts to kiting checks, falsifying loans and forgery to cover the truth of his situation. During a routine bank examination, the Banking Commissioner discovers the shaky financial condition of the bank and notices evidence of Burghers irregular activities. Given fair warning, Burgher changes nothing. When the bank is closed for lack of funds in its reserve, all of Burghers problems come to light. He is indicted for embezzlement and forced into bankruptcy. This tragedy is so devastating that the family forms a protective shell around themselves, vowing to hold their heads up no matter what the public gossip. Held together by Annas strength, the family

bears the humiliation of a public trial, where Burgher is convicted and sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary. Despite appeals to the U. S. Supreme Court, the conviction stands. Lawrence Burgher is taken to the state penitentiary at Moundsville, West Virginia, to suffer over-crowding, rampant tuberculosis and confinement in a cell smaller than the closets in his home. When the Great Depression hits, the Burgher family is already deep in poverty. In the spring after Lawrence leaves, Anna is struck with excruciating headaches. Diagnosed with a brain tumor, she goes to Baltimore for surgery, and spends her final year in a hospital, blind and dying. The oldest daughter, Eileen, takes over raising her younger siblings on her meager teachers pay. Moving again and again into successively smaller homes, the de facto orphans still maintain their dignity in the face of public gossip and pity. In 1932, Anna Burgher dies. Three months later, Lawrence Burgher dies suddenly in the penitentiary. Thoroughly shaken, it becomes the childrens unspoken rule never to discuss their fathers troubles. A myth is born and is eventually handed down to their children. Fathers troubles becomes a code-word which they understand, but which is translated for the next generation into a romantic story of wealth lost during the Depression. Until Maggie is nearly forty, she never knows the real story. And when she begins to inquire, she is told some things are better left alone. Maggie, however, is determined to know the truth, hoping it will help her to understand her strained relationship with her mother. Over a twenty-year period she digs into the past without the help of her family. Through her efforts, Maggie gains a new respect for her mother, as she realizes the strength of the Burgher women is deeply embedded in her and is the finest legacy she could have been given.

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