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MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series A: Writings and Addresses. 1947-1991

Box 5, Folder 23, Draft manuscripts [typescript], Circa 1990s.



I.

Gracie has been up for an hour, since 6:00, setting breakfast ready for family. Knock on front screen door. (Rover leaps \_\_\_\_\_.) Gracie suspicious. Man introduces self as new garage mechanic, comes in, cracks about St. Peter. Considerable small talk about family (Willie in yard, children upstairs living here -- years, not bad get used to it, trains, produced rent, tending gates, out-house, tub ((make own boiling water)) wallpaper, coal dust) she says she talks too much, giggles, asks him about self "He lives in country, alone -- not much more", frowns.

Gracie says, "We used to live in the country, was more quiet, always knew you had something to eat -- but city life kinda gets you -- clothes, movies, trolley cars (Howard sees room cluttered up with bric-a-brac, gadgets). Gracie impressed that he talks to her so leisurely. Everybody else around garage always so busy, never have time to talk. He jokes around for a few minutes, plays with Rover then says he supposes he should get back to garage. She invites to breakfast. Helps her out with garbage can. She opens gates, invites him in later for drink. Gracie says she can't talk long, "factory people don't like it." He says maybe after work. She watches him drive truck up road.

1. "He ain't no father and he ain't no husband. What good is he to us -- I wisht he'd die!"

"Margie!"

"Well, I wisht he would -- I ain't afraid to say it --  
I'll say it again -- I wisht he'd die."

"Hush your mouth, girl! At ain't nice!"

"If he was a real father, why ain't he up here protectin'  
us -- stead of makin' slats -- oughta bury him in the  
cellar in that pile of wood of his 'n --"

"Stop your crazy talk -- I can't stand it --"



CHAPTER 0

"Shut that door in the summer kitchen, quick, and come here in the front room --" Gracie all wrought up. A sudden summer storm broke loose, and rain beats mercilessly on house. A wind races along iron fence, and howls through shacks in backyard, loose black boards are heard chattering.

Gracie is terrified; "Tern off the lights -- tern off the lights, I sed --" A candle flashes in middle of living room. Margie sits on sofa, holding her breath.

"Damn the factory -- why couldn't they tear down those godawful shacks back there -- way the wind comes howling through there is enuf to scare the soul outta person."

Roll of thunder and lightening crackles for full sustained minutes. They shrink in their chairs and in the wavering light their visages grow waxen. "Did you lock the gate? Afraid storm will tear it off -- ain't nothing gonna tear that off."

"Tear em down, darn ye, tear em down!" Gracie screams, her eyes are luminous with fear.

"I ain't been near them shacks since I first heard a man was hung in "fun" -- I don't see why they leave 'em up -- they're ain't nuthin' in 'em but bats and spooks and ghosts -- where the boys work? tremulously.

"They're out, it's jest terrible, them out on a night like this, an' us left alone --" Gracie.

"What's he doing?"

"He's down in the cellar choppin' out slats --" Margie, "He's a helluva man to hang around at a time like this -- wisht I was deaf like he is -- I wouldn't hear none of there noises and tunder bangin's."

"He ain't really deaf -- he's deaf only when he wants to be -- an' he hears good as you an' me when he wants te --" Another gust of wind makes shrill whistling sound as it passes through yard.

Margie is chattering -- "I swear, ma, the damned yard is haunted -- if the factory don't tear them places down t'marrer, I'm leavin' here -- I'll go anyplace, anyplace y'hear --" Shutter rattles and wind rips it off top hinge and it hangs creaking with every new gust.

Gracie looks across room to Margie. Her face is sucked in and frozen.

"Marge, I got a terrible feelin' in the pit o' ma stomach --"

"What ye mean?"

"I got a feelin' sumthing's goin' to happen --"

"Maybe it's your arthritis -- at's always achin' up in this kind o' weather."

"No -- it's not my arthritis feelin -- it's a different feelin' --"

"Is it -- good or bad?"

"I dunno -- it's jest, jest different -- I ain't never had it before --"

"Is it goin' to happen soon --"

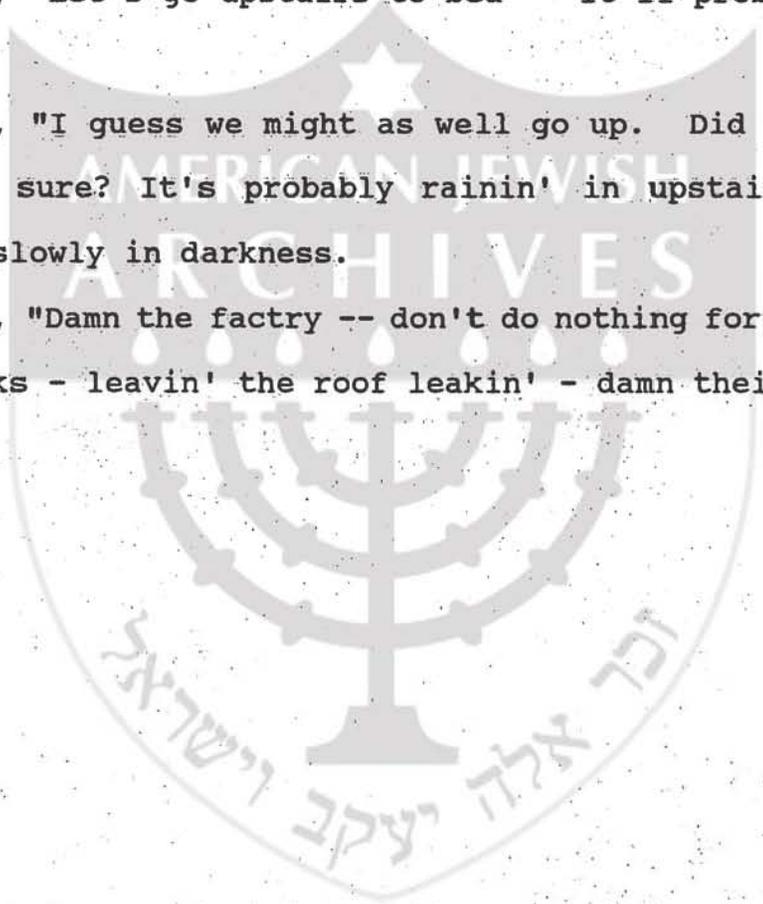
"How do I know? I jest feel it - like a hand in my stomach - an' its fingers reachin' out and touchin' all of us --"

Margie shivers -- "Cut out talkin' your foolishness - you're blabberin' like a spoo -- now cut it out!" Silence, listen to rain.

Margie, "Let's go upstairs to bed -- it'll probably rain all nite --"

Gracie, "I guess we might as well go up. Did the boys take keys? You sure? It's probably rainin' in upstairs --" They clamber up slowly in darkness.

Gracie, "Damn the factory -- don't do nothing for us -- leaving up the shacks - leavin' the roof leakin' - damn their hides --"



CHAPTER I

"Hello . . . Is St. Peter in?" Voice travels through living room into kitchen where Gracie Rutherford busies herself over black stove like a great hen.

"What? What in the world?" She is startled. She hears screen door rattle against bolt. Runs back. "Jest a minute . . ." she calls out. Turns down knobs on gas-range. Looks up at clock hanging over cupboard, wonders "Who in the world is that at this hour. Ain't nobody come rapping at the door at quarter to seven . . . Jest a minute!" Gracie wipes her palms on her small white apron pinned to her waistline, waddles into living room. "Quiet Rover!" Dong jumps at door. Growls at Gracie's side.

Her head is bent to a side. She adjusts rimless specs and peers curiously at form of man vaguely outlines against screen door. "One thing is sure, he ain't no bill collector," she thinks.

"Morning, ma'am," speaks pleasantly.

"Mornin'", rising inflection (distrustful), as though she has doubts. Her head moves up and down screen.

"I'm Howard Grumpner, the new mechanic. They tell me you're the St. Peter around here." "What?" "I'm sorry," laughs, "I mean keeper of the gate out here --"

"Mechanic? Oh, yes, they told me a new man is coming on this mornin' -- jest a minute, leme open this here door." She fumbles with bolt, looks at him before opening, invites him in. "Come in, come in. Sorry to keep you waiting."

"That's all right. I'm sorry to bother you so early in the morning . . . "

She gives him seat on the "teet," (takes off the covers; this is where Willie sleeps) pulls shade up a bit on screen door, lifts shade half way up window (comments on last night's terrible storm, scared). Dog growls under the table. She quiets him. "He's like us -- suspicious of strangers. \_\_\_\_\_"

"It's kinda dark in here - don't you pull them all the way up?"

"Never do. Neighbors crost the street are always peepin' in. Suspicious damned people you ever did see."

"Why do they peep in?" "Don't know, but all day long they set on the steps over there and looks and stares at us. We ain't had nothin' with em' en years. (As for as they is concerned, we live by an island). We knows theys always talking about us --- fact the we speak, county folk."

Howard looks out through screen, across road, cobble street with separates house from row of red brick houses, white wooden steps. Sun is up over top of houses, glistened on morning dew , rays \_\_\_\_\_ through screen door and window, feels warmth on arm of chair.

"Whadya say your name was?"

"Grumpner. Howard Grumpner."

"GRUM" -- Gracie giggles. "Ain't nothin' grumpy 'bout you . . ."

Howard thanks her warmly, says being she is keeper of the gate, they'll probably be seeing each other a lot, might as well

call me "Howard." She says he likes that better than Grumpy, suggested he call her "Gracie."

She goes to kitchen to get keys. Picks them off nail above stove. Adjusts burner under coffee pot. Hears Rover barking, calls out to quiet him. Waddles back into living room. "You're smoking kinds early. Bad for your stomach." Gracie talking like a whirlpool, spins endlessly around, around, feel sucked in, no direction, just around, feel numb, pleasant in act spinning -- waves spread out engulfing everything they touch. Speaks about everything with equal concern.

He says he's never without a cigarette, anytime of the day, 'cept when he's fixing a gas gasket or bushin' or something like that. Says Rover is a nice dog -- "Part collie, ain't he?" Plays with dog.

Gracie says they had Rover since he way puppy. He's like one of the family. Don't mess with neighbor's dogs. He's been clipped, y'know. "Makes him lest hungry, that away." (Howard says makes him less hungry for beef, too. Gracie "Hee, hee's" shrilly. "You're a real card, Howard, hee hee!")

Howard points to painting on wall. I've been noticing that that American flag and the cannons. (Exhibits patriotism: Ft. McHenry, flag and feast).

Gracie says Henry did that. Painted right on the glass. My Henry coulda be an artist. Paints all kinda pretty pictures. He's a sassy one sometimes, but he's got talent . . .

"Is he your oldest?" Shakes ashes from cigarette.

"No. He's my middle one. I got three boys and a daughter. Albert's the oldest, gonna marry Ellen, Henry's next, and Robbie and Margie. She's my only daughter." Boys all work in factory.

"Four children, uhh?"

"Yes, and Willie my he man. He's a bigger bother all of i put together . . . (Touches finger to corner of mouth). He ain't been working goin on ten -- lessee -- no nine - nine years now, ever since the beg layoff when the factory fired him. It's Roosevelt's fault -- heard 'em say on radio . . . Landsakes, never hired him back, cos he's got high blood pressure. Lost two of his fingers on a stampin' machine. what a pain he is . . . always grouchin, fightin' with the children --

"Well, I guess I'd better be getting to my work -- good to be early first day on the job."

"Landsakes, I'm just talking your head off," giggles, "I must say I do enjoy talkin' -- specially too with strangers --" Howard look \_\_\_\_\_ then smiles.

"What time is it?" Howard looks at wristwatch. "It's just about seven -- I'll open the gate for you in a minute. You wanta cup of coffee? Maybe you'll stay for breakfast. You don't have to be in till 8:00, do you?" That's when my boys to in, at eight. Com on back and have a cup, it's all boilin' on the stove -- sittin' right there on the stove --"

"No, well, thanksalot, but I ate already -- I wanted to get into the garage a little early to get a look at things --"

"Well, you're welcome to the coffee anytime. I'll be right with you, I want to take our my garbage can out front -- and I'll open the gate in a minute." Starts toward kitchen. (Nothing planned in her routine -- does everything that comes her way - but does it intently).

"Here, let me kep you." Starts following her, Rover growling behind him.

(Puckers mouth like pike, slight resp). "No, don't bother. I can handle it. I'm used to hard work. Used to be a country girl, y'know --"

Howard comes into kitchen, takes garbage filled bucket from his hand. (\_\_\_\_\_ little hands like hamburgers, fingers like little \_\_\_\_\_ sausages.) She thrills at touch. "Oh, landsakes, I don't wantcha bothering yourself --" Giggles, "At's real nice of you -- you're a gennulman." Embarrassed, she nods sympathetically.

"Let's go, Rover." He lifts can, walks through living room with Rover dancing at his side, Gracie prattling behind him. "Rover likes you; never takes to strangers like this." She opens the door. He deposits can in grass weeds growing out of pavement, next to lamppost. "Thank ye, thank ye a lot, you're a real gennulman." She giggles, adjusts her little white apron. "It at your car in front of the gate?"

Howard says, "Yep, that's the old buggy."

Gracie squints, "It's got a nice shine, big car too."

Howard says, "Buick's are big cars -- keep up good if you take care of them."

They walk together on red pavement toward picket fence. "Looks pretty much like end of the world," Howard says.

"What you mean?"

"I mean this dead-end street." He points to fence, erected across end of street, big red reflectors, "ROAD END" sign, valley on other side of fence where trains go and fields over there (overgrown). "Street car used to run over here, didn't they?"

"They stopped 'em just after we came here from the country (Cumberland) just almost 12 years ago. The tracks are still in the street, see 'em."

"Yes, I seen 'em when I drove down. Place sure does look like end of the world. Your house especially, the only one on this side of the street with the factory and picket fences all around, and the big backyard, and the dirt lots running close from the garage back there all across the street and along down to the bridge."

Howard, "What do they make in there?" Points to great black building, windows looming over house.

Grace, "Oh, different things," looks up, shades her eyes from sun -- "mainly buckets, the galvanized kind -- buckets and garbage cans -- mainly things like that."

Howard, "Why don't they want people snooping round? What's so secret?"

Grace, "I dunno -- it's news - they're suspicious of strangers. Maybe it's because they don't want them youngin' people

comin' around stirring up trouble. Strikers and things, I dunno - we just get orders to be wary of strangers -- to keep em off the grounds!

Howard, "Must get to be lonely --"

Gracie, with finger to mouth, looking up admirinly, "I must say, ye do sound like one of them -- eh." It slips her mind, "one of them -- "

Howard waits.

"Oh, whatchamacallems?" Face lighted, "Poets, that's it, one of them poets."

Howard laughs, "No, you just get to feel a little lonely."

Gracie, " Well, it is a little lonely at times. We don't have much to do with the neighbors. And then again, we can't have too many young people around here -- factory don't like it -- they don't like people snooping around the grounds.

"How long you have been watching the gates for the factory?"

"Oh, ever since we been here. I fact, they let us stay in the house only cause we tend the gate and watch the yards. Sure, Willie had to sign a paper saying we'd take care of this here gate as long we stayed in the factory's house. They reduced our rent to \$18.00 a month, which ain't much for a five-room house and you run own backyard, is it? 'Course house needs lots of fixin, like bathtub, toilet, and wallpaper -- They don't do nothing for us. They don't realize how much trouble it is running in and out -- course we're more used to it now. Cause it was a lot of trouble

at first, running out here every time a truck come in and came out -- but I guess you get used to it after a while."

"Well St. Peter did, I guess you did too . . . "

Gracie giggles, "What did you mean?"

Howard, " Well St. Peter, y'know. Supposed to take care of the gates in heaven, like you do won here." She through head back and laughs -- "Hee hee, you're sure are a card, Mr. Howard." She slaps her knees, bends half over. "You know you're the nicest man ever passed through these gates in all the years we been here, more than the mechanics and drivers. None of them ever stopped to talk to us -- they were always running always in a hurry, rushing here, going there, marking the time clock, never had time to say a word to us, cept "OPEN THE GATES, COMING THRU!" Same way with everybody around the garage and factory. Everybody is always in a hurry. After a while you get to feel like that lamp-pole there or that fence. Almost like you ain't human -- but you're different."

"Well, you've been very nice tome, and I enjoyed talking to you."

"Why don't you drop in round supper time after working over for a drink or so? I'd like you to meet my family."

"I'd be glad, too."

"Landsakes, I've been talking a blue streak." She looks over shoulder toward factory entrance, high step, brass rail leading to offices. "I'd better get back in the house. The factory people -- the office ones -- don't like it when I talks to garage people out here. And I'd better get back to set up breakfast for my

children. Be expectin' you at suppertime?" A hit of longing which surprises her.

Howard gets in Buick, starts motion, drives through gates. Gracie shuts gate and watches car as it drives up yard to garage, feels strange twinge -- big and grasping, like a hand.



CHAPTER II

Willie comes in from woodshed in backyard, asks who was visitor. (Rover barks). She tells him it was Howard, the new mechanic. He says he heard new man was coming on, asks what kind of man. She says he was a nice feller. Willie: (deaf) What? Gracie: (louder) repeats. Willie: I guess you auther know. You were friendly enough with him. Gracie gets angry, says he's been spying on her again. She curses him for being suspicious -- can't even talk to people anymore. Threatens with skillet, tough enough living, making ends meet, without your damned sneaking. Factory whistle squeals. She calls children down to breakfast.

Screen down opening into yard creaks again. Willie enters, sits down on chair near window. He's middle-height, chunky, slightly hunched, face alters washed streaked with grime, duty-gray cap, blue work-shirt (\_\_\_\_\_), collar cut out, heavy work pants held up by rubber suspenders (98 cents), dirt-covered heavy brogans. Looks listless, yet one senses strenght in gnarled hands (middle finger on right hand missing). Hairs in ear, nose. Heavy grayish eyebrows. Smells from perspiration.

Mumbles that somebody done stopped up toilet in yard. Filled it with paper or sumpin. Grumbled speech is garbled; difficulty articulating because only one giant took suspended from top gum, pitch uneven because deafness prevents his hearing sounds he produces.

Gracie preoccupied with Steve, shouts over her shoulder, "Whathe say?"

Willie answers, "What?"

Gracie, irritated: "I don't know what in the world you're mumblin' about -- whatja say?"

Willie point to back-door, "They stuffed up the toilet."

"Didn't last night's rain wash it down?" He doesn't hear her.

Picks fleas from damp shirt.

"One of ems ded." Nods with head upstairs where shoes scraps on floor. Children are getting up.

"Landsakes, it's getting late -- I'd better stir em up." She looks at clock, adjusts apron and waddles to staircase on other side of kitchen wall. She yells up to darkenss -- "It's seven fifteen -- better get a move on up there, you'll be late for work."

"What time is it?", drowsy \_\_\_\_\_ voice calls back.

"Quarter after 7. Rustle your bones -- breakfast's ready down here." She waddles back into kitchen, adjusts table.

Willie sits sideways on chair, peeping turn curtains up the street. "Kelley's got a new Ford . . ." Stares intently.

"How d'ja know?"

"Sittin'out front there, in front of their stoop."

Gracie walks over and peers with him. "Guess they playing the horses again. Don't know how they do it -- with that big family like they go -- well, I gwest those who don't care about money, always get it -- them that fusses and frets over it, never do." Paddles back to cupboard, takes out sugar bowl, puts it on red checkered table cloth.

"Ma." Girl's voice from upstairs.

"Whatcha want?"

"Ms, where's my yellow blouse? I left it on my chair last night."

"Look it in the burey -- I put it back -- it was getting all rumbled up." Veins in neck tightening. (Live of petty \_\_\_\_\_).  
\_\_\_\_\_).

"Damn it, you never leave my stuff alone," voice grumbles angrily into distance, "Landsakes, how she curses, I dunno what's got into her." Gracie shaking head.

"What she want?", Willie asks.

"Her yellow blouse," Gracie.

"Oh." Rover ambles in and sniffs at Willie's feet. He pats dog, then complains, "Looket -- he got coal-dust all over him. Ever since they unloaded that coal pile back there, ain't nothin' round here clean anymore. \_\_\_\_\_ Rover, he needs a washing."

Gracie, "You ain't cleanin' him up more wipin' your nose in him that way."

Willie, "What?"

Gracie silent, something on her mind.

Willie stares out through the screen door, then blurts, "Wuz there sumbody in here little while ago?"

"Yes there was." She busies herself with match, lighting gas range under frying pan. She hesitates, doesn't know whether to tell him about Howard Grumpner.

"Who was he?"

Gracie stares at him, "How do you know it was a 'he'?"

"What?"

"How do ye know it," raises her voice, "oh, never mind -- it was the new mechanic, he came askin' to be let in."

Willie takes hot off, smooths gray streaked hair, "I did heard a new one's comin' on today," nods head, "sure was a shame what happindt to Bill Cooley." Swats fly with hat.

"Lordéy, he was a nice feller -- they say that huch jest made him look like masht potatoes -- me, he sure was a nice feller, never talkt much but always decent and polite."

"I hurd the factory gave his factory a thousand dollars."

"Izzat all?"

Willie, "What?"

Gracie, "Is that all?"

Willie, "Well, that is a lot of money."

Gracie, "Landsakes, they could've given his pore wife 5 thousand dollar and even that wouldn't been nothin'. Why, Bill Cooley been workin' in the factory garage since he was a yungster -- humph, one thousand dollars. I pity his pore wife and babies."

Willie looks at his right hand, the missing finger. "Wal, I guess you're ain't worth much to 'em after you're no good to 'em."

Silence. Rover pushes open screen door, enters summer kitchen and laps water in bucket outside door.

Willie breaks momentary silence, "What's this new fella like?"

Gracie, smiles uncontrollably, her face wreathed with obvious pleasure, "Oh, he's a nice one."

"Zat so?" Willie hints resentment, apparently has little difficulty in hearing.

"Oh yas," she builds enthusiastically, "he's real nice and perlite -- why, he sat here and talkt for 15 minutes, real friendly sat."

"You shore was."

She whirls around, thrusts hands akimbo, "what d'you mean by that, Willie Rutherford." She glowers at him, "What d'ya mean 'I shore was . . . Was you spying on me again, Willie Rutherford, I swear."

"I seen him sittin' on the teet, and you askin' him -- a total stranger -- into the kitchen for coffee."

"I swear, WR, if you don't stop your spying on me, I'm -- I'm gonna mash your head in with this skillet," he eyes blaze behind the specs, and she rushes about kitchen like excited little hen, fluttering to hot skillet, adjusting things on table.

"Wal, you ain't got no business been so friendly to total strangers -- s'pose he really wuzn't the new mechanic -- s'pose he was a union spy, s'pose the factory people hurd you had a union spy in your living room, what'd happen to us then? You ain't got no business been so friendly to strangers, an' offerin' coffe." His talk becomes more inarticulate as he grows excited.

"For your information, WR, Howard Grumpner is coming around here this evening at suppertime for coffee, at my invitation, and

if ye don't like it, ye can do down to the cellar and chop wood till yer blue in the face."

"This is my house, much as it is yours, an' I'm stayin' right here, I don't care who comes in."

"Well, stay and don't gimme none of your sass, I got me enuf troubles running this house without you spyin' on me every minute of the day. Landsakes, with \_\_\_\_\_ to pay the bills, an' the rent, an' washin', cleanin' and \_\_\_\_\_, an' tendin' to the gate, I got enuf to give me a breakdown, and your sass and spite ain't helpin' me any. Maybe you'd learn to mind your own business a little more, effin' ye had a job and earnt some money."

"I earnt four dollars last week from cartoons."

"Heh, four dollars! Why that ain't enuf to keep Margie in stockins."

"That girl wastes too much money any ways. She buys everythin she lays eyes on."

"It ain't your money, is it? Jest mind your own business."

A baritone booms belligerently down the staircase, "Hey, what in the hell is all the fussin' down there?"

"It's the ole man agin, Henry, mindin' everybody's business but his own."

"Tell him if he don't but it out, I'm gonna let him hve it - straight between the eyes," Henry.

Willie, "There you go, settin' the children aginst me. You're the awflut woman that ever walked the earth." Soft upper lip flaps

excitedly against single tooth, looks like agitated squireel, flails arms in front of him.

Gracie lifts skillet, "Get outta here, 'fore I throw this at you!" He cowers into living room. Factory whistle squeals. She stands at foot of staircase and calls:

"It's seven-thirty -- Albert, Henry, Robbie -- you'll be late -- come on down right this minute, breakfast been ready for half an hour, right this minute, ye hear?" Rover toward Willie in living room looking through screen door like penalized child, "An' ye, WR can eat by yourself."



CHAPTER III

After breakfast, cleans up (coal dust, trains, backyard) ... warm feeling thinking about Howard, fixes her hair. Will panting, leaves to gather cartoons. Description factory surrounding house. (Willie suddenly suspicious). Grace routine; store talks about Howard, comes back home, sits out front. Mr. Matthews drive by (she nods -- feels sense of cowering before his wealth and power, also sense of despising him because he aware? of her conditions (outhouse, wallpaper, coal dust, tub), seeing (scene) maybe Howard will pass, thinks Willie will be angry, decides the hell with Willie. Unreasoned antipathy toward neighbors (they have cars, tubs, etc.), she thinks they think Rutherfords are "farmers," aliens, feels isolation from rest of block). Margie comes home from school (makin' different things -- ain't learning nuffin') (change clothes -- don't like these candy bars before supper). Says old lady looks happy, what happened, "The old man die?"

Willie on platform taking cartoons out of empty boxcars. Cold and dank -- feels food bumping in chest, had finished eating at 8:30, alone at table, after children had finished, just couldn't sit at same table with Henry -- he's terrible, no respect for parents, cussin' me all the time, don't talk to me, makin' fun of me, felt soggy in presence of Henry -- like the bread roll be kepped in his morning coffee -- getting tired of this fussin'. I ain't such a mean feller -- what did I do to harm them? I worked for 'em long as I was able -- could I help it they fired me, got

the blood pressure, shouldn't even be doin' this now -- but I'd work, I'd work at anything, they won't take me now, too old, got the blood pressure, fingers missin', wish we was back on the farm, we was better off, had my own truck, garden, an' cow, an' mules, sure I worked hard, but it was mine, was healthy, would had my fingers, an' no frettin' over bill collectors and factory people, dang it, why did I let the ole woman pull me here into the city. "Country ain't no place to raise children," she said. Well, lookit what happint to 'em here -- city done made a bum of Henry, he ain't good for nothin', cussin' all a time, threatens me, betcha he sleeps with wimmin, way he's out late all the time, he's a bum. And Albert gonna marry that Caflec girl -- ain't got nothin' again' her, but ain't none in our family ever married a Caflec -- jist terrible what's happint. Margie running around with all kinds of fellas, way she's gettin' all dressed up, I kin tell. Robbie's only good one of all my children, he ain't been spoilt. Dang it, even the ole woman is messin' aroun' with other men, fat old woman like her ain't got no right invitin' strangers into house, right off bat offerin' 'em coffee and invitin' him to supper. She was never like this on the farm, never any men in our front room. Damn his soul, making me burnin' mad (busts hole in cartoon -- regrets).

I wisht I was the drinkin' kind -- maybe they'll pay more attention to me iffing I came home drunk an' ravin' -- I got a good mind to get me good and drunk. Hell, I don't even smoke. Feels lump in chest, but, shucks, I just couldn't take it -- blood pressure. It'd finish me off jest like that, if he could save

enuf, fill his box up, maybe leave house, go to eastern shore (his sister's), can't buy my own farm, work on sister's -- feels he want to do something desperate, blind feeling of punching out at someone, something responsible for his depression.

"Hiya doin', Willie?" Joe Prima, Italian trucker asks.

"Oh, all right, I guess." Can't hide his remorse, depression felt in reply. Willie thinks, "Lookit, I get along fine with all these people -- Wops, Poles, whatever -- what's the matter with my fambly?"

Inside kitchen, Gracie puts away morning dishes, irons work shirts and Margie's dress. A scowl on her face. "Dang is soul, he's gettin' worst every day. Gettin' impossible to live with him. Always suspicious, always watchin' me. Like being in prison. Can't go anywhere, can't talk to anybody, always arguin' with me. Like the time when I stopped to talk him to the watchman and he kept starin' at me thru the screen door, and give'd me hell for talkin' so long. I mighta divorce him. If it weren't for the children, I'd divorce him. I swear I would. He ain't nothin' but a leech, livin' off what the boys makes." She set jaw, "If it wouldn't break up my house, I swear I'd divorce him.

Puts away ironed things. Goes upstairs to fix beds. Thought of leaving Willie lingers with her. "He would die if I left him. I know. Sister on eastern shore can't take care of him. He ain't got nowheres to go, he'd have a stroke -- but I couldn't be bothered -- why don't he think of my happiness. I ain't had a happy minute since I been with him in this house.

Happiness -- word glitters like rhinestone in her mind. "I'd be happy with him, with Howard I would -- he's so nice and considerate," pictures him in her mind. Strong, nice-looking, clean, pleasant. Tingling sensation -- car, we'd go place -- so excitin'." Looks down at bed-cover; strange drunken feeling, what if Howard were lying on the bed and she were there next to him, his arm across her waits, and then, they'd (wonders whether Howard is married, divorced, sleeping with woman) -- she shudders as she realized how totally captivated she is with the strange image. Strange because she hasn't been with man for six years now, since she had argument with Willie and made him sleep on the teet downstairs. She shakes, like a dog trying to shakes off water, yet the image has sunken deep in her mind, and she knows it will rise again. She wonders whether this is strange stomach feeling of \_\_\_\_\_ before. (She feels embraced and loved).

She tells herself she must not think this in her sleep -- does she talk in her sleep? Does she say things that Margie might hear? No matter, she has no past secrets Margie might not share, but this thought is hers alone, and she must not think it in her sleep.

Downstairs, screen door slams shut and she hears Margie call out, "Anybody home." "Landsakes, I left the front door open. (Getting careless), Gracie thinks. "I'm up here, Marge." Margie footsteps on staircase, she steps into room. Gracie feels momentary strangeness, stands before bed as through trying to hide her great secret, illicit thought. She stutters, "You back from school, already?"

"Sure, it's past 12 o'clock." She speaks fresh, bluntly.

"Landsakes, how the mornin' flut by. I ain't had chance to go to the store yet --"

"I been there."

"I can see that." Margie is munching on a Hershey bar. "Margie, honey, you shouldn't be eating candy bars before lunch. It ain't good for you."

"Why ain't it?"

"It just ain't -- specially before lunch."

Margie sticks forefingers in mouth to flip chocolate away from tooth. She reveals front black tooth, rotting away from cavities. Gracie looks at her for moment. Thin, blond, bony oval face, sloping breasts, hint of sensuousness (seducible) in her easy swing. Margie is a growing woman, Gracie realizes.

"What do ye want to eat? Ye ain't got but a half hour's time."

"I'll take as long as I want to eat. Maybe I ain't goin' back to school today anymore -- It's a pain in the ass."

"Now, Margie, that ain't no way for a girl to talk -- now you cut it out."

"Oh, bullshit!"

"Margie!", outraged.

She laughs, raucously throws back her head.

"Now I ain't a foolin'." She slaps her thigh angrily. "Stop trying to be smart. Now come on down and eat."

They walk down narrow staircase. "What do you want to eat?"

"Oh, anything, I ain't hungry."

"American cheese?"

"No, lemme see, sausage. Find sausage."

"I don't think we got any left in the icebox."

"Then, bacon and eggs."

"You had that for breakfast."

"I want it again," stubbornly.

Gracie, followed by Margie, enter kitchen. Margie plops in chair, legs spread out, \_\_\_\_\_ . Gracie finds basin under icebox is running over. "Margie, be a good girl, and empty the basin in the backyard."

"Empty it yourself, ma, I'm goin' upstairs to change my dress."

"What for?"

"I dunno. Jest feel like changin' it."

"Well, it's jest plain foolish. Changing clothes, three four times a day. All ye do is make me more work cleanin' and pressin'."

Margie gets up, starts toward stairway. "Well, I'm changin' anyway. Maybe I'll go back to school after lunch -- there some nice fellers on the store comes crost street from school round lunchtime," coquettish.

Gracie, irritated by remark, but restraining, "Is that all ye go ter school for? Yer see fellers on street corners? Don't ye learn nuthin' at school?"

"Heck no," seriously, "They put me in that there 'opportunity' class. All they do is make little baskets, an' straps, and paints pictures. Don't hardly get any readin' or spellin' or nuthin'."

Gracie looks up from stove, "I'm going to talk to yer principal 'bout this. One of these days I'm goin' to dress up and go up and tell him. I wantcha learn least how to read before you're thru."

Margie, climbing up stairway, calls down, "Don't bother with that ole bastard -- I'm going to leave school soon anyways."

While she's setting table (disturbed by flipness and unmanageableness of Margie), knock on front door. She thinks it's Howard. She straightens the apron, touches her comb in hair, and pads out to front. From living room, she sees it's not Howard. She's miserably disappointed. It's the installment man.

"Hello, Mrs. Rutherford," cheery, rosy-checked, black haired young salesman.

"Hello. I don't own my next installment till Saturday (defensively)." Looks at cars in front, up the street, trucks, midday - heavy traffic.

"I know," he smiles obsequiously, "I was passin' by and I thought I'd show you some of the latest jewelry and accessories we go in."

"No, don't need anythin'," abruptly, "Besides, I own you \$85.00 from last bill."

"Well, your credit is good, and I knew you'd want to see these. You're not obligated in any way to buy, you understand."

Margie calls down, "Who's 'at, Ma?"

"It's not for you," she calls back. "No, I really ain't interested, don't bother to open yer bag."

Margie comes in, zipping up dress. "Oh," pink slip showing, "its the installment man! Whatcha got?"

"He's got jewelry and you ain't buyin' any, we own him \$85.00 for that phonygraph which's already broke."

"Gee lookit, a beautiful breastpin, and a bracelet with rhinestones. My they're purty. I can use 'em wif my new black dress. How much?"

"You mean, the breastpin and bracelet, they're special -- \$4.95 for both."

"Margie, go back in the house, I'm tellin' you, ye ain't puttin' these on the bill -- I got enuf worrying over how to pay up what I owe the man."

"You ain't puttin' these on no bill -- here's your money, I'm payin' for 'em."

"Where'd you get 5 dollar bill from?", steel-eyed.

"Oh, I had it."

"Margie, don't lie to me, where'd ye get it from?" Image of boys on corner flashes in her mind.

"I took it from him."

"The ole man, from the box."

"From his box with the carton money?"

"Yes!"

"Why -- why he'll murder ye when he finds out."

"He ain't gonna murder nobody," steely, "I figger he ain't got no right holdin' on to all that money anyway -- he don't pay you no rent like Al and Henry and Robbie does, beside, he don't need this money - he's gonna die soon, anyways. Let's have the pin and bracelet, mister."



CHAPTER IV

Family at supper-table, Gracie serves different kinds of food to each (noise, smells soap, dog) talk about shop (piece-work). Henry brags about amount done, Robert (hint about joining army) gives him hell for lying. Henry threatens to fight, Albert stops him. Margie mentions boy in school. Willie bitterly reprimands her, don't want her goin' wif boys -- she too young. Henry says let'her go -- it's good for her. Look what it's doing for me; makes a muscle; take jerk pimples off your face. Gracie outraged by this (Henry gives appearance of his whore-manager?) What she got bumps for anyway?

Gracie intervenes, attacks Willie, softsoaps Margie -- incident with salt shaker (tell him to pass it -- I ain't talking to him).

Howard enter, first feels warmth of family scene), feels tenseness. Willie turns head around, Rover laps Howard's pants, jokes a bit, takes drink and reaction of how each son and Margie see him -- Albert, earnest; Robbie, admiringly; Henry, chip on shoulder; Margie, you're cute.

"Dang the coal dust!" A soft summer afternoon breeze swept down from behind the garage, across the yard where the coal heap was piled, depositing sediment on Gracie's dress and sewing. It was 2 o'clock. She was sitting out front sewing a hem on one of Margie's dresses. She shook the dust from the dress and with the palm of her hand wiped the grit from the white apron in her lap. There was dust on the Gibson chair she was sitting on. She blew

some away; Willie gets a fit when his chairs are messed up. Willie makes Gibson chairs from slats he's given from box cars. Sells them for \$1.50, painted green and white; makes them in the cellar in winter time - in back yard during summer. Cartons and Gibson chairs, Willie's main preoccupations.

"Dang the coal dust!" She repeated. "Factory people ain' got no feelin's for nobody. Why did they have to pile coal in my backyard. Impossible to keep things clean. It's bad enuf with engines thrown' coal smoke all the time. I'm gonna complaint -- at's what I'll do -- I'll complaint to Mr. Matthew himself." Realizes with futility, she's been complainin' ever since she's been here, complained first about out-house, especially in winter - "We'll take care of it soon as we can, Mrs. Rutherford, don't you worry" - sweet voice of white-face office girl.

Complained about tub and lack of hot water - We're told heaters are difficult to get nowadays, Mrs. R., but don't you worry, we'll take care of it soon as we can."

Complained about sooty wallpaper - "Soon as we contact a wallpaper hanger, Mrs. R. just as soon as --"

When it comes to collectin' the rent, they're sure don't lose anytime. A trumpet-like auto horn blows out in the street, Gracie jumps up, squeezin' dress in her palms. Howard? No. It's Mr. Matthew. Mr. Matthew himself drivin' by up the street in his convertible Cadillac. Mr. Matthew always honks his horn when he passes by. Some he waves his straw hat. Sometimes he nods. Today he just honked his horn.

Gracie waves a meaty hand and smiles broadly. Suddenly, she recalls her complaint. "Mr. Matthew!", she calls weakly. Tell him about shacks, too. Mr. Matthews is gone, up the street, over the tracks.

Gracie sits down and returns to sewing. Nice man, Mr. Matthews. I bet he'd do somethin' 'bout the coal dust and shacks if I toll him. Only thing is, I can't never get to him. Only get to see Mr. Matthew when he drives by, honking his horn.

Plowie! Gracie jumps. A softball crashes against wall, foot away from chair. What in the world. A white-haired kid snakes thru between cars. "Where's ma ball?" Gracie waves her finger at him, "Lisen here, Charley Keeley, you ain't got no right playin' ball in the street, specially this time a day, with all these cars around. S'pose you break a window, who's gonna pay when you break a window? Now I'm responsible for these cars."

"Sez who?" Kid is under chair reaching for ball.

"Factory, that's who. I'm responsible for everythin' on factory property an' I'm not goin' to stand for your throwing a hard ball around, with all these cars out here. S'pose you'd a hit me, ever think of that? S'pose you'd hit me with that hard ball?" Veins tighten in her neck.

Kid stands feet spread apart, tossin' ball from hand to another, with deadpan expression, "Why don't you stop crabbin', you're always crabbin' - ain't no wonder nobody talks to you over here, you're always crabbin' about the factory -- the hell with the factory."

Gracie is incensed, "Well, if you're such a big-shot, Charley Keeley, we'll see, yessin', we'll see. I'm goin' in and call the factory office -- we'll see what a big-shot you is -- such a nasty-mouth sassin' big shot."

In a huff, she slams screendoor and paddles into living room, puts down dress, picks it up, goes into kitchen, then comes back into living room. She plops into chair near window and starts sewing furiously. She looks out from behind dark curtain and sees kids still playin catch. "Ain;t no wonder nobody talks to you over here, you're always crabbin' about the factory." "Humph!" She sews. "I given I did get too excited, but he really shouldt be playin' out there."

At 4 o'clock, with radio in living room blaring out western tunes, sung by "Texas George and his geetar," Gracie is fixin' supper, boilin' water so's boys can wash. She goes out to open gat for truck driver, Eugenie \_\_\_\_\_ by, looks self-consciously at street, sees kids are gone. "They should've been in school, anyways." As she enters kitchen, three boys come in back door. They're doing all over, blond hair of each stands our. Henry, tallest of three, stops dead in front door, flexes his muscles, sticks out his chest. "Where's the hot water," his first remakes to Gracie.

Go upstairs and change your clothes. I'll bring it ter ye."

"All right -- don't keep me waitin!"

Albert immediately behind him, "Get the hell outta the way showoff." He pushes Henry in back.

Henry wheels about stiffly and in semi-crouch, warns: "Watch yourself -- I'll clip ye."

"Poo-poo-poo, big shot," Albert mimics, "Get movin' or I'll knock ye on your can." He waves a bucket at Henry.

Gracie intervenes, "Get upstairs with ye -- I don't want us foolin' in here -- go on, get yourselves washed up for supper."

Henry starts upstairs, calls back gruffly, "Got any beer on ice?"

"Yes, I got beer," Gracie answers, "Come on, Henry, other gotta wash, too."

"Got two bottles?"

"I swear, boy --" hands akimbo.

Gracie asks, "Where's Robbie?"

Albert, "He'll be in, he's in the yard helpin' the old man with the carton." He puts buckets down in the corner. "I sneaked out this for Evelyn. We'll need it when we get marrit."

Gracie looks at it, says nothing. Robbie, shortest of all three, comes in. Gracie says, "Robbie, take this hot water up, so's all ye can get washt."

"O.K. Who's at -- Texas George?" He takes tub of hot water to stairway, listens for a moment to radio, then climbs stairs whistlin' tune.

Half hour later, they're sitting round table, cleanly dressed, blond hair parted on right side, glistening with water. Striking resemblance are three, except for height. Lean muscular.

Litheness of ball players. Albert's nostrils upturned, looks the King George; Robbie has two front teeth bleached.

"Whadja make for me?" Henry asks, holds knife point on tablecloth.

"Pork chops, and take the knife away from the tablecloth."

"I don't want any pork chops," Albert turns toward her.

"I made meat-balls and spaghetti for you, Albert; what ye want, Robbie?"

"Don't matter -- I like both." Robbie starts whistling Texas George tune.

"Where's me beer?" Henry grunts. Albert looks to see if bucket still in corner.

"Get your long feet outta the way," Robbie tell Henry. "Aaah," Henry brushes at his arm.

At this instant Willie bursts into kitchen in from living room, short-winded, his cap askew, "Who's been at my money-box?" Somebody's been down the cellar at my money-box. Damn it, I tole ye not to let strangers in here; done stole five dollars from my carton money."

"What strangers?" Albert asks.

Gracie wheels around. "Ain't nobody stole your money."

Henry blurts, "Tell him I took his five dollars." He stands up, clenches fist, protrudes chest, "Wanna make sumthin' outta it?"

Both Al and Robbie pull him into seat, "Oh, sit down and shut your mouth." Henry, taken by surprise, jumps backup, shoves chair

behind up, postures like boxer, "C'mon, I'll take ye both on -- sunnovabitch, both at same time -- c'mon, yaller-bellies."

Gracie deposits two steaming plates on table and wearily explodes, "Oh stop yer fussin. I declare, yer worst then a mess of babies . . . Willie Rutherford, stop your shaking and set at the table -- I took your five dollars for the insurance man."

Willie pants, "Insurance man ain't due till Saturday. You givin' my five dollars to that stranger, I'll bet ye did."

She stomps foot angrily on floor and moves toward stove. "So help me, WR, I'll mash ye with this here skillet if ye don't cut out yer talkin' that way. Howard ain't been here since he left this mornin'; I'm tellin' ye, I took yer money and I'll give it back to ye on payday. Now, set to the tables and stop yer fussin; all of ye, I want quiet during supper."

Henry asks Al, "Who's this Howard?"

Gracie answers, "He's the new mechanic thes came on this mornin. He's a nice fella. I expect he'll be here soon to meet all of yey."

Gracie parcels out food. Willie, still pouting and disgruntled, sits next to Robbie, his hat still askew. "Gonna hide my box so's nobody kin find it next time."

There's a moment of silence, punctuated only by knives and forks and clinking glasses.

"Landsakes," Gracie says, looking up at clock, "in all of the excitement I plumb forgot what happint to Margie. She oughta been home from school two hours ago."

Screen door rattles, Gracie rushes out. From other room, "What happint to ye, girl? School let out two hours ago, an' stop eatin' that candy bar, supper's on the table."

Margie struts in, looks at table, "Boyoboy, pork chops . . . meat-ball -- an' BEER!"

"Where ya been?" Albert asks severly, a note of big brother reprimand. She turns up her nose, "I been delayed, what's it to ye?"

"That ain't no way to answer me -- I ask ye where ye been?" persistent.

Willie looks at her under heavy brows, "She been foolin' with boys on 'em street corners -- at's where she's been."

"Ye been hookyin from school to fool wif boys?" Gracie.

She ignores the question, plops into a chair between Willie and Albert, and bends over to play with Rover who's chomping on a pork bone.

"Leave her alone. What're ye ridin' her for?" Henry waves fork toward his jaw, "It'll take the jerk pimples off her face, like it did mine . . . besides, what's she got bumps for in her blouse?"

"HENRY!" Margie leaps up outraged. Henry bursts out guffawing at his bold joke. Robbie and Albert threatens to punch hell out of him if he don't stop at once. Ole man lip flaps against his tooth, "What? What he say?" He turns towards Robbie, toward Albert seeking meaning of tumult which passed his ears.

Gracie leans across table waving ladle at Henry. Narrows eyes, "Henry Rutherford, you ain't in saloon an' you'd first better watch yer talk in this house. Don't ye ever talk to yer sister like that agin, y'hear me? Don't ye ever!"

Screen door rattles. Rover runs out of kitchen barking. "Landsakes," Gracie says, "must be Howard." All in a dither, she puts ladle back on wrong hook, starts pulling nervously on apron, before leaving kitchen, turns toward table, "I want no fussin' or wise-\_\_\_\_\_ while he's in here -- y'hear me?" She feels Willie staring at her fixing apron. Points finger above his nose, "An' don't you go off with you wild talk -- One minute!" She calls out toward front. She pads out to door.

"Howdy!", Howard says, cigarette dangling, coming into living room. "I'm in a bit of a hurry, but I thought I'd drop in as I promised to meet your family."

Grace giggles, "Glad to have ye." He follows her giggling into kitchen, Rover sniffing at his footsteps. He nods as he enters kitchen -- meets with strong silence. Feels sense of awkwardness. Gracie, fumbling with apron, (she beams throughout), blurts proudly, "This is ma fambly!"

Howard nods and smiles. "This is Albert, my eldest, he's the one who's gonna marry a Caflec girl." Albert looks severely at Gracie for her last remark, starts to stand up, drops a fork. Bends down, "Oh the hell with it." He reaches across table, shakes hands, seriously asks, "Howdoyedo?" "What's your name?" Assumes father role.

"Howard. Howard Grumpner. I'm the new mechanic," he grins warmly. \_\_\_\_\_ repeats "Howdoyedo?"

"An' this is Robbie, the youngest of the boys." Robbie stands stiffly, softly says, "Howdoyedo?"

"An' Henry, he's the painter." Henry sits in his chair, his arms at his side, and nods strongly-\_\_\_\_\_, "Howdy." Leisurely, he decides to stand and squeezes Howard's hand.

Howard winces at unexpected squeeze, "Mighty powerful hand, Henry." Henry smiles wanly, reaction of flattery.

"This here is Margie, my onliest daughter."

"My what a pretty girl." Howard studies her black tooth for a moment as she grins at him, pull her dress down.

Willie, without hearing Gracie's introduction, but feeling it's his turn next, rises slightly from his chair, \_\_\_\_\_ and listlessly extends his hand which feels like dead fish or limp rag.

Before anyone can say a word, or silence becomes embarrassing, Gracie leans over table, grabs an open bottle of beer and thrusts it into Howard's hand. "Really, I don't want anything, Miss Gracie."

"Go on, go on don't be bashful with me. Beer's good for ye."

Howard feels all eyes on him. He leans against frame of window. "Finish eatin', don't let me disturb you." He begins to sucks on bottle, sees they're waiting, staring at plate, at each other, at him.

Gracie, "Have a seat?"

Howard, "No, I'd rather stand."

Gracie, "How'd you like first day here?"

Howard, "Well, not much different than other jobs. Got more trucks, bigger ones too. Mack, white, but it'll be all right. Feels attention riveted on him, tries to shift interest. "Yourself?"

"You all work together, don't you?"

"Yup," Henry first to answer. "We dammed near runt the galvanize room between the three of us."

Albert and Robbie flower at him. He continued, "We're on piece-work now. You know anythin' 'bout galvanizin'? No? Wal, I myself p\_\_\_\_\_ over 350 buckest today. Just about set a record. Joe Prima, the foreman, he's a dago, but nice fella, he said that . . ."

Gracie interrupts, "Henry's sure enuf a good worker -- everybody says so, But he likes to brag."

"\_\_\_\_\_ is dangerous work, don't kid yourself. Dippin' buckets in hot acids till that galvanzie sticks to the sides. If ye ain't careful, ye can burn you entire arm off."

Howard was interested. "Is that a fact? How do you protect yourself?"

"Wal, we covers ourselves with big rubber aprons, and rubber gloves that comes up to your shoulders. We puts masks over our faces to keep out the acid fumes."

Howard, "Lord, must look like Frankenstein's with all that on."

Gracie and Margie giggle. "Damned if we don't," Robbie smiled. (General thawing of atmosphere.)

Refusing to be diverted, Henry continued, "Course, sometimes acids kin escape and get into your lungs, and yer a gonner."

Albert immersed adds, "Thing that really bothers me is the tanks, the acid tanks, damned things are heated to \_\_\_\_\_ degrees. If somebody every farts around with the heat on um, those bastards will explode and blow every man in that room to kingdom come."

"Man," Howard nods at terrible thought. "How long all of you been doing this?"

"I started 'bout 9 years ago -- I was just 17 -- I had to go to work when the ole man was laid off. Wuz 9 years wasn't it?"

Old man, hunched over table, "What? Yes, jist 9 years." Opening made for him in conversation and he crawled thru it, blabbering, "It'l be 'xactly 9 years next week, June 22. They laid me off in the afternoon, after I came back from the doctor's. Factory doctor. He fixed my hand when I lost these two fingers in the stamping machine." He holds hand up. Howard grimaces at gnarles fist. "They said it was depression. Hell, they didn't have any more use for me, at's all. Give'd me couple hundred dollars and laid me off. What could I do? Livin' in their house like this, couldn't even ask for more money."

Howard scowled, felt pity for ole man. Momentary silence. Gracie blurts, "Drink yer beer, Howard, it's gettin' warm."

He smiles, "Nearly forgot about it."

Henry, picks up thread, "I started 7 years ago, jest about two years after Albert, and he (point to Robert) started 2 years after me. Have to be 17 to get work permit."

"Hell, I got mine when I was 16 -- I fooled 'em. I didn't want to go to school nomore, so's I started in early, my first job was hammering handles into buckets. At's where all of us got muscles from." Howard looks at sturdy arms of boys.

"You sure have -- Margie, you got muscles like them?" Tries to bring her into conversation.

"Sure she has," Henry says looking obviously at her chest.

"Henry!" Gracie scowls at him. He laughs.

Howard says, "I'd like to drop into your department."

Robbie, in an attitude of confession, "I'd been a better off in school. They throwed all 3 of us in galvanizing room, cos they can't get others to work there. What the hell am I gittin' outa this? There ain't no advancement, ain't got a raise in 3 three; if anythin' ever happint to me, say, lose a finger like the ole man did or get gassed -- they'd chuck me just like this."

Albert, "No, they wouldn't -- union won't let 'em."

Robbie, "Union, shit! Union ain't nothin' here. Take Buck Peters and Walter Collie -- they're the heads of the union (to Howard who nods), them guys don't give a damned 'bout us. They're worrit 'bout their own skins. A joke, union is. I see both of 'em

ridin' around with old man Matthew in his Cadillac day before the last strike was called off. Those guys id sell us out for a quart of beer, hell, no, I'm gettn' fed up with this damned place, dangerous work like this," pause, "I'm fixin' to join the army."

Gracie, overwhelmed, "What?"

"Not jest yet, but soon enuf."

Howard, "I was in the army in last war, that's where I learnt to become a mechanic."

Robbie, "Izzat so. What was it like?"

Howard laughs, "It's a long story, Robbie -- I'll tell you about it sometime -- tell you what -- soon as I get settled in my place."

"We'll show you around if it's o.k. with the foreman," Robbie volunteers.

"Well, I don't want to keep you from \_\_\_\_\_ and I gotta be going. Sure was pleased to meet you." He waves so long. Grace goes out with him to front door.

He thanks her for the beer, "Oh, at't nothin', drop around some more," Gracie fingers dress.

"I will; you got a real nice family. If there's anything I miss, it's nice family life -- well, bye!"

CHAPTER V

One month later - midsummer. Gracie and Margie are in kitchen, Saturday afternoon (lazy day, neighbor's car stops, ball in street, Willie away with cartons). Gracie's routine: ironing, washing, mopping, tending gate, coal dust, neighbors. Gracie mopping floors, Margie on chair munching candy-bar, playing with Rover. Henry in saloon, Robbie looking at car, Albert at girls. Factory agent asks for rent, reproaches Gracie for being day late; she sulks afterwards -- outhouse, no running hot water, no wallpaper -- but gate tends, lose fingers -- Mr. Matthews in car.

Margie says wouldn't it be nice if Howard were her father. What made her say that, Grace asks. I dunno, just thinkin' -- maying things would be different -- he's smiling, pleasant, and he's got a car -- we could go places -- downtown, drivin' in the country, might even take us to the movin' pictures (movies), none of Willie (old man, \_\_\_\_\_) groundin' -- might even take me and boyfriend for ride; Gracie irritated at thought Margie playing with boys.

Margie blurts out -- why dont'ya marry him? Gracie tells her to stop being foolish, besides Willie ain't dead.

Margie, "If he died, would'ya marry him?"

Gracie, "Stop talkin' nonsense, gimme a hand."

Margie, "Maybe you'd do like Aunt Eleanor did."

Gracie, "Margie!"

Margie, "Well, she's just like married. They sleep together and Cousin Herman calls him Pops."

Gracie, "Stop talkin' and help me."

Margie, "I'm goin' out front and read comics, yer need the  
extercize."

On Saturday afternoon in mid-July street assumes new face, what during the week is a growling, irascible, grimy, contorted face is now composed, pleasantly relaxed, sunking in lassitude. Trucks are gone, mist of carbon monoxide has fled before onrushing warm July air scented as it emerges from the bay at Ferry Point and crosses the fields, over the valley, it hangs with musky fragrance. Face smiles in a hot sun sits on the street, stroking with warmth. Occasional twitter as half-nakes kids shout as they play play ball on hot asphalt. Noises mingle with occasional call of cows in

\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ on  
corner. Across the tracks, doorbell on Abe Levin's tottering  
screen door tinkles. Bicycles thrown on side on pavement.

Neighbors houses sit relaxed behind wooden steps. Mrs. Campbell's eight children play with hose on hot pavement, Johnsons' glass doors sparkle in sun, they've gone shrimping in rock creek; Krells are on steps shubbering popsicles, look at comic book pictures; Kelleys are cleaning new car; Popeye's barefoot, followed by ragged dog, walks along gutter looking for fintail. On the lot, which ends the row of houses, kids crouch playing marbles.

Most serene, uninteresting part of face is left side. Great block building is seized with \_\_\_\_\_ of silence. Steps, animals, by dainty feet of office girls and factory talk, resumes staid composure of unquarried marble.

Throughout shipping, reviewing, cutting room, stamping; galvanize, packing have yielded to coma of the Sabbath. And on the surface, the contagion of silence has spread to the Rutherford house, nestled at the feet of the giant building which hovers over it. Gibson drain back in the sun, yielding up water from warping; gate to garage \_\_\_\_\_ as huge slips \_\_\_\_\_ through hundred little openings.

In the kitchen, Gracie, her knees heavily planted on a rubber mat, unbends to mop her brow. She is washing floor, bucket of hot water at her side, and brush in her hand.

"It's hot, ain't it?" Margie asks lazily. She's sitting on chair, in white shorts; a comic book is in her hands, and she's blowing bubble-gum.

"Move yer feet -- yer in the way," Gracie says. Margie stands up, walks toward back door. She calls Rover from under chair, picks up his front paws, makes baby talk to him, "You's a good doggie, you is, yes you is, a good good good doggie." Rover barks, his long tongue hangs out. On hind legs he dances up close to Margie's naked, begins rhythmic motion against her with his belly. His long red tongue coils back and forth, and he pants audibly.

Gracie swivels around, frowns, orders, "Margie, take Rover into the yard, let him run around and put some of that steam outta his stomach."

Margie sends Rover into yard, throws dirty bone into weeds beyond outhouse away from shacks. Rover chases after it, Margie returns.

Gracie has washed over to the icebox now. She stands up, and stretches, "Guess I'm getting old. Gotta crick in ma back."

"Got any soder, mā?"

"There's some oringe in the icebox. Think I'll havesome, too."

Margie takes out bottle, starts toward cupboard for glasses.

"Dang it -- don't step on the wet floor. Walk on the papers I put down over there." Margie walks daintily on newspapers, brings back two glasses. She hands Gracie a glass, pours self a glass, sits down next to Gracie, and hands her bottle. Gracie pours hers, stretches to put bottle on table. They sip.

"Ah, it's good and cold," Gracie says wiping her wet lips.

Margie, "Where's ole man."

Gracie, "Took away a load of cartons."

Margie, "Where's Robbie's go?"

Gracie, "Went to the movies -- at's about the only entertainment that boy has. Wisht he'd get marrit and stop talkin' about the army."

Margie, "What'd he go see?"

Gracie, "I dunno. Gene Autry -- or some cowboy piece."

Margie, "Did he go with Henry?"

Gracie, "I guess not. Henry left early in the mornin' -- took all his spendin' money with him."

Margie, "Guess he went to a saloon."

Gracie, "I dunno -- I majin so," perturbed; moment of silence.

Margie, "Al's at his girl's ain't he?"

Gracie, "Yas. I dunno what he sees in her. Course, she's decent and respectable, but she ain't purty atall."

Margie, "He likes goin' to church with her. Says it's all decorated, and purty inside, an' makes him feel different an' clean (he don't cuss in front of her)."

Gracie (shakes head), "I dunno, hin't nobody, neither in Willie's nor in my famby ever marrit a Caflec. I ain't got nothin' again' 'em, 'cept it sounds purty crazy talkin' to statues and pictures, and countin' heads like they do."

"Ma-a."

Gracie notes inflection of serious inquiry in Margie's tone.

"Ma, wuldn't it be nice if you was marrit to Howard?"

"Now whatever made ye say that?" questions mildly.

"I dunno -- I been thinkin'." She stares into glass, shakes liquid, looks up gathering dreamy excitement, "but wundt it be nice, tho?"

Gracie says harmlessly, "Wal, he's a very nice feller."

"He ain't marrit, is he?"

"No. His wife got killed five years ago in an accident. never remarrit."

"Chee, if you was marrit to Howard everything'd be so different -- we and go places in his big Buick an' see different things -- I betcha he'd takes us uptown to the Hippdrome."

"We ain't never been to the Hippodrome," Gracie says trance-like.

"An' we'd go to different restaurants."

"We ain't been no place since I been marrit to Willie."

"I betcha he'd take me an' my boy-friend for a ride even -- he'd drive and we'd sit in the back an --"

"Margie! I don't wantcha talkin' like that! What in the world's been happenin' to ye."

"Ain't nothin' happenin' to me. I'm dang fed up bein' cooped up in this chicken-coop, doin' nothin', seein' nothin'; ain't nuthin' in this house but fussin' an' fightin' allin time. Damned ole man is gettin' on my nerves. I wisht he'd die an' we'd leave here, this ole chicken coop -- no friends or nuthin'."

"What're ye fussin' about? If anybody's to fuss, I'm the one to fuss. Work myself to the bone, from mornin' to night -- washin' and ironin' and cleanin' and feedin' all of ye three times a day -- and runnin' myself ragged tendin' the gate -- and scrimpin' to pay the rent and the grocery bill. I get no thanks from nobody. Soon as I step outta the door, the ole man in spyin' on me, can't even talk to a soul without expectin' to contend with him. Landsakes, girl, you got nothun' to complain about, goin' to school, an' all in dresses of yours. Why, I ain't been to a movie in morin' a year."

A knock on front screen door intrudes upon her speech. "Now, who could that be? Sure ain't Willie, he's got left a coupla hour ago." She put down glass and walks to door.

"Oh, hullo, Mr. Alexander, come right in," she says, opening door. Alexander is robust, red-cheeked, white crew-cut.

"Nice summer day, isn't it?" routinely.

"Really, didn't have a chance to see, been cleanin' all mornin' -- here have a seat, I'll bring the rent right in to ye."

She hurries into kitchen, steps on papers to cupboard, opens coffee-can, takes out rolled-up bills, returns, counts it out in his palm, "fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen -- that's right, ain't it? Maybe yer should count it over again."

"Yes, that's right, Miss Gracie." Pause, stiffly, "Uh, Miss Gracie, I thought I ought to remind you that the rent was due las week, and though I don't mind making a special trip here for it - - it is good to see you again, the established procedure is that you're to bring the monies to the office."

Gracie feels her spine twist in knots. A bitterness mounts in her bosom and climbs to her throat, and then it subsides, falling back again inside her. "I unerstan', Mr. Alexander, y'see -- uh, last week I has to pay the gas bill (fiddles with apron) and the insurance was due, so's I didn't have enuf to make it up -- an' I was goin' to bring it up myself yesterday, but I was here alone by myself and what with tendin' the gate an' one thing an' another I couldn't get around before the office closed."

"Well, I understand, Miss Gracie. I knew there was some good reason because you and your family are so faithful to Matthew Bucket Company, but I thought I'd just remind you. Well, bye bye, an' have a pleasant week-end. Oh yes, the office will send you a receipt first thing Monday morning." The door slammed shut, and Gracie stood in the middle of the living room flaming with indignation.

"Well, damn it to hell!" A confused fury took hold of her. "Don't mid making a special trip! I shoulda' booted that pot-belly, stuff-pants," she choked with anger. "Don't mind -- special trip! How many special trips do I make outta to thet gate and back?!" She waves towards gate. "Faithful to the factory!" (Mimics at screen door as though talking to Alexander), "We ain't faithful, pot-belly, we're slaves to the damn factory!" She turns toward kitchen, shaking her head, stomping feet on floor. "Maybe I shoulda ast him if it's 'stablished procedure to paper a house oncet in 12 years, or to have to poop in a wooden shack with the widn freezin' your tail, toilet bucket in yer bedroom, or to -- to have drag buckets a' hot water up a flight of stairs to washt your face, or coal dust coverin' face and clothes, or haunted shacks in yard -- Damn, if he ain't got his nerve."

Margie commiserates, "See? Just whut I told ye, we aughta get up and get the hell outa here. We aughta show 'em. They don't 'preciate whut we do for 'em anyways. We oughta jest get up and get the hell oughta here."

Gracie stands in front of window, wavin' clenched fist towards Alexander's car which pulls away up the street. "We'll do it, I tell ye, one of these days when I get good and ready, we'll do it. We'll get pack up everythin' and leave, we'll go back to the country or somewheres. An' they can have their shack out there, and that gate of theirs can swing on them hinges till they fall off from rustin' 'fore I swing it open agin."

Gracie sits down, partially exhausted. There is silence as Gracie ruminates over the Alexander episode.

"Ma-a-a," Margie starts as before. "Ma -- is Howard got money?"

"I guess he's got a right nice sum put away. Must have to run that big Buick and to keep up his home in the country."

"In the country?"

"Sure, didn't ye know he lives in the country? Sure, girl, he's been livin' in and out (almost as long as we been here. Got a nice home."

Margie, "How d'ye know?"

Gracie, stiffly, "He tole me."

Margie wiggles with new delight, "Chee, I didn't know that."

"Sure, he sez he's been livin' in the country ten, 'leven years now -- drives back and to every day."

Margie relishes thought.

"Ma-a, he likes you, don't he?"

"Gracious sakes, stop astin' foolish questions! Ye talk like a little chile."

"But don't he tho?"

"We gets along very friendly, but that don't mean nuthin'."

"He must like you a lot, ma."

"What makes ye say that."

"Well, ever since he's been workin' here, he's been bringin' you things, and regular too."

"What, well how do ye know?"

"Oh, I ain't blind. I seen the tablecloth and towels he brot ye last week, the ones ye hid in the burey in our room."

"Now, I don't want ye touchin' that stuff."

"Oh, don' worry, I ain't gonna touch anythin' -- and I seen the powder box and puff he give'd couple weeks before that."

"Landsakes! Everybody's a'spyin' in this home!" Slaps lap in exasperation.

"Don't take on so. I'm not a'spyin', an' ain't nothin' wrong with it. I jest say he likes ye -- he likes ye a lot, an' ya oughta do somethin' about it."

"Them little presents ain't nuthin' but thanks for some work I did for him -- like pressin' an' darnin' an things -- ain't nuthin' else to." Sticks foot out to step on cockroach that meanders from under icebox. "Whatyamean, I oughta do sumethin' about it?"

Without hesitation, Margie blurts out climatically, "MARRY HIM!"

Gracie leaps up in shock, "Now, Margie, ye cut out yer prattle -- foolish nonsense a girl your age," then \_\_\_\_\_, "besides, Willie's still alivin'."

"If the ole man was dead, wouldja marry Howard?"

Gracie stares into living room, her mind caught up in sudden web of reverie -- the image on the bed cover, Howard at her side, his arm across her waist, she shakes with the cold thrilling sensation, "What?"

"Wouldja?"

"Now, Margie, I don't want to hear another word of this -- stead your jabbering away like a silly schol-chile, you'd better gimme a hand in cleanin' up the livin' room."

Margie stubbornly refuses to let go. She wants to elicit an answer. "Don't really have to wait till ole man dies -- besides, he's gonna try to outlive you jest fer spite -- you could do like Aunt Eleanor."

"Margie, I ain't standin' for another minute of you jibber-jabber!"

"She's jest the same as marrit. She's been livin' with Frank Chester for two years, and Cousin Horace calls him 'Pop'."

"Stoppit this very minute! You say another wod and I'll mash you with this scrubbin' brush!"

Margie moves back toward screen door, continuing unabashedly, "Trouble with you is ye don't know how to handle Howard. I'll betcha he'd want to live with ye, he's terribly lonely, specially not bein' with a woman for five years. If ye knew how to handle him."

Gracie helpless before the barrage, has swirled around in fury and raced into living room. Margie follows her in, in a few moments. Gracie asks her, "Now that you stopt yer blatherin', ye gonna help me clean?"

"Naw, I'm goin' out front to read the comics. I ain't ever goin' to work, coz ye don't have to . . . if ye know how to handle him." The screen door slams shut and Gracie stands staring blankly at the flapping shade.

CHAPTER VI

(Howard up). Howard greets Margie out front, asks about Gracie, goes in with laundry bag, explained he had nothing to do, though he'd take overalls to laundry. She says she'll do it for him. (He's greatly moved.) Howard speaks sentimentally of family scene. Invites her to country home following Sunday. Thrilled by idea of invitation (like first date; bedroom vision ((hope - taboo)) (but momentarily disturbed by thought of Willie), she blushing accepts. Suggests he pick her up. She says meet her near Wichlein's Alley. Willie would be disturbed, neighbors would talk.

Margie, sitting on front chain flipping pages of comic books, can't concentrate, too much activity in street with ball -- playing, and little girls in bloomers running around screaming in spray of hose. She looks down at curve of her legs and thinks how attractive they are. She hopes Reds Kelley is notching her -- she'd like to --. She glances up street and sees Howard coming out of watchman's entrance. "What in the hell is doing in the fact'ry t'day?" Howard walks down street toward her. He's carrying something. A bag. Margie bets it's somethin' for the ole lady. "Jerk," she muses, "o'l bet he's in love with the ole woman an' ain't got guts enuf to tell her. Christ, good lookin' man like that ain't been in bed with a women in five years. I betcha I could . . . "

"Howdy, Margie . . . "

"Hey, look at ye all spruced up . . . "

Laughs. "All spruced up? All I did was take off my dungarees, put on some clean pants, an washed my face."

"Well, ye looks all spruced up to me. What ye got in the sack?"

He looks down at the white bag. "Oh this? This is some dirty clothes that I piled up on the garage. I had nothing to do today so I thought I'd come in an' take care of my laundry and odds and ends. What're you doin' showing off your pretty legs?"

"Not bad, hugh? Nope. Tryin' to read the comics here, but those damned kids over there makin' too much fuss. Oughta be a law against 'em playin' in the streets like thet, disturbin' other people's place. I'll betcha they're doin' it on purpose." Looks at her legs, squintin' in the sun. "Guess ye want to see Ma. She's inside."

Defensively, "Thought I'd drop in say hello, bein's I'm here already." Picks up sack, rattles door, Gracie looks out, opens, "Come in, come in. Jest in the middle of cleanin' up, " giggles. "Ole man and boys are gone. I'd thought I'd straighten things out a bit."

"I happened to be in the factory, so I thought I'd," door slams behind them.

"Jerk," Margie mutters, "why don't he stop playin' possum and take up to the bedroom. Do 'em both good . . . Christ, I betcha I could . . ." She looks at her legs.

"Come on out in the kitchen, I'll get ye somethin' to drink. Did ye eat yet? Maybe I kin fix ye a bite to eat . . . "

"Lord, no. I ate a big lunch uptown, before I came here. Don't bother yourself at all, Grace."

"Ain't no bother. Take me a minute . . . ."

"Now please, don't." He touches her arm. She stops and feels a whirling sensation, a gauze-like hand fluttering in her stomach. She looks up at him as though through a wooly veil; an inarticulate urge impels her crazily.

"Please don't bother, Grace," he says intimately, still touching her hand.

"Well, here's a drink anyways." She clumsily pours him a glass of root beer. "How come yer here on Sactiday. I'd think you'd want to get away from the fact'ry. Lord knows I do."

"I had nothin' to do at my home -- it's kinda lonely out there, so I thought I'd come in and collect my dirty clothes and take 'em to the laundry. Don't have much time for that during the week."

"Is that your laundry in the sack there?"

"Uh huh." She walks over, lifts it up. "Landsakes, ain't much there. I'll do it fer ye."

"Now, Gracie, no." He stands up to protest.

"Oh, Howard, don't go gettin' excited. Ye got a handful of things there. Take me ten minutes to wash 'em up for you. Ain't no use ye botherin' with runnin' all over the city to laundries. They rip things up terribly anyhow."

"Gracie, I didn't drop in here to bring you any extra work." He reaches out for bag. She snatches it away and drops it in

summer kitchen. "I knows ye didn't. But, Howard, I wants te do it. Now, sit down an' finish yer root beer."

He feels like schoolboy, flustered, realizes futilely of arguing with her.

"Gracie, honestly . . . I don't -- "

"At's all. It's done already -- no use talkin'."

"You've really been very nice to me. I wish there was some way I could repay you."

She blushes. "Oh, landsakes, you're the one who's been nice. All those purty things you bringed me. Besides, it's enuf payment you're comin' around. You're always so pleasant and full o' fun."

He's staring at her studiously. She feels unnerved. He says quietly, "Gracie, how, how'd you like to come out to my home?" She is stunned. Embarrassed like a schoolgirl asked out on first date. She leaps up, looks into living room to see if Margie is around, then whispers jubilantly: "I'd like it fine, Howard." For a moment, she simply stands over him, her face bathed in joy. Suddently a frown emerges and like a little cloud and settles on her face.

"What's the matter, Grace?"

"Nuthin' 'cept . . . Willie . . ."

"Well, you don't have to tell him, do you?" She thinks for a moment."

"When do ye want me to come out?"

"Tomorrow?"

"No. I'd ruther not . . . I'll need more time to prepare things . . . ", purses lips, " . . . how 'bout next Sunday . . ."

Nods. "That's fine with me."

She feels exhilarated, then somewhat bewildered -- two reveries wrangle in her mind -- the rainy night, the clutching hand feeling in her stomach; the reverie in the bedroom. Excited and whispering conspiratorially, she tells him not to meet her in front of house, Willie'd kill her and neighbors would talk; arrange to meet her in Wichlein's Alley -- about 10 o'clock in the morning.

He stands up, places both his arms on her shoulders and says, "I'm glad you'll come."

She bleats happily, "Hee, hee, so'm I . . . Jest can't wait . . . ."



CHAPTER VII

Willie comes (walks) back from Pratt Street (6 miles), from selling cartons, (brings back large jar of aspirins, feenamint -- wuz a sale, delighted with "find" -- seen it in the papers, 10¢ specs), puts money in a jar box, goes into back yard to take leak, sees men's clothes, tears down clothes pole, stamps on clothes, Rover barking, breaks into kitchen in mad rage, accuses Grace of fartin' around with Howard. She tries to quiet him down with "blood pressure", then threatens to go to her sister Eleanor (Willie: "Whore's nest wif both of you laying there."), stomps down into cellar to chop wood.

At 6 o'clock, Willie trudges into house. Door open, "Damn 'em, careless as hell . . . ." Enters living room, Rover trots out to sniff at him, sneezes at bad smell. Mumbles, "Where the hell they all go to . . . Sure am tired." He was up at 6:00 a.m., packing last few bundles of cartons in backyard by himself. At 1:00 big truck from Junk & Paper Company came around and he helped nigger load it. They finished loading at 1:30; he got in front with driver and blubbered all way out to Junk yard. Got sense of power-importance sitting up front looking out at people. As they drove through market, stopped at red light, he looks around hopefully that neighbors would see him in his position of eminence. Near the Echo movies a couple of kids from across the street did see him and called out, "Hey, look at old man Rubberfoot! Four blocks away from home! Guess he's lost!" Willie didn't hear them well, thought it was a greeting, feeling of two neighbors meeting

in foreign country, he waved feebly back at them. Nigger grinned white teeth flashing. Willie shouts to him above roar of motor, although there is no roar, "They live crost the street from me."

Takes everything in as they rattle along, comments on stores, waterfront, cobble streets, watermelon boats, Dago neighborhoods, gypsies in windows. When he enters yard, junkman says, "Got a big load on this trip, Willie. Betcha it's lest \$8.00 . . . ." (guessing weight, is standard \_\_\_\_\_ between them).

"More'n thet . . . ."

Stands dully by scales as guy swiftly weighs it -- hands him \$8.25.

"Sure it ain't more?"

"Well, here check it yourself." Books blankly at weights. "I could'na swore this was a bigger load than last time."

"Well, it is. Last time y' got \$4.00 , remember?"

Willie nods, "Oh, yeh."

"Well, s'long, Willie, see you in a couple weeks?"

Mumbles "Yeh". Sticks crumbled bills in pants pockets, leaves yard, feels cheated. Doesn't take trolley, afraid he'll get lost. As he starts walking along street, feels rising sense of power, and money feels like hot golden nugget in pocket. He clamps hand on pocket, and gives dirty look to passerby, especially negroes.

Walk back takes about two hours. He stops to look in windows to catch his breath occasionally. Stops at all hardware stores, brace and bits, green and white paints, brushes, saw blades, plane.

When he gets to market, he goes to drug store, asks for big jar of aspirins (uses for headaches from blood pressure) which were advertised in paper. "What?", white jacketed girl asks, wrinkling nose, can't understand him. "Them!", he points to jar on shelf. "That'll be forty-nine cents and a penny tax." Then he asks for box of feenamint and a bottle of alkaseltzer. Turns to side to count out money. Hands girl two dollars, doesn't hear her say to cashier, "'stead all this stuff, he oughta buy a bar of soap. . ."

He leaves with package proudly in arms, mingles with market crowd, goes into air-conditioned 5&10. Dazzled by its sparkling glass and time magnificence. He goes to counter, girl asks, "Can I help you sir?" He mumbles somethin' and begins trying on glasses. Tries on six, seven pairs, selects first one, pays her 15 cents. Trundles home, tired by exhilarated.

Now he sits in parlor with packages relishing his "buys". Tries on his new magnifying glasses, looking around rooms, stiffly at Rover. Suddenly remembers money in his pocket, picks up packages, goes down to cellar. Looks up stairs to see no one is watching him. Takes out two bricks from wall, puts money in cigar box, replaces it.

Comes upstairs. Can't unnderstan' where everybody's went to; should never leave house alone like this. Decides he has to take a leak, Rover follows him out to yard. He sees clothesline hanging

with men's gray pants, shirts, shorts and undershirts, (boys are all blue), breaks into wild rage, tears down clothesline, tramples on clothes, shirt falls on Rover who madly races about yard trying to shake it off, barks fiercely. Yanks screen door open, stomps into kitchen, cussin' enragedly; Gracie rushes downstairs.

"What in the world -- "

Willie, his eyes flaring and his cheeks flushing red, "What in the hell are those clothes doin' out there in my yard?"

"Willie -- "

"Answer em, damn ya woman!"

"Willie, your blood pressure -- "

"Goddman the blood pressure -- what are ye doin' washin' that man's clothes and hangin' 'em in ma yard?"

"Willie Rutherford, now stop your damned hollerin'. I ain't gonna stand for yer cussin' at me." She boils up too.

"No sooner I turn my back, ye start foolin' with man -- wal, I'm tellin' ye, ole woman," he stares at her ruthlessly, "if I even catch ye in bed with that man, I'll kill ye, I'll kill ye both." He is screeching and his eyes are frozen and glacial.

"Don't ye threaten me. I'll put ye in jail. Dammit, you cuss me again, I'll call 'em to take ye to a crazy house."

"If I ever catch him again on this here property, I'll throw my wood-ax at him."

"Ye crazy baboon. If ye don't stop this minute I'll leave ye -- I'll go to my sister Eleanor's -- "

He points toward the door. "Go -- at's where ye belong -- ye're two of a kind -- ye're, ye're." With uncontrolled fury, "Ye're both WHORES!"

She bursts into hysterical crying and he trudges down cellar, stops, picks up his ax and with maddening ferociousness chops deeply, angered thrust after thrust, into a massive tree stump.



CHAPTER VIII

Week has passed. During week, Willie sulks moodily, they don't talk to each other; she doesn't prepare food for him. He eats when no one is around, when alone in house with him, she stays upstairs, terrified that he might break loose and kill her. She warns Howard to say away, she'll see him Sunday. Children aware of her terror, Henry says he'll slap ole man down, she begs him not to. Margie says it's her own fault for not leaving. Albert says it's crazy house, glad he's getting married; Robbie, it'll be all right, they're always like this.

On following Sunday morning, Willie in backyard making Gibson chairs. Grace says she's going to sick sister Viola's -- takes pot of food with her. (Willie informed by Viola's son earlier, aware Viola is sick). She explains to Margie that food's prepared for family, asks her to stay with old man (watch gate). Gracie leaves house, walks up street, feels eyes on her, looks back, she's Margie watching her from behind curtained door, and Willie (with hammer in hand) near the fence. Crosses tracks, up block, turns Kagle's corner, down to Wichlein's Alley, sees Howard's Buick, looks around, heart thumping, hops in, they speed away.

A week has passed. It's Sunday morning, 9:30. Willie is in the background grimly sorting slats, preparing to make a Gibson chair. Upstairs Henry and Robbie are still in bed, Albert has gone to church with his girl. Gracie, bright-eyes and haunted, new dress, powder on face, is in the front room, setting on the edge

of the bed talking to Margie whom she has awakened. She speaks to her in whispers.

The week has been one of whispers. Since last Saturday, Gracie has felt a sense of terror clinging to her (the rainy night, the hand in her stomach). She has constantly feared Willie's exploding into an act of violence, like against her and Howard. Throughout the week, Willie has not said a word to anyone. He and Gracie have avoided each other. He has eaten his meals alone. Gracie feels something fierce and violent is brewing in his mind. Whenever he came into the house, she rushed up to the front room and locked her door. She has warned Howard to say away; she said she would meet him in Wichlein's Alley 10:00 o'clock as they arranged, but not to come to the home at any cost.

The other night at supper, Gracie stalked uneasily about the room, brooding, nervously looking at front and back doors. Henry suddenly burst out, "What the hell is goin' on here? Place is like a funeral paller? Hey," he called to the ole woman, "What's happint?" The others, Al, Robbie, Margie, were apparently unaware or didn't care to involve themselves in finding out why the strained atmosphere, but when Henry asked, "What happint?" and the ole woman burst into tears, they sat back in their chairs and were concerned.

"Oh, f'r Christ sake, stop blubberin' like a coyote and tell us what's happint." An' she blew her nose, wipt her eyes and she tole them about washin' Howard's few things, and how the old man in tearin' down the pole, and screamin' and yellin' and threatenin'

to axe Howard and kill her and how he was accusin' her of bein' a whore -- and she bursts into tears again, cryin', "That man's torturin' me to death."

An' Henry sat back with his hands on his hips, and smirked, "Sunnuvabitch, place is getting to be a real nut-house!"

"Gettin'?" Margie added, "It's done been a nut-house since we came here."

Henry then ordered the ole woman to stop her cryin' and he said that if the ole man acts up he would beat the livin' daylights out of him. Gracie pleaded with him hoarsely not to anything like that, 'coz it'll sure set him off an' there's no tellin' whut he would do then. Albert washed his hands of the whole thing, saying he was glad he's gettin' married soon and gettin' away from this sinful place (Henry threatened to punch him to for his high-an'-mighty Catholic talk). Margie says in her grossest manner, "Ye wouldin' lissen' te me. I tole ye to leave him, should left 'at crazy bastard long ago -- I tole ya."

An' Robbie sealed the conversation with an admonition, that they're all makin' a great big fuss over a spat. This is happint before and it'll happen agin. Jest leave him alone and it'll all blow over with time.

An' nothin' else did happen during the week, 'cept that Gracie was mortally frightened and constantly on the verge of tears. And now that she sat on Margie's bed this Sunday morning, she knew she had to get away at least for a day. She tells margie who is yawning in her face that she is leaving for a little while.

"Where ye goin'?" She yawns again and smiles pleased over the sudden thought of her date last night.

"Aunt Viola is sick -- I'm goin' over to see her a little while," Gracie says shakily.

Margie arches her eyebrow in disbelief, but she yawns, too tired to press for the truth. "Yeh," she says drowsily, hinting that she knows.

Gracie hesitates, feels she cannot explain any further, asks Margie to serve the boys breakfast when they get up, asks her to watch the gate in case anyone like Matthew or Alexander come around, and as a parting suggestion, begs her to keep an eye on the ole man. She's got a terrible feeling somethin' had's goin' to happen. Margie nods, gapes, "Bye bye -- I'll take care of everythin," turns over on her side again and closes her eyes.

Gracie tiptoes downstairs, looks toward the kitchen, hears Willie fumbling around in yard. Rover ambles in, sniffs at her feet, growls lazily, she puts finger to her mouth, "Shhhhhhh."

She picks up her change purse from mantleplace, treads stealthily toward screen door, opens it with caution. She is on the pavement. She starts walking up the street, her heart is pounding inside her. She looks neither to right or left, walks forward now hastily. As she reaches end of fence where building throws a shadow, she stops to look down at her shoes. As she slowly bends over through side of eyes, she sees Margie in her slip looking out through front room window upstairs. Leaning against

the fence next to Pier house is Willie, his face against the wire, his right arm resting above his head holding a hammer.

She suddenly jerks herself up and continues walking, working up speed. As she passes watchman door, whitehaired man in straw hat sucking pipe sitting in front of door nods, "Mornin' Miss Grace. Nice morning?" She smiles woodenly and doesn't stop. "Landsakes, Fred Taggart, Willie's friend . . . "

She steps down into the entrance way leading into the receiving way, steps up, passes the office steps, crosses the tracks, "Thank God, I'm off the block." She sighs nervously. She continues up the block. People are sitting on the steps, men in undershirts and slippers, holding babies, reading newspapers; some look up and nod, she can't bother to nod back -- in a hurry -- near 10 o'clock. She knows then all by name, never spoke much with any of them, know some of the womenfolk from the store -- must hurry -- milk bottles on the doorsteps, late sleepers, hopes Margie serves the boys breakfast, barber shop pole ain't spinnin', Nick, the barber, Italian, a Catholic, probably his church. Albert's in church, wonder if same church, St. Mary's -- here's Miller's Corner, turn down here, left, cross the street, let's see if ole man and Margie still lookin' -- squint -- look harder - don't stop -- no, can't see, eyes bad, can't see, no difference, down here, one block, Fecklin's Alley. There's the Buick - Howard . . .

The door opens. She rushes in, looks around, no one seen her. Her bosom heaves and she can hardly catch her breath. She looks at Howard.

"Jest lemme -- lemme catch ma breath . . . "

Howard smiles. "Is it all that bad gettin' away from the house?"

She looks at him, frightened. He's looking at his watch (cigarette), "You're right on time."

He starts the motor shifts into first, the car turns down the street, and heads out over the bridge, towards the country.



CHAPTER IX

Howard's house (cement walk, bushes, flowers, furrows planted, vines, shingled house, woodwork, kitchen, tiled bathroom, shower, covered sofas, curtains, back porch, \_\_\_\_\_trees, honeysuckle smell).

Gracie passes through house, Howard behind her. She tries to suppress her excitement, breaks into tears. Tells him about clothes, fight, threat to kill her.

Howard, "Had no idea it was that bad. He always looks sour, but then, is nothing violent about him." They sit on the sofa. She confesses this is her first trip away from home in years. She just begins to realize how enslaved she's been to her home, her family, the factory, Willie. She stops crying, saying it isn't nice for a guest to cry. Howard says it's all right, he knows how she feels. He muses to self about his past, his wife young, pretty wild, her mad parties here, her fornicating with young men, her death on a motorcycle. He is seized with desire never to experience swiftness and turmoil of past, looks at Gracie and sees her as dependable, secure wife, reliable - homemaker. She gets up, starts fixing things (drapes, sewing, kitchen). Howard impressed. He tells her how lonely he's been, big house (no wife), no family; how terrible it is to come home at night and hear only distant buzzing of crickets. She is touched (sentimental); they go off to bed. She is tense, explains she hasn't slept with Willie for years, can't stand sight of him. Howard asks her to stay. She says she wants to, but she can't.

A grouse path leads off from the country dirt road up to the two-story brown shingled house. In front of the house there is a flower garden full bloomed and fragrant. (Summer flowers.) On the other side of the house, there is a peach orchard \_\_\_\_\_, well-formed, and a vegetable garden. A Boston Ivory vine climbs gently across the broad back of the house.

Gracie is stricken with wonderment as she stands viewing the back yard. "It's . . . it's beautiful!" She is chocked with awe and feels removed from everywhere, everything. "How do ye take care of it all?" asks Gracie. He tells her a colored boy who lives a \_\_\_\_\_ down the road works on it during the week, and he does the rest on the weekends. "Come, let's to in. I want to show you around." Sense of peace sweeps down upon her.

She "aws" and "ohs" like a little girl taken to the circus for the first time. Every room is a wonderful act, a miracle of achievement. She is overwhelmed by the splendor of it all. "Oh, Howard," she looks up at him, "it's purtier than anythin' I have ever seen -- it's great, jest beautiful . . . "

She was simply unprepared for this. If she had read books, she might have had some notion of fine homes and fine furniture, and bric-a-brac, but she had never books. And the only conceptions she has had was her own musty, squalored place which would have dulled anyone's sensitivities to beautiful things. She recalled her own farm, a pleasant place, but it was like a glass stone next to a glittering diamond.

Howard, as though recalling a past decision, says, "Now you can understand why I could never leave here -- I built this place, every inch of it -- I put in these hardwood floor myself. I put in the tile into the bathroom. I installed the water, I planted the gardens and the orchard. This is all mine. I would never leave here for the city." She learns what he means, felt the same when she had own place, now house belong to factory.

"Oh, Howard, it's jest wunnerful." She, who had been so garrulous all her life, felt suddenly a massive inattractiveness before the splendor in the house. And then the strangeness of her inarticulateness grew after the next wondrous thing happened.

Almost without knowing they had moved into the living room, and they were seated on the sofa when Howard had taken hid had in his and without a word, embraced her and they were as one. In a moment, when she moved her trembling lips away, she fell back against the sofa, vigorously shaking her head. She was drugged. She felt a strange fluid mysteriously filling her head, then flowing drowsily through her body. She knew something was happening to her, but she didn't know just what. Then, she felt something break inside her, like the snapping of a twig, and she fell forward on Howard's shoulder, her eyes wets with tears.

Howard stroked her back with the palm of his hand. "Don't, don't, Grace . . . I know, I know . . . "

Grace sobbed, and her body trembled with crying. "Oh, Howard . . . it's been so long . . . and I'm so mixed up inside . . . "

"Don't worry, Grace, everything will be all right . . . ", he soothed her.

She sat back and dried her eyes. "I know it ain't nice ter cry when yer a guest in somebody's house -- but I jest couldn't help . . . " She sniffed and blew her nose with the hanky. She pointed to her bosom, and said, "So much as gethered in there, I just had to get some of it off . . . "

Howard looked at her tenderly. A gentle feeling of warmth was upon him and he said he wanted to know. She began to tell him about the previous Saturday, the clothesline and how he threatened to kill her, and she broke down crying again.

Howard said, "I had no idea it was so bad." "Oh, it's jest terrible . . . terrible," she said.

He added, "I knew he always had a sour look on his face, but I thought that underneath there was something decent about him . . . " he shook his head, "I had no idea he could be so -- so crazy."

"It's been hell, Howard. Jest hell. He's been torturin' me all the time, an' last week he woulda killed me. I don't know whut stopped him -- he was so fierce -- like an' criminal."

"I don't understand him, Grace. You were so good to him -- always cleanin', an' cooking three meals a day for him -- an' taling care of him when he got those headaches . . . what more could the man want?"

"That was it . . . I was too good for him. I was a slave to that house. Why in all the years I lived there I hardly even went

futher than the grocery the next corner. I was a slave to him every since we moved into that house . . . he never 'preciated nothin' I did for him, allers grouchin' an' hollerin' and threatenin'. An' then, lately, he become suspicious I was . . . oh, he jest tortured me to death . . . "

Howard touched her forehead with his lips, and said, "No more crying -- this is a vacation - smile." He stoon up, walked across the room to a mirrored cupboard, and brought back two glasses with wine.

Gracie lifts the glass awkwardly with her meaty fist and made a slubbering noise as she drained its entire contents in one draught. Howard chuckled warmly. She drank wine like it was soda pop or beer.

"What's so funny?" she asked.

"Nothing really. It's just, well, you're supposed to sip wine, slowly, like this . . . "

A pink blush feathered her cheeks. She said candidly, "I don't know these fancy things . . . " and she abruptly put the empty glass on the end table before them.

Howard thought for a moment, then said, "It's better that way. I don't like people with "fancy" things. I like you just as you are . . . "

These words touched off a great spreading of pleasantness in Gracie who sat upright now, her eyelashes fluttering over the thought of being liked by this wonderful man, this understanding man, this man who would never scare nor threaten, but who would

always caress and love and embrace. Her lashes stopped fluttering as she sensed a change in Howard's manner. He was struggling with something in his head, and she wanted to know whether it was about her or them or what.

"What is it, Howard?"

Howard, his forehead knitted in thought, looked and searchingly at the circling of wine in the bottom of his glass. "Fancy things mean very little, Grace. My wife knew of fancy things. I guess she knew too many."

He looked at her earnestly, knowing he had lost the struggle in reticence and that he would tell her about it. He had spoken of this briefly before, but never the details insisted on coming out.

"She was a gay, young, and pretty woman. I bought and built this place for her, I thought we'd be happy here. But she liked parties, and she liked men, and -- " his voice broke off, " -- and, I guess she liked everything but building a home with me. She made a nightclub out of this place. I'd come home after work, an' there'd be empty and broken bottles all over the floor, an' cigar butts -- an' she was gone -- till four, five the next morning."

"I used to have to straighten the place up and make my own supper, then tend to the garden and the orchard -- place was just goin' to pot."

"Landsakes, how terrible, how terrible!" She shakes her head in warmest sympathy.

"She got so careless, her men were leavin' rubbers in the bedroom -- just had no shame anymore. I guessed we should've broke up and at the beginning when we knew it wall all over. But people are crazy that way. They hold on to little pieces when they know the glass is broken and you can never put the pieces together to make a glass whole again."

"I thought if we could sit down over to talk it over, we might straighten it out. But she was two restless. She never wanted to sit down. She wanted to go -- always to go -- she liked speed -- an' that's what did her in, speed."

"Ye mean the motorcycle?"

He nodded. "It was on a Friday night. They found her and the guy out in a ditch in Humphrey . . . ." He look straight at Gracie whose face was set in pity. There was a hint of plaintiveness in his monotone recitation. "She always said I never liked the fancy things -- she called 'em the finer things, if those were the fine things. I guess I didn't . . . ." He held Gracie's hand, and massaged her little sausage-like thumb. "I think you really know what the finer things are -- you ain't got fancy names for 'em -- but you know what they are. I've seen, the way you run your home, the way you take care of your kids . . . ."

As though timed, or preordained, a mood of drugged relaxation fired by the wine settled now over both of them. Howard's tongued was loosened and leaning back, his arm over Gracie's neck and hanging over her breast, he spoke all the thoughts which had gathered within him all the long evenings of his loneliness. "This

is a nice place," he said, his eyes taking in the room before them, "but not good to be here along. At night, when it's black all around out there, y'hear the crickets and the owls and you ell lost in your own bedroom. Christ, sometimes you feel like crying, you get so lonely."

A mist covered Gracie's eyes. It wasn't making sense, she thought. Jest a little while ago, she was terrified and burstin' with hate, and now she was happy beyond memory, she was in a man's embrace, an' she was consumed with love. It was the dream she always picture and now it was fulfillment and she yielded to the enigma. It was too much for her to comprehend.

"There were times I thought I'd burn this place down," Howard was drunk with speech. "It wasn't built for one man . . ." There was an appeal in his voice and Gracie felt herself responding to it as she nestled close against his chest. Howard paused, looked at the devoted, secure, reliable woman in his arms, he saw her busy in his ivory kitchen, he watched her in the orchard, and he kissed her gently on the forehead. "Come," he said.

She stood before him upstairs in the bedroom, dumpy and confused. He had his fingers on the buttons of her blouse, when she muttered, like a tiny shriek, "Howard -- no . . .":

There was silence, then Howard asked, "You don't want to?"

Of course she wanted to. She had been waiting for this moment since that first morning when Howard stepped into her living room. But she remembered another day more recent, and terrifyingly sharp in his memory. What if Willie Rutherford had followed them. She

knew it was silly. But suppose he were out there in the flower garden, or behind a tree in the orchard. He would be upon them in a moment and in his terrible vengeance he would -- "

"Howard -- I know it's foolish -- " She couldn't tell him her fears about Willie, his wild threats. Howard would laugh at her. Another thought inhibited her. She hadn't slept with a man in -- years. She would be clumsy. She would offend him. He would hate her. That would spoil everything . . . "

"It it's foolish, forget about it," he said, and he ran his fingers over her blouse while she closed her eyes, trying to shut out the entire world she left behind when she had crossed the tracks this morning.

A soft breeze caressed the curtains, moving them toward the pool of sun on the window-ledge. Gracie smelled the fragrance of honey suckles which filled the room. She lay on her back like a pink fluffy garment whose elastic belt had snapped. The tension which had pinched the fabric form was gone. She turned toward Howard and they held the embrace of two lonely people.

"Stay here," said Howard.

She winced, for the word "Stay" meant she would have to return. "Stay here and make this our home." It was a plea of a lonely man (but she heard only the affection of her lover.)

"I can't, Howard, I jest can't." She thought of tomorrow morning's breakfast, and the boys and she heard the gate swinging on its hinges and she repeated, "I can't."

CHAPTER X

Grace returns home at 11:00 p.m., finds Willie sprawled out on floor, aspirins at his side, Rover licking his head. Grace overcome by guilt and pity; filled with remorse at thought she might have killed. She gets ammonia spirits to revive him. (She labors over him with a care that borders on love). Then she hears voices out front. She looks through curtain, lamp overhead and sees Margie embracing boy on Gibson chair. Anger wells up in her, why didn't Margie take care of him like I asked her? She wants to rush out and berate her. She stops, returns to Willie who is reviving, mumbling. Margie enters, crisply asks what happened. Gracie pounces on her. How dare she leave when she asked Margie to take care of him. She knows he's ill -- and I had to go to Aunt Viola.

Margie breaks in, ""Aunt Viola, my ass!"

Gracie, "Margie, how dare you and stop cussing."

Margie, "Don't try to fool me. I know you went to Howard's. Don't think I'm staying here tied up to the old man watching the gate while you're out playing around."

Gracie, "Hold your tongue."

Margie, "I'm gonna have a good time, too -- and I ain't staying here with this crazy bastard all day."

Willie rears up on his elbows, and weakly mutters, "You're killing me, you're killing me!"

Gracie said goodnight, closed the door behind her. She stood on the corner of the alley under the lamp pole and watched the huge

care pull smoothly away in the night. She saw the tow diminishing tiny red lights turn the corner in the distance and suddenly she realized for the first moment of this day that she was alone. She stepped hurriedly away from the lamp pole whose bright bulb threw a spotlight on her \_\_\_\_\_ her figure.

Ordinarily she would be terrified to be alone near the alley at this time of night. She hated alleys in general. Especially this alley since the smokehounds were assembled in an alcoholic orgy. She feared being raped. She had been filled with terror by the shadows which marauded the alley with this suggestive shapes. She knew she should have been terrified.

Yet taught terror was a figment and the apprehensions of rape lurking in shadows were merely delusions. She was filled with a sense of calm, inexplicable and delicious, and she now moved through the darkness toward the corner her thoughts were fragrant with honeysuckle and she felt as sure and composed as the line-straight furrows in the gardens and the trees in the orchard.

Her house was around the corner and two blocks yet it was in another city, in a different place, another time. She was convinced. Once you know true happiness, nothing can bother you. When you are in love, when you know you are wanted, when you feel you have purpose and have a place in the world, tragedy is reduced, every fear is unreal, can even be telescoped into nothingness. The song which joyously filled her head now dinned out all the discordant cries in her past.

As she walked down the street, her sense of peace swelled. There was no movement anywhere in the block; a feeling of solemnity hung like a vast shroud. They were in the garden. Howard was in his undershirt (he had left his shirt in the bedroom). He stooped and branded her blue and pink bouquet of flowers (mums). They were in the orchard. She sucked the ripened peach and they laughed as the juices trickled over her cheek. Then she bent over and lifted up a lapful from the windfall and in the kitchen she stirred the compote. Compote and gingerale in the garden. She was dreaming and they were to bed again and now she was tired, exhausted by the torrential flows in her body, but she smiled deliciously recalling this day without precedent.

As she padded across the tracks, along the red-bricked pavement before the shadowy factory, past the watchman's shut gate, emerging into the moonlight which silverized the picket fence, her heart pulsed widely, and apprehension, a dank foreboding, were like specters in her mind. It was not terror, for terror is in loneliness, and she was certain she was not alone this day.

She stood on the steps, poised to rattle the screen door. It opened almost voluntarily. A tiny brooding suddenly ascended her back and flowed over. It's over 11 o'clock, how dare Margie leave the door open? She entered the living room. The terror of loneliness was upon her and the song in her head became a cry.

Willie Rutherford lay on the floor, his head twisted toward the side in an agonized mask. Below, his sock-like body was stretched out limply, his arms flat and motionless at his sides.

In the open nerveless palm of his right hand, a brown jar of aspirin rested, with tablets spilled from its mouth. Growling deeply, Rover hovered about Willie's head, dipping his tongue in the wan light from the table touching the contorted face.

Gracie gasped. She stood riveted in one place. For a moment her head sway dizzily in a dark fluid and a numbness invaded her. In swift desperate movements, she jerked herself into motion, swirling through in the darkness of the room, into the kitchen. She fumbled for the ceiling cord, dipped a rag into the sink, and rushed wobbling back into the darkened living room. She knelt at Willie's side, \_\_\_\_\_ the rag at his head and nostrils.

"Oh Lord, Lord," she fretted. She sat back on her haunches listening. His chest heaved slighted and a throttling sound like a chocked snore came from deep inside him. "He ain't ded . . . " Springing to her feet, she raced back into the kitche, opened the white-pained chest where she fumbled with bottled marked with skull-bone emblems. "Go way dawg," she said angrily to Rover who sniffed at her feet. She selected a small bottle with purple fluid and hastily returned. She held the open bottle under his nostrils and softly commanded, "Sniff it, sniff it!" There was no response. She lifted the damp rag wiping away strands of matted hair from Willie's forehead. "It must've been a stroke," she said.

She leaned over his chest, picked up the jar and the few fallen pills which she replaced. She held the bottle toward the

pale light on the table, "Lord, he took half the bottle . . . " She shuddered.

She watched his nostrils twitch once, twice, and then she moved around toward his head. With her arms under his shoulders, she heaved upward, grunting heavily as she raised the upper part of his body toward the feet. Her knee under his shoulderblade, she managed to shift his upper part further squirming movements onto the sofa. Then, with one knee still on the floor, she skirted around the broadside of the sofa, moving the middle part, then the lower part of his body onto the cushions. Suddenly his head rolled listlessly back hanging from the farthest cushion. She shoved his fleshy head back until it turned completely over toward the back of the sofa. She stood, her head beaded in perspiration, her arms weighted with the strenuous effort and the accumulated exhaustion of the day.

As she leaned over the arm of the sofa straightening out his ruffled form, a profound sense of remorse throbbed in her. He had tried to commit suicide, she thought, and it was her fault. He should never have been left alone with a full jar of aspirin. Suddenly the vision of a distant orchard focused in her mind; she straightened up and stared at it and then watched it explode into a million blinding splinters.

"I can't, I just can't . . . " She cried in her throat. A wave of protest mounted in her and she clenched her little fists. "Where did they go! Why did Margie leave him here by himself? Should call Dr. Bramble . . . " Wringing her hands in quiet

despair, she walked sullenly through the shadows which filled the dining room, and stood at the foot of the stairway. "Margie . . . Margie . . ." she whispered up the blackened tunnel. She didn't wait for a reply for she knew her daughter was not there. "Dang her soul. Don't care for nuthin' -- only clothes and boys -- leaving the front door unlocked, and the gate untended -- Lord if Matthew or Alexander was here with we mite's well pack up tonite . . . "

She stumbled into the living room and stared at the lifeless form of Willie crumpled on the sofa. "What kin I do?" She felt wretched and broken and guilt sat on her shoulders like great pillars of stone. Dr. Bramble had his office on Menton Street 12 blocks away. She had no telephone, she couldn't call neighbors, there was no one in the street to send, she couldn't leave Willie like this.

She looked blankly at Willie's open mouth, and stiffly, almost automatically, she bent over to wipe the spittle which frothed at the corners of this mouth. A giggle, a girl's giggle, Margie's giggle. She was certain it was Margie's giggle coming from outside the window. Gracie turned to meet her daughter as she would enter, she was going to give it to her this time, whip her don't matter how old she is, till she cries. But the door failed to open, and the giggles trailed away with a \_\_\_\_\_ sucking sound, and Gracie set her jaw and strode toward the door.

The springs squirmed and Gracie looked back toward the sofa and saw Willie more slightly. She half-turned to go toward him,

but then she wheeled about moving secretly toward the window when the shade floated back with the breeze, she snatched it with her two fingers and peered out through the space. The lamp on the pole placed a large circle of expanded light on the ground below, which just missed touching the Gibson chair in front of the window. In the pale reflection from the circle, Gracie made out two forms squirming on the chair. It was Margie and a boy. Margie's head was propped up against the arm of the chair, and her feet rested on the other arm. The boy was over her, his face against hers, his left arm under the fold of her dress which looped across her knees. The shade slapped against the window and the boy looked up. Gracie stepped back, nearly toppling over the chair behind her. She gasped, and suppressed a choking rasp which thundered in her throat. She moved two steps toward the lamp, wheeled around toward the window, then was caught by a flash of light in the mirror over the mantle. she stared dumbly at her face in the creamed mirror light. She held her face in both hands. It was hot and pulsing and damp. Her first impulse was to run toward the door and discover them in this act, to throw her head through the window, to fall upon them and beat with her fists until they were one bloody pulp. Shame, shame! She heard a voice deep inside cry, shame, on the front steps! And before the neighbors, the whole world to see . . . it was his hand, wasn't it, only his hand?"

Beneath her thick wavy hair her head bubbled like a cauldron, and her small eyes were narrowed with fury. She was being pulled from all directions and she had no one direction. Then her smoking

little eyes saw the sofa in the mirror, the soft sofa without a ruffled body, a sofa which was a bed, and a bed upon which her own body is unfolded, surrounded with the \_\_\_\_\_ fragrance of an orchard. Then she knew she could not step outside nor peer through the window.

(And instead, she slowly unburdened her fury through the \_\_\_\_\_ in the face) and with gentle sighs, and she turned toward the sofa, sitting on its edge. With the alternate use of the damp rag and the little bottle with the purple fluid she sought to revive Willie Rutherford, her husband. She tried to understand all this about her as she stared blankly before her, dazedly moving the objects in her hand over the object on the sofa. But it was futile for she had never really understood anything, since things just happened to blindly, without \_\_\_\_\_. And she could not, therefore, understand this, the new image, the image of a house with a swinging gate suddenly cracking apart, suddenly tumbling over into a valley, piece by piece, falling deep into a giant field of weeds, crashing secretly and in silence. She could not understand it but she stared at it and knew that it had happened.

The door opened as Willie slowly twisted his head from side to side muttering inaudibly. Gracie stood up from the sofa and stared warily at her daughter whom she now saw in a new light, bleak and unflattering. She was about to ask her, rather \_\_\_\_\_, "Did ye have a good time?" when Margie coldly interrupted, "What's a matter with him?" She tossed

her handbag onto the table and plopped into the chair near the window.

"He's had a stroke . . . "

"He ain't dead, is he?" She spoke briskly and her tone bad. (He jagged edges of \_\_\_\_\_.)

"No, he ain't dead," Gracie replied with a broken sigh, "but I s'pose ye keep it up like this, he will be soon -- "

"Now what in the hell do ye mean by that?" Margie retorted viciously. Her back was sunken in the chair, her stomach jutted upward and her legs weaved loosely together and apart in the outer circumference of the light.

"I mean . . . if ye keep walkin' out . . . leavin' the house and him . . . I mean . . . he'll be dyin' before long . . . "

Margie jerked into a sitting position. "Sunnovabitch I like that . . . If I keep walkin' out . . . Where in the hell was ye all day? . . . Movin' yer bowels?"

"At's enuf sass from yer nasty mouth ." Gracie stood over the lamp, her face seemed drawn and quivering. She spoke with effort, as though drained of energy.

"Never mind calling name . . . I ast ye -- whur was ye all day?"

"Aunt Viola's."

"Aunt Viola's, my ass!"

"Margie, that's enuf." Her eyes smoldered behind her spectacles.

"What d'yer think I am, deaf? Don't ye think I hurd ye tell Howard ye was goin' out with him to the country?" Her face white and hard as slate, "It's all right for ye to play around but I'm s'posed to say here tied to thet gate and thet crazy bastard over there, is thet it? Well, like hell?"

"Hold yer tongue, girl, hold yer tongue." Gracie felt bitterness gathering in her, she lifted the patent-leather handbag in a small threatening gesture. Margie stood up like an iron rail, her arms defiant on her hips. A snare curled on her face.

"Well, ain't nobody goin' to stop me from havin' a good time, y'see, and it'll take more'n ye to keep me in here all day watchin' that crazy ole bastard over there."

Against the wall, in the shadows of the sofa, the springs creaked heavily as Willie instantly lurched up on a side and with flaming red eyes and a grotesquely twisted face, he \_\_\_\_\_, "Ye're killin' me -- both -- ye're killin' me." He wrenched forward, made a little roll, and fell to the floor with a dull thud.

CHAPTER XI

Monday morning, before \_\_\_\_\_ Dr. Bramble (fat, bald, jowls, cigars, burly, Packard Coupe, wheezing, dollar medicine, 65), examines Willie, tells Gracie and sons it's high blood pressure. They take Willie upstairs in front room; Bramble suggests Willie take a rest away from factory, worst, a home. Willie froths: I ain't leaving them -- they'll let me rot in a home, they want to get rid of me, they'll make this a whore house, they're no good, I tell ye. Doc quiets him.

In kitchen, Doc says he should be taken to home. Gracie says they can't afford it, insurance, rent to factory (months in arrears), store bill, electricity, gas, installment plan. Albert says he needs savings to get married. Henry blurts he wouldn't give that sunnuvabitch a plug nickel -- out of any beer money -- he takes all we're doing for him for granted anyway, like it's coming to him, an' him not workin' damned near ten years. Let him come beggin' for it. We work too hard to set him up on easy street.

Robbie says he'd like to help out, but he's buying that '31 Chevie over at Fox's (\$35.00) and he's gotta keep payin' his weekly buck, else they'll sell it (maybe if I was in army already, I'd have money to spare).

Bramble says they'd better take care of him, then, at home, else he'll pop off (snaps fingers).

Margie offers to quit school and take care of him, but they gotta buy her a new dress and fancy red shoes. Bramble leaves and tells them to add it on what they owe him.

Dr. Bramble straightens up from sofa, puts stethoscope in black bag on table. He is a giant man, obese, great lakes of fat hanging from his face. His whole body shakes as he wheezes. He looks around at Grace, Margie, Albert, and Robbie. Henry is still upstairs.

He looks down at Willie who's staring up with wide frightened eyes. "Ain't nothin' to worry about, Willie. Heart's in good shape. Just gotta keep yourself from gettin' excited."

"What?" he asks weakly.

"He sez you're all right." Gracie yells. She looks worn out, hair mussed, eyes reddened, grooves in face. He was up all night sitting in chair, watching Willie.

Dr. Bramble turns to Gracie. "Suppose we take him upstairs. There'll be too much activity in the living room. He needs quiet and lots of rest." He wheezes.

"We'll put him in the front room. It's nice and cool there," she says.

Albert and Robbie lift up Willie, put his around their shoulders, and start through dining room, up staircase.

Dr. Bramble holding black bag, puts his other arm over Gracie's shoulder, "Don't worry, he'll be all right."

She looks up at him guiltily, "It warn't my fault, doctor."

"But you should've called me when it happened. He's had a bad night."

"Wal I wanted to call ye, but we ain't got no phone and the boys were out till late and I wouldn't send Margie out so late at nite."

"Christ sakes, when's that factory going to make this house livable. It's unheard of, not having a phone. Lucky thing you got Robbie to come and get me, if you were alone here, that man could've died and no one would've known the difference."

"I know it, it's jest terrible; they don't care a bit 'bout us." Knock on the door. Gracie turns. "Oh, it's one of the drivers. 'Scuse me, doctor, I'll let him in the yard and then I'll come right up."

Driver, "Don't you hear my horn?" Gracie, "No, doctor in here." She opens gate, then comes upstairs into bedroom. Doctor sits on edge of bed, taking Willie's pulse, a gold watch in his great, beefy paw. Albert, Robbie, and Margie stand around bed.

Doctor, "What's that bucket?"

Gracie, "We use it for night pan."

Doctor, "I swear, I oughta have the Dept. of Health investigate this. They'd make the factory do something."

"How'd you like to go away somewheres for a nice rest, Willie? You'd like that, wouldn't you? Some nice, clean place in the country?" He says soothingly.

Willie twists head from side to side. "You wouldn't want to take a rest?"

Willie nods again, his face slowly contorting.

"Why not, Willie?"

There's silence for a moment, then Willie fiercely into the doctor's face and stammers, "They ain't gettin' rid of me. I ain't leavin' this hyer house. I know it, they want to get rid of me, they want me outta the way -- wal, they ain't do it, y'hear, they're ain't movin' me from this house."

"Now, now, Willie, quiet down, no one's trying to get rid of you. We thought it'd be for your own good, rest and fresh air for a couple weeks in the country."

"I ain't leavin', doc, y'hear, y'hear. They'll make this place -- they'll make it a whore house, a whore house. I ain't leaving'!" Willie's face was purple as his head jutted back and forth, shouting.

The doctor put his hand on Willie's shoulder. "All right, Willie, if you don't go away, you don't have to. Now just lie back and rest a bit, that's it, just relax. You can stay right here." He turned toward the Rutherfords and said he'd meet them in the kitchen, he asks Gracie for a glass of water. They all leave, Gracie returns with water, Doctor give Willie a sedative, waits till he closes his eyes.

In the kitchen, the doctor slurps coffee and chuffs on a cigar. The boys are eating breakfast in their work clothes. Gracie flounders about table, fretting.

"Don't take on so, Gracie. Nothing will happen." Doc puffs cigar and wheezes. "There's no question that man's bad off. He

had a bad stroke. Must've been terribly excited and that overdose of aspirins didn't help him any. He needs to go away to sanitarium somewheres for at least a month. With all the excitement around here and the factory noises, he'll pop off good like this -- " He snaps his fingers.

"I swear, doctor, if we don't take him away somewheres, they're have to take me. It's jest killin' me. I can't take it much longer." She breaks into tears, sobbing into her apron.

"All right now, Gracie, that ain't doin' us any good, is it? Let's stop the tearin' and see what we can do."

"But we ain't got no money for a sanitarium or place like that, Doctor. Landsakes," she says weakly, "I've got enuf of a problem keepin' the house goin' as it is."

"Ain't there anyway, you boys can help out!"

Albert, "I give her \$14.00 a week -- the other \$8.00 I'm savin' to get married. Christ, I can't afford to give her anymore."

Henry, taking \_\_\_\_\_, "Ain't no use askin' me, 'cause I ain't givin' another penny for thet ole fart. I been supportin' him for the past seven years. He thinks he's got it comin' to him, well, he ain't, see?"

"We work too goddam hard to set him up on easy street, country home?" Sunnuvabitch, send him to jail, he'll get a rest, hell, a damned good rest." He laughs falsely. "If you ask me, we oughta let him died, do us all good." Henry sneers back.

Robbie volunteers, "I'll give two extra bucks from spendin' dough -- but that can't help much. Maybe when I get in the army I'll have more money and we'll be able to send the ole man away for awhile."

"When you leavin', Robbie?" Doc asks, wheezing.

"Soon. I'm gettin' information."

"Well, there's no question that it does look pretty tough," Doc.

Gracie explains, "I'd like to get him away from here more'n you would, then all of us would have some peace here, but we jest can't do it. Look Doc, I gets \$42.00 a week from the boys. Four dollars and fifty cents each week is fer rent, there's \$30.00 for food. That's \$34.00 don't gone -- an' with the rest - why there's gas, 'lectricity, insurance, installment, clothes for Gracie. Landsakes, it's jest impossible."

"Well, I guess you're right. We'll just have to work out some way of caring for him here."

"I'll quit school and take keer of him, don't learn nuthin' there anyway. An' the principal is jest about as bad as the ole man."

"Well, the important this is that he has quiet and steady care, and you have to keep him clean. Those dirty wet clothes are enough to kill a man with disease."

"I'll quit school t'morrer." Margie like the idea. "But you gotta buy me a new dress before I start keerin' for him."

Doctor stares at her severely. Factory whistle squeals.

"What time -- is that 8:00? I'd better be leavin'. Lifts body from chair, picks up derby and bag, tells Gracie at door, "Follow the instructions I gave you and he'll be all right."

Margie yells out, "It's what we're afraid of."



CHAPTER XII

Monday, 2:00 P.M. Gracie opens gate for Howard (Mack truck). Tells him about Willie's spell and illness. She feels turrible. Howard says he'll meet her in backyard at 3:00. (She's bothered by factory people seeing them).

They meed behind woodshed. (Spooks, Howard decries). Gracie is overwrought with guilt, if the old man dies it'll be her fault. Howard says they'll be able to marry. I know, Gracie says, it'd be better if he died, but I feel guilty. Howard asks her whether she'll come out next Sunday. She says she can't. Howard becomes piqued. She says she will soon, but not now. She's afraid if she leaves Willie alone, Henry will kill him. He's become terrible, he drinks, wild women and threatens. Besides, Margie can't be trusted alone now. She's running around with boys and she's afraid to leave her alone in the house.

Howard, fed up with all these entanglements, asks her to come away with him for good. She wants too, but how can she? If she don't care for boys, they'll lose their jobs, the factory will take away the house. Howard - What do you home for anyway -- Albert marrying, Robbie in army, Henry a bum, Margie'll marry soon. Gracie says it ain't right. She can say with us until she does. Divorce Willie, send him to an institution. Howard tells her to divorce Willie, pieces of broken glass. She should have long ago, Gracie says, but it's too late. We'll just have to wait till he dies. Have patience. They go into shed and play around.

Gracie closes screen door gingerly for fear of waking up Willie who's resting in the front room upstairs. She pauses, looks up toward the window to make sure Willie isn't watching her. She walks carefully down to gate where Howard is waiting in truck. He took truck around the block to test new clutch he has just installed. As she steps off curb, she sees Howard wink at her. She forces a smile, but knows it communicated its inner turmoil as Howard clambers out of truck and meets her at gate.

Howard asks her what's the matter? He frowns, thinking perhaps she feels remorse at yesterday's experience. Perhaps he should have \_\_\_\_\_ in the day to reassure her of the excellence of yesterday, that there was nothing wrong, etc., but she did ask him not to come because of Willie. "Anything wrong?"

"Landsakes no." Gracie says broadly, strange look in her eye. With effort she says, "I'm really pleased to see ye."

A sigh of relief crosses his face. "Oh, I thought that."

Her face lights up, "It was, it was jest grand." She touches his belt impulsively.

"The why the sour face -- and the mysterious \_\_\_\_\_?"

"We had some trouble."

"Willie?"

She nods. "While I was gone, he had a stroke. It was terrible -- jest terrible -- I found him on the floor, Rover lickin' his head." She sighed with emotion, "It was jest turrrible. Dr. Bramble wanted to send him away this mornin' . . . for a rest

. . . but he refused . . . he callet me a . . . ," she whimpered, "a whore . . . "

"Oh, Jesus Christ!" Howard said in a manner of outrage. "Was there any fightin'?" Gracie didn't answer. She looking over her shoulder, first up at the window then toward the office steps. "I'd better let ye in. The factry'll be complainin' soon. I'll tell ye about it later."

She unlocks gate. "S'pose I see you in the yard at in an hour, let's make it exactly at three o'clock, back at the sheds, O.K.?" Gracie nodded consent. As Howard walked back to truck, she looked again up the street, then opened gate wide. The truck roared up, then went up the dirt-pathed driveway.

At five minutes to three, Gracie looks up at the clock. She fingers her hair, adjusts her apron. She calls Rover in from the yard and locks him in the summer kitchen. She doesn't want him raising a row while she's out there. She's glad Margie is still in school. It'll be a week before they release her. At least she won't be spying on her this afternoon.

Gracie walked simply across the backyard, and the weeds which skirted and drooped over the path leading to the sheds. She walked with her head bent low, as though on a mission. She felt all the little red sun-baked windows were pock-holes through which she was being stared at. Yet she didn't pause once when she reached the other side of the bleached clapboard shed. She saw Howard, in his grey coveralls and overseers caps, walking toward he, across the dirt path. He was wiping off his hands in fluff of waste (wool).

She looked at him with the same disturbed look that betrayed her confusion at the gate before.

"Right on time," Howard smiled. From the shadows by this shed, she surveyed the yard for a secluded spot, then said, pointing to the she behind her, "Let's go in here."

"I'd ruther not." A faint tremor lurked in her voice.

Howard blinked as though he didn't understand. "Why not, Grace?"

She fumbled with the corner of her apron, then muttered, "It's . . ." the word forming on her lips felt awkward, but she could not repress it, "it's haunted."

"What?" Howard was abashed. Then, briefly reassuring, he chuckled. "Well, we'll go in and scare out the spooks."

Gracie's mouth twisted a faint smile. She could not suppress her apprehensions. "Come," Howard said. He took her soft hand and led her up the rotted steps. The warped \_\_\_\_\_ door creaked stiffly open under his hand. They stopped across the threshold, and Gracie almost immediately clung to Howard's arm. Howard felt her pressure on his sleeve and looked about the shed (dank order, cool). A bower of spider webs hung in each corner, dotted with the bushes of insects long consumed. Stream of light filtered thinly through the one dusty window at the back of the shed. On the floorboards, through which weeds struggled wildly upwards, a shallow pool of light formed, dissolved, then reformed. Two wooden benches, their rusted nailheads loose in their holds, sat silently opposite each other, creaking only when under the

gentle rush of wind. Through the knot-holes and the spaced widened by the shrinkage of the board, shivers of lights feel sharply downward. An ancient newspaper flaps against the wall.

Gracie, holding tightly to the muscular arm beside her, looked toward the rafters overhead. She saw at one the large rusted heads of penny-nails and a shaft of pain cut through her. "Up there," she murmured, pointing to the rater, "it must've been up there!"

Howard, quite unexcitedly, looks up toward where she pointed. After a moment, he returned his gaze toward her frightened face, and said blandly, "I don't see nuthin' but old rafters and nail-hooks."

"At's where they must've hang him." Her eyes were glassy and cold.

"Hung who?"

"The man they say it was a nigger."

"Who says?"

"I dunno, everybody. They been sayin' it since we been here. Give ye the creeps, and when there's a storm, and the wind is a howlin' ye kin hear the voices."

"Oh, Grace, please. Control yourself. Now do you see anythin' here? There ain't no bodies hangin' here, is there? Only a few cobwebs hangin' here an' some weeds an' a piece of old newspaper."

"I know, ain't nuthin' here now. But at nite, when the wind blows thru y'hear all kinds o' things. It's haunted, Howard. I tell ye, nobody's used this place for years, it's haunted."

Howard moved toward the end of the shed. The boards made a groaning noise under his feet. He picked up the yellowed newspaper and placed it on the bench nearest the side of the house. Then he led Gracie toward the seat and sat down with her.

A peculiar look was on his face. It was the look of a irritated school teach tempered with the benign frown of a father. "Gracie, I don't mean to be harsh, but you must stop being so superstitious. After all, you're a grown woman. It just don't sound right for a mother of four grown children to be talkin' of spooks and hosts and haunted houses. Other day, I heard you laughin' at how the Catholics talk to statues and pictures and play with heads. It sound pretty silly for grown-up people doin' things like that. Think at how silly it sounds for you bein' afraid of things that just don't exist. You make these things up in your own mind and then you scare yourself with 'em. It's like with your old man. He's made up a spook in his mind about you and the children and now he's scared himself near to death with it. I just can't understand how anxious people are to scare themselves. Hell, if you didn't think you had spooks here in the backyard, you'd probably go to the movies to see a Frankenstein picture or somethin' like that, so's you could frighten yourself up good and proper. It just don't make sense Gracie - like with your neighbors - I just can't believe people hate you and are spyin' on you like you they are. It's just a spook and you keep scarin' yourself with it. Coz you like to be scared. Christ knows there's enuf things around to scare the guts out of a man without inventin' your own."

Gracie sat overwhelmed by the pattern of logic which wave about her. She stared into Howard's eyes. She did not feel ashamed nor instructed. Just overwhelmed. "Ye're -- ye're jes' so intelligent, Howard."

Howard smiled and nodded his head as though realizing his lesson was in vain. "I'm not really, ain't has much schoolin' at all, just seams to me like plain common sense. Anyways, you won't be so scared of this shed anymore, will you."

She hesitated. Then nodded. "No, I guess there ain't no spooks in here." He had triumphed after all.

There was a moment of silence, Gracie looked up toward the after, was momentarily reassured that at least no corpse dangled from the ceiling. Then she glanced toward the misted window. Through an open patch of light scarred by filmy strands of dust, she saw the factory windows.

"Howard," she began, "I, ye think they're watchin' us?"

"If they are, they can't see anythin'. There are no windows except that dirty one, an' nobody saw us comin' in. There's nothing to be 'fraid of."

She felt completely reassured. Howard had now taken on the status of an oracle, and his pronouncements were unchallengeable. "I ain't really 'fraid of them anymore," she said with a gesture toward the tiny window, "but I'm scairt to death of Willie." She felt again the thickness in her throat she felt lately when she spoke or thought of her husband. "If he dies," she began, twisting

the edge of her apron in tiny knots, "if he dies, I'll jes' feel turribly guilty, like I kilt him myself."

"Oh, come now, Grace, don't act up so." He lights another cigarette. "I don't wish nuthin' on the old man, but if he dies, it'll be his own doin'. He'll kill himself by his own spooks. There's no reason in the world for you to feel guilty. He \_\_\_\_\_, you're doin' everythin' you can to keep the man alive. An' after all he's done to you durin' the past couple days, I jest wonders why you're puttin' yourself out so." She exhaled and studied a smoke-ring glide by bars of light. "Besides, there's us."

Gracie watched the light and for a moment was lost in its lazy movement. She jerked up, "Oh Howard, I hate ye to be messed up in all this. It ain't right to ye." She clenched her meaty little fists and shook her head in short \_\_\_\_\_ jerks, like a child suddenly angered, "Sometimes I wisht he was dead!"

"It's really a heluva thing. If he does die, you'll feel guilty, if he doesn't does, you'll be tortured," he saw a frown on her face, "and we won't be able to marry till he does." Despite the dilemma he had just outlined, her face broke into a broad smile. She was enthralled with the very prospect of being able to marry this man. It stirred again in her feelings of gay, light-hearted youthfulness, like the Sunday in the country.

"Grace," Howard reached out and cupped her hands in his. "How 'bout comin' out next Sunday?"

She looked as his strong hands. She nods. "I'd like to, but I can't, Howard. I . . ." The set irksome look on his face troubled her. "I jest can't now, ye understand don't ye?" She was afraid he wouldn't. "I'll come out real soon. I want to come out, ye know it, don't ye? It's jist . . . I can't leave the house now. Everythin's so upset. If I go away, anythin' kin happen. I'm terribly scart of Henry. That boy's jest become a mess. Drinkin' all his money away. An' runnin' around with wild women. If I have the house alone, he'll kill the old man. I'm sure he'll do it. I'm the only one's that kept him doin' till now. I jest can't, Howard, but I will, real soon."

Howard looked at her with a look of pity, but she saw it as the look of loneliness. She shrugged her shoulders and sighed deeply. "How can I go? Nobody will take keer of anythin' here. Margie . . ." She paused and thought of her daughter. "She's troublin' me terrible. I don't know when she and Henry get this mean streak. She's sassin' and cursin' and runnin' around with all kinds of fellas till late at night. If I left her alone agin with the house, Lord knows what she'd do this time."

Howard suddenly uncupped her hands and they fell abruptly into her white apron. A tightening set in about his lips and he muttered coldly, "What a goddam mess this is gettin' to be."

Gracie felt him moving away from her and a small cry came from her throat. "Howard, I . . ."

"Howard stood up. "Look, Grace, I don't want to be hard, about it looks like we're gettin' so damned involved in this

. . . jigsaw puzzle. If you don't put yourself out of it now, you're gonna get so stuck in it you'll never be able to pull yourself out." He looked down at her and the slivers of sun cut across his face and coveralls. "Why don't you pack up and come away with me now, for good?"

"What about yer job here?"

"The hell with my job. There are plenty jobs for mechanics. Besides, there aren't no job ever gonna change my life for me. It's a principle with me."

Gracie stood up next to him, looking up at his face with wide imploring eyes. She wiped a cobweb that had fallen onto his arm. "Lord, Howard, I want to. I want to go with ye more than anythin' else . . . but, Lord, how can I?" Her arms fell to her side in a small febble gesture.

Howard placed his hands on her round shoulders and looked earnestly at him. She said, almost pleading, "If I go with ye now, my whole house'll jest crack up. The factory'll take away the house, an' the boys'll won't have anyplace to stay and nobody to take keer of them. They'll probably even lose their jobs if I stop tending the gate. It'd jest break my house if I leave with ye now."

"House? What house? It's like another spook. I sorry, I didn't mean it that way, but really it is just like a spook. What kind of home d'ye have with Willie like he is, an' Albert fixin' to get married, and Robbie goin' in the army. Henry, well, y'say yourself, he's a bum, and Margie'll probably marry soon. She could

stay with us till she does. Honestly, Grace, there's just one way out if you want to marry me. Divorce Willie, won't you? I know it sounds hard, an' it'll break up your home an' all that, but if you're ever going to get out this, that's the only way. Divorce him. Send him to an institution, but don't let him stand in our way." He paused, waiting for her reaction. He sensed her confusion, and continued.

"Grace, remember, you can never make a glass whole out of its broken pieces."

She was tormented with confusion. She grabbed her hair and twisted under his arms. "I know, I know, Howard, everythin' ye say is right, but I can't -- I jest can't -- I should've left him long ago. I should've divorced him when we came here, but it's too late, it's too late and I can't." Her face was moist with sweat. She wiped her forehead. "We'll just have to wait till he dies. It won't be long, Howard. Jest (give me) a little time.

Howard studied her face. Why was he troubling himself over this dumpy, superstitious, country woman? He was getting along all right by himself. It was better to be alone and content than to be with a \_\_\_\_\_ and embroiled in such a terribly stinkin' set-up. But, she would make him a good wife. She would be hardworking, devoted, reliable. He would be secure with her. He would learn to love her, with time. But, what the hell! He just couldn't get involved in this ridiculous family affair.

He took his hands off her shoulders and turned toward the door. When he reached the threshold, she called, "Howard." He

turned around, and stepped forward. (In a rush of uncontrollable emotion, she threw herself into her arms, and in a moment, they stood locked in embrace.)



CHAPTER XIII

Monday, 4:00 P.M. Gracie takes Margie (Margie changing dress) with her to store to buy odds-ends for supper.

Upstairs Willie has hallucinations. Wants to go to toilet, looks for bucket, collapses in faint - awakes again. He peers behind screen, sees neighbors on steps, thinks they're watching him, laughing at him (not working). He screams out in wild mumble, "Mind your own damned business." He calls for Gracie and Margie, no answer. He thinks they've run away with Howard. He goes to closet to get gun. He crouches at window waiting for Howard to pass.

Margie had come home from school half-hour ago. She was now in the boys' room changing into white shorts. She put down candy bar she was chomping on, put it on the bureau and began unbuttoning her flowered blouse. She has an angry look on her face. "Damn it, can't even dresset over in my own room. Why don't they take him away."

Suddenly her eye fell on the drawer, slightly open. She walked over, picked up the candy bar again. She looked into the drawer and began moving things around, sunglasses, bookmarkers, key chains, pencil without a point, a medallion -- what in the hell -- a Catholic medallion, with the virgin on it, must be Albert's. Betcha he'll a Catholic. She fingered the medallion, put it down, next to a little red package. She opened the package, neatly folded, prophylactics - Henry's; she left both of them there. The

medallion and the prophylactics. She closed the drawer, slightly as it was.

She finished the bar, then with her fingers she wiped the chocolate from her gums. She took off her blouse, threw it on the chair. She opened the side of her skirt, let it drop to the floor. She threw it on the floor. She threw it on top of the blouse. As she turned toward Robbie's bed on which her shorts lay, she caught a \_\_\_\_\_ of herself in the mirror. She looked at her thin form, full-view, then profile. She thought her breast were heavy. She touched her stomach. Funny, she felt a soft rumbling, tiny pinches all day in school. Maybe she'd been eatin' too much at the carnival. But that was yas ago. He was a nice-looker, wasn't he. She went over to her shirt to take the picture out of the pocket, one of those 4 for quarter pictures of her and the boy who worked at the ferris wheel. He was a nice looker, strong, real smooth, not like them boobs acrosst the street, not even like Reds, and he had money. She felt the pinch of pain like an appendicitis job; she winced. Must've been too much pop corn and cotton candy and gooey-apples and all them rides. She puts back photo. Shame carnival had to leave. Jimmy was nice-looker and real smooth. Said he'd write me, from Pensivania . . . what'sat pain for, I hope nuthin' . . .

"Margie." From the foot of staircase, Gracie called softly, "Marge, honey, see if he's up. I'm goin' to the store to get a few things for supper. Maybe he wants sumthin'."

Margie calls back, "Wait a minnit, I'm goin' with ye."

"I'd ruther ye'd stay here and take keer of him.

"Hell with that noise. I'm comin' right down." She slips suspenders straps over her shoulders, straightens out shorts, then comes downstairs.

"Didya see if he's up?"

"He's still sleepin'."

"Did'ya look?"

"Course I lookt! He's sleepin' I'm tellin' ye."

"All right, let's go, but remember ye ain't gettin' nuthin'. I gotta keep that store bill down. We owe Mrs. Levin over a hundred dollars and I'm wissin' to pay her back some day."

"What fer? Them Jews makin' money off us as is -- lookit the machine they got -- an' then sendin' Harold to school in New York, hell they made lots a money off us."

"Margie, I don't want you talkin' that way. Them people been mighty good to us and you ain't got no reason to talk that way."

"Mighty good? What they ever do aside from takin' 30 to 40 dollars a week from us."

They done plenty, what 'bout when he lost his job and they lent us money and the Christmas basket they brought us that Christmas. We'd a starved without it. They did more for us then the factory or anybodyelse even did. What about the soups and the fish she still sends us."

Margie wingles her nose, "Them Jews eatin'."

"I swear, girl, ye don't preciates all anybody does fer ye. Yer jest selfish and zealous and there's no likin' in ye. Why, I

thought ye were friends with Rose Levin, and the way ye talk . .

"Wal, I like her, but she won't even go out with me on a date, only wants to go out with Jewish schoolboys."

"Oh, stop yer prattlin' and take this here basket. I want to be back in before the boys gets in."

Margie steps out front door. Looks at people across the street. Gracie calls from living room. "Ye left the basket on the teet. Come here an' get it."

She replies drily, "Oh take it yerself." And Gracie, twisting her head from side to side, takes it.

Upstairs, Willie is flat on his back. He opens his eyes and blinks like an ancient turtle in his wrinkled face. He tries to move, mutters with pain. He feels stiff. He's always been used to movement, on the go, now he suddenly feels immobilized, ain't used to sitting still, lying on my back in the middle of the day, always on the go.

He sits up, and feels dazed. A think mist is on his head, and he feels a heaviness all above his shoulders. He has to go. Call the old woman or Margie. Better not. Do it alone, get along without them. It's dark in here. Shades are down. My slippers, whur my slippers?

Bends over to look under the bed. Ach -- a sharp pain in my head. Close his eyes, holds his head back. Finds slippers with his feet. Out-house. Slowly he'll walk down slowly, down the stairs, through the kitchen, to the outhouse. He'll do it alone.

He ain't dead yet an' he'll show 'em. Nobody's gettin' rid of him, not for a long time, real long time . . .

He stands up. That thickness in his head, in the legs too, legs like wooden planks -- why they so stiff. Needs a little exercize. Walk to out-house, do the legs good.

He walks to the end of the bed and kicks the poster. Dammit, it's dark. He pulls shade up half-way. Now walk, slowly, past the bureau, past . . . the bucket. Use the bucket . . . out-house too far.

He stands besides bureau, and uses the bucket. He looks down and watches the bucket and listens. The thickness in his head, great blank circles of the thickness, wood thickness, tone, heavy stone thickness, black, all black.

He opens his eyes. He is on the floor, on his side, the bucket is at his feet turned over, and empty. For a moment he blinks out, the turtle heavy with his heavy shell. He rolls onto his back and lifts himself, slowly. The thickness is gone, he is up. Hold onto the bureaus. The shade is up. Darker in house, light outside. They're laughing, who's laughing? Across the street; they're laughing. They're looking up and they're laughing, at me. They saw me fall over the bucket, they're making fun o' me. Stop your laughing, damn bastards! Damn bastards! Stop lookin' in here an' laughing. I'm sick -- don't laugh at me. Mind yer own business, I tell ye!

Willie narrows eyes and stares out. Always laughin' at me, all of 'em. I ain't no bum like ye are. I got a home, and I don't

fool around with other men's wimmen. What're ye laughin' at me for? I worked as long as I could. I ain't no tramp. I still work. I ain't no . . . Stop yer snoopin' in here and yer damned laughin' I tell ye."

He feels a hotness in lungs and he feels a wish to shriek at the laughers. Stop it, stop it -- his words of anger climb up inside him. He opens the screen, sliding it across halfway. STOP IT! STOP IT! MIND YOUR OWN DAMNED BUSINESS! STOP THE LAUGHIN'!

The screen trembles nervously in his hand, his lifeless hand, and it falls to the ground below. They've stopped it, I see 'em, they stopped laughin', they're lookin' at me, but I stoppt 'em. The screen . . .

He turns around and holds onto the bed post. GRACE! Grace, the screen! Get the screen before they do! MARGIE! Get the screen, Margie!

They ain't here. Whur'd they go? They ain't here. Again, but more feebly, GRACE, MARGIE . . . They gone away . . . with Howard, they gone with that mechanic. They couldn' get rid of me, so they left me, with thet mechanic.

Anger grows thick in his head like the thickness of the wool, thick and heavy. I'll get him. Break up my home. I'll get him. The gun, the rabbit gun. I'll blow his head off like a cottontail. I'll get him when he goes by. Sunnuvabitch, break up my home. It's in the closet. I'll get him.

He struggles lamely one to the other bed post, rolls aside the bucket. Inside the closet, on the stop shelf, the gun and the

cartridges. I'll wait for him like a cottontail and I'll blow off his head. When he goes by in the car, the black shiny car.

His back is against the wall. He jams a cartridge into the magazine. Good ole Winchester -- I kill rabbits in my vegetable patch, I'll kill the mechanic . . .

And so he lies in wait, against the window \_\_\_\_\_, his gun pointed through the window, and he lies in wait, mumbling and muttering, lies in wait for the black car and the cottontail, the mechanic, in his vegetable patch.



CHAPTER XIV

Monday. Store -- brief description; musty shelves, flies, variety (pants, prophylactics) nigger - sardines, Billie - soda. Margie buys candy bars (sign says sugar good for you) cakes, "put it down". Gracie tells her to stop taking so much, having enuf trouble paying bills as is. Tells Mrs. Levin of all her troubles: Willie ill, Albert saving for marriage, Robbie buying care - might join army, (can't stop now, will loose his \$10 down), bills, installment, Doctor bills -- wisht Willie would die -- he's such a stone on my neck. (Order different meats, cheese for each of sons).

Mrs. Levin thinks what a terrible thing to say. Why doesn't Margie work? Changes subject to new mechanic -- Gracie on defensive, then giggles -- he's a fine man, I'd marry him if I could. He's got car, summer house. Margie giggles -- she's in corner, Billie has his hand behind her. You're prettiest girl in your block. -- I know, I'm the onlist girl in my block.

There are categories of stores. There are grocery stores, and \_\_\_\_\_ merchandise, and confectionery, and clothing, and pharmacy, and shoes, and butcher shops, and tobacco shops. Abe Levin's store was none of these, yet his supply was blinded to the tastes and needs of the small \_\_\_\_\_ of customers he built up during the past 24 years. He sold pants, and blue chambray shirts, and silk panties, and hominy grits, and Kotex, and spiced ham, and Hershey bars, and pies and cakes, and

machine shop caps with black visors, and Bull Durham tobacco, and soda pop, and cough medicine.

The shelves which ran along length of walls were painted in a gloomy red, behind them the flowered and long-faded wallpaper crumbled. On the shelves were the morning cereals, and the canned peas and pickles, and cleaners, and the grease solvents (for factory) and the jellos, and the toilet paper rolls. And the canned fruits. In the bins for fresh vegetables, there were strewn empty bags and broken sheets of glass and empty Clorox bottles. The vegetables were kept in their original containers - potatoes in bags, onions on sales, apples and pears and peaches in buckets - because in the bins the rats would get at them and feast

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In the candy-case, always muddy with sediment from kids clammy hands, 5¢ bars were on the bottom shelves and 4 for penny nigger-babies, and licorice sticks and peppermint sticks were on top.

To Grace and Margie Rutherford, Abe Levins' general store was a place where you could get almost anything you needed, including latest information about neighbors. It was also a place of refuge from home. It was also a meeting place. And it was a place for exchanging recipites. And a place for advice, whether solicited or not.

On this day, it was a place of refuge and a place of advice for Gracie Rutherford. Ordinarily she would have winced at the presence of the colored man who was sitting on the milkcase fingering mustard sardines from the can into his mouth, and

slurping the little fish down with crackers and large bottle of grape soda. He was a country nigger. She could tell from his dusy dungarees and muddy shoes, and he smelled from perspiration, the way she knew negros always smelled. Recall farm days and negroes. She looked at him for a moment. He had come with a white man who had brought a truckload of cattle to the \_\_\_\_\_ across the street. She also looked momentarily at Reds Kelley, the tall broadshouldered youth in his wet T-shirt, standing before the candycase at the opposite end of the store. He worked in the \_\_\_\_\_, as did his entire family. She knew him as a fresh boy who put brands on the sides of beef before they went into the icebox. He stood there, with a bottle of soda in his strong hand; he was surveying the candy bars in the case and the potato chips and pretzels and pickles on top the case. By this time, Margie was sitting on top the red case cooler, her legs dangling back and forth, a bottle of Pepsi-Cola at her lips.

"I came to get a few things before the boys come in fer supper," Gracie said to Mrs. Levin, the fleshy litte woman with the greying hair and wired spectacles, who stood behind the showcase with men's stocking, undershorts, suspenders and handkerchiefs. All the neighbors called Mrs. Levin "Mrs. Able" -- but the Rutherfords, out of deference, called her Mrs. Levin, or they called her by no name at all. Mrs. Levin was a friendly woman, she talked more than she should have, but the neighbors, including Gracie, took this as a sigh of friendliness, and they confided in her their innermost secrets. They thought, too, she was a smart

woman because it was obvious she ran the entire business, for her three children were all in school, and her husband was a sick man who needed sleep the greater part of the day, and who when he did take care of the store, was sullen or irascible or called them strange foreign names like "gariff" or "mamzer" or "bandit." When Abie counted up the store bill at the end of the week, there were invariably errors in addition or subtraction, and then Mrs. Abie would have to recount and set the records straight.

Mrs. Abie also had insight, or at least, intuition, for she sensed, as she did now, when something good or ill has taken place.

"Is something the matter?" asked Mrs. Abie in her slight accent, and feeling the presence of strangers, the nigger with the sardines and the tall youth before the candy case, Mrs. Gracie winked and nodded indicating she would delay her confidence until a later moment.

Mrs. Abie was quick to grasp the meaning of the sign and she devoted herself to Gracie's previous request. "What did you want, Mrs. Grace?"

Mrs. Grace put her finger to her mouth and thought of the supper she had prepared. There was vegible soup, and beef pie for Robbie, and a pork chop for Henry, and now it was something light she needed for Albert, since he had asked for a light supper.

Mrs. Levin, "Why do you make different foods, raises bill.

Gracie, "Boys works hard and should get what they want. It's their only real enjoyment."

"Maybe some liverwurst?", Mrs. Levin. "'Bout a quarter pound."

"Better make it a half pound; I might take some, too." This was Margie's first remark since she finished the soft drink. Mrs. Abie reached with a faint hostility, for the Rutherford bill was growing rather than diminishing, and its growth was due in no small measure to such suggestions from Margie.

Mrs. Abie walked behind the candy case to the ice box, and then placed the liverwurst on the slicing machine. She cut and weighed out a quarter pound. As Mrs. Abie squinted at tiny figures on the white scale, Mrs. Gracie wiped her face with a small hankie, "Landsakes, it's hot. Even the fan don't seem ter do much good."

The colored man who had just finished drinking down the mustard sauce from the can, looked up at the fan suspended from the ceiling, its wooden blades whirring softly, throwing out a faint breeze toward the \_\_\_\_\_ which not fluttered from below the ceiling lights, and the fly-papers which crackled stiffly back and forth with twin burdens of insects. The colored man stood up, brushed the cracker crumbs from his pants, looked around to see if he wanted anything more, then left the store leaving the can on the milk-case and the screen door tinkling with its cow bell behind him.

Margie waited a moment, then came off the case muttering coldly, "Sunnuvabitch, I'm glad he's gone, shouldn't leave niggers like that in a white store."

For the first time since the Rutherfords entered, Reds Kelley turned around and shook his head. "Bastard really stinked, didn't he?" Gracie Rutherford nodded. She felt a wish to speak but she hesitated. Reds Kelley is a smart-aleck from across the street, and she don't speak to neighbors from the across the street, especially Reds Kelley, the smart-aleck. But, she nodded, as if to say, yes, he certainly did stink.

Mrs. Abie was now back behind the show case. She put the liverwurst package down and said, "Colored people always perspires a lot. It's in der blood. But dis one was a nice fella; he was very polite and called, 'Mam'". She had no intention to defend the negro man, for it was not good for a Jew to defend a negro man, for it was better the Jew be on the white side cursing the black side, but she sounded as though she was defending the negro man and she stopped.

"Anything else, Missus Grace?" asked Mrs. Abie. She asked the questions with little relish, for she knew Mrs. Grace could never pay for everything she wanted to buy, and then there was the back-bill.

Mrs. Gracie touched the finger to her mouth. She was thinking. Margie moved toward the candy case near there bid Red Kelley, the smart-alec, stood. She picked up a large bag of potato chips, tore off the top and began making a crunching noise with her mouth. "I'm takin' a bag of chips. Mark down a quarter, Mrs. Levin."

Mrs. Levin scowled over her spectacles. Mrs. Grace felt the scowl and was moved to remonstrate. "Put it down, Margie, there's no need for 'tater chips afore suppertime. Put 'em down."

"Too late, now," Margie smirked, putting another browned chip in her mouth.

"Wal, that's all yer takin', y'hear," Gracie frowned. She was embarrassed by the lack of control she exerted over her daughter and she was embarrassed for she was certain Reds Kelley would tell the neighbors about her lack of control. She was further embarrassed for she noted how her daughter winked at the tall Reds Kelley and how he, the smart-aleck, in turn looked at her daughter with that fresh look that covers in one sweep the blue blouse and the white shorts and the white legs beneath the shorts.

Irritated, she turned toward the shelves for the pickle relish and the pound of coffee. She placed them next to the liverwurst on the top of the glass case, and she paused to think, "What else," glimpsing notice of her daughter and the fresh Reds Kelley.

"I guess at's about all," she said undecided. There was more, but once decided not to ask for more, for it is embarrassing not to be able to pay on the next Saturday, and there was always the back-bill.

Mrs. Abie began figuring the sum on the paper bag. She was fast with figures. Gracie watched her lick the pencil, paint and block across the \_\_\_\_\_. Hesitantly, with her finger on her mouth, she interrupted, "Better add on a carton of Chesterfields. Boys have run out of smokes." She apologized for

asking, she always seemed to apologize. She didn't want to, but she felt she had to. It wasn't her fault she didn't have enough money to take care of the entire bill -- Lord knows she tried to keep it down. Six people and a dog are a lot of mouths to feed. It wasn't her fault. And it wasn't Mrs. Abie's fault, because Mr. Abie didn't try to hook her; she was \_\_\_\_\_ gettin' good cheap cuts of beef and tried every which way to help keep the bill down. Lord knows whose fault it was, but still she apologized.

Mrs. Levin placed the cigarettes carton on the counter and added up the figures. "Four nineteen," she said.

"Whew -- all at money and so little bit of stuff," Gracie said.

"At's away it it, and we can't do anything about it. I gave you the liverwurst 10¢ cheaper than I us'ly sell it for."

"Oh, I ain't meanin' ye," she apologized again. "I mean things in general are high. It's gettin' more terrible every week -- I don't see for the life of me how I'll keep the family in bread and clothes if things keep goin' up as they're doin'. Landsakes, it's terrible for the poor pursin."

Mrs. Levin complained how terrible it is for the small businessman, jobbers raisin' price, and small businessman can't raise prices cause customers can't afford it. And Gracie nodded mournfully, "Don't know what the country is comin' to."

Abruptly, without transition, Mrs. Levin said, "I saw Dr. Bramble's car outside your steps this morning."

And Gracie told her, "It was for the ole man, he had a bad stroke." She went into all the details, how she found him on the floor, how she lifted him into the teet, how she stayed up all night with him, and how he carried on in front of the doctor, calling me -- she whispered the word whore.

Mrs. Levin held her own convictions about the truth of Willie's charge, but she withheld them. Gracie continued about the misery and torture of living with the man, all the trouble she has as it is, taking keer of the place and the bills, and now with him sick. "Oh," she sighed, "I wisht he'd died."

Mrs. Levin shuddered. She was a religious woman and she said to say such a thing wasn't nice. Gracie respected her because she was religious and because she was smart in business, but she said she couldn't help it and that nobody would go through what she went through.

Mrs. Levin commiserated that indeed Gracie had gone through a lot. She made a point of mentioning the early years when she had brought them the Christmas basket, and how shocked she was at the run-down condition of the house and how now, even with the boys working for the factory, they could do nothing or little to better their living ways, and that the factory didn't even help.

Mrs. Levin, then had something on her mind, and she seldom could withhold what she felt was on her mind. She warmed up to the new thought, "If you need more money, that is, if you have lots of bills and you need more cash, why don't you take Margie out of school and put her to work."

Gracie, her elbows now on the showcase, said, "I been thinking about it," but she also thinking about how difficult Margie would get to be if she were earning her own money, and if she were fooling with boys now, how she would fool them.

At the thought of Margie, she turned to see what her daughter was doing at the other end of the store, and when she saw the fresh Reds Kelley standing before her daughter, trying to tickle her behind her armpits, she wanted to call out her displeasure. But, it was Mrs. Levin who called out, for Mrs. Levin could seldom hold back the thoughts on her mind, and her heaviest thought at this instant was that she didn't like what Reds Kelley was doing with Margie Rutherford in her store, and so she called, "Hey! Hey! What's going on here?" But she felt the admonition was too severe for her customers, so she \_\_\_\_\_ it in an excuse, "Watch out for the candy case, Reds; you'll break da glass, besides it's very weak."

Reds laughed a keep, full laugh and turned to show his white teeth, "Y'know," he laughed deeply, "Margie here is the purtiest girl on that side of Light Street." He paused, the way one pauses before the punch-line of a joke. "She's the only girl on that side of Light Street," and he threw back his head and laughed deeply at his great joke. Margie like the joke even though it was at her expense, and she thumped him on his chest.

Embarrassed at the closeness between the fresh boy and her bare-legged daughter, Mrs. Grace managed a \_\_\_\_\_ giggle. She nervously pushed around the packages on the show case

and bridged the conversation gap. "I don' think more money would fix things, although it wud shure help out. What I need is a complete change in life." Mrs. Levin understood her reference. They had spoken before of Howard and Mrs. Levin knew Grace's desire to marry him, and that is why she understood, Grace was eager Willie should die.

It required virtually no probing on Mrs. Levin's part before Grace spoke freely of the Sunday at Howard's country home. Beneath Gracie's smiling exclamation on the beauty of the orchards and gardens and the house, Mrs. Levin sensed the art of intimacy and insider her, her religious sensitiveness felt bruised. But she continued to listen as Gracie revealed her dream world with her dream man.

The giggling, the wild loose sort of giggling, the kind of giggling which embarrassed Mrs. Gracie and outraged Mrs. Levin came from over the candy case. Mrs. Grace broke off in the middle of a phrase as she saw fresh Red Kelley standing behind her daughter, his one hand behind and below moving in a small secretive movement. The giggling, the wild loose hee hee hee giggling. Before Mrs. Levin could cry out her admonition, Mrs. Grace has gathered the packages in her arms, and turning swiftly toward the screen with the tinkling cow bell, she glowered at the Red Kelley, and called to her daughter, "Come here, this minit!" And as her daughter marched toward her, the potato-chip bag crinkling in her hands, Mrs. Gracie twisted her head toward Mrs. Levin and said, "We

gotta be goin'. Willie \_\_\_\_\_ be made as blazes  
if we're not home. See yer later."

Margie turns towards Reds, wishes, "See ye later.'



CHAPTER XV

Monday. Gracie comes in house, finds three sons, asks what's all the excitement in factory (police, people). They tell her about (describe) explosion, three men killed, flaming acids. Robbie says he's going to join army. If he's going to get killed, mite's well be in pretty uniform. More dangerous than fightin on battlefield, only here there ain't no \_\_\_\_\_, and only medals are sawed-off fingers and acid in your eyes. Ain't going to spend another day in factory, trouble with us we got guts only for little things, for arguin' with the old man, or hollerin' at the foreman, but no guts to make a real break. Gracie asks how long till repaired. Albert answers about one week. How terrible, we'll lose a week's wages! Henry blows up. We damned near gets our head blasted off and you talk about wages. He says he's glad it happened, he won't have to support that old bastard for a while, tired of taking care of him past nine years, he takes it for granted, let him come begging for it, (I'm a slave to the factory, to the old man). Goes out to get drunk, good pissin' drunk.

"Now what in the world is the screen doing on the ground?" Gracie asks Margie to pick it up. She thinks maybe kids were playing ball and knocked it our, but there were no kinds in the street. Or maybe it was loose and a gust of wind. She would go up and find out what happint. How is Willie, asleep?

But when she came into the kitchen, she completely forgot to go up. Her three boys were in the kitchen, Henry sitting at the

table, Albert sitting next to the window facing the factory, Robbie standing up looking out the window with the backyard. She saw immediately that something had happened, and fear grew inside her and coiled in knots. Thin faces were white, with the pale whiteness of putty, and in thin eyes was the distant look of men who had experienced a great experience, and who would rather think it in their minds than speak it with their mouths.

She demanded to know what had occurred, after a moment they looked at her and she saw trembling in their faces, even in the face of the brave one, Henry. It was he who spoke at last.

"Didn't yet hear the explosion?"

"What? What explosion?"

"It blowed up like a bomb, the whole galvanize room.

"I seen people talkin' in the street as I came down, but I didn't stop to find out.

Robbie turned toward her, his faced was chalk-white, his lips trembed as he spoke, "It jest wiped 'em out, rolled 'em over like dead flies or beetles -- ye could hear 'em screaming through the smoke -- the acid jest burnt right through their guts.

Albert nodded his head as through in morning. "Poor fellers, all of 'em yung like us. There was three of 'em dead when we got out, Charley Wilkins, Franz Boker, Bill Selden -- all of 'em yung feller like us -- they'll have to wait till the smoke clears out to get the bodies. Oh, Jesus, Lord."

Henry put the bottle of beer to his lips and sucked on it fiercely. He returned it to the table and began squeezing its

middle between his two hands. Gracie looked at her sons and shuddered as thought of the three left inside the smoke-filled room.

"Looked like a volcaner. Smoke just bustin' up all over, and the fumes chokin' ye. Even the masks didn't help." He gritted his teeth in anger and grasped the bottle as though it were flesh. "I'd like to get my hands on the sunnovabitch who played the temper'ture on the tank. I'd break his goddam neck in two . . . I'd.

"You'd poop!" Robbie had turned around and lifted his face which was older than anyone's in the room, which was old with the tragic happening, old with resolution. The wild voice was harsh, bitter, angry; maddened as it had never been before in this house. "You'd jest sit there and poop in yer pants! Ye'd sit there and talk yerself blue in the jaws. Ye won't do a damned thing to nobody. Ye'll go back to that murder-trap jest as soon as the smoke clears out, and ye'll start picklin and throwing out yer 300 buckets a say like nuthin' ever happint. An' ye'll keep on picklin and bust yer back to make an extra buck, and ye'll keep on talkin' bog talk until yer numers comes up, and then ye'll go down screamin' with acid in yer lungs like Charley did and Bill . . ."

"Shut up, runt!" Henry spoke angrily, but an anger of respect, for Robbie's words were not prattle.

"Don't runt me, big shot! Sure, ye got lots of big talk. You got big guts -- but only fer little things. Sure, ye kin blow up yer chest and holler at the ole man or her, sure ye got guts fer

that; ye got guts to punchin' little guys on their arms, for all the little things that don't count yet got guts, het ye got a yaller streak runnin' from the back of yer spine down to the front of yer pecker when it comes to the important things. Why don't ye save some of yer hot air fer the union meetings?"

"Shet yer trap. I'm gonno bust ye \_\_\_\_\_." Henry

"Boys!" Gracie.

"Ye ain't gonna bust nobody. Why don't ye bust that goddam foreman when he wouldn't get us those safety valves? Why don't ye bust Buck Peters and Willie Callie when they sold us out to Matthew? Why ain't you makin' with yer big talk at the union meetings? Why don't stick you yer chest and tell 'em we ain't going back to that hell-hole 'till we get the safety conditions every other pickler gets in other fact'ry?"

Henry, "Look runt, why ye tellin' me these things? If yer so hot under the collar, why don't ye do tell 'em?"

Robbie, "Me? I'm a weaklin', I ain't got the guts, but I got enuf guts now to get the hell away from that goddam rat-trap. I'm makin' a break once and fer all with Matthew Bucket Co. They can share their galvangize rooms up their ass-hole, and they kin shove up their \$22 bucks a week, and they kind shove up this goddam house. I'm leaving for good."

"Robbie? Whut, where ye goin'?"

"I'm signin' up for the army." Robbie moves toward doorway near staircase. Both Albert and Henry watch him in stunned silence. Here the runt, the baby, was making clear this whole

tragic situation. Here the weakling had guts; ashamed, they felt ashamed and impotent. "I'm goin' up to the recruitin' station."

"Now!" asked Gracie, packages still in her arms.

"Now! Lissen here, If I'm gonna get killed, I want it to be pretty, in a uniform with brass button, not in a rubber apron with goggles. If they're gonna blow me up, then let 'em do it on a battlefield where there's grass and flowers. If I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die like a hero -- not like a rat in a rattrap. I ain't gonna be a Matthew hero, with fingers missin', and acid in my belly. I don't know what you guys are gonna do, but I ain't steppin' foot in that gas-house another minit -- I'm thru."

Albert, "Don't go blowin' off half-cocked, Robbie. You'll go doing sumthin' ye'll be sorry for later on."

Robbie, "What kin I ever be sorry for later on? My job? My house? Don't go foolin' yerself. We got nuthin' to lose. What kind of house we got? Freezin' yer nuts off in the outhouse in winter time, pissin' in a bucket in yer bedroom 'til the room smells like Feckley's stables. Yeh, we got lots to lose! Acid and burnt guts we got to lose!"

Albert, "This was an accident. How often did it happint?"

Robbie, "It happint twicet in my lifetime, an' I ain't gonna be around when it happins agin. Coz next time it's gonna be me and you and him."

Albert, "Ye're jest all excited. Why dontcha go to a movie or to . . . "

Robbie, "Or to church? Lissin', Al, maybe ye kin sit in church and lissen' to purty music and hear 'em talkin' solf, maybe ye kin forget about all this. Maybe ye think ye got some great prupose here. Wal, it ain't in me to sit in church and dream my way out this. I got no purpose here, an' when ye got no purpose y' ain't got no right hangin' around like a spook. I've got nuthin' here to say fer. I got to target to aim at, none of us got a target here, 'cept each other and we jest keep pluggin' away at each other. Maybe if we was back on a farm we could stick it out. We'd been buildin' somethin' that was our'n. We'd been grown' somethin' that was our'n, but now we're workin' for nobody and nuthin'. House ain't ourn, our lives ain't ourn, place ain't ourn (gates, neighbors), friends ain't ourn."

In the silence, they could hear his steps as he walked up the stairs, opened the door to his room, then shut it.

Al laugh. Gracie put the packages on the table. She looked up and shook her head. She felt another pillar of the house topple from under her, and she knew there was nothing that could hold it up.

She turned to Albert and asked the first question that came to mind. "How long will it take to fix the tank and get the room workin'?"

Albert answered, half-dazed, "'Bout a week."

"Oh, gracious! We lose a whole week's wages!"

"What!" Henry jumps up; the bottle fell from his hand and rolled across the table. His face is puffed with fury. The nerves

in his long bare arms twitched. "Sunnuvabitch! We damned near all of us get our heads blowed off and all ye can say is we're losin' wages."

"I didn't mean . . ." She sought to apologize, but Henry was started and there was no restraining. He threw his hands up in the air and stalked around the room.

"Wal, lissen' here, ole woman. There ain't no wages an' there ain't gonna be no wages from me anymore. I'm glad it happint, y'see? I ain't supportin' that old bastard anymore, y'see. I been breakin' my back for nine years now -- for what? For him, at's for what? Wal, not more. Let him come beggin' for it, on his goddam knees. I ain't gettin' myself killt for him or nobody else. I ain't no slave to nobody, not to Matthew, or the ole man, nobody."

He opens screen door, spits between his teeth into summer kitchen. His face tightens, and a mean look comes over him. He kicks Albert's feet out of the way, pushed Margie aside, and walks into living room.

"Whar ye goin', Henry?" Gracie cries.

"I'm goin' out ter get drunk, good an' drunk, good and pissin' drunk." In the kitchen, they hear the screen door slam and the curtain rollers turn over and over.

CHAPTER XVI

Monday. Albert tells his mother not to worry about Henry. He's tense because it almost hit him. He'll be all right. Get supper ready, bringing Evelyn over to see Willie.

While they're eating, Willie back in bed (gun under bed), tired from exertion. Margie brings him supper, tells him Evelyn and Al here. They come up. Willie talkative, glad Albert brought his girl (quiet, mouse-faced, don't talk straight toward people, speaks thru Albert), feels he's near the end, glad he saw her. Knows she's a Caflec, never did like Caflecs, think they own everything, think they're better than everybody, but glad he saw Evelyn, looks like she'll make Al a good wife, Caflecs do make good wives, never much on church myself, but I know church-goin' people don't play around with other people's wives and husbands, they're loyal (church throws scare in them).

Suddenly turns to Robbie, when I'm gone be a good boy and take care of my cartons, you can have a Gibson chair (one for Albert as present).

The storm tears through a field, it swirls and whines and makes great eddies in the dust, and then abruptly it lifts itself and passes on. Behind it, silence falls and with it the dust settles in little mounds, the weeds with their broken spines fall upon each other, and lament.

Gracie sat back in her chair, but her shoulders leaned forward. Her eyes were reddened and her hair seemed untidied as

though from windstorm. She lifted her hands in a helpless movement, and her eyes felt moistened. She broke into weeping, and her weeping gave to sobbing as Albert came to her side.

"Don't, ma, don't it'll all be allright. Jes' pull yerself together. It'll straighten' itself out. They're nervous. It'll . . ."

Her head shook gently like a leaf not fully broken from its stem. She cried in murmurs, "They're all leavin' me. They're nuthin' left. All these years and nuthin'."

"Now look, ma." Albert said, with anger climbing in his voice. He couldn't stand women crying. He grabbed her by her shoulders and moved her back till her face was opposite her. "Now stop, ma. Ain't nobody leavin' here. The boys are jest all cooked up 'cause they had a narrow escape. They jest gotta get the fight outa their systems, but they'll be back. Henry'll get a good drunk on, but he'll be back." She sniffled and ran her fist across her nose.

"Jest you get a holt on yerself. Everything'll be jest like it always was. Here." Albert gives her his big red hankie to blow her nose. "Take a good blow and get supper ready. I'm bringin' Evelyn over ter see the ole man before he gets too bad."

She rubbed her eyes with her knuckles and set her specs on her protruding brow. In a soft whimper, she muttered, I jest don't unnerstan' it. Everythin's jest comin' apart . . . the

house . . . the fambly . . . (what'd I do to deserve this?) . . .  
An' now you're gonna leave me with the old man and Margie . . . an'  
no money comin' in . . . "

Gracie's face was set in a mould of self-pity. She looks at Albert imploringly. "Where'll I go when they put us out. Where'll I go with the ole man. Where'll I get money?" She was too bereaved to remember Howard, to think of a solution which would exclude Willie, for at this moment his plight and hers were one. She felt bound by tragedy and are not the tragic this more inseparable than others?

Anger now flowed over Albert's face. In a murmur of command, be ordered, "Stop running away with yerself! I swear -- I'll, I'll, I'll leave ye myself, this minit, if ye don't stop it."

Gracie sat back and sniffed. "All right, I'm better, Albert. I'll be all right."

Albert sighed with relief, "Good," he said, "good!" He turned to Margie who sat at the table confused and bewildered by the turbulent experience. "Margie, ye go upstairs and tell Robbie to stay for supper. He can enlist later an' . . . Tell him I said so."

\* \* \* \* \*

While the table was being set, Margie came upstairs, as she was ordered to, carrying a bowl of broth, some crackers, and warm milk for Willie. She knocked on the door and heard a groan. Inside, she saw her father stretched out across the bed, his beet

dangling on one side. She placed the broth and crackers and milk on the bureau, grimaced at the overturned bucket, lifted it with her foot, and turned to lift the shade when she remembered the fallen window screen. How did it fall, she was about to ask him. But the question froze in her throat as she saw the rifle on the floor.

She looked up at her father and saw his white, white eyes staring at her. She felt a desire to cry out, but a great feeling of pity was upon her. The look on her father's face -- it was the first time in so long she thought of the man in terms of father -- was like that of the crippled cow which lay in the street, in front of the slaughter house, last week before they shot her.

She looked down again at the rifle. Why? Who? Why the gun? Who was he to kill? The broth. She would give him the broth and then take the gun downstairs. She tried to prop him up. He was limp from exhaustion. And he smelled. Margie thought of the nigger who smelled from perspiration. Nigger stink and sardines. Her pity was opening into her hostility.

"C'mon, sit up an' take this!" she spoke coarsely. Why does he stink so?" Oughta change his clothes and wash him. Christ, wait till Evelyn comes up and smells him. She'll faint, poor little Caflec. I ain't gonna touch him, that's one thing sure. She held up the bowl and he drained its last contents as the dog would. "They're comin' up't see ye."

He groaned. His hands were soft and lifeless as though without bone. He was emotionally exhausted and emptied of his old

\_\_\_\_\_ strength. He faintly had the \_\_\_\_\_  
power to ask who was coming up.

In her brittle way, Margie repeated harshly, "They're comin' up to see ye -- Al and his girl Evelyn."

He finally spoke with a thin, quavering voice, "Al and Evelyn." In a quick jerky movement she pulled the bowl from his hands, then handed him the milk which he slowly turned toward his lips. Swiftly and with the litheness that thin persons often have, she bent toward the floor, raised the rifle in her one hand, and with the bowl in her other, she left the room, feeling the old man's eyes in pursuit.

In the kitchen she showed them the rifle. Gracie instantly clutched the wet towel she was holding to breast. "Oh Lordey, Lordey."

"Where'd you find it?" asked Robbie.

"Near the window." She turned to Gracie. He must've knocked the screen out. I found him half dead on his back."

Albert squirmed with embarrassment. He nervously watched his girl, Evelyn, who sat beside him. There was no reaction on her small, pinched face. She sat at his side like a faithful little bird. The frown on her brow was there before, for she looked as though she was always worried or concerned.

Albert at length spoke to her. "It's an old Winchester. The ole man -- uh -- my father, he used to use it when we were kids in the country. We'd go every Sunday -- uh -- on weekends we'd go huntin' cottontails in the woods. He used to be a good shot. We'd

have rabbit stews, and once we'd made a vest outa the skins. Still got it upstairs."

Evelyn sat small and quiet, showing no trace of reaction. If she thought was not nice or \_\_\_\_\_, she failed to say so. If she thought hunting in the country exciting, she failed to say that as well. She simply sat, small and quiet, the prospective housewife, the steady church-goer.

"Who do ye think he was aimin' to get?" Margie asked.

Gracie answered excitedly as though she were weighing the question from the beginning. "Me! He was gonna kill me. I'm sure as today is Monday. He was hyin' up there waitin' fer me to get back from the store."

"Maybe he was hyin' fer Howard," Margie said.

"Oh, fer Christ sake, you and yer magining," Robbie said impatiently. He stood up, took the gun from Margie, and put it somewhere in the living room. When he returned, he told them, "He was probly afraid bein' here alone, so he took up the rifle to protech hissself. Now let's forget all about it an' get upstairs. I wanta hurry up and finish so's I kin get uptown afore they close."

\* \* \* \* \*

Willie watched them gather about his bed. He had the look of a hunted man in his eyes. He thought they would question him about the gun, about the fallen window screen. He squirmed slightly on the bed. The broth and milk were warm inside him. He felt his numbness thaw, slowly giving way to an elemental strength. He

squirmed again while his back was against the backboard. His eyes were luminous with fight, his limp body seemed poised for movement.

"This here's Evelyn," Albert pointed a clumsy thumb toward the small woman at his side.

Slowly, almost suspiciously, Willie nodded. He stared into her eyes and muttered weakly, "Howdy."

Her long eye lashes flinched and her small nostrils trembled as the sour smell came to her. "Hello, I'm pleased to meet you." She spoke in her thin soprano, as though with brave, trembling effort. Then she looked up at Albert and seemed to melt into his side.

"I wanted ye to meet Evelyn, bein's we're gettin' marrit soon." Albert spoke, and then there was an abrupt silence.

Willie twisted the upper part of his body and he raised himself on his elbows. A tightening came into his face and he seemed prepared to either move or speak or to fall back. At length, he began to speak.

"I'm glad ye came," he started weakly, but a hint of his former huskiness seemed to emerge as he gathered words, "I been to meet ye, girl. I ain't gonna be here fer much longer, I'm gettin' near the end -- and I'm glad to meet ye."

"Don't, paw." Robbie began to plead.

"No use foolin', Robbie, I'm near the end and I know it . . . no use." His chest rose as he coughed. A bit of froth was the lower of his mouth. "I know ye're a Calfec, Evelyn," he plunged reckless on in his speech, with the recklessness of old men

who they are at the end of their days. But he spoke now with a sureness and with the \_\_\_\_\_ of wisdom with which old men at the end of their time speak, "an' I never did like Caflics. Nobody in my family ever likt Caflecs. Thought they know everythin', thought they owned everythin', thought they was better'n other people. Like them Peders crost the street, when ye see 'em goin' to church, ye' so important, too importan' fer everybody." He caught his breath. The little woman looked up at Albert, terrified. "But I'm glad I met ye. I kin tell ye'll make Albert here a good wife. Caflec women make men good wives. I'm not a church-goes myself but I know it -- church goin' people make good wives -- an' good husbands. Maybe the church scares 'em into it -- I dunno -- but they make good wives and husbands. They don't fool around with other men and wimmen. I kin tell that about ye. Ye'll be a good and loyal wife."

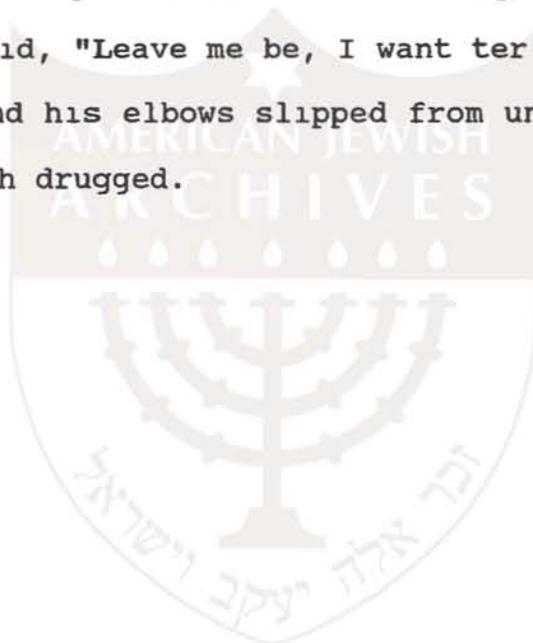
The bitterness of his years of loneliness and reproach now erupted from Willie. His words were directed toward the frightened little girl at his son's side, yet their sharp edges cut with intention into the woman who was his wife and even into the girl who was his daughter.

Suddenly he turned toward Robbie who stood at the foot of the bed. "Robbie," he pronounced the name with great warmth. "Robbie, be a good boy like ye always was."

"Don't tuck like this, paw. Ye'll be all right. Dr. Bramble sed . . . "

"No use foolin', Robbie. I know the end when it's come --  
lissen to me, Robbie. When I'm gone I want ye to take keer of my  
cartons, an' the Gibson chairs, they're all I got left. They're  
all yours -- ye can do with 'em what ye want."

His flow of words were interrupted by a thickness he felt in  
his chest. He closed his eyes for a moment, then opened them wide  
upon his wife and daughter. He moved his lips as though to speak.  
And finally he said, "Leave me be, I want ter sleep. I'm  
tired . . . " And his elbows slipped from under him and he fell  
to sleep as though drugged.



CHAPTER XVII

Monday at 11:00 P.M. Gracie, (Robbie, went to park, looking for girls), Albert went with Evelyn; Gracie worried about Henry; Margie wanted to go out too, Gracie wants her around with old man sick; Margie are sitting in living room. Knock on door. O'Brien comes in, friendly exchange, he's on night shift -- don't want to alarm you good people, but think you ought to come with me. Gracie gets wrought up. He tells her it's "Henry." "In jail?" "No, but he will be unless we get to him soon." Gracie says let's hurry, afraid what neighbors will say, what factory will do if they find out.

CHAPTER XVIII

They hurry (dark path, gutters, weeds, railroad ties, cows moving in slaughter house, swinging lamp, walk on ties, squeeze past box cars, across lot), under bridge. Find smokehounds around mulligan stew. (Lard can, ingredients, flame smokehounds sprawled on the damp ground, singing, cursing, dog lapping thin faces, empty smoke bottles, streetcars overhead). Henry thoroughly soused, bleary-eyes, lying in mud, mumbles about factory explosion, barmaid (nice little piece of \_\_\_\_\_, oughta let her have it next time), own strength (knock da fuggin' bridge down, watchme) other bums tell him to shut up.

Gracie, Margie, O'Brien take him home.

It is at night that the loneliness of this street comes alive. It is like a giant box, this street, walled all around in darkness,

ringed about with massive buildings, the picket fences, the rows of houses, closed off on one end of the train tracks, and ended on the other by the warped wooden fence with its Road End sign flinching on and off in the night air with its red caution. There is no stirring in the heart of the box. Perhaps in error into this lonely street. But it is at the tracks or at the top of the hill he pauses to see the caution sign and behind it the black and white fence, and he turns leaving the street, never daring to ask for directions here for Highway One, for here it is dark, and desolate, fearful at night and lonely.

When the car which came in error and left suddenly taking with it its soft purring noises is gone, the loneliness of the night presses in from the other directions. From the field across the slight valley, a scented breeze rises, moves over the fence and its red sign, and gently nudges the lamp above the Rutherford house, which now nods with soft creaking. And the crickets take up the night noises, and in a clattering chorus sing across the entire field, rising then falling. And the frogs leap from out of the clay hills \_\_\_\_\_ the valley, and splashes with faint sounds into the muddy waters which follow the length of the tracks.

It is in the living room where the mother and daughter are aware of all these turnings, the night noises, the car which came in error and now sped away, and the loneliness. They sit opposite each other, the mother on the sofa mending the hem of her daughter's skirt, the daughter in the rocker looking carefully at

the colored pictures in the magazines before \_\_\_\_\_. Between them is the table. The quiet is welcome, for this was a troublesome day, unreal and testing to the nerve.

It is the laugh of the girl that the silence is suddelny engulfed and swallowed. "Hee, hee," she laughs thinly.

Grace Rutherford looks up from her mending. Her face is drawn from the long experience of the day and her mind is wearied from the troublesome thoughts. But she addresses herself now to the laugh; "What's at, Margie?"

"This Mister Spirit sure is a card! He's got a little nigger-boy who comes to the cemetry where he hides out and the little nigger boy says . . . " She pauses to recall the continuity of the picture-story. It is difficult to recall, and she turns back the pages, and she turns towards the pages, she says, "Now whur is it?"

She continues to turn the pages, and then Gracie calls out "Never mind, it ain't 'portant." Her manner is subdued, and she speaks with a voice that is strained.

"I wunder where Robbie went to?" It's round eleven o'clock now and it shouldn'ta taken him this long at the recruitin' p[lace for the army." Suddenly she saw her youngest son dressed in uniform, it was like a faded picture in the family album. She winced and felt a shudder ascend her back.

"Damn it. What happint to that page?" Margie said wryly. Grace tied a knot in the end of the black thread, and began basting

the hem. She stopped to wonder again. "Think he went to the movies?"

Margie threw the magazine on the floor in disgust. "Hell with it!" She paused, and then added, "What ye say?"

"I sed d'ye think Robbie is gone to the movies? It's so late."

"How do I know?" She said cockily. Then, with restraint, she added, "I think he's gone to the park. He's been meeting some girls up there. I seen him there last week with a girl who used to be in my class. Name's Doris. Doris Burkhart. She's not a bad-looking girl. But she's stuck up, though. She \_\_\_\_\_."

Gracie interrupted. "Lord, I wisht he'd change his mind about the army. I wisht he'd git marrit and settle down with a nice girl and built him a good home." She spoke solemnly, as though in prayer.

"Did Albert go over to Evelyn's?" asked Margie.

"I guess he did."

"The old man liked her." Gracie remained silent. She felt wounded at the thought of the old man, at the recollection of his caustic attack a little while before. She was glad he was now asleep, for in sleep he was silent, motionless, no axe, no gun, no threats, and her fear of him could rest. But now her greater fear came upon her, her fear of the future, of the morning soon to come.

The morning was a matter of hours, and would it be a matter of hours before Robbie left for the army? Hours before Henry had left, gone completely in his rage? Hours before Mr. Matthew or

Mr. Alexander asked her to leave this house, pack and go for your services to Matthew Bucket Co. are at an end. Or would it be hours before Willie died and ended her torment, freed her to embrace her new life?

What would the morning bring with the hours? Perhaps it would bring new strength to the wretched man now on his back in the room above. And with that strength, perhaps more torment. The torment of bondage to suspicion and jealousy. The torment of endless struggling with broken pieces never to be made whole again.

Would she, Grace wondered, would she when the morning came have the courage to leave this man and his torment, to leave this house structured on hate, to leave the factory, its work and unhappiness which it filled her life, leave to go with Howard, leave to live in the dream and the promise which powered her until now. Or would she with the coming of the morning, succumb to her ancient instincts, the ritual of loyalty to her dying husband and her crumbling home?

There were ponderous feelings in her mind, a mind too feeble to comprehend, too wearied to wrestle with thoughts even if she were capable of comprehension. There was time until the morning - - perhaps then she would decide.

At the knock on the door, she gasped and turned up a frightened look toward her daughter. The dog suddenly stretched long and looked up toward the door. He growled deeply, then opened his mouth with a bark that was for strangers. Gracie stood up

stiffly, and with her head cocked to a side, she asked coldly and as though from a distance, "Who's 'ere?"

"Jim Mulrooney, Miss Grace."

"Oh." Her heart settled quickly and she uttered with pleasure, "Officer Mulrooney."

"What's he want?" Margie asked with cool suspicion.

Gracie opened the screen door to let in Jim Mulrooney. He was a tall, heavy Irish cop, with red sunburned face, and restless eyes. There was mirth in his greeting to Miss Gracie and Margie. He had been on this beat for several years now, and he was friendly to the Rutherfords. He was full of gossip and had an uninhibited laugh which rolled out in waves as he threw back his head. Jim Mulrooney was also a bachelor, and Gracie knew her husband cared little for his visits with them.

Jim Mulrooney spoke with an Irish accent and deep baritone. "Lovely night ain't it?"

Gracie forced a smile. Margie said she didn't really know coz she hadn't been out.

He starts playing with dog. Gracie senses he's covering up something. She asks him, "Jim, anything wrong?"

"Well, not really."

"Jim, what is it?" Her eyes are wide behind her specs.

"S'pose ye get your wrap and come with me, Miss Gracie. You can come too, Margie."

Margie stands up. Gracie looks with fright into her eyes. "It is Henry?"

"Yes'm."

"Is he in jail?"

"No, nothin' bad as that. But it might well be if we don't be gettin' to him soon."

"He's drunk."

"Yes'm, he's drunk."

"Wait, I'll get my shawl." She runs out of the room and comes back with a knitted shawl around her shoulders. "Will we need Margie?" she asks tremulously.

"She can come along."

"Where is he?"

"Under Hanover Street Bridge. He's with the smokehounds. I couldn't bring him myself. I thought he's start up a rumpus and a squad care would surely take him in. I thought he'd come peaceably if you was to ask him."

"Oh Lord." She walked around almost in a circle. She was perplexed. "I hope he don't make a fuss. If the neighbors see . . . if the factory finds out. Oh, Lord, with the smokehounds!" She shuddered.

Margie walked out of the room and then returned with a sweater over her blouse.

Gracie turned toward Margie and then to Jim Mulrooney, and she said, "Come, let's be hurryin'."

CHAPTER XVIII

When they reached the end of the road, Gracie said, "Stop!" She was breathing heavily for they had practically run the entire way. A cool sweat stood on her back and brow. She was not as young as she used to be, and had she been much younger she would still have found it strenuous to keep up with Jim Mulrooney's long strides.

It was not a great distance from her living room to this road which ended in a \_\_\_\_\_ before Hanover Street Bridge, yet in her mind she had traveled a great distance. As she plunged through the night padding heavily along the dirt road, always a pace or two behind Mulrooney and her daughter, her mind, her very tired and troubled mind, reached to the past and then to now, and to yesterday, and haltingly toward tomorrow. Henry was in her arms, an infant. She stood with him outside the barn door as she watched their bloated heffer give birth. Henry stood at the mahogany bar, his foot raised to the brass rail, his mouth swizzling draught beer. He pulled the plump, red-cheeked, raven-haired woman to his side, and patted her behind. Henry stood on the steps behind her, his head just above her waistline, he tugged at her apron and cried in hot anger, "Dammit, ma, I wanta ride the mare, I wanta, an' y'ain' stoppin' me," and he shoved her and she fell down the steps, and she sprained her side, the side which even now hurts. His muscles bulged, he stood massively bitter in the kitche, his arms waved about in wid movement, he snarled and clamored, "there ain't no wages . . . no wages from me . . . I'm

goin' out to get drunk . . . good and drunk . . . good an' pissin' drunk . . . "

And then Jim Mulrooney. It was almost a trot. Up the block, the cows mooin' in Henry's pens, past Abie's with the lights upstairs shining through the trees, the crunch of dirt and ground ashes under their feet, over the smelly water in the alley gutter, more dirt road, over the next gutter, the lamp high on the pole swinging in the night air, lighting up the long weeds in the marsh along the road, the garbage in the way, cracking of the hard shell crabs underfoot, breathing heavily and a cold sweat, not far now, "watch your step," Jim's hand helping onto the railroad ties, tar on the ties, tar and thick grease and weeds between the ties, cross Charles Street, street's asleep, a light in the store down the block, gravel road, now turn sideways, squeeze past in the little space between the box-car and the barrel-warehouse, sidle past two box-cars, grease underfoot, slippery but slowly, and now the lot, grass and weeds and rubbish, machines speeding through thenight, across the bridge going south Highway Number 1, a cold wind across the lot, rustling through the big cottonwood tree, moon overhead, big yellow cold moon, watch the rubber tire, an' the beer cans, so much rubbish, not far, not far anymore, weeds are tricky, you can smell the field across the way, cars speeding up on the bridge, Number 6 trolley, Curtis Bay trolley rubmlin' over bridge, thunderin' noise on the steel girders, not far. She said it again, "Stop!"

They stood in a clump of weeds, Gracie, her heart pounding, Mulrooney and her daughter at her sides. They stood at the end of the dirt road which broke off in a well-trod pathway leading down under the bridge. They heard the noises of the smokehounds, drunken noises of drunken men, and from the crest of the hill where they stood they smelled the alcohol, the mulligan stew, and the sharp \_\_\_\_\_ stench of urine.

A square of light fell on the ground under the bridge, a light thrown by a distant beam in the Chemical Works on the other side. In the shadows which crouched along the granite walls of the bridge, the smokehounds lay, some sprawled on their backs against the ground, their heads resting on the granite base, some half sitting against the wall, groaning and muttering, one crying out the torn fragment of a song, "My wild Irish Rose . . . "

The square of light lifted and swung heavily toward the wall, thrusting aside the shadows. It rested for a moment on the knot of men. "Same old crew," Mulrooney said atop the hill.

"Henry, where's Henry?," Gracie asked excitedly.

The light flared on a white jug which passed from one pair of hands to another, then to a mouth beneath a grimy, bearded face.

"Rags Kelly, Spinner, Curley, Joamey Loden, Syl Wanger . . . same old crew . . . you run 'em in in and thrity days later they're back at it agin. What's the good of it?," Mulrooney said with an air of detachment and futility.

Gracie pulled her shawl close about her neck and peered with small straining eyes across the space separating them and the underpass. "I don't see him, Jim."

Again the square of light lifted and hovered back in its circuit. From out of the shadows, a gruff, officious voice, called, "Gimme the smoke, you shunnuvabitch."

There came a drunken retort. "Ere ain't anymore."

"Well lest make shum-more," the gruff voice said again.

"Shpirmer, letsh have the alcohol," the second voice asked. A bottle thumped on the ground as the light returned picking out two coveralled legs, beneath the stretched hem two stockingless ankles and shoes, their soles open below the toes. Two hands reached shakingly for the fallen bottle.

"Dumb bashterd," the voice above the legs cried. "Dumb fuggin' bashterd . . . ya almosht brokt it," there was a loud burp. Then the cry continued. "Oughta beat the piss outta ya."

The beam slowly wheeled away from the shaking hands clenching the bottle of \_\_\_\_\_ alcohol. A trolley thundered overhead, jarring the girders, and an automobile horn blared out.

Below, a low his curled through the dark air as the man with shaking hands and bare ankles poured the contents of the bottle into the larger jug. The smoke was prepared.

Suddenly a large rancous laugh, large and nervous, blared out of the shadows.

"Henry! That him!" Gracie shouted.

"So damned dark without that light, ya can't make him out." Mulrooney said, "C'mon, we'll go down after him."

"Goddam thing jesh blowd up in a millum fuggin' pishes," the voice of the laugh bellowed. "So fuggin' thick," the voice was in tears, "ye couldn' shee yer ash-hole . . . din the ashid burnin' yer shkin right off yer nuts . . . jesh a million pices . . . it got 'em . . . got 'em, all free it got, Sharley right agin the fuggin' tank . . . never lay a broad again . . . Sharley, a good boy." The voice with the laught was now a voice of weeping, of lamentating.

Mulrooney stood with both legs astride the pathway, holding Gracie by her arm as she stepped timorously down toward him. "That's Hen . . . it's the explosion what did it." Gracie rambled. margie stepped down after her.

"Ye won't be comin' under the bridge. Ye'll stay at the edge an' I'll bring him to ya," Mulrooney said to Grace as she reached the ground leveling off before her.

The beam came across a giant lard can set on two rows of bricks in the center of the underpass. Underneath the can, dying coals struggled for life with every shaft of breeze. The can was blackened with smoke and remnant lard grease on the outside, and within, the remainder of the mulligan stew ceased bubbling, and threw up its rancid odor of rotted cabbage, and blood-clotted melts, and vinegar, and cheese and pulpy apples. It was a collective meal which the smokehounds had eaten, each contributing to the lard can his vegetable or fruit wrangled from a huckster,

or filched from a market stand, or lifted from the market garbage heap. Or a slab of raw meat sneaked to them from a relative employed in the slaughterhouse. Or a piece of moldy cheese worried out of Mrs. Abie. Or a bottle of vinegar, or a cupful of pepper, or a pocketful of bread Rags Kelley pleaded from his sister. And all together in their tomato cans they had swilled their stew, and from their jug they had swizzled their smoke. And now the festival was at an end, and it was the time for relaxation and after-dinner chatter.

Spinner's black and white mongrel, Spots, leaped out at the light in evening frolic, but finding it passing fearfully before him, he sauntered toward the still-warm can, lifted a hind leg and wetted, making an instant hiss.

"I can make it myself," Margie said as she came down the embankment and reached the level next to her mother. Mulrooney came after her.

"Lord, it jes' smells terrible," Gracie said, nodding her head, and holding two fingers to her nose. Against the underpass wall, on the opposite side of the lard can, a small crumbled form was hunched over, watching a stream fall him and from a spreading circle of wetness on the granite. The moon threw great pale \_\_\_\_\_ of light on the weeds and rubbish and glass-shards and dented oil cans.

"If he had to get grunk why din't he stay atta saloon? Why did he come to these . . . these smokehounds?" He had enough money

. . . why din't he stick to beer . . . Landsakes, 'smoke'," and Gracie shuddered and felt her insides coil.

"You folks stay here, I'll bring him out to yas." Mulrooney turned his large frame toward the underpass. Sparkles of light reflected from his brass cuff buttons as he swung his arms forward. Another trolley, going south across the bridge, rumbled over, and the beam of light fell across the blue pants of Mulrooney's uniform.

As he reached the area of the lard can, she stopped for a moment to watch two recognizable figures spar limply about each other, circling each other in slow teetering movement and then, at intervals, flinging out an arm drugged with heaviness.

"Yar gonna beat the piss outta who?", the taller of the two combatants said. He accepted the challenge flung at him earlier.

"Outta you, ya dumb bashterd. Ya almost brokt it," the other repeated his grievance.

Suddenly another form wobbled from out of the shadows into the arena. "I'll lock bof a ye; I'll knock bof a ye on yer asshes." It was Henry. Both turn on Henry. Together they mock, "Oh, big shot."

Mulrooney saw. He walked hastily toward the three men. "All right, you guys, break it up, break it up! C'mon, Spinner, get over there and sit down, an' you too, Rags, or I'll run you all in." Mulrooney had his hands on their shoulders. Both of the combatants looked up at him through their bleared eyes. They

blinked slowly, incredulously. They had been unaware of his arrival.

Mulrooney turned them both around in one strong spin, and moved them back toward the wall, where they instantly plopped down. As he turned around, Henry came tumbling toward him with wide open arms, his face wide with a drunken grin. "Mulrooney. Mulrooney, y'ole shunnuva. How 'bout a drink ole timer. C'mere, I'll getcha drink. Boy, shtuff's really gotta kick in her . . . beer's like monkey pissh againsh iss shtuff . . . C'mere, ole timer."

As Henry tried to weave past him toward the cluster of sitting, sprawling men, Mulrooney placed a firm grip on his arm. "Let's go, son, we're goin' home," Mulrooney said in a tone of pity.

"Who'sh goin' home?" Henry cocked his head back and his chest lurched forward. He struck a pose of drunken defiance.

"You are."

"Now jesh wait a minnit, ole timer. Jesh hole it a minnit."

"C'mon," Mulrooney said seriously, "Yer mother and sister are here fer ya."

Henry's head came between his shoulders, as though he were searching intently.

"They're out there," Mulrooney pointed toward the pathway.

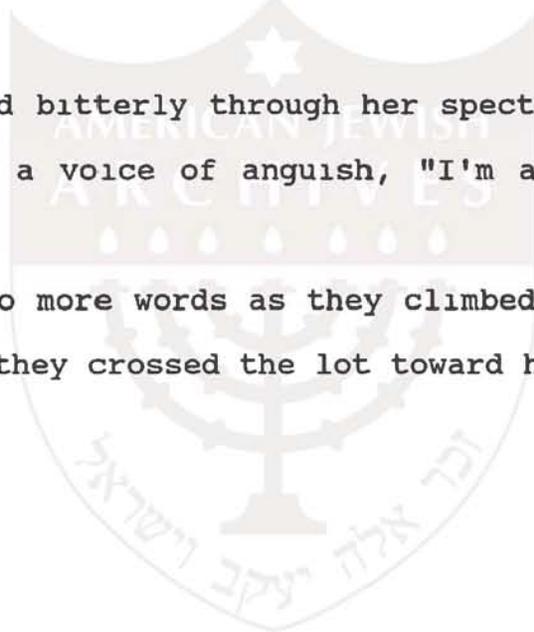
"Out'ere?" Henry raised his head a bit, and blinked through the maze in his eyes.

When Mulrooney came out to the pathway with his arm around the wobbling boy, he saw Mrs. Grace holding a shawl to her face. She was weeping. Margie stood at her side, muttering, "Don't, don't, ma . . . "

With her eyes wet, and her nose sniffing, Grace looked up at last at her son. His mouth was twisted in a foolish grin, his cheeks were streaked with grime, and his blond hair lay tossed about his forehead. Mud and pieces of stone clung to his shirt and pants.

Gracie stared bitterly through her spectacles and at length she cried out in a voice of anguish, "I'm ashamed of ye! I'm ashamed of ye!"

There were no more words as they climbed the pathway toward the road, and as they crossed the lot toward home.



CHAPTER XIX

Make it simply, watch it ferment, taste its hotness, and smell. Almost like cooking in the kitchen, like making porridge or \_\_\_\_\_ or peach compote. But the fancy name, get the fancy name: double fermentation. They teach it in college classrooms. Harumph, the beak-nosed, white-collared professor is speaking. Harumph, he speaks importantly, now such common tuber plants as grain, potato, rice, etcetera, which mixed with  $H_2O$ , that is, water, are reduced to a paste, which will, by adding malt, set up fermentation, transforming starch into dextrose and maltose. Yeast then added converts maltose into alcohol.

Now then from the fresh white face, the clean innocent faces, turn to the blackboard and scratch the chalk on the nerves, and with importance the secret formula --  $C_2O H_5OH$ . This is alcohol. Then out with the gay little joke, the witty remark which clamors on the chicken-breast, clamors to be told to the white eager eyes, straining for knowledge, lusting for truths in capsules, yearning for reality in formulas clean and neat on the blackboard. On New Year's Eve you drink 50% of this formula and 50%  $H_2O$  -- and in the morning you wake with a hangover. Guffaw and giggle. See how boring is our course, number 211, Organic Chemistry, 4 hours a week, 3 credits.

Silence class. More formulas. More knowledge, listen closely, copy fiercely into your notebooks. Specific gravity of alcohol is .91984. Now \_\_\_\_\_ alcohol has a specific gravity of .798 at the temperature of 60 degrees F.

Alcohols are neutral litmus. What are the by-products? Ethers, aldehydes, acids.

Another formula:  $\text{CH}_3\text{OH}$ . This, class is methyl alcohol. It is obtained as a by-product in the manufacture of beet-root sugar and also by the dry distillation of wood. It is a colorless, mobile liquid, burning with a blue flame. In its crude state it contains acetone (which, as you know, is used in explosives). It is used as a solvent for \_\_\_\_\_, and resins, as a fuel, as a starting product in the manufacture of formaldehyde (with which we "pickle" animals. Giggles and gaffuw. Such a good teaching. So humorous, makes the lesson just come to life). Now methyl or denatured alcohol should never be used medicinally as it is a powerful poison. The bell. That's all this hour. Continue tomorrow. No more jokes till tomorrow, no more knowledge. Malted milks and frosted rootbeers and no more formula.

A powerful poison. Rags Kelley. It contains acetone (used in explosives). Joamey Lochner and Spinner and Syl Wagner. Burns with a blue flame. Look, Mr. Hardware-store-man, all we got is a dime, fill up this bottle and nobody'll know the difference.

"I shouldn't really do it . . . it's illegal. See the poison mark on the tank -- skull and bones -- get sent up for sellin' this to you guys . . . why don'tcha drink beer?"

Beer costs a dime and it's for one. Beer don't mix with water. Beer's got no kick. Beer don't warm the stomach on winter nights under the bridge.

Should never be used medicinally. It's a formula, Rags Kelley, carbon, hydrogen oxygen. CH<sub>3</sub>OH. The hell with the formula. Gimme the \_\_\_\_\_, the boys are waitin', the boys are dry, the boys are dyin'. . . gimme the stuff.

"Saw the professor! I've got no insides. None of us got insides. We lost our insides long ago, when we lost our jobs, we lost our insides, when we lost our families, we lost our insides. We're only outsides. Gimme the steam, hardware-man, ten cents on a steam . . . a bottle of steam and a jug of water . . . and pssst . . . a jug of smoke for all the boys without insides."

Looks at your hands, the blue them skeleton fingers, the trembling fingers which never pauses in their trembling.

Nobody is looking, hardware-man . . . filler up . . . under the counter . . here's the dime . . . the steam, he a sport.

Look at your insides, stomachs without linings, \_\_\_\_\_ liver hardened like warts, kidneys like rocks, and shatered lungs, and the muscles of your hearts and the tired throbbing of your watered blood, and the nerves, the frayed torn nerves, like shreaded clothes.

Stop looking at our insides, I told you we've got no insides. They are them up long ago, the monster ate them at the beginning, the job ate them, the family ate them, we've got no insides only a callous, a bag for smoke, a gimme the steam, mister, here's the dime for our happiness . . .

Look at your brains, the little gray cells and white cells, look at the seat of your nerves, the seat of your thoughts . . .

No nerves, no thoughts, we've got none of these. Give them to the kids, the white-faced laughing kids, give it to the kids with chocolate malteds and frosted root bears and the formulas. This is our happiness, give the steam, mister . . .

Your happiness, now Rags Kelly, your happiness for the ten minutes or a half hour. What after that Rags Kelly? What after, when the pison eats away the cells, carrodes the reason, and dulls restraint? What with killing and what with lust? And what with death like the smokehound who died on a pile of snow in Fehkılın's Alley last Christmas eve?

Do it quick, under the counter, mister . . . they'll die without it . . . It's their happiness. Even for ten minutes. It's their happiness. For half hour. There's no killing. Machines kill. We've no machines. Hate kills. We've no hate. Hate needs insides and we've got no insides. Quick, man, under the counter. Ain't nobody looking, under the counter.

Who will be responsible if after the happiness one of you kills?

After the happiness, there is sleep. Here's the dime, quick, the steam . . .

One of you will kill, and I am not responsible. Here is the steam, give me the dime, and go . . .

CHAPTER XX

O'Brien leaves. Gracie asks Margie to boil water, she's going to clean up Henry. Puts cold towel to his head. Henry gets up and begins railing against old man. Tired of support him all these years, damned near getting myself killed for that lazy sonnova-bitch, he ain't no good to anybody, I'm gonna get him. He wobbles over to stairs. Gracie tries to stop him. He shoves her out of way, Margie tells her to let him go. He clammers of stairs shouting drunkenly -- I'm gonna get you, you ol' bastard. Inside room, Willie gets up seized with panic. In dark he bumbles under bed for gun, rushes to door, opens it, Henry swings, old man topples down stairs, sprawled out at bottom with hemorrhage. Henry laughs drunkenly, goes into romand falls on bed in stupor.

Gracie sends Margie to get Doctor Bramble.

Jim Mulrooney looked at his one dollar Ingersoll pocket watch, and said he had to check in at the call-box on Miller's Corner. He would drop back later one, just in case. Gracie thanked him, and he left through the front door.

Henry lay fallen on the sofa, drugged and senseless. There were stages to the "smoke" intoxication - first, happiness, and then the coma. Henry's eyes were closed rapidly. His legs and arms were like dead lumber. Specks of broken glass, and clumps of mud and grass clung all over his white shirt and blue summer pants, both darkened with sweat and smelling.

A band of grime was smeared across his forehead, and his yellow hair was crumpled like dirty straw.

"Margie, go boil some hot water," said Gracie. She stood above the sofa, staring down at her son, the strong brave son. The lines of shame which at first flooded her eyes were gone, and she stood now, an exhausted but determined woman. She knew she was weak, but at moments like this a strength from some source deep inside always came to her. Only now she was weary because of the day. And frightened, because of tomorrow.

At length, her hands fell from her hips, and she moved into the kitchen. Out in the yard she heard Rover growling to be let in and she told Margie, "Let 'em out'ere. He'll be gettin' in the way in here."

She returned to the living room with two towels, one damp, the other dry for wiping. She placed the dry one on the arm of the sofa, and with the damp one she began wiping her son's face. The smell was sharp and her nostrils twisted. Henry had wet in his pants. She couldn't help thinking it, her big brave son had peed in his pants. He was a kid after all, only his body was grown, only his arms were thick and strong from swinging the hammers and throwing out the buckets. But in his mind he was still the same child she had held in her arms before the barn door. The factory had thickened his biceps, had corded his forearms in muscle, had given him a chest he could throw out at he strode along the street where girls would look, but beneath his yellow hair and behind his grimey brow, the factory had put nothing. Nothing, but temper, and

fight, and cursing, and meanness. Who could blame the factory whose need is men of muscle, and men who fight and curse to throw out more buckets a day than another? But, to her sons, the factory was a school, and what kind of school is it that puts nothing behind the brow except temper, nothing below the brain except fight?

She wiped away the scar of dirt from his forehead, then passed the damp towel along the cheeks, under his nose, around his chin. The lips of his mouth were cracked and purple, and with every exhaled breath there came the strong sting of alcohol. "My Lord," Gracie said with a scowl.

She wiped his eyes again and a droplet of water trickled down into the corner of eyes. For a moment, she left a nerve twitch, and then his eyelashes flickered open. He stared and before him toward the rolled curtain on the screendoor, but in his stare there was no recognition.

"I'll get ye some coffee," said Gracie. She stood up and walked slowly through the dining room toward the kitchen.

Henry closed his eyes again, and held them shut for a moment. Then he opened them once more and blinked as though in a trance. The door touched the ceiling, the lamp stood on one edge, the wall curved downward toward the sofa. He snapped his eyes shut and groaned. In his stomach something boiled and burned and he tasted the pain on his purpled lips. He groaned again and his mought remained twisted in a painful snarl.

He tried to sit up and felt an aching in his thighs and chest, a thudding numbness at the back of his head. He heard hammers on bucket-handles are the steel-wheels of a trolley car rumbling across the crown of his brow. He scowled and groaned, then with his stiff arms he pulled himself to a sitting position.

He felt the sofa against the back of his head, and he tried to look before him. Everything came in waves, in waves and circles. The mirror and mantelpiece swirled round, the picture frame and the American flag flashed up, even the drab wallpaper took on life. Everything was pulpy and molten, sliding one into another, shifting into place, toppling out of focus, hovering and sweeping. He shook his head vigorously and stared hard and cold. The mirror quivered above the mantelpiece and then froze, the picture frame shuddered back into shame, and the light came out softly and in waves. He was in his own living room.

"Coffee's boilin'. It'll be ready in a minit," said Gracie, returning to the dimly-lit room.

He looks at her and the snarl remained about his lips. He was home, but, why home? The tank, the explosion, the dining room, Charley Peters, home, the staircase? Suddenly, he climbed waveringly to his feet and Grace saw a fierceness come over his face, a hotness in his eyes, and she heard him shout through his snarled lips, "Where'sh at ole shunnuvabitch! Wheresh he? Lemme at 'im - - at goodfirnuthin' bashterd eatin' up my money -- ," and he screamed, "WHERSH HE?"

Gracie leaped in front of him, and threw her little fists on his soggy chest. "Henry, sit down! Wait till yer sober. Henry, please, ye caused me 'nuff trouble t'nite. Sit down, Hen . . ."

"Get outta ma way," he growled. With his left arm he threw the little woman aside as though she were a curtain. She cried in pain as she fell against the door of the dining room. Henry toppled forward uncertainly, he crushed the lamp to the floor with his right arm, he pulled down the drapes which hung in his way, a chair he trust aside with his leg. He was like an enraged gorilla, maddened and howling, obeying drunkenly his most primitive instinctual impulses.

"I'll get in 'ish time . . . nine yearsh eatin' off my hide . . . killt myself for 'im . . . dirty goodfirnuthin' lazy bum sunnovabitch . . . he ain't no good ter nobody, goddam scum . . . lemme at 'im . . ."

Gracie came again toward him, her entire body shuddering with pain, her arms outstretched to retain the wild monster who was her son. But he thrust her asie again and she fell against the wall with a resounding clap, and she stood wailing in tears. Margie stood against the kitchen doorway, seized in terror, poised to fall into the yard should her brother come her way.

His foot was lifted on the staircase and with his hands beat against the walls he braced his tottering ascent. The stiffness was gone from his arms, the numbness from his legs, his body flowed with wildness and anger and drunken hate. "I'm gonna get ye --

y'ole bashterd -- I'm coming to get ye, scumface ole sunnuvabith  
. . . "

His voice rolled in thundering waves up the hallway, and his feet clambered up the stairs with a heaviness that made the staircase tremble. The entire house seemed to quake under the impact of his outburst (fury).

And the quaking came quickly to the front room where Willie lay. Through the walls he heard the angry blaring of the some to whom he felt nothing but rancor, and he felt caught in the wild-eyed panic. He had just fallen asleep and now he was up because his son had come to murder him. He must save himself, even kill his son, but save himself. It is dark in the room and panic comes greater in the darkness. The blood pounds in Willie's head, it thunders in his temples, but in his sleepy and dimmed awareness, his mind reaches out for the gun which is his last surety of survival.

His cold hands throw aside the covers, and he tumbled out of bed in his blue sweated shirt and shorts. His pants and the gun. In his coulded mind theses two stand out. Now, just the gun, the gun! He hears the cursing and the hate outside his door. The gun, the gun! Where's the gun? Willie is on his knees, his cold fingers search frantically under the bed. He cannot remember where he put it. The blood is full in his head. He hears the heavy steps outside the door. Lock the door, Willie! Lock the door! He hears it in his blood-filled head, and he hears it in a woman's cry from the distance. Lock the door!

Across the room he races, his blue shirt wet on him, his feet cold on the floor. The blood boiled in his head, it grows difficult to see, to feel. At last he is at the door, but it is already opened. The coulded headed, filled with \_\_\_\_\_. He has toppled turn the open doors. There is a blow, a shrieking gloating laugh, and a blow.

"Y'ole sunnovabitch, I gotcha." Henry, his chest jerking with laughter, stands half-leaning, his arms against the walls of the hallway, his white glistening eyes peering down at the bottom of the staircase. "I gotcha, y'ole bashterd . . . no more'a my hide . . . I gotcha . . ."

At the foot of the staircase, Gracie kneels over the old man, then shrieks with anguish. A pool of blood has gathered at her side, gutward from the fallen man's nose and mouth, from what appears, his entire face.

Margie has come from the kitchen and now stands behind her mother. Her face is shocked with the sight of the blue shirt and the shorts and the gathering pool of red.

"I'll get the doctor," she says and she raced through the dining room past the fallen chairs, through the living room and the crushed lamp, and into the night for the doctor, healer of men.

CHAPTER XXI

Funeral is set for 3:00 P.M. Willie dressed in new suit bought from carton money. Handful of visitors (Viola and son, Eleanor and lover, Howard, Albert and Evelyn, old watchman friend of Willie's; he was a good man, had his funny ways, but a good man, never snitched, nor chewed, nor played around).

Two cars (Howard's with Gracie, Margie, Robbie, Albert and Evelyn) and Eleanor lover's (preacher in car). They drive out to Cherry Lawn cemetery. Beautifully hot day as they gather around grave. Preacher begins services and Margie faints. They revive her, says she doesn't feel well -- Howard takes her home in car, calls doctor who says she's pregnant.

A funeral parlor is a different kind of place. It is different from Abie's store and it is different from Eddie's saloon because in these places you can come and go every day through the doors with the tinkling bells, you can laugh and curse and be happy or melancholy, you can buy hershey bards or a box of Kotex or a cold glass of beer with a head on it or a shot of whiskey for twenty centy and tell a dirty joke. You can doo all these things as you feel disposed. But to a funeral parlor you come once, or twice, or, at worst, three time within your life, and you sit quiet in the cool room with the palm fronds, your knees close together, your eyes dry or moist, and you have but one deep feeling which is in the room even before you enter. You listen to the man in black

with the subdued pipe-organ voice and the drawer face with its funeral pallor, you listen, with your eyes either dry or moist, to the instructions. And then you listen to the other man in black with the black little book in his hand, and while you listen you wonder how much alike are both these men in black, living in this world of darkened cool rooms with palm fronds, moving softly on tip-toes in and out and around the Willie Rutherford who no longer stir, whispering over their boxes in pipe-organ voices which seem to have foot-pedals always pressing down.

At another time, standing out front or walking by the heavily-curtained glass window with the black-bordered sign in it, you might feel to laugh or to pity these two in black with the drawn faces, who walk on tip-toe and who speak in whispers all their days among the boxes. But as you sit here now, all of you with eyes either dry or moist, you feel neither to laugh nor pity, for these two are necessary for you now -- necessary as Abie and Eddie -- for their black and the cool and the palm fronds are, a consolation, their tip-toe measures your sorrow or your relief, and their whispered voices are like a drug which settles on the nerve and still the beating pulse.

You cannot think much long of them for you have not come here to think of these in black, for they are still living, although in the world of the dead. Yet one more thought, idle and listless and effortless is, one the tired mind. Why does not Fred Taggart, the shabby watchman, Willie's friend, who is among you, robe in black, and walk on tip-toe and speak in whispers in and out and about the

factory at night, for the factory dies at the setting of each sun, and the machines are without heat in thin leathered-cover coffins, and the office rooms are cold and dark, and the life is gone from the great throbbing soul of Matthew Bucket Company. Why not, Fred Taggart, why not in black for the death of the giant machine soul, which dies and is lifeless as the unmoving Willie Rutherford before us. But it is an idle thought. For Willie has dies and we shed a tear, and Willie is buried this Thursday evening and will never stir again, never never is a million million years, But the factory, Fred Taggart, will stir again in the morning, will clamor and thunder again at noon, and will pound and hammer again at afternoon. And when it does come to rest in evening, it will be but a pause, a slowing in an \_\_\_\_\_ cycle, a time to stretch the coil-springs and give rest the fibers, but only a slowing for this is a deathless soul. And what if it should die and cease its pounding? Who will bury this soul of springs and coils and pipe, and who will shed a tear? Neither you nor us, Fred Taggart, but another machine. Another machine, and with this machine, another machine will perform the last rites, and in the heart of the dying machine only Mr. Matthew will shed a tear.

Gracie sat stiffly in her dark dress, her hands clutching a handkerchief in her lap, her knees close together. Her eyes were reddened and yet moist, although she had really ceased crying the morning of Willie's death. On that night, she had been seized in a paraxysm of tears, a bitter flow that had welled over and was without containment. She had sobbed in grief not so much over the

death of her husband but over the manner in which he died and on over the hands at where he came to his end. Willie Rutherford had been ready for death, she had known and seen bad secretly wished it so. But not in this way. Even in her depthless bitterness toward this man who had made her life so wretched, she never willed it should have come this way. And now she would be free and her son a fugitive upon the land. Drunken, screeching with laughter, Henry had come down the staircase, crossed over the bleeding body, and raced into the night, a mad wild cry, the howl of a wolf, up the street and gone in the night. Must it always be this, freedom to one at the price of endowment for another? (The murder of her husband so that her son become the murderer.) The death of Willie for the liberation of herself? The death of Howard's wife for the freedom of Howard? Three young lives in an acid-blown explosion to compose a list for freedom upon her own children? No one would know for she had told them differently how it happened. It was dark, he had sought the outhouse and fell in the darkness to his death. No one would ever know that a wild son killed his father, not even Howard, and Margie had sworn, cross her heart and Christ kill me stony dead, never ever to tell how it happened. But why was Henry not among the mourners now? It was not asked audibly and it was understood without asking.

A sense of peace had come over Gracie, and there was repose on her quiet, white unpowdered face. It was the first peace she had known in, who can say how long? It was like a great soft shawl that had settled over her, over the erect body, her set face, her

unblinking eyes. It was like the early days when they came together in the white-steepled church, came on buckboards, came in Model-7 Fords, sat together with her ma and pa in the front rows, and listened to the flowered sermons of the parson, and then the singing, loud and then soft and the humming. And it was like the day up at Howard's with the sun coming in through the bedroom windows and the smell of honeysuckle.

She looked up at Howard who was standing in the corner, and a faint smile brushed across her face. She thought they were sharing the same thought. But Howard didn't smile back. He stood respectful in his suit, the first time she had seen him in it, and she thought it was his marrying suit; but he stood there, listening, his head tilted in appropriate reverence. So handsome and a gentleman.

All who were present in this dark, cool room could sense the air of peace about Gracie. Being a widow now almost gave her a feeling of significance; she was in a new category and she seemed to adapt herself to her new station in life. She always needed to be in a category to feel she had a place -- the category of wife, the category of mother, the category of lover, each shifting to another when one fell apart. And now the category of widow. One could never be freed of categories.

Some wondered again about the absence of Henry, but the atmosphere prevailed upon their discretion. The other children were present, Robbie, awkward in his blue suit which was tight across his shoulders, and fretting at the starched collar buttoned

at his neck, but proud of the blue rayon tie, bought at Abie's, flashing with its silver streaks which framed the brown horse's head. He was much pleased with the tie when he bought it at Abie's this morning, but he was disturbed at the waste of money, for in a day he would leave for the army, and blue ties with silver streak and horse's heads would hardly be regulation. Robbie sat next to his mother, his eyes peering forward. He had like the old man and he was honestly moved by his passing, all could tell.

And Margie, sitting next to Robbie. From the moment Dr. Bramble announced the death of Willie Rutherford, Margie had gone into mourning. She wore dark dresses during the past three days, and a plaintive mask covered her visage. It was as though the death of her father was the greatest catastrophe ever to befall her, like tearing a pair of new shoes. When she entered Abie's store, she walked solemnly, her eyes lowered. She has asked for bread or milk or \_\_\_\_\_ in hoarse whispers. And the women in the store would look at her and nod and sympathize, "Tsk, tsk, poor child . . . ". And Margie would solemnly raise her eyelids as though to say, "Please, please. No sympathy. My loss has been great and I will bear it alone." This, the death, the pity, the attention, was a new act in her life and she played her part, winning the sympathy that was there to be won, playing the lady as though dear father had wanted it this way. And now she sat next to her brother, sunk in mourning, a delicate and fragile mourning worthy of admiration.

Next to Howard stood Albert and his fiancée, Evelyn, a little girl frightened by death, terrified by the smell of the funeral parlor, and perplexed over whether it was right for her to be here while a Protestant minister was reciting. Albert wore the dignity of a pall-bearer, erect, serious, and concerned. His eyes glistened as he lost himself in the deep voices of abiding truth and everlasting love. There was a fervor in his attentiveness, and in his wrapt attention he seemed more enthralled with the pomp of words than the circumstances of his father's death.

Gracie surveyed her family and felt pleased. They had made a good showing and Willie would have been pleased. Only why did her sister, Eleanor, wear a loud green dress, and brown and white pumps? And so much rouge! Her lover was a tall, good-looking man, of course, not as handsome as Howard was in his masculine way, but from the way his arm looped about Eleanor's waist, she could tell he loved her. (Frank Clusters)

She was glad Sister Viola came and brought her purple-faced Sam. It kinda built up the crowd. She was worried about Sister Viola, the way she was run down, her face bleak and haggard with thick furrows. Was it consumption or tuberculosis? She never said. But Sister Viola looked worried and peculiarly interested in the operations and prices of the funeral parlor, in the fees the pastor asked for.

And Freed Taggart, the only stranger, aside from Eleanor's lover. He's a nice man, always spoke good of Willie, they got along so peaceably together. Willie'd never pass by the watchman's

door without stopping to greet Fred, to look up at the sky with him and predict the weather, or to comment on the noise that came from the people across the street, the way the kids bat the ball around without care for people's life or limb. Nice man, Fred; nice, quiet, respectable man. Glad he came.

Gracie was glad they had chosen this funeral parlor. The owners were polite and they gave Willie much personal attention. At first, Howard took Gracie to a large place uptown, but when she talked to the hawk-faced man there behind the long desk about price, she decided to come back to her own neighborhood where it was cheaper to die. Besides, she later told Howard, she didn't like the way they ran that big place uptown, with all rooms operating like a bustling factory, with bodies piled neatly in slabs pulled in and out in accordance with the daily time schedule, with preachers running from one room to the another to say soft words of consolation to the bereaved, families with the parking lot behind the marble building filled with shiny cars. No, she had told Howard, she didn't like that big funeral place, it was too much like Matthew Bucket Company on a busy day.

And she was pleased with this small place, just a mile from home and so near to Highway No. 1 over which they would travel toward Cherrylawn Cemetery. It was handy, and the attendants also gave Willie such personal attention. They had cleaned Willie all over and dressed him in the white shirt and coarse second-hand blue shirt which Gracie had bought with Willie's left-over carton money. Willie looked so good, laying there in the coffin, silky and

peaceful, and pleased look on his white face. Gracie recalled this is how he looked when they first married thirty-one years (51 years old) ago next month. If he only could have stayed this way, silky and peaceful. But, she thought inside her, embalming fluid wouldn't have done my Willie any good while he was alive, he would never take no medicines but aspirins and alka-seltzer.

When the instructions and words of consolation were at an end, they filed out of the funeral parlor in twos. Howard's Buick stood behind the limosine in which the coffin now rested, and behind the Buick stood Frank Chesting's green Chevrolet. Howard helped Gracie into the front seat, and as she settled next to the gear-shift, Margie moved in beside her. Robbie then sat in the back seat behind Margie; Fred Taggard stooped in and fell quietly beside Robbie. Then Albert sat down, holding Evenlyn on his lap. With the car filled, Howard got behind the steering wheel. Through the rearview mirror, he could see Fred Chesting, and Eleanor, and behind them, Viola, her pimply-faced son, and Cousin Horace.

With a low growl, the limosine pulled into the street and the caravan was under way. Howard flicked on his dim lights and notice that Fred Chester did the same. Until they reached Hanover Street bridge and entered into Highway No. 1, there was silence in the car. Then Margie, looking out the window at the bay in the distance, said in her mournful way, "He lookt good, din't he?" (Scene: Feel pity at only two cars -- extent of life's contacts).

Strangely, there was no response. Gracie sat staring through the windshield at the limosine ahead glowing under the brilliant sun as it cruised through the afternoon to \_\_\_\_\_.

It was a hot day, she thought. She felt Howard's thigh next to hers, and she looked down. His hand rested on the throbbing gearshift between her kneecaps. She looked up at his face, set, intense, a cigarette slanting from his lips. He was a sensitive man, moved \_\_\_\_\_ by death. He had said few words since Willie's death and Gracie wondered over his silence.

Somehow, Gracie felt detached from this moment. She didn't feel the tension a widow should feel in a death caravan, riding to the cemetery to inter her husband. Perhaps, after this week of emotional upsurges, of violent peak of fury, there was no tension left in her. She was tired and exhausted and it would take a great deal to win her attention now, to upset her, or to move her. When the earthquake has already erupted, one become numb and insensitive to faint tremors or rumblings on the ground.

It's a mercilessly hot day, she thought again. She was taking a ride in the cemetery; it felt like that. A long pleasant peaceful ride with the family, in the country. The cows are lowering in the meadows, the dust whirls up behind the tractor cutting deep in the earth, the fields are lush and green, and the corn is high and ripe with tassels. A ride in the country, it felt just the that. Tomorrow, or the next day, she would be living in the country, she and Howard, living in the beautiful home, quiet and empowered, with the earthquake far away. These are not the thought one thinks on

the way to the cemetery. What does one think about at these times? She had never spoken to WR about death -- they never had time to think about death for it was enough trouble worrying through life. Death just comes, sometimes peaceful, sometimes violent; whether wanted or unwanted it just comes, and there's no stopping. She knew these thoughts were untrue, but she thought them anyway.

The three cars jerked up the gravel-path entrance to the cemetery. They passed through an arch, heavy with garlands around the gold letter -- Cherry Law Cemetery. It was at this moment Gracie again felt like a widow; it was here Willie, her husband, father of her children would be put to rest, next to his father and mother. In a few moments, Willie would be out of her life forever and these 31 years would settle deep in the ground buried deeper with every spade of earth. An episode in her life would come to an end, and now, the next chapter.

The cars came to a halt before the cottage-office. In a few moments, they had scrambled out the cars, and now stood with bowed heads before the open grave. The thick smell of grass and turned of earth hung in the air. A bee buzzed in around the circle, then departed. The minister began speaking in the low deep voice which made Albert's eyes glisten. And as he spoke, they forgot about the hot merciless sun, pounding down on them and the sweat which ran along their collars and made their dresses sticky and clinging.

"William Rutherford was a good father, an honest man, decent, respectable, and law-abiding," informed the minister. He spoke

with feeling, as though he had known the man all his life. As the voice droned on extolling the virtues of William Rutherford the loyal husband, William Rutherford the Christian, William Rutherford the toiler and provider, Gracie felt tears crowding into her eyes, and running over. She was sobbing. The words were so beautiful, she felt respectful toward her husband, but she didn't want to cry with Howard at her side. Howard stood unmoving, his eyes toward the red oblong pit. Secretly Albert glanced up at the minister, and in his mind the \_\_\_\_\_ of the words lingered. He had forgotten about Evelyn who stood trembling at his side.

Robbie was not ashamed that tears were in his eyes; he felt clear and honest and he wanted to cry. He felt a closeness to his father; no one had understood him, the decent, honest father no one understood, what a pity, what a terrible pity that he died misunderstood. Everything else he could understand, gadgets and machines and devices and gimmicks we could understand, \_\_\_\_\_ we could understand, and fly-wheetls we could understand, but this poor lonely man we could not understand, what a pity! And Robbie cried and he was not ashamed.

The minister raised his eyes slowly toward the skies, and the words began to form on his lips, "May his sould rest in peace . . . " But the words never came out, for suddenly Margie gave out a brief cry, and fell to the ground.

Howard held her yellow head on his knee and dabbed away the sweat with her handkerchief. "She's fainted from the heat . . ." Gracie, her eyes red and her face streaked with drying tears, knelt

over to open the collar of her daughter's black dress. The others gathered around, and Howard asked them to please step back and let in some air. Frank Chester offered to get some water, but Howard said not to.

"Don't none of you bother. Continue with the services, minister," Howard said, "I'll take her over to the cottage where there's water and shade."

"I'll come with ye," said Gracie.

"No." Howard stared harshly at her. How could she leave the very moment they were to bury her husband. "No," he repeated. "I'll take care of her. When you finish the services, come to the office."

Howard lifted the crumbled form into his arms and carried Margie across the dirt path to the office. "She's fainted," he told the man inside.

The stubby little man in green coveralls stepped outside and then came back with a pail of cold water. Howard had placed Margie on a wooden bench, and he now mopped her brow with his wet handkerchief. He ran the damp cloth around her face and along her open collar. At last her body moved and her eyes fluttered.

"What happened?" She groaned in a daze.

"Never mind, jes' rest a minute," Howard said. The stubby man with the round sunburned face handed Howard a ladle full of water. "Let'er drink this," he said.

"Here, drink this." Howard placed his hand under Margie's neck, and held the ladle toward her mouth. She leaned forward and

touched her lips to the metal rim. Suddenly sprays of water spurted from her mouth and nostrils, and she choked. Her head jerked to a side and she vomited on the floor.

Both Howard and the caretaker winced. The little man rushed to the corner to get a mop. He could'nt let vomit stay on the floorboards for a minute; it would stink in this hot weather.

"What's wrong?" Howard asked, easing Margie's head back to the bench.

"I'm sick," she cried, "Oh, I'm sick, I'm sick, I'm sick, I'm sick . . ." Margie began wailing like a crushed little animal, twisting restlessly from side to side.

"All right, control yourself. They'll be back in a few minutes, and we'll take you to a doctor."

Howard stared silently at Margie's washed-out face, pale and glistening; he saw the lobe of her breast compressed against her brasserie-strap, and then the stench of the mess on the floor came to the nostrils.

He turned to the caretaker and said, "Give me the mop."

CHAPTER XXII

Dr. Bramble got off the edge of the bed and the springs creaked back into place.

"This is where I examined Willie, wasn't it?" The huge man wheezed, then coughed into her handkerchief.

"Yes, it was." Gracie said impatiently. She wanted to know what was wrong with her daughter and Doc Bramble spoke around the point and took too long to get to the point.

"I'm sorry I couldn't get to the funeral, been busy all day," he said.

"Doctor?"

The doctor looked up through his large eyes at Howard, "What's your name again?"

"Howard -- Howard Grumpner."

"You're the mechanic friend of the family, eh?" winking that he knew something about him, that he had a cherished bit of gossip.

"Yes," Howard answered, the impatiently, "Doctor, what . . ."

"You've had a lot of trouble this week, Gracie," he seemed to disregard Howard's attempt to speak or ask or do whatever he wanted. "First Henry running away. Then Willie's passing." He paused, then continued, "He was a good honest fellow . . . could of been more careful with his health and cleanliness . . . but an upright man."

Gracie had lost all patience. She blared out at last: "Doctor, what's the matter with ma daughter. Ye trying to hide sumpthin' from me?"

A serious look came across the doctor's jowled face. He look straight at Gracie, then at Howard. He nodded his head back toward the bed where Margie lay, and said, "She's pregnant."

"What?" Gracie screamed.

"You sure?" asked Howard, touching the doctor's black sleeve.

"Damned tootin' I'm sure." Dr. Bramble resented the inquiry. "To make double sure, I'm gonna give her the rabbit test."

"Is there anything we can do?" Gracie said, fishing desperately for a solution.

"There's nothing legal we can do. And good friends as we are and have always been, Grace, I don't intend at this stage of the game doing anything illegal," the Doctor said.

Gracie felt her entire body shake. She ran her fingers through her hair and cried, "Oh Lord, Lord!"

Moving to her side, the giant doctor put his arm around her shoulder, and advised, "Let's leave her alone for a while. Let her rest, it's been a hot and trying day."

As they turned toward the door, the doctor's face lighted up. "Don't feel badly, Grace. Look at it this way, you'll be a grandmother."

CHAPTER XXIII

Gracie comes home (6:00 P.M.). Howard meets her on pavement, tells her Margie is pregnant. Gracie is dumbfounded. They go into living room. Margie tells them it was carnival boy who left town. Gracie, "Miss Smart-pants, you know how to handle im', eh? Gracie takes Margie upstairs to lie down. Come downstairs, asks Howard to marry her and take Margie along with them to country home. Howard refuses, says he had no intention of supporting entire family (and a bastard) ("I've had enuf of one women like Margie. I want no part of her around my home. She'll do the same thing my first wife did.), he leaves.

When Dr. Bramble had left, Gracie turned to Howard who stood beside her at the doorway.

"I'm goin' up to find out who it was," she said. Her eyes shone with fierceness. The composure of the funeral parlor had left her completely, and she was no longer the sobbing widow. She was not an outraged mother whose daughter had been wronged. She was vengeful, relentless, seeking justice for her seduced daughter from the seducer.

"Not now, Grace. Let her rest." Howard tried to calm her.

"Now, Howard." There was no restraining her. The laxness was gone from her face and a bitterness had set in. Her jaws were tight around her mouth, and her veins stood out on her neck. "I'm

gonna find out now, Howard. If it was that Reds Kelley, I'll make him marry my daughter or I'll have his whole family in jail."

"Easy, Grace, easy," Howard counselled. "Look, your jes' getting yourself worked up. You've had a terrible time this week. If you don't relax, I'm afraid of what'll happen to you. Now sit down, just for a few minutes."

There was a knock on the screen door. Gracie saw it was a truck driver. "One minit," she said, "I'll open it fer ye." She turned toward the kitchen for the keys. "Even on funeral days," she mumbled.

"Here, I'll get it," Howard said. He took the keys from her hands and went out the front door.

The sun was hot and blinding, even as it lowered behind the houses across the street.

"I see there was a death in the family," the driver said pointing to the flowers on the door. Howard told him about Willie; and the driver said it was a shame, "Funny thing, in all the years here, never really got to know him -- looked like a nice old guy," he said. Howard close the gate behind the truck and reentered the living room. Gracie was not there. He heard her voice upstairs.

Howard climbed the staircase and came into the front room. Gracie stood over the bed, her hands on her hips. She was shouting at Margie who looked up with fear in her face.

"Ye know how to handle 'em, do ye? Miss smarty-pants! Yer the one who was never gonna work doz ye knew how to handle 'em. Why I oughta beat the livin' daylights outta ye." Gracie lifted

her right arm in a threatening gesture, as though to beat the frightened girl on the bed.

Howard rushed over the bed and pulled Gracie away.

"Don't Grace, control yourself."

"To sleeping with goddam bums in the park, will ye?"

"Grace, cut it out! That's enough. We're goin' downstairs."

Margie folded her legs in and crouched on one arm. "He wasn't a bum, ma. I tole ye he'd come to get me."

Gracie looked up at Howard. "It was one of them loafers at the carnival. He fixed her up with a kid and done run off to Pens'vania."

"He'll come to get me, ma. He said he would," Margie insisted. "Jim said he loved me and that . . ."

"Damned bum. I'd like to get my hands on him," Gracie muttered vehemently.

"Come," Howard took her by her arm and led her downstairs, into the living room. Grice sat in the chair near the window, biting her thin lips until they were purple. Howard sat opposite her on the sofa. He leaned back and closed his eyes. Such confusion, such terrible, violent, mesirable confusion. Death and adultery and vagrancy, a afuneral, a grandchild, a bum, a soldier. Where's Robbie, the thought occurred to him, and he phrased it.

"He's in his room packing," Gracie said. "He's leaving tonight. He don't want to say here anymore and I can't blame him."

Howard closed his eyes again and tried to think. (Caught in a web; all he wanted was simplicity; a simple, uncomplicated life

you could plot like on a chart; that you could predict, you can shape it, form it -- if it's unpredictable, it swallows you in. He felt himself being swallowed). What's I doing here? What's my role in this, in all this, why'an I so involved? What's he doing here in a suit? Sitting in this part of the day in a suit on a sofa? Why's everything churning so? An open grave, a carnival ferris wheel, palm fronds, what in the hel is all this about?

"Howard?" the voice was Gracie's and it came from the chair. He opened his eyes and looked across the room.

"Howard," Grace said with concern, "can we take Margie with us?"

\*\*\* UNNUMBER PAGES OF DIALOGUE BEGINS \*\*\*

"What?!" Howard sat up. "What?!" he repeated.

Gracie, "Wal, what d'ye want me to do with her?"

Howard, "It's her problem -- she should've thought of it when crawled under with that guy."

Gracie, "Howard, I know she's not been a good girl -- I know she's had a bad streak in her -- but it ain't in me. It jes' ain't in me to leave her alone like this, we ain't May-flies, we don't jest give birth to children and leave 'em."

Howard, " Well you're acting like a May-fly because a May-fly drops her brood and then dies off -- an that's what you want to do -- you want to kill yourself. You want to murder whatever we dot left for her, an' she don't deserve it. She don't deserve nothing, no pity, nothing. She's never worked a day in her life -- she's been living off you and the boys like a leech. At least Willie was

a sick man -- even then he worked much as he could -- but she never lifted a finger at work. Clothes and candy and movies and boys - - she's no good I tell you. I want none of her kind in my home."

Gracie, "It wasn't her fault, Howard. With all the fightin' and hate in this house, it couldn't a been different."

Howard, "Well, why didn't it affect the boys -- look at Robbie and Albert -- good, decent, hard-working boys. Why was it different with them? "

Gracie, "They were making their own living and they had friends in the factory. She was too young to work -- and she never had a girl friend. None of the neighbor girl ever had anything to do her. All she had in the world was her clothes. I dunno, she just never seemed to fit in here with anybody. I guess none of us ever fit in here. We been like foreigners since we came here. We just never belonged."

Howard, "She knew how to fit in with boys well enuf."

Gracie, "That's our fault."

Howard, "What?"

Gracie, "She knew about us. She knew about us all along. She knew we was sleeping together. How could I tell her not to, when we was?"

Howard struck by this, but he cannot yield to idea of pregnant Margie in his house.

Howard, "You know damned well she was foolin' around before we ever began, before I even came here. You admitted yourself she has a bad streak, like Henry -- I don't want her around, that's

all. Let her get a job, let her marry one of her other boyfriends, let her go to an institution. There are plenty in the city to take care of her sort."

Gracie, "But how can I, my daughter, part of my family."

Howard, "What family? You've ruined your life until now because of that crazy spook-family. D'you want to ruin mine now? What family? That word in a disease in your head. When people want to be together, when they want to help each other, they're a family. But when did you ever have a family who ever wanted to live together, wanted to help each other. Only reason you stood together because you had to -- none of you every had anywhere else to go. You had to live together, it was cheaper this way. You'd a been better off if you broke up long ago and each lived his own way in happiness, rather than together in misery. Sure, family, I want a family, as much as you do, ut a real family, not a spook family, and she ain't no part of it."

\*\*\* UNNUMBER PAGES OF DIALOGUE ENDS \*\*\*

"We'll have to wait a while so the neighbors won't talk, but when we do -- I mean, when we get marrit will we take her to the house in the country." Gracie spoke uncertainly, as though fearful of the consequences of her words.

"What d'you mean?" asked Howard, disturbed. His back was stiff.

"I know she done wrong, but when we're ready to get marrit and go to the country . . . I mean, we can't leave her here along."

"Well, we certainly can't take her with us." A harshness underlay his tone. He was firm and definite; his mind was made up. "Look, Gracie, when I marry you, I marry just you. I'm not marrying your daughter or your family." He paused to light a cigarette. The smoke came from his nostrils in plumes. As he spoke, the cigarette bobbed up and down in the corner of his mouth. "Maybe under other circumstances we might've . . . but not now."

"But I can't leave her alone, Howard. Specially in her condition." Gracie began pleading. "Maybe she'll stay with us a while 'till we get in touch with that carnival feller in Pens'yvania, an' he'll come ter marry her and everythin'll be like we planned it."

"Gracie, you're dreaming. You're always dreaming." Howard stood up and paced in front of the table with the lamp. "Nobody's comin' to get her, an' you know it. If that guy promised her, it was just a lotta bull. Guys are always promisin' things until they get inside -- I doubt even whether the guy promised her anythin'. she just liked it, that's all. Liked it like she liked candy bars. Eat 'em up and put it on the bill. Well, this one's on her own bill and she's got to pay it, herself."

Gracie sat perplexed, twisting her fingers like she was \_\_\_\_\_ knots. She could not suppress the worry which spread on her face. "Howard, I never heard ye talk like this."

"Because you never asked me before to become the father of a whore!" Howard called back in irritation.

"Howard!" Gracie stood up.

"Listen to me, Gracie!" A soothing note creeped into his voice.

"Ye listen to me fer a minit. She's my daughter, an' she's no whore! If ye're gonna take me, then ye gotta take her too. She's all that I got left of my family an' I ain't desertin' her like this."

Anger swelled in Howard's face, and he made a futile effort to control it. He stood squarely before Gracie and he said, "I don't want to get angry, and I don't want to be stubborn. I've offered to marry you because I want you as my wife." He raised his hand, pointing above him. "But, I ain't taking her in my house." He paused to catch his breath, then he lowered his voice, "I had one like her once in my house, and one is enough. You know what happened. Her kind is no good. She'll bring trouble wherever she goes, an' I've had enough trouble in my lifetime. I want to build my house in peace and I don't want a who -- I don't want her kind anywhere near me."

"I'm not leaving her, Howard. She's all I got left of my family, an' I ain't desertin'."

Howard sighed deeply. He searched Gracie's face with his eyes and felt no understanding. Finally he said, "I'm not going to argue with you, Grace. It's been a tough day. Rest up a bit and think it over. When you made up your mind, let me know."

A look of vexation grew on her face. Her eyes grew small, and her lower lip fell open. "My mind's made up," she said.

Howard snapped his lips tight together, then crushed his cigarette in an ash tray on the table.

"Good bye," he said, and left through the screen door.



CHAPTER XXIV

Saturday. Sit trembling, close doors and windows. Fear rape by passerby -- least Willie usta be here, count on him fer pertection. Not having heard from Howard all day Friday, Saturday morning Gracie takes money (Willie's) for cab, goes to Howard's home. She tells Howard she didn't want to come out unwanted, but if it's the last thing in her life she wants to make it clear she loves him, she doesn't want to saddle him with burdens -- but she believes it's their responsibility to take care of Margie until kid is born. She said she should've done it alone if necessary, but Robbie is joining army, Albert's getting married (Henry left), she has no income, factory's taking away house for garage (so sumthin'). She thinks they were responsible in part for it, because their love-making inspired Margie's looseness.

Howard relents. She her room, "This'll be Margie's and the kid's. Then he shows her the bedroom which they enter, "This is ours."

Fall comes to street. Brisk breeze, across withering field, sun warm rays; men in mellow jackets and brunch kits, kids going to school; afternoon football teams from high school. Abie's screen door taken down, trees hold colored leaves.

Gibson chairs creaks from sun-rain, now warping rains -- it's too cold at night to sit out front. Gracie and daughter sit together in darkened living room, dog between them. Gracie sits sewing; Margie reads comic books (loose dress over belly). Front

door and back are locked. Everytime man walks, turn street, they stare and wait 'till gone to breathe easily -- railroaders are tough, might rape them. Both fondle dog as protector.

Margie looks up at painting -- wonders where Henry is. Somebody at Abie's said he joined Merchant Marines (girl whose brother is in, said he saw him signing up).

Gracie, "I wish he'd drop us a postcard."

Margie, "It'd be nice if Robbie and he ran into each other somewhere like in China or Eurippe."

Gracie, "Wonder whether they'd talk to each other. I know Albert wouldn't talk to him. Said he got no use for him, way he done Willie in."

Margie, "When Evelyn has kid, will they let us in to church for baptism. Albert said they might not."

Gracie, "I'm sure they will. Just because Albert a Catholic don't mean I ain't his mother anymore. I don't like this business churning up families with religion, but Albert marrit a good girl, clean and good housewife, course, I don't see why he can't help us out a little -- but I guess he ain't got much -- has to take care home and what with baby comin'."

Margie, "They're gonna have a lot of kids -- churc wants him to."

Gracie, "At's his own affairs, but he won't be making enuf to have big family."

Margie, "I'm gonna need new dress soon -- this gettin' too tight."

Gracie, "I'll have to fix it for ye. We ain't got enuf for new dress. We got another month 'til Robbie's next check. Without that I dunno what we'd do. Glad we don't have to pay rent anymore -- nice of Mr. Matthew saying tending gate will be our rent."

Margie, "Well, it ain't gonna last too long. I hear they're gonna tear down house to make bigger garage. We got 'bout couple months here."

Gracie, "We'll have to get a room then, it'll be tough on Robbie's check."

Margie, "Howard. Howard was a fool for quittin'. Coulda been boss both garages."

Gracie, "It's better he left."

Margie, "Whaddya mean?"

Gracie, "Nuthin' -- jest it's better -- man had no feelin's."

Margie, "Ma, there was nuthin' in the mail today, was there?"

Gracie, "Only Robbie's card, why?"

Margie, "Nothin' from Pennsylvania?"

Gracie, "No."

Margie, "S'funny. How long was it since I got that picture card."

Gracie, "'Bout two months ago."

Margie, "At's when I wrote him back. Wrote him a penny postcard tellin' him 'bout givin' birth. I ask him to write back sayin' when we was comin' to see me, an' to bring some money. Sure there was nuthin' in the mail?"

Gracie, "Positive (finality)."

Margie, "Ma, (reverie) ma, he was real nice. You'd like him. Good-lookin' and real nice. He was no bum. Went to school. He liked me, ma. Said he'd come after me. He will, ma. Soon's he gets my card, he will. I betcha he'll come and take both of us away and set us up in a home in the country."

Gracie, "It don't take two months to get your postcard. If he's comin' he'd a answered by now."

Margie, "Oh, he'll answer, I'm sure. He's probably busy with the carnival now. But soon as it closes for the winter I'm sure he'll come."

Gracie, "Well, maybe. How long has Robbie been in?"

Margie, "It's past three months."

Gracie, "Hope he gets a leave soon -- I want to see my boy. Not good to be alone in a house without a man."

Margie, "He'll be back soon. I'm sure."

Gracie, "You're sure of everythin'."

Margie, "Ma -- How long is he inlis' for?"

Gracie, "18 months -- 15 now -- year and three months."

Margie, "Think he'll stay in longer?"

Gracie, "I dunno -- I hope not."

Margie, "He says he likes it there -- no worries, do what they tell you and everythin's all right. Plenty food, clothes, lots of entertainment. Even learnin' to dance -- never woulda done that here. Rides a jeep now. Betcha he stays in longer -- reenlists."

Gracie, "I'm not gonna let him -- I've got plans for us."

Margie, "What plans?"

Gracie, "When he comes back, we're gonna get a farm, a small place in country -- raise rabbits for fur or meat. Some goats or ducks. Set up a real nice place. He's savin' some money an' the government'll led him some. Yessin, we'll have a place like we used to have. An' maybe Al'll come out and live with us. An' Henry, he might change in the country. Mighta never been bad if we stayed there. Yessin', a real nice place. With the family comin' together, an' maybe we'll go to church on Sunday mornin'."

E N D: Both going to sleep taking dog up with them.



Grace's circumstances

- 1) old man & suspicious of strangers, incompatibility (sleeps in separate room)
- 2) daily routine - ironing, washing, mopping, tending gate, coal dust, rags  
making ends meet, family fights, (ant-lower, hot boiling water)  
no new wallpaper from factory
- 3) Willie's illness

major pts

- 1) tyranny of marriage, lack of courage to divorce, breakdown of family
  - 2) enslavement to factory - Willie's dismissal, salaries, explosion, gate, coal in yard
  - 3) inability to orient self in city civilization - kaffee clothes, cinema, buses
- ~~Grace can't talk to strangers because of "factory plaster" <sup>installation</sup>; agent asks for rent one day late; Factory fingers; Mr. Matthews drives by in Ford Cadillac~~

- 1) SEX? Grace - Howard  
Harri - (Billie)  
Henry - (barnard, park)

I- Gracie has been up for an hour, since 6:00, getting breakfast ready for family. Knock on front screen door. <sup>(from back porch)</sup>  
Gracie suspicious  
Then introduces self as new garage mechanic, asks her to open gate to yard. ~~(truck about St Peter)~~. comes in, cracks about St. Peter. <sup>Gracie</sup> impressed that he talks to her so leisurely. Everybody else around garage always so busy, never have time to talk. He jakes around for a few minutes, <sup>plays with Rover</sup> then says he supposes he should get <sup>(she hurries to breakfast)</sup> back to garage. He helps her out with garbage can. She opens gates, invites him in later for drink. <sup>Gracie</sup> He says maybe after work. She watches him drive truck up road.

- ① Gracie says she can't talk long, "factory people don't like it"
- ② considerable small talk about family (Wilie in yard, children upstairs) living here — years, not had got used to it, trains, reduced rent tending gates, out-house, tub (make own boiling water), wallpaper, coal dust — She says she talks too much, foggles, asks him about self — "He lives in country, alone — not much more" hours

Gracie says — we used to live in country, was more quiet, always knew you had something to eat — but city life kinda gets you — clothes, movies, trolley cars (Howard 5555 room cluttered up w. ho-a-bra, gadgets)

① "He ain't no father & he ain't no husband. What  
good is he to us - I wish he'd die!"

"Marjie!"

"Well, I wish he would - I ain't afraid to say  
it - I'll say it agin - I wish he'd die -"

"Hush your mouth, girl! At ain't nice!"

"If he was a real father, why ain't he up  
here protectin' us - instead of ushin' slots -  
oughta bury him in the cellar in that pile  
of wood of his'n -"

"Stop your crazy talk - I can't stand it -"



Ch 0

"Shut that door at the Summer kitchen, quick, and come  
Down in the front room -" Grace all wrought up. A sudden  
Summer storm broke loose, & rain beats mercilessly on house.  
A wind races along via fence, & howls thru shades in  
backyard; loose black boards are heard chattering.

Grace is terrified, "turn off the lights - turn off the  
lights, I see -" & candle flickers in middle of living  
room. Margie sits on sofa, hugging her breast.

"Damn the fairy - why couldn't they tear down  
those Godawful shades back there - way the wind comes  
howling <sup>thru</sup> them is enough to scare the soul outta persons.

~~Great~~ Roll of thunder, & lightning crackles for full minutes  
minutes. They shrink in their chairs & in the waning light  
beech-like their visages grow waxen. <sup>Do you look the gate? afraid storm will tear  
it off - ain't nothing gonna tear that off</sup>

"Then in down, down ye, tear em down!" Grace  
screams, her eyes are luminous with fear.

"I ain't been near them shades since I  
last heard a man was hung in 'em - I don't  
see why they leave 'em up - they're ain't neither  
in 'em but bats & spooks & ghosts - where the <sup>(Remorseless)</sup> ~~bug, with~~

"They're out, it's yet terrible, them out on a  
night like this, an' us left alone -" Grace

"What's he doin'?"

"He's down in the cellar choppi' out slats -"

I was deaf like he is - I wouldn't hear none

(C)  
M: He's a  
helluva man  
to hang around with  
a time like this -

of these noises an' timber bangin's "

"He ain't really deaf - he's deaf only when he wants to be - an' he hears good as you an' me when he wants to - " Another gust of wind makes shrill whistlin' sound as it peeters thru yard -

Margie is chattering - "I swear ma, the damned yard is haunted' - if the party don't tear them places down t'morrow, I'm leavin' here - I'll go anyplace, anyplace, y'hear - " Shutter rattles & wind rips it off top hinge & it hangs creaking with every new gust -

Groce looks across room to Margie. Her face is puckered in a frown.

"Marge, I got a terrible feelin' in the pit o' ma stomach - "

"What y' mean?"

"I got a feelin' sumthin's gonn to happen - "

"Maybe it's your arthritis - at's always actin' up in this kind o' weather "

"No - it's not my arthritis feelin' - it's a different feelin' - "

"Is it - good or bad - ? "

"I dunno - it's just, y' see, different" - I ain't never had it before - "

"Is it gonn to happen soon - "

"How do I know? I just feel it - like a hand in my stomach - an' it's finkin' gonn to reach out and touchin' "

all of us —

Margie Shivers — "Cut out talkin' your foolishness — you're blabberin' like a spook — now cut it out!" Silence, listen to rain.

Margie: "Let's go upstairs to bed — it'll probably rain all night —"

Ernie — "I guess we might as well go up — Does the lamp take keys? You sure? It's probably raining" in upstairs — "They clamber up slowly in darkness —"  
Ernie — "Damn the factory — don't do nothing for us — because of the strike — probably leave the roof leakin' — down their backs —"

Ch I ... and ...

"Hello ... St. Peter ... travels through living room, into kitchen ... Grace ... herself on black stove like ~~ghost~~ <sup>bird</sup> ...

"What? ... startled. She <sup>from back</sup> ... screen door rattle against bolt. "Just a minute..." she calls out. Turns down knob on gas-range. looks up at clock hanging over cupboard, wonders "who in the world is that at this hour. Ain't nobody come rapping at the door at quarter to seven ... Just a minute!" Grace wipes her palms on her small white apron pinned to her waistline, ~~touches her hair~~ waddles into living room. <sup>from! Dog jumps at door. Barks at Grace's side.</sup>

Her ~~own~~ head is bent to a side, she adjusts pinless specs, & peers curiously at form of man vaguely outlined against screen door. <sup>can't</sup> ~~James, his accent, neat, arched brows, walrus-mustache~~ She steps foot away from door, looks suspiciously at man standing on step on other side. "One thing sure, he ain't no bill collector, she thinks.

"Morning, ma'am" speaks pleasantly (distinctly) "Mornin'" rising in fiction, as though she has doubts. Her head moves up & down screen

"I'm Howard Grumpus, the new mechanic. They tell me you're the St. Peter around here." "Mechanic? Oh, yes, they told me a <sup>what?</sup> <sup>I'm sorry - maybe I mean</sup> <sup>out here -</sup> <sup>new man is</sup> coming on this mornin' - just a minute, come open this <sup>looks at her before opening</sup> here door". She fumbles with bolt, invites him in. "Come in,

⑩ Grace's starts talking like a whirlpool, spins endlessly  
around, around, feel sucked in, no direction, just around,  
feel numb, pleasant in sort of spinning - waves  
spread out engulfing everything they touch  
- Speaks about everything with equal concern



12 years arrived  
9 .. Willed out of work (AR 17; Henry 15; Rob 12; Margi 7)  
12 yrs ago (AR 14; Henry 12; Rob 9; Margi 4)

I (2)

Come in. Sorry to keep you waiting.

"That's all right. I'm sorry to bother you so

Early in the morning ..."

② Takes off  
teat covers. This  
is where  
Willie sleeps

④ Comments on  
last night's  
terrible storm,  
skewed

She gives him seat on & "teet" <sup>①</sup> pulls shade up a bit  
on screen door, lifts shade half way up window. Dog growls under  
table. She points him. He's like no-suspicious of strangers <sup>②</sup> like the  
"It's kinda dark in here - don't you pull them all the  
way up?"

①  
A: why do they  
peep in her  
B: Don't know  
but they sit  
on the steps  
give me  
& look at  
stare  
at us. It  
ain't bad  
nothing to do  
with in her  
years. (As  
for so they is  
concerned,  
we live  
on in  
with.)  
(We don't know  
them - we don't  
know them  
knowing us.  
We know they  
always talking  
about us - but  
the way we speak,  
country folks)

"Nem do. Neighbors <sup>cross</sup> the street are always  
peepin in. Suspicious damned people you ever did see"  
Howard looks out thru screen, across road <sup>cobble</sup> street which  
separates house from row of red brick houses, white wooden steps,  
sun is coming up over top of houses, <sup>glitters on morning dew</sup> rays from through  
screen door & window, feels warmth on arm of chair.

"Whadja say your name was?"  
"Grumpy. Howard Grumpy. GRUM" - Graci  
giggles. "Ain't nothing grumpy 'bout you ..."  
Howard thanks her warmly, ~~she~~ she says being she  
is keeper of the gate, they'll probably be seeing each other a  
lot, might as well call me "Howard". She says she  
likes that better than Grumpy, suggests he call her "Graci".

She goes to kitchen to get keys. Picks them off nail  
above stove. Adjusts burner under coffee pot. Hears Rover  
barking, calls out to quiet him. Waddles back into living  
room. "You're smoking kinda early. Bad for your stomach"  
He says he's never without a cigarette, anytime of the



Landsides, I'm just talkin' your head off - guffin - I must say I do enjoy talkin' - specially to new strangers - "Howard looks queer" Howard looks queer  
"What time is it?" Howard looks at wrist - watch

"It's just about seven: Factory whistle squeals. "Time she goes - it's just seven - " I'll open the gate for you in a minute. You want a cup of coffee? Maybe you'd stay for breakfast. You don't have to be in till 8:00, do you? That's when my bus goes in, at eight. Come on back and have a cup, it's all boilin' on the stove - sittin' right there on the stove - "

No, well, thanks alot, but I ate already - I wanted to get into the garage a little early to get a look at things -

"Well, you're welcome to the coffee anytime. I'll be right with you, I want to take out my garbage can out front - and I'll open the gate in a minute" Starts toward kitchen - [nothing planned in her routine - does everything that comes in her way - but does it intently]

"Here, lets me help you". Starts following her, how growling behind her.

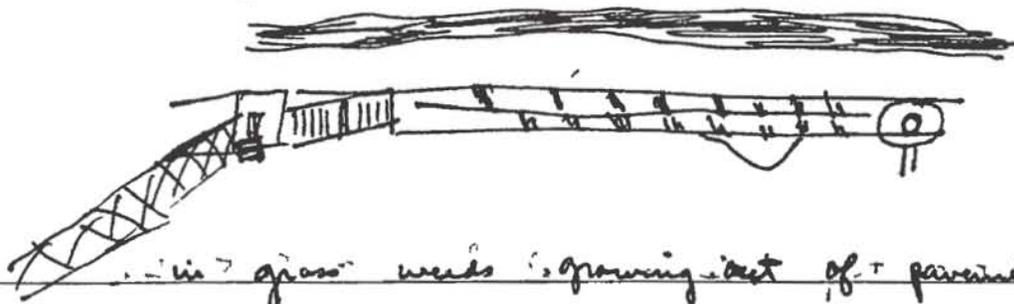
pushes mouth like pipe, slight rasp

"No, don't bother. I can handle it. I'm used to hard work. Used to be a country girl, y'know - "

neatly little hand like figure hamburger, like bottle down sausage

Howard comes into kitchen, takes galvanized bucket from her hand. She thrusts at touch. "Oh, landsides, I don't want to bother yourself - " Guffin - "At's real wise of you - you're a gentleman" She holds emphatic

"Let's go, now" He lifts can walks through living room with how dancing at his side, Grace prattling behind him. "Now like you're used to strangers like this" She opens door. He deposits can



in grass weeds growing out of pavement, next to lamp post. "Thank ye, thank ye a lot - you're a real

gentleman" - she says, "adjust her little white apron

"Is it quite in coming front of the gate?" -

Howard says: "Yes, that's the small bridge"

Gracie - squints: "It's got a notice on it, by car, too"

Howard says "Benches are a bit scarce & keep 'em good"

Howard says "Care of them is a bit - owned by"

They walk together along with a small dog, Howard

Howard says "It looks like a pocket fence at the end of the world"

Howard says "What you mean?"

"I mean this dead-end street" He points to fence,

Erected across end of street, big "ROAD END" sign, valley

on other side of fence where train goes, "Street can used to

run over here, didn't they?"

"They stop in just after we came here. The tracks

are still in the street, see 'em" from the County, just about 12 years ago" Cumberland

"Yes, I see 'em when I throw down" Place

sure does look like end of the world. Your house

especially, the only one on this side of the street with

the factory & pocket fences all around, and the big backyard,

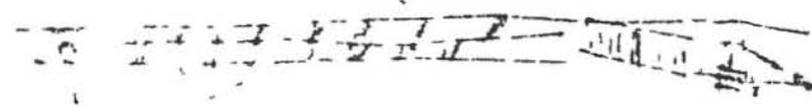
& the dirt lots running clear from the garage back there

all across the street and - always down to the bridge -"

① ← must get to be lonely -

looked had  
was it  
out, rained  
like days  
last with  
first world?

[Candle seen  
flashes across  
mind]



Hi  
Loves like  
State  
penetration  
to: Does  
course  
even  
pen-  
up  
but  
pay  
like  
Prison  
refugee

Q: Hi - what do they think, in terms? points to... first block

building, windows, blowing, open, house

Q: Oh, different things? looks up, slide her eyes from

seen - mainly brackets, the galvanized kind - brackets

garbage cans - naturally things like that

Q: Why don't they wait? people whooping around?

Q: What's so secret? ... and ...

Q: I know - it's not out of the ordinary of strangers

Q: ... because they don't want to see you people

Q: ... around stirring up trouble, strikes & things & demands -

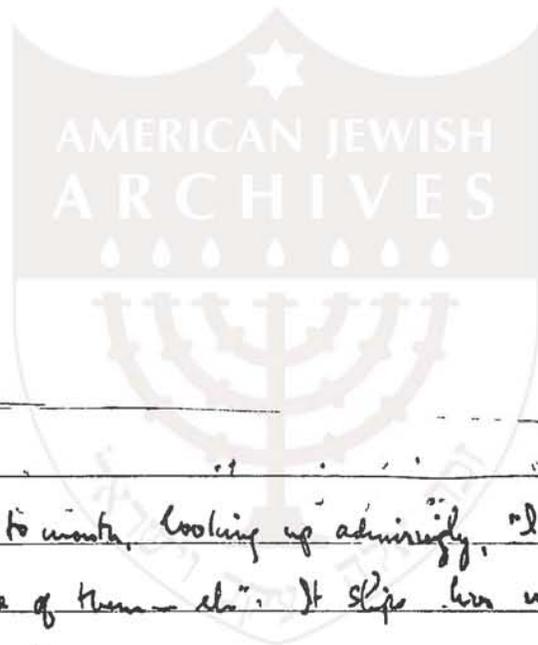
we just get used to the way of strangers - to keep in

the ground

Q: ... of things ...

Q: ...

It's like a ...



① with fingers to mouth, looking up admiringly, "I must say, you do sound like one of them - do". It slips her mind, "one of them - Howard waits

"Oh, what a name!" she hushed - "Poets, that's it, one of them poets -" Howard laughs - "No, you just get to feel a little lonely -"



was the "TARU!" Some way with everybody around the garage & factory - everybody is always in a hurry. You get to feel like that lamp-gold time or that fence. Almost like you are a foreman - but you're different -"

"Well, you've been very nice to me, and I enjoyed talking to you"

"Why don't you drop in round supper time after work's over for a drink or so? I'd like you to meet my family -"

"I'd be glad, too." ~~He~~

"Loudspeaker, I've been talking a blue streak."

She looks over shoulder toward factory entrance, high step, brass rail leading to offices: "I'd better get back in the house. The factory people - the office ones - don't like it when I talk to garage - people out here? And I'd better get back to set up breakfast for my children! Be expectin' you at supper time?" A hint of <sup>surprise</sup> ~~surprise~~ <sup>of eyes</sup> ~~eyes~~ <sup>what</sup> ~~what~~

Howard gets in Quirk, starts motor, drives through gate brass shuts gate & watches car as it drives up yard to garage, feels strange twinge in his ~~throat~~ ~~& throat~~ ~~maybe~~ it's the backburn - lung an grasping, like a hand.

II -

II  
①

Willie comes in from woodshed in backyard, asks who was visitor. (from banks)  
She tells him it was Howard, new mechanic. He says he heard new  
man was coming on, asks what kind of man. She says he was a  
nice fellow Willie. (tear) what? Grace (london) repeats. Willie. I  
guess you oughter know. You ~~talked~~ <sup>were</sup> friendly <sup>enough</sup> with him. Grace  
gets angry, says he's been spying on her again. She curses him  
for being suspicious - can't even talk to people anymore. Threatens  
with skillet, tough enough living, making ends meet, without your  
damned sneaking. Factory whistle squeals. She calls children  
down to breakfast.





- ② "Didn't last night's rain wash it down?"  
He doesn't hear her. Pines fleas, from damp shirt



you'll be late for work"

"What time is it?" drawy made voice calls back -

"Quarter after 7". Rustle your bones - breakfast's ready down here -" She waddles back into kitchen, adjusts table.

Willie sits sideways on chair, peeping thru curtains up the street. "Kelley's got a new Ford..." Stares intently

"How d'ya know?"

"Sittin' out front there, in front of this stoop -"

6  
Don't know how they do it - with big family like they got - well, I guess those who don't care about money, always get it - then their horses & sets over it, then do -

Gracie walks over, and peers with him. "Guess they been playing the horses again -" Saddles back to cupboard, takes out sugar-bowl, puts on red-checked table cloth -

"Ma" girl's voice from upstairs

"Yes, dea" whether want?"

"Ma, where's ma yellow blouse? I left it on my chair last night -?"

"Look it in the bureau - I put it back - it was settin' all rumpled up -" voice in neck tighter (line of pretty alone window)

"~~Don't~~ it, you never leave my stuff alone -" voice grumbles <sup>outside</sup> into distance "Landscape, how she comes, I dunno what's got into her -" Gracie shaking head

"What she want?" Willie asks

"Her yellow blouse" Gracie

"Oh -" Brown ambles in & sniffs at Willie's

eyes nose on floor }

feet. He puts dog, then complains - "holquet - he got coal-dust all over him - Even since they unloaded that coal pile back there, ain't nothin' around here clean anymore -"



garage since he was a youngster - ~~5~~ ~~to~~ length, 1 thousand  
dollars - I pity his poor wife & babies -

Willie looks at his right hand, the missing fringe -  
"Well, I guess you're aw' water much to 'em after  
you're no good to 'em - "

Silence - Room pushes open screen door, & laps water  
in bucket outside door

Willie breaks momentary silence - "What's this  
new fellow like?"

Gracie, smiles uncontrollably, her face wreathed with  
obvious pleasure, "Oh, he's a swell one -

"Got so?" Willie hints resentment, apparently  
has little difficulty in hearing.

"Oh yes," she builds enthusiastically, "he's real  
nice & polite - why, he sat here & talked for 15 minutes,  
real friendly sort -"

"You shore was -"

She <sup>weaves around,</sup> thrusts hands akimbo - "What d'you mean by  
that, Willie Rutledge?" She glowers at him "What d'you  
mean 'I shore was' ... Was you spying on me a-jin -  
Willie Rutledge, I swear -

"I seen him settin' on the feet - an' you  
askin him - a total stranger - into the kitchen for  
coffee -

"I swear, W.R., if you don't stop you spying

on me, I'm - I'm gonna wash your head in water  
this skuller -" her eyes blose behind the specs, & she  
nudies about kitchen like excited little hen, fluttering to  
top skuller, adjusting things on table

"Wal, you ain't got no business been so friendly to  
total strangers - S'pose he really wasn't the real  
mechanic - S'pose he was a union spy - s'pose the factory  
people heard you had a union spy in your living room -  
what'd happen to us then? You ain't got no  
business been so friendly to strangers - an' offerin' coffee -"  
His face becomes more inarticulate as he grows excited.

"For your information, Mr. Howard Brumper is coming  
around here this evening at supper time for coffee, at my  
invitation - and if ye don't take it, ye can go down to the  
cellar & chop wood till yer blue in the face -"

"This is my house, much as it is yours, an' I'm  
stayin' right here - I don't care who comes in -"

"Well, stay & don't give me none of your sass -  
I got me some troubles running this house without  
you spyin' on me every minute of the day. Landshoes,  
with principles to pay the bills, an' the rent, an' washin',  
cleanin' & ironin', an' tendin' the fute, I got enough to  
give me a breakdown - and your sass & spite ain't  
helpin' me any. Maybe yer'd learn to mind your own  
business a little more ifn ye had a job &

earn some money - "

"I learnt four dollars last week from customs -"

"Heh, four dollars! why that ain't enough to keep Margie in stockings - ~~down~~

"That girl ~~she~~ wastes too much money anyway. She buys everything she lays eyes on -"

"It ain't your money, is it? Jest mind your own business -"

A visitor <sup>belongingly</sup> comes down the stairs. "Hey, what in the hell is all the fuss down there?"

"It's the ole man again, Henry - muddin' everybody's business but his own -"

"Well, tell him if he don't butt it out, I'm gonna let him have it - straight <sup>between the eyes</sup> ~~in the kitchen~~ -" Henry

Willie - There you go, settin' the children against me - you're the angriest woman that ever walked this earth - "soft upper lip flaps excitedly against bridge of nose, looks like agitated squirrel - flaps arms in front of him

Grave left skull - "get outta here, I'll throw this at you - !" He comes into living room. Factory whistle squeals - She stands at foot of stairs, & calls:

"It's Seven - thirty - Albert - Henry - Pathe - you'll be late - come on down right this minute - breakfast here ready for half - an - hour - right this minute, y' hear?" Turns toward Willie in living room looking thru screen door like paralyzed child - "An y', wh can eat by yourself -"

After breakfast, cleans up... warm feeling thinking about Howard, Fixes her hair

Willie pasting leaves to father Carters, Description factory surrounding house. (Willie solving suspicion -) Grace routine: store talks about Howard, comes back

home, sits out front, sewing (scene) maybe Howard will pass, thinks Willie will be angry, decides the hell with Willie. ~~Grace~~ <sup>Marge</sup> comes

home from school (makin' different things - ain't learnin' nuffin') says old lady looks happy, what happened the old man die?

(change clothes - don't like these) candy bar before supper

① Mrs Matthews drives by (she nods - feels sense of condescension before her wealth & power, also sense of despising him because he ignores her conditions (outhouse, wallpaper, coalstove, tub)

② unreasoned anti party toward neighbors (they have cars, tubs, etc) she thinks they think ~~strange~~ Rutherford's are "farmers", aliens, feels isolation from rest of block

unattachment - takes money from Willie's box

~~Chris out front~~  
~~back porch~~ - fix to spite us  
tell factory

Ch III

Willie on platform taking cartons out of empty box cars -  
cool & drunk - Feels food lumping in chest, had finished eating  
at 8:30, alone at table, after children had finished - just  
couldn't sit at same table with Henry - he's terrible, no  
respect for parents, cussin' <sup>me</sup> all the time - don't talk to me -  
makes fun of me - felt soggy in presence of Henry - like  
the bread roll he dipped in his morning coffee - getting  
tired of this fussin' - I ain't such a mean feller - what  
did I do to harm them? - I worked for em long as  
I was able - could I help it they fired me - got the  
blood pressure - shouldn't even be down this road - but  
I'd work - I'd work at anything - they won't take me  
now - too old - got the h. pressure - fingers missin' - wish  
we was back on the farm - we was better off - had  
my own truck garden - an cows - an mules - sure I  
worked hard but it was mind - <sup>was healthy - ~~words~~ would had no fine</sup> an' no better over  
hill collectors and factory people - dang it, why do I  
let the ole woman pull me here into the city - "country  
ain't no place to raise children", she said - well, looked  
what happen to em here - City done made a brum  
of Henry, he ain't good for nothing! cussin' all a time,  
threaten me - betcha he sleeps <sup>way he's out late all the time</sup> with women - he's a  
brum - and about gonna marry that Caple girl -  
ain't got nothing' again her, but ain't none in our  
family ever married a Caple - just terrible what's

happit - Marji rummies around with all kinds of fiddles -  
~~she ain't talkin' but~~ I kin tell - <sup>way she's gettin' all dressed up</sup> Robbe's only good  
 one of all my children - he ain't been spalt - dang it,  
 even the ole woman - nussers' aroun with other men,  
 fat ole woman like her ain't got no right invitin  
 strangers into house, right off bat offerin em' coffee &  
 invitin em' to supper - damn her soul - makes me  
 burnin' mad (busts hole in carton - regrets)

She was never  
 like this as  
 the former,  
 never any  
 more in  
 our front  
 room

I wish I was the drinkin' kind - maybe they'd  
 pay more attention to me than when I come home  
 drunk an' ravin' - I got a good mind to get me food  
<sup>here, I don't even smoke</sup> and drink - feels lump in chest - but, Shucks, I just  
 couldn't take it - blood pressure - it'd finish me off  
 just like that - A feels he wants to do something  
 desperate, blind feeling of punching out at someone, some  
 thing responsible for his depression -

if he could  
 save enough,  
 fill his box  
 up with  
 some booze  
 go to eastern  
 shore

"Hoya damn, Willie" ~~Joe~~ Joe Bruno, Italian  
 teacher asks  
 "Oh, all right, I guess," <sup>can't hold his tongue</sup> depression felt in reply,  
 Willie thinks - lookit, I get along fine with all these  
 people - <sup>whoops,</sup> Italians, Poles, whatever - what's the matter  
 with my family?"

sister's  
 aunt  
 buy my  
 own farm,  
 work on  
 auto's

9:30

Inside kitchen, Grace puts away washing dishes,  
 vious work shirts & Marji's dress. A scowl is on her face.  
 Dang his soul, he's gettin' worst every day. Better

makes life miserable

impossible to live with him Always suspicious, always watchin me. like being in prison. Can't go anywhere, can't talk

like the time to anybody, always arguin' with me. I oughta divorce when I stopped to talk him. If it weren't for the children, I'd divorce him. I to the window, swear I would. He ain't worth but a leech, burn' off.

& he kept stannin' at what the boys makes. She sets jaw - if it wouldn't me then the screen door, break up my house, I swear I'd divorce him.

& she'd me back for talkin' Puts away crined things. Goes upstairs to fix beds. (A)

so long Thought of leaving Willie ligens with her. He would die if Sister on eastern shore can't take care of him.

(A) toilet I left him, I know. He ain't got noables to go, he'd have a stroke - but I couldn't be bothered - why don't he think

of my happiness - I ain't had a happy minute since I been with him in this house

Happiness - word glitters <sup>rhinestone</sup> in her mind - I'd be happy with him, with Howard I would. He's so

out-shin success and jaunty angle

nice & considerate - portents him in her mind - strong, nice-looking, clean, pleasant - tingling sensation - car, we'd go places - so excitin' - looks down at bed-covers; strange drunken feeling - what if Howard were lying on the bed

wonders whether Howard is married, divorced, sleeping with woman -

& she were there next to him, his arm across her waist, and then, they'd - she shudders as she realize how totally captivated she is with the strange image - strange because she hasn't been with man for six years now, since she had argument with Willie & made him sleep on the test downstairs - she shakes, like a dog trying to

Shakes off water, yet the image has sunk deep in his mind,  
& she knows it will rise again (she feels embraced & loved)

She wonders  
whether this is  
strange  
feeling of  
before

She tells herself she must not think this in his  
sleep - does she talk in her sleep? does she say things  
that Margie might hear? No matter, she has no great  
secrets Margie might not share, but this thought is hers  
alone, & she must not think it in her sleep -

Downstairs, screen door slams shut & she hears Margie  
call out "Anybody home". Landecker left the front door  
getting careless open, Grace finds, "I'm up here, Marge". Margie footsteps  
on staircase she steps into room. Grace feels momentary  
strangeness, stands before bed as though trying to hide her  
feet secret <sup>illicit</sup> thought. She stutters - "You back from school,  
already?"

"Sure, it's just 12 o'clock." ~~Yes~~ She speaks back,  
bluntly.

"Landecker had the morning flur by. I ain't  
had chance to go to the store yet -"

"I been there -"

"I can see that": Margie is munching on a Hershey  
bar. "Margie, honey, you shouldn't be eating candy bars  
before lunch - it ain't good for you -"

"Why ain't it?"

"It just ain't - specially before lunch."

~~She~~ Margie stiches forefinger in mouth to flip chocolate

away from tooth. She reveals front black tooth, <sup>sat off</sup> away from caries. Gracie looks at her for moment then, blond long oval face, sloping breast, hint of <sup>easy swing</sup> sensuousness in her stiff walk. Margie is a young woman, Gracie realizes

55 reducible

"What do you<sup>7</sup> want to eat. <sup>4</sup>What ain't got but a beef hour's time -"

"I'll take as long as I want to eat. I <sup>maybe</sup> ain't gonna' back to school today anymore - It's a pain in the ass -"

"Now, Margie, that ain't no way for a girl to talk - now you cut it out -"

"Oh, bullshit!"

"Margie!" outraged

"She laughs, rancorously, throw back her head"

"Now I ain't a foolin'" she slopes her tongue

<sup>angrily</sup> <sup>stop trying to be so smart -</sup> <sup>on</sup> determination "Now come on down & eat -"

They walk down narrow staircase. "What do you want to eat -"

"Oh, anytime I ain't hungry -"

"American cheese?"

"No - heh-heh see - Sausage. Fried Sausage -"

"I don't think we got any left in the

refrigerator."

"Then - bacon & eggs"

"You had that for breakfast"

" I want it again - " stubbornly  
Gracie, followed by Margie, enters kitchen. <sup>Margie plops in</sup> <sup>chair, legs spread out, adm</sup> <sup>Gracie notices</sup>  
basin under table is running over. "Margie, be a good girl,  
and ~~throw~~ empty the basin in the backyard."

" Empty it yourself, ma. I'm fun upstairs to  
change my dress - "

" What for? "

" I dunno. Just feel like changing it - "

" Well, it's for plain foolish. Changing clothes, three  
four times a day. All you do is make me make  
work changes & fussin - "

Margie gets up, starts toward stairway. " Well, I'm  
changin' anyway - Maybe I'll go back to school after  
lunch - they're some nice fellers on the store corner  
cross street from school round lunchtime - " coquettish

needs her eyes  
full work

Gracie, irritated by remark, but restraining: " Is  
that all you go to school for? To see fellers on street  
corners? Don't ye learn nothin' at school? "

" Heck no, " seriously, " They put me in <sup>that - that time</sup> <sup>what they</sup>  
~~call an~~ 'opportunity' class. All I do is make little  
baskets, and straps, and paint pictures - Don't hardly get  
any readin' or spellin or nothin' - "

Gracie looks up from stove, " I'm going to  
talk to yer principal bout this. I wantcha learn least  
how to read before you're there - " <sup>One of these days I'm going to</sup> <sup>dress up & go up & tell him</sup>

Margie, climbing up stairway, calls down - "Don't bother with that old <sup>boasted</sup> principal - I'm going to leave school soon anyways -"

while she's setting table (disturbed by flipness & unmanageableness of Margie), knock on front door. She thinks it's Howard. She straightens her apron, touches her comb in hair, and pads out to front. From living room, she sees it's not Howard. She's minutely disappointed. It's the installment man.

"Hello, Mrs. Putnam" cherry, rosy cheeks, black haired young salesman.

*definitely* Saturday - "Hello. I don't owe my next installment till looks at cars - front, up the street truck, midday" heavy traffic -

"I know" he smiles obsequiously, "I was passing by and I thought I'd show you some of the latest jewelry and accessories we got in -"

"No, don't need anything," shrugs, "Besides I owe you \$5.00 from my last bill -"

"Well, your credit is good, & I knew you'd want to see them. You're not obligated to try in any way, you understand"

Margie calls down: who's at, ma?

"It's not for you" she calls back, "no, I really ain't interested - don't bother to open yer bag -"

*series dots*

Margie comes in, buckles zipping up dress. "Oh, pink slip showing"

it's the installment man! What'd he got?"

"He's got jewelry ~~but~~ <sup>an</sup> you ain't buyin' any - we  
owe him \$85<sup>00</sup> for that phonograph which's already broke -

"Gee, lookat, a beautiful breastpin - an a bracelet  
with rhinestones - <sup>my twin's party</sup> just what I <sup>can use 'em up</sup> need for my new black  
dress. How much?"

"You mean, the breastpin & bracelet - they're special -  
\$4.95 for both -"

"Margie, go back in the house, I'm tellin' you, ye  
ain't puttin' these on the bill - I got enough worryin' over  
how to pay up what I owe the man -"

"You ain't puttin' these on no bill - here's  
your money - I'm payin' for 'em."

"Where'd you get 5 dollar bill from?" steel-  
eyed

"Oh, I had it -"

"Margie, don't lie to me, where'd ye get it from?"

"I took it from him - <sup>image of legs on corner of screen</sup>  
<sub>in his mind</sub>

"Who?"

"The ole man, from his box"

"From his box with the Canton money?"

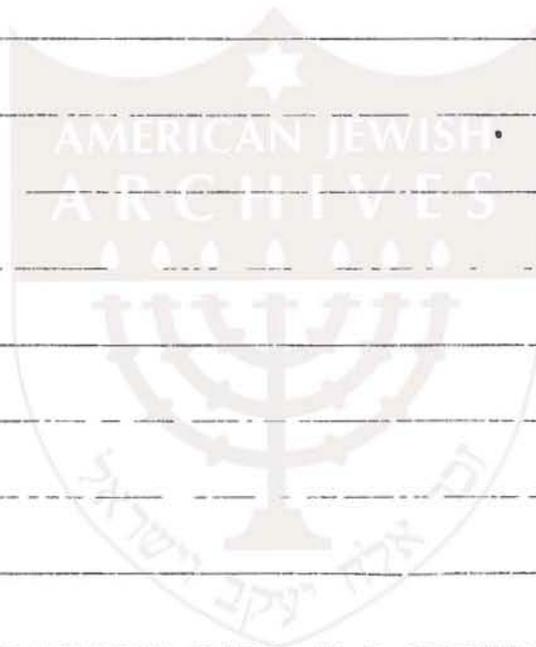
"Yes!"

"Why, why he'd murder ye when he finds out -"

"He ain't gonna murder nobody -" Stealy,

"I figure he ain't got no right holdin' on to all that

money anyway - he don't pay you no rent like Al & Henry &  
 Robbe does - besides - he don't need this money -  
 he's gonna die soon, <sup>anyways</sup> Let's have the pin & bracelet,  
 mister -"



IV - Supper

Family at Supper-table, Grace Serves different kind of food to each (nose, smells, soap, dog) talk about shop (piece-work) Henry brags about amount done, Robert <sup>(hint about joining army)</sup> gives him hell for lying, Henry threatens to fight, Albert stops him - ~~Grace~~ Marge mentions boy in school - Willie bitterly reproaches he don't want her going wif' trap - she's too young <sup>①</sup> - Grace intervenes, attacks Willie, Softsoaps Marge - incident with salt-shaker (tell him to pass it - I ain't talking to him)

Howard enters, feels tenseness, jakes a bit, takes drink & leaves. <sup>(first time wants to know some)</sup> Willie turns head away, Row caps Howard points. <sup>(reaction of Row caps see & Marge see him - Albert correct. Noble admiringly, Henry claps on shoulder - Marge - you're all)</sup>

① Henry says let 'er go - it's good for her - look what it's doing for me, makes a muscle, takes jek pimples off your face Grace outraged by this (Henry finds appearance of big white - mangle) what she got bumps for anyway?

- Willie hits on her taking money for Marge dress, mother for me | Grace says she borrowed it
- ball-play in street
- Matthews [

Ch IV

"Dang the coal dust!" A soft summer afternoon breeze swept down from behind the garage, across the yard where the coal heap was piled, depositing sediment on Gracie's dress & <sup>sewing</sup> knitting. It was 2 o'clock. She was "sitting out front" sewing a hem on one of Margie's dresses. ~~with~~ She shook the dust from the dress & wiped the palm of her hand wiped the grit from the white apron in her lap. There was dust on the Gilson chair she was sitting on. She blew some away. Willie gets a fit when his chairs are messed up. Willie makes Gilson chairs from slats he's given from box cars. Sells them for 1.50, painted green or white; makes them in the cellar in winter-time - in back yard during summer. Carous & Gilson chairs - Willie's main preoccupations.

"Dang the coal dust!" she repeated. "Factory people ain't got no feelin's for nobody. Why did they have to pile coal in my backyard. Impossible to keep things clean. It's bad enuf with engines throwin coal smoke all the time. I'm gonna complain - at's what I'll do - I'll complain to Mr. Matthew himself -" Realizes utter futility, she's been complainin ever ~~to~~ since she's lived here - complained first about out-house, especially in winter - "We'll take care of it soon as we can, Mrs. Matthew, don't you worry - Sweet voice

bucket  
in  
bedroom

of white-face office girl

Complained about tub & lack of hot water -

"We're told heaters are difficult to get nowadays, Mrs R,  
but don't you worry, we'll take care of it soon as we can -"

Complained about sooty water pipes

"Soon as we contact a wall-paper hanger, Mrs R, just  
as soon as —

When it comes to collectin' the rent, they' sure ~~won't~~ don't  
lose anytime. A trumpet-like auto horn blows out in the street  
Grace jumps <sup>up</sup> ~~out~~, squeezing dress in her palms. Howard? No.  
It's, Mr. Matthew, Mr. Matthew himself driving by up the street in  
his countable Cadillac. Mr. Matthew always honks his when he  
passes by. Some he wags his <sup>stow</sup> hat. Sometimes he nods. Today  
he just honked his horn.

Grace waves a meek hand & smiles broadly. Suddenly  
she recalls his complaint. Mr Matthew! <sup>Tell him about shoes, too,</sup> she calls weakly. Mr Matthew  
~~is~~ is gone, up the street, over the tracks.

Grace sits down & returns to sewing. Nice man Mr.  
Matthew I bet he'd do somethin' bout the coal dust <sup>& shoes</sup> if I  
told him. Only thing is, I can't never get to him. Only get  
to see Mr Matthew when he drives by, honking his horn.

Plowie! Grace jumps. A soft-bree crashes against wall,  
foot away from chair. What in the world. A white-haired kid

longue short (yellow  
scarves)  
brown-hair

IV (3)

25

shakes <sup>from</sup> between cars. "Where's ma ball?" Grace wants to laugh at him - "Listen here, Charley Kelley, you ain't got no right playin' ball on the street - specially this time a day - with all these cars around - s'pose you break a window - whos' gonna pay ~~for~~ when you break a window? Now I'm responsible for these cars -"

"S'ez who?" He is under chair ~~but~~ reaching for ball ' Factory, that's who I'm responsible for everything on factory property. An' I'm not join' to stand for your throwing a hard ball around, with all these cars out here. S'pose you'd a hit me, ever think of that? S'pose you'd hit me with that hard ball -" He's tighter in his neck

He stands feet spread apart, tossin' ball one hand to another, with deadpan expression - "Why don't you stop crabbin', you're always crabbin' - ain't no wonder nobody talks to you over here - you're always crabbin' about the factory - the Bell with the factory -"

Grace is unkind. "Well, if you're such a big-shot, Charley Kelley, we'll see - y'esser, we'll see. I'm join' in' & call the factory ~~guards~~ office - we'll see what a big shot you is - Such a nasty-mouth sassan big-shot - In a huff, she slams screen door & paddles into living room, puts down dress, picks it up, goes into kitchen, then comes

back into living room. She plops into chair near window & starts sewing furiously. She looks out from behind dark curtains & sees kids still playing catch. There's no wonder nobody talks to you over here - you're always crabbin' about the factory She feels wounded. "That damned little upstart. Got no manners at all, no respect for old people". The bell with the factory - "haugh!" She says. "I guess I did get too excited - but he really should be playin' out there -"

At 4 o'clock, with radio in living room blaring out western tunes, sung by "Texas George & his gators", Gracie is fixing supper, boiling water so's boys can wash. She goes out to open gate for truck-driven, <sup>engine chuff by -</sup> looks self-consciously at street. Sees kids are gone. "They should've been in school, anyways."

As she enters kitchen, ~~three~~ <sup>three</sup> boys come in thru back door. They're grinning all over, <sup>blood</sup> white hair of each stands out. Henry, tallest of three, <sup>stops dead in front of door</sup> flexes his muscles, sticks out his chest.

"Where's the hot water" his first remark to Gracie."

"Go upstairs & take <sup>change</sup> your clothes off. I'll bring it for ye -"

"Alright. don't keep me waitin'."

Albert immediately behind him, "Get the hell outta

<sup>the way</sup>  
Showoffs — " He pushes Henry in back.

Henry wheels about stiffly & in Semi-crouch, warns:

" Watch yourself - I'll clip you — "

" Poo-poo poo, - <sup>hot shot</sup> " Albert mimics, " get moving or I'll knock ye on your can - " He waves a bucket at Henry.

Gracie utters, " get upstairs with ye - I don't want no foshin in here - go on, get yourselves washed up for Supper — "

Henry, starts upstairs, calls back <sup>further -</sup> " Got any beer on ice? — "

" Yes I got beer, " Gracie answers, " Come on, Henry, others gotta wash, too — "

" Got two bottles? — "

" I swear, boy — " hands admits

Gracie asks, " where's Robbie? "

Albert, " He'll be in, he's <sup>no</sup> helpin' the ole man with the cartons — " He puts bucket down in the corner. " I ~~do~~ sneaked out this bucket for Evelyn. We'll need it when we get married — "

Gracie looks at it, says nothing. Robbie, shortest of all three, comes in. Gracie says: " Robbie, take this hot water up, so's all ye can get washed "

"O.K. Who's at - Texas George?" He takes the hot water to stairway, waits for a moment to radio, then checks stairs who still there -

white  
shirts,  
open  
collars

Half hour later, they're sitting round table, clearly dressed, blond hair parted on right side <sup>glint</sup> w. water. Striking resemblance as three, except for height. Lean muscular. Intensity of ball-players. Albert's nostrils like returned, looks like King George; Robbie has two front teeth bleached

"Whaddya make for me?" Henry asks, hands knife point on table cloth.

"Park chops, an' take the knife away from the tablecloth -"

"I don't want any park-chops -" Albert turns toward her

"I made meat-balls & spaghetti for you, Albert; what ya want, Robbie?"

"Don't matter - I like both -" Robbie starts who's in Texas George time -

"Who's ma beer?" Henry grunts. Albert looks to see if bucket still in corner.

"Get your long feet outta the way" Robbie tells Henry. "Aahh" Henry brushes at his arm

At this instant Willie <sup>bursts</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>into</sup> kitchen from living room, short-winded, his cap askew - "Who's been at my money-box?"

Somebody's been down the cellar at my money-box. Damn it, I  
told ye not to let strangers in here; done for stole five dollars  
from my carton money -

"What strangers?" Albert asks

Grace wheels around. "Ain't nobody stole your money -

indirectly;  
never  
addressed  
direct

Henry blurts, "I took <sup>ye</sup> ~~you~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~your~~ five dollars" He stands up,

clenches fist, protrudes chest, "Wanna make sumthin outta it?"

Both Al & Robbie pull him into seat - "Oh, sit down  
& shut your mouth -" Henry, taken by surprise, jumps back  
up, shows chain behind up, postures like boxer, "C'mon, I'll take  
ye both on - Sumwotch, both at same time - C'mon, yaller-  
bellies -"

Grace deposits two steaming plates on table, & wearily  
explodes, "Oh stop yer fussin. I declare, yer worst them  
a mess of babies. ... Willie Rutherford, stop your shakin' &  
set at the table - I took yer five dollars for the insurance  
man -"

Willie pouts - "Insurance man ain't due till Saturday  
You gived my five dollars to that stranger, I'll let ye  
dod -"

She stomps foot angrily on floor & moves toward  
stove. "So help me, WR, ~~I~~ I'll smack ye with this  
hoo skuller if ye don't cut out yer talkin' that way. Hows

ain't been here since he left this mornin'; I'm tellin' ye, I took yer money & I'll give it back to ye on pay-day. Now, set to the tables & stop yer fussin', all of ye, I want quiet during supper—

Henry asks Al — 'Who's this Howard?'

Gracie answers, "He's the new mechanic that came on this mornin'. He's a nice feller. I expect he'll be here soon to meet all 'o' yez—"

Gracie parcels out food. Willie, still pointing & disappointed, sits next to Robbie, his hat still askew. "Gonna hide my box so's nobody kin find it next time—"

There's a moment of silence, punctuated only by knives & forks & clinking glasses.

"Landsches," Gracie says, looking up at clock, "in all the excitement I plumb forgot what happenit to Margie. She oughta been home from school two hours ago.

Screen door rattles, Gracie makes out. From other room "What happenit to ye, fird? School let out two hours ago— an' stop eatin' that candy bar, supper's on the table—"

Margie struts in, looks at table — "Boyboy, pink chops... meat balls— an' BEER!"

"Where ya been?" Albert asks slowly, a <sup>big</sup> note of reprimand  
 She turns up her nose, "I been delayed, what's it to ya?"

"That ain't no way to answer me - I ask ya where  
 ya been?" & persistent

Willie looks at her under heavy brows - "She's been  
 lookin' with boys on the street corners - it's where she's  
 been -"

"Ya been lookin' from school to find with boys?" Grace  
 She ignores the question, plops into a chair <sup>between</sup> next to  
 Willie & Albert, & bends over to play with Homer who's  
 chomping on a pork bone.

"Leave her alone. What're ya roidin' her for? What's wrong  
 with her playin' with boys? It's good for her." Henry  
 looks toward his jaw, "~~It's~~ It'll take the gunk pimples  
 off her face, like it did mine... ~~gave me muscles, too~~  
 besides, what's she got bumps for <sup>in her blouse?</sup> ~~up there?~~"

"HENRY!" Margie leaps up outraged. Henry bursts out  
 guffawing at his bold joke. Robbie & Albert threaten to  
 punch hell out of him if he don't stop at once. He in  
 his flip against his tooth, "What? What he say?" He turns  
 toward Robbie, toward Albert seeking meaning of tumult when  
 passed his ears

Grace leans across table waving ladle at Henry  
Narrow eyes - "Henry Rutherford, you ain't no saloon  
an' you'd just better watch yer talk in this house. Don't  
ye ever talk to yer sister like that agin, y'hear me?  
Don't ye ever!

Screen door rattles. Rover runs into out of kitchen  
bawling. Landscapes, Grace says, must be Howard. Altho in a  
ditch, she puts ladle back on <sup>wood</sup> hook, starts pulling  
nervously on apron, before leaving kitchen, turns toward table,  
"I want no fussin' or wuss-akin while he's in here -  
y'hear me?" She feels Willie staring at her fixin' apron -  
Points finger above his nose - "An' ~~now~~ don't you go  
off with your wild talk - One minute!" she calls out  
toward front. She pads out to door.

"Handy!" Howard says, <sup>cigarette slinger</sup> coming into living room -  
"I'm in a bit of a hurry, but I thought I'd drop in as  
I promised to ~~see~~ <sup>meet</sup> your family -"

Grace giggles, "Glad to have ye" He follows her  
giggling into kitchen, Rover sniffling at his footsteps.  
He nods as he enters kitchen - meets with stony silence.

Feels sense of awkwardness. Grace, fumbling with apron,  
blinks proudly "This is me family!"  
Howard nods, & smiles. "This is Albert, my eldest, he's  
"Quite a family!"

She beams  
throughout

the one who's gonna marry a Capote girl -" Albert looks  
sincerely at Grace for his last remark, starts to stand up, drops  
a fork. He reaches across table shakes hands, "Howdy do."  
Blinks down "in the hell with it" seriously, asks  
"What's your name?" Assumes former role.

"Howard. Howard Grumpier. I'm the new mechanic,  
he greets warmly. He greets "Howdy do"

"An' this is Robbe, <sup>the</sup> youngest ~~boy~~ of the boys"

Robbe stands stiffly, softly says - "Howdy do"

"An' Henry - he's the painter" Henry sits in his chair,  
his arms at his side, & nods <sup>strongly - swaggers</sup> aggressively "Howdy"; leisurely, he  
decides to stand & squeezes Howard's hand -

Howard winces at unexpected squeeze, "Mighty powerful  
hand, Henry." Henry smiles wanly, reaction of flattery

"This is here is Margie, my only daughter"

"<sup>my what a</sup> pretty girl." Howard studies her black teeth for a  
moment as she greets at him. <sup>pulls the dress down.</sup>

Willie, without hearing Grace's introduction, rises  
slightly from his chair, <sup>but feels it's his turn next</sup> bunches, & <sup>listlessly</sup> extends his hand which  
feels like dead flesh or limp rag. <sup>silence becomes embarrassing</sup>

Before anyone can say a word, Grace leans over  
table, grabs an open bottle of beer & thrusts it into Howard's  
hand. "Really, I don't want anything, Miss Grace"

"Go on, go on don't be backfurl with me, Boss's good for ye—"

Howard feels all eyes on him, He leans against frame of window - "Fursh eating, don't let me do'turb you - He begins to suck on bottle, sees they're waitin', starni' at plate, at each other, at him.

"You all work together, don't you?"

"Yep," Henry <sup>shrugs to answer</sup> replies, "We damned near must the galvanize room between the three of us—"

Grace  
have a  
seat?  
It: No, I'll  
stand

6 - How'd you  
like first  
day here?

He well, not  
really different  
from other  
jbs. Got  
more tunders,

higger ones  
too, mach,  
white, but  
it'll be  
all  
right.

Kills attention  
misled on  
him, tries  
to ~~switch~~  
interest

Albert & Robbie glowers at him. He continues, "We're on piece-work now. You know anytins' bout galvanizin? ~~isn't~~ No? Well I myself puchled over <sup>35</sup> ~~20~~ buckets today. Jest Jos' Prina, the pa's a dog - but was killed by Foreman, said that.

Grace interrupts: Henry's ~~is~~ sure end a good worker - everybody says so - but he likes to brag - "Rochlin is dangerous work, <sup>don't let it get yourself</sup> ~~of tunders~~. Dippin buckets in hot acids till that galvanize stocks to the sides.

If ye ain't careful, ye can burn your entire arm off - Howard was interested. "How do you protect yourself?"

"Wal, we covers ourselves with big rubber aprons, and rubber gloves that comes up to your shoulders.

We puts masks over our faces to keep out the acid fumes — "Howard" loud, must look like Frankenstein's with all that on —

Grace & Marge giggle. "Darned if we don't" Noble smiled. (General drawing of atmosphere)

Refusing to be diverted, Henry continued. "Course, sometime aced kin escape & get into yer lungs — & yer a fanner —

Albert <sup>inferred</sup> adds — "Thing that really bothers me is the tanks — the acid tanks — darned things are heated to — degrees — If somebody ever farts around with the heat on em, those bastards will explode & blow every man in that room to kingdom come —"

"Man" Howard nods at Herbert's thought. "How long all of you been down this?"

"I started bout 9 years ago — I was just 19 — I had to go to work when the old man was laid off. Was 9 years when it >"

Old man, hunched over table, "What? Yes, just 9 years." Opening made for him in conversation & he crawled thru it, blabbering — "It'll be exactly 9 years next week, June 22 They laid me off in the afternoon, after I came back from the doctor's. Factory doctor. He fixed my hand when I lost these two fingers in the stamping machine" He holds hand up.

Howard grimaces at grumbles first. "They said it was depression-hell, they didn't have any more use for me, at's all. Giv'd me couple hundred dollars & laid me off. What could I do? Live in their house like this, couldn't even ask for more money —"

Howard scowled, felt pity for the man. ~~Saw some~~ ~~watches~~ his momentary silence. Grace blunts: "Drink yer beer, Howard, it's getting warm —"

He smiles, "nearly forgot about it."

Henry, ~~says~~ picks up thread, "I started 7 years ago, <sup>just about</sup> two years after Albert, & he ~~(points to Robert)~~ started 2 years after me. Have to be 17 to get work permit —

"Hell, I got mine when I was 16 - I fooled em - I didn't want to go to school anymore, so's I started in ~~an~~ <sup>early</sup> hammering handles onto buckets. At's where all of us got muscles from —" Howard looks at Stinky and of boys —"

"You ~~sure~~ sure have - Maggie, you got muscles like them?" This to bring her into conversation

"Sure she has," Henry says looking <sup>obviously</sup> at her chest.

"HENRY!" Grace scowls at him. He laughs.

Howard says: "I ~~might~~ <sup>like to</sup> drop into your department

They should all 3 of us in  
Salvage room, coz they can't  
get others to work there

in an attitude of confusion

① Archie: "I'd a beer better off in school - what  
the hell am I getting outta this - there ain't no  
advancement <sup>ain't</sup> for a raise in 3 years -  
- if <sup>anythin'</sup> ever happen to me, say, lose a  
finger like the ole man did <sup>a few years</sup> - they'd chuck me just  
like this -

Albert - "No, they wouldn't - 'em union won't let em

with  
worrying  
is -> reluctance

Rothe - Union, shit! Union ain't nothing here. Take Buck  
Potter & Walter Collier - they're the heads of the union (to Howard  
who nods) - them guys don't give a damn about us. <sup>They're worried about their own skins</sup> It's

FARM -  
was we  
was back -  
before it could  
pay - we  
with us  
us we  
could make  
be in  
house

a) The union is. I see both of 'em riding around with ole  
man Matthew in his Cadillac - <sup>day before yesterday was called off -</sup> those guys and I'll get a  
quint of beer - hell, no, I'm getting fed up with this  
damned place - dangerous work like this - punch - I'm

fixin to join the army -

Grace - overwhelmed - "What?"

"Don't get excited, now - not just yet - but soon enough -

Howard - "I was in the army in last war -

that's where I learnt to become a melchance -

Rothe - Dyzat so - what was it like?

Howard laughs - "It's a long story, Rothe - I'll tell

you about it sometime - till you what ->

soon as I get settled in my place - "

" We'll show you around if ~~it's~~ it's o.k with the foreman," Robbie volunteers

" Well, I <sup>I don't</sup> want to keep you here longer & I gotta be going, sure was pleased to meet you - <sup>so</sup> He wants so long. Gracie goes out with him to front door.

He thanks her for the beer, " Oh, at's nothing, drop around some more" - Gracie fixes dress

" I will; you got a real <sup>nice</sup> family - If there's anything I miss, it's a nice family life - well, bye!"

V One month later - midsummer

V ①

Grace & Margie are in kitchen, Saturday afternoon (lazy day, neighbor  
will be away with carter) Grace mopping floor, Margie sits on  
(Margie Solon, Robt looking at car, Albert at gate)  
Chair munching Candy-bars, playing w Rover

neighbor  
Car was  
stuck  
back in  
Street/2m

Margie says wouldn't it be nice if Howard were her father  
what made her say that, Grace asks. I dunno, just thinkin' - Margie,  
things would be different - he's ~~obviously~~ smiling, pleasant, & he's  
got a car - we could go places - downtown, down in the  
country - might even take us to the movie-pictures (movies) some  
of which (old man, tho) grandin' - might even take me & my friend  
for ride; Grace irritated at thought Margie playing with boy

move  
away from  
here  
(Coal smoke,  
factory gets  
neighbors  
snoring)

Margie blunts out - why ~~don't~~ would'ya marry him?  
Grace tells her to stop being foolish, because Willy ain't dead.

M - He he did would'ya marry him

G - Stop talkin' nonsense, gimme a hand

M - Maybe you & do like Aunt Elmer did

G - Margie!

M - Well, she's just like married. They sleep together & even  
themselves even her dogs

G - Stop talkin', & help me

M - I'm jam out front & need the cones - You need the  
intercage

try money  
he likes  
you

① Grace routine - ironing, washing, mopping, tending gate, coal dust,  
neighbors

② Factory agent asks for rent - reproaches her for being day late;  
she sulks afterwards - outhouse, no running hot water, no wallpaper -  
but gate trade, lost buyers - Mr Matthews in car

Ch V

mid July

on Saturday afternoon <sup>the</sup> street assumes new face, what during the week is a growling, rasible, grumpy, contorted face is now composed, ~~set~~ pleasantly relaxed, sunken in lassitude. Trucks are gone, most of carbon monoxide has fled before our side warm ~~land~~ <sup>July</sup> air scented as it emerges from the bay at Ferry Point & crosses the fields, over the valley, & hangs with musky fragrance. <sup>Four smiles in</sup> A hot sun <sup>has</sup> sits over the street, striking it with warmth <sup>occasional twitter as</sup> Half-naked kids shout as they play ball on hot asphalt. Horses mingle with occasional call of cows in pens in albatross on corner. Across the tracks, doorbell on Abe Lamm's tottering screen door tinkles. Bicycles thrown on side on pavement.

Neighbors houses ~~flutter like~~ sit relaxed <sup>behind</sup> wooden steps. Mrs Campbell's eight children play with those on hot pavement, Johnsons glass doors sparkle in sun, they've gone shrimping in rock creek; Krells are on steps ~~also~~ shuffling pop-zels, look at comic book pictures; Kellys are cleaning new car; Popeys, barefoot, followed by ragged dog, walks along gutter looking for tin foil. On the lot, which ends the row of houses, kids crouch playing marbles.

Just screen, unobscuring part of face is left side. Great black building is seized with paralytic of silence. Steps, anima by clarity felt of office girls & factory-folk, resumes stand composition of unguaranteed marble. Throughout shipping, receiving,

stamps, cutting room, stamping, galvanize, packing have yielded to coma of the Sabbath. And on the surface, the contagion of silence has spread to the Puterford House, nestled at the feet of the great building which looms over it. Cotton dress hangs in the sun, yielding up water from warping, gate to fange <sup>hums</sup> ~~hums~~ as breeze slips silently through hundred little openings ~~into~~ of ~~hollow~~ ~~hammer~~ ~~tappings~~, with ~~making~~ a cotton ~~cham~~ in ~~background~~.

In the kitchen, Grace, <sup>her</sup> ~~her~~ knees heavily planted on a rubber mat, unbends to mop her brow, and she is washing floor, bucket of hot water at her side, & brush in her hand.

"It's hot, ain't it?" Marge asks <sup>lightly</sup> ~~lightly~~ <sup>lightly</sup> ~~lightly~~ She's sitting on chair, in white shorts, a comic book is in her hands, and she's blowing bubbles-gum.

"Move yer feet - yer in the way" Grace says. Marge stands up, walks toward back door. She calls Nover from under chair, picks up his front paws, makes belly talk to him - "You's a good doggie, you is, yes you is, a good good good doggie" Nover barks, his long tongue hangs out. On hind legs he dances up close to Marge's naked leg, begins rhythmic motion against her with his belly. His long red tongue coils back & forth, & he pants audibly.

Grace swirls around, frowns, orders "Marge, take Nover into the yard - let him run around & get some of that steam outta his stomach -"

① M. Al's at his friend's ain't he?

G. Yes I know what he sees in her. Course, she's decent & respectable, but she ain't party at all.

M. He likes goin' to church with her. Says it's all decorated, & party inside, an' makes him feel different an' clean. - (He don't cross in front of her).

G. - (shakes head) - I know, ain't nobody, neither in

( Willie's nor in my family ever married a Catholic

I ain't got neither again an'cept a South party, crazy talkin' to statues & pictures, and countin' heads like they do

~~She will be preoccupied with  
under plots, looking at~~

Marge sends Pomer into yard, throws dirty bowl into  
bushes beyond outhouse, Pomer chases after it, Marge  
returns any time she

Gracie has washed over to the celox road, she stands  
up, & stretches - "Guess I'm gettin' old Gotta crack  
in my back -"

"Got any Soder, ma?"

"There's some orange in the celox. Think I'll  
have some, too"

Marge takes out bottle, starts toward cupboard for  
glasses -

"Dang it - don't step on the wet floor. Walk on  
the papers I put down over there -" Marge walks daintily  
on newspapers, brings back two glasses. She <sup>hands Gracie a glass</sup> hands Gracie a glass,  
sets down next to Gracie, & hands her bottle. Gracie pours  
hers, post stretches to put bottle on table. They sip

"Ah, it's good & cold" Gracie says wiping her wet

M: where's ole man  
G: took away a load  
of cartons <sup>life</sup>

"Ma-a"

M: where's Robb's go?  
G: What to the noovers -  
M: about the my entertain-  
ment by boss. What the  
set meant & Howard?  
stop talkin about  
the army -

Gracie notes inflection of Scream in query in M's tone.

"Ma, wouldn't it be nice if you was married to  
Howard?"

"Now whatever made ye say that?" questions mild

M: what'd he go for?  
G: I dunno. Guess he  
or some cowboy pulled  
M: Did he go in on Henry?  
G: I guess not. Henry  
early in the mornin.  
M: Guess he went to  
a saloon  
G: I dunno. I  
wasn't so  
perturbed  
moment of  
silence

M is at his job's

"I dream - I dream of this" She stirs into glass, shakes liquid, looks up <sup>dreaming</sup> ~~gathering~~ excitement, "But would it be nice, too?"

Grace says harshly - "well, he's a very nice fellow -"

"He ain't married, is he?"

"No. His wife got killed five years ago in an accident. Never remarried."

"Chee, if you was married to Howard everything'd be so different - we could go ~~great~~ places in his big Buick and see different things - I betcha he'd take us uptown to the Hippodrome -"

"We ain't never been to the Hippodrome -" Grace says trances-like.

"We would go to different restaurants."

"We ain't been no place since I been married to Willie -"

"I betcha he'd take me on my dog friends for a ride even - He'd drive & we'd sit in the back an -"

"Marge!" I don't wantcha talkin' like that! What in the ~~over~~ world's been happenin' to ye?"

"Ain't nothin' happenin' to me. I'm dang fed up been cooped up in this chicken-coop, down' nuthin', seem' nothin'; Ain't nothin' in this house but fussin' and fightin' all the time - Darned ole man is fitten on ma nerves - I wight be'

die & we'd leave here - this ole chicken coop - no friends or nuthin'

"What're ye fussin' about? If anybody's to fuss, I'm the one to fuss. Wake myself to the bore, from mornin' to night - washin' & ironin' & cleanin' & feedin' all of yez three times a day - and <sup>runnin' myself ragged</sup> tendin' the gate - <sup>or Schimpun to pay the rent, & the grocery bill,</sup> I get no thanks from nobody -

Soon as I step outta the door, the ole man is speakin' on me - can't even talk to a soul without expectin' to contend with him - Lanceshots, git, you got nuthin' to complain about - jam' to school, an' all in dresses of yours - why, I ain't been to a movie in movin' a year -

Insurance & installment man

A knock on front screen door intrude upon her speech "Was, who could that be? Sure ain't Willie, he's just left a couple hours ago -" She puts down glass, & walks to door.

"Oh, hullo, Mr Alexander, come right in -" she trips, opening door Alexander is robust, red-checked, white crew-cut

"Nice <sup>Summer</sup> day, isn't it? Pardonably

"Really, didn't have a chance to see, been cleanin' all mornin' - here have a seat, I'll bring the rent right in to ye -"

She hurries into kitchen, steps on papers to cupboard opens coffee-can takes out rolled-up bills, returns, counts it out in his palm "Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen - that's

right, ain't it -? Maybe you should count it over it again -  
 "Yes, that's right, Miss Gracie" Pansy stilly - "uh,  
 Miss Gracie, I thought I ought to remind you that the  
 rent was due last week, and though I don't  
 mind ~~making~~ <sup>making a special trip</sup> here for it - it is good to see you again, if  
 the ~~usual~~ <sup>usual</sup> procedure is that you're to bring the money  
 to the office -"

Grace feels her spine twist in knots. A bitterness  
 mounts in her bosom & climbs to her throat, & then it  
 subsides, falling back again inside her. "I understand, Mr  
 Alexander, y'see - uh, last week I had to pay the gas  
 bill & the insurance was due, so's I didn't have  
 time to make it up - an - I was gon' to bring it  
 up myself yesterday - but I was here alone by  
 myself and <sup>with</sup> tender's two jobs an' one thing an'  
 another I couldn't get around before the office closed -"

"Well, I understand, Miss Gracie. I knew there was  
 some good reason because you and your family are so  
 faithful to Matthew Bucket Company, but I thought I'd  
 just remind you - Well, bye bye, an' have a  
 pleasant week-end" - <sup>oh yes, the office will send you a receipt first thing in the morning</sup> The door slammed shut, & Grace  
 stood in the middle of the living room staring into  
 indignation

"Well, damn it to hell!" A confused fury took hold  
 of her. She was bitter with herself for not talking

Gracie  
 with apron

Don't mind making a special trip! I shoulda booted that pot-belly, stuff-pinto, she choked with anger Don't mind - special trip! - How many special trips do I make outta to that gate & <sup>She wants toward gate -</sup> back? Fa' the way to the factory! [Minie at screen door as two talking to Alexander -] We ain't faithful, pot-belly, we're slaves to the damn factory! She turns toward kitchen, shaking her head, stomping feet on floor maybe I shoulda cut him if it's a 'stablished procedure to paper a house once in 12 years, or to have to poop in a wooden shack with the wind freezin' your <sup>told bucket in yer bedroom</sup> tail, - or - to <sup>to have</sup> drag buckets o' hot water up a flight of stairs to wash your face - Damn, if he ain't got his nerve - "

<sup>or</sup> could dust green face & clothes, or haunted shades in yard

Marge commiserates - "See? just what I told ye - we oughta get up & get the hell outa here - we oughta show 'em - they don't appreciate what we do for 'em anyway - we oughta just get up & get the hell outa here -"

Grace stands in front of window, waven' clenched fist towards Alexander's car which pulls away up the street - "We'll do it, I tell ye - one of these days when I get good and ready, we'll do it - We'll just pack up everythin' & leave, we'll go back to the country or Samowles. An' they can have their shack

out there, and that gate of theirs can swing as ~~them~~  
~~bonies~~ ~~hell~~ ~~they~~ fall off from Austin' fore I swing it open <sup>again</sup>

Gracie sits down, partially exhausted. There is silence  
 as Gracie ruminates over the Alexander episode.

"Ma-a-a" Margie starts as before. "Ma- ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> Howard  
~~has~~ got money—?"

"I guess he's got a right nice sum put  
 away — must have to run that big Buick and to  
 keep up his home in the country —"

"In the country?"

"Sure, didn't ye know he lives in the country?"

Sure, girl, he's been livin' <sup>in</sup> out ~~there~~ (almost as long  
 as we been here — Got a nice home — <sup>Mr. Howard</sup> <sup>knows</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>stittly</sup> he take me

Margie wiggles with new delight — "Chee, I didn't  
 know that —"

"Sure, he say he's been livin' in the country  
 ten, eleven years now — drives back & to every day —"

Margie relishes thought. She presses ~~inquiry~~

"Ma-a-, he likes you, don't he?"

"Gracious sakes, stop askin' foolish questions! Ye talk  
 like a little child"

"But don't he too?"

" We gets along very friendly, but that don't mean nuttin' "

" He must like you a lot, ma - "

" What makes ye say that - "

" Well, ever since he's been workin' here, he's been bringin' you things, and regularly too - "

" What, well how do ye know? "

" Oh, I ain't deaf blind - I seen the tablecloth & towels he had ye last week, the ones ye had in the burey in our room - "

" Now, I don't want ye touchin' that stuff - "

" Oh, don't worry, I ain't gonna touch anythin' - an I seen the powder box & puff he give'd couple weeks before that - "

" Land sakes! Everybody's a spyin' in this house! "

Slaps lap in exasperation

" <sup>Don't take on so</sup> I'm not a spyin', an' ain't nothin' wrong with it - I jest say he likes ye - he likes ye a lot - an' ye oughta do somethin' about it - "

" Them little presents ain't nuttin' but thanks for some work I did for him - like presentin' an' dancin' an' things - ain't nuttin' else to - " Stocks foot out

to step on cockroaches that meander from under icebox.  
 "Whaddyamean, I oughta do Sumetin about it?"

Without hesitatin, Margie blunts out climacically:

"MARRY HIM!"

Gracie leaps up in shock, "Now, Margie, ye cut  
 out yefr prattle - foolish nonsense a girl your age -"  
 besides, Willie's <sup>gone alive!</sup> ~~ain't~~ dead yet -"  
 from  
 pleasin'

"If the ole man ~~is~~ <sup>was</sup> dead, wouldja marry Howard?"

Gracie stares into living room - her mind caught  
 up in an sudden web of reverie - the wings on the bed cover,  
 Howard at her side, his arm across her waist, she shakes  
 with the cold thrilling sensation - "What?"

"Wuldja?"

"Now, Margie, I don't want to hear another  
 word of this - Stead your yabbering ~~about~~ away like a  
 silly school-child, you'd better git your hand in cleanin'  
 up the dinin' room -"

Margie stubbornly refuses to let go. She wants to  
 elicit an answer "Don't really have to wait till ole  
 man dies - besides, he's gonna try to outlive you just  
 for spite - you could do like Aunt Eleanor -"

"Margie, I ain't standin' for another minute of  
 your yabber-jabber!"

"She's just the same as marrit. She's been livin' with Frank <sup>Charles</sup> ~~Charles~~ for two years, and Cousin Horace calls him 'Pop'."

"Stoppit this very minute! You say another word & I'll mash you with this ~~&~~ scrubbin' brush!"

Margie moves back toward screen-door, continuing unobscuredly - "Frouble with you is ye don't know how to handle Howard - I betcha he'd want to live with ye - but ~~he's afraid~~ <sup>he's terribly lonely - specially not been into a woman, for</sup> ~~could ye~~ got a family - If ye <sup>had</sup> ~~you~~ knew how to handle him -"

Gracie helpless before the savage, ~~she~~ <sup>she</sup> smiled around in fury, & ~~passed~~ <sup>passed</sup> into living room. Margie follows her in, in a few moments. Gracie asks her: "Now that you stop yer bleatherin', ye gonna help me clean?"

"Now, I'm goni' out front to read the comics - I ain't ever goni' to work, coz ye don't have to... if ye know how to handle em." The screen door slams shut & Gracie stands staring <sup>blankly</sup> at the flapping shade.

Howard gets Marge out front, asks about Grace, goes in with laundry bag, explained he has nothing to do, thought he'd take overalls to laundry. She says she'll do it for ~~me~~ him. (He's freshly ~~washed~~)<sup>①</sup> invites her to country home following Sunday.

Thrilled by idea of invitation (but momentarily disturbed by thought of Willie) She blushing accepts (like first date) bed. room in room (hops. tubs) near William's Alley - Willie would be astounded, neighbors would talk

① Howard speaks sentimentally of family scene - (~~the~~)



Margie, sitting on front chair flipping pages of course books, can't concentrate, too much activity in street with ball-playing, & little girls in bloomers running around screaming in spray of hose. She looks down at curves of her legs & thinks <sup>She hopes Mrs Kelly is watching her - she'd like to -</sup> how attractive they are. She glances up street & sees Howard coming out of watchman's entrance "What in the hell is doing in the factory today?" Howard walks down street toward her. He's carrying something. A bag. Margie lets it's somethin' for the ole lady. "Jerk," she muses, "I bet he's in love with the ole woman an' ain't <sup>got</sup> quite dumb ~~enough~~ to tell her. Christ, good lookin' man like that ain't been <sup>in bed</sup> with a woman in five years. I betcha I could ..."

"Howdy, Margie ..."

"Hey, look at ye all spruced up ..."

Laughs. "All spruced up? Aye I did was take off my dumfrees, put on some clean pants, an' washed my face —"

"Well, ye looks all spruced up to me — what ye got in the sack?"

He looks down at the white bag. "Oh this? — this is some dirty clothes that I piled up in the garage. I had nothing to do today so I thought I'd come in an' take care of my laundry & odds & ends. What're ye doin', <sup>showin' off. You pretty leg?</sup> ~~showin' yourself?~~"

"I <sup>Not too bad? hope</sup> ~~guess so.~~ tryin' to read the courses here, but those damned kids over there makin' too much fuss. Oughta be a law against 'em playin' in the

streets like that, disturbing other people's place. Looks at her legs, Quantin' in Sun "Guess ye want to see Ma. She's inside -"

defensively "Thought I'd drop in say hello, bein's I'm here already -" Pokes up sack, rattles door, Grace looks out, opens, "Come in, ~~but~~ come in, just in the middle of cleanin' up 'goggles - "See man & boy are <sup>straighten things out a bit</sup> fine - I'd thought I'd

"I happened to be in the factory, so I thought I'd -" door slams behind them.

"Jerk," Meiji ~~rattles~~, "why don't he stop playin' possum & take her up to the bedroom. Do 'em both good.... Christ, I betcha I could.. She looks at her legs -"

"Come on out in the kitchen, I'll get ye Sumthin' to drink. Did ye eat yet? Maybe I kin fix ye a bite to eat.."

"No, no. I ate a big lunch uptown, before I came here. Don't bother yourself at all, Grace."

"An't no bother. Take me a minute..."

"Now please, don't -" He <sup>quart-like hand fluttering in her stomach</sup> touches her arm. She stops & feels a whirling sensation. She looks up at him as tho thru a woolly veil; an unarticulate urge impels her madly -

"Please don't bother, Grace," he says intimately, still touching her hand -

"Well, here's a drink anyway -" <sup>VI</sup> She <sup>(S)</sup> <sup>31</sup> ~~drinks~~ <sup>hands</sup> him  
a glass of root beer. "How come you here on Saturday -  
I'd think you'd want to get away from the  
party - but, know I do -"

"I had nothing to do at my home - it's  
kinda lonely out there, so I thought I'd come  
in & collect my dirty clothes & take 'em to the  
laundry - Don't have much time for that during  
the week -"

"Is that your laundry in the <sup>sock</sup> bag there?"

"Uh huh -" She walks over, lifts it up -

"Landsabe, ain't much there - I'll do it for ye -"

"Naw, Grace, no -" He stands up to protest -

"Oh, Howard, don't go gettin' excited. Ye got a  
handful of things there. Take me ten minutes to wash  
em up for you ~~the~~ - - Ain't no use ye botherin'  
with rumm' all over the city to laundries - They  
rip things up terrible anyhow -"

"~~well~~ Grace, I didn't drop in here to bring  
you any extra work -" He reaches out for bag. She  
snatches it away & drops it in rummer kitchen.

"I know ye didn't. But, Howard, I wants to do it,  
Naw sit down & finish yer root beer -"

He feels like school-boy, flushed - realizes  
futility of arguing with her.

"Grace, honestly... I don't -"

"A't's all - ~~no use~~ It's done already - no  
use talkin -"

"You've really been very nice to me - I wish there was some way I could repay you -"

She blushed. "Oh, Landschaft, you're the one who's been nice. All those party things you brought me. Besides, it's my payment you're coming around - you're always so pleasant & full of fun -"

He's staring at her studiously. She feels unwell. He says quietly. "Grace, how would you like to come out to my home?" She is stunned. Embarrassed like a school girl asked out on a first date. She leaps up, looks into living room, to see if Margie is around, then whispers jubilantly. "I'd like it fine, Howard -" For a moment, she simply stands over him, her face beamed in joy. Suddenly a frown emerges & settles in a little cloud and settles on her face.

"What's the matter, Grace?"

"Nothing - 'cept... Willie..."

"Well, you don't have to tell him, do you?" She thinks for a moment.

"When do you want me to come out?"

"Tomorrow?"

"No. I'd rather not... I'll need more time to prepare things..." purses lips... "how about next Sunday..."

Nods. "That's fine with me."

She feels exhilarated, then somewhat bewildered - two reveries warble in her mind - the rainy night, the clutching hand feeling in the stomach; the reverie in the bedroom. Excited, & whispering

53  
conspiratorially, she tells him not <sup>VI</sup> (5) to meet her  
in front of house, Willie'd hear her & neighbors  
would talk; arrange to meet her in Fochler's  
Alley — about 10 o'clock to the woman!

He stands up, places both his arms on her  
shoulders & says: "I'm glad you'll come —"  
She bleats happily, "hee, hee, so'm I ..."  
"Just can't wait..."



VII -

VII (1)

Willie (comes) back from Pratt Street (6 miles), from selling cartons, ~~from~~  
 into (brings back large jar of aspirins, <sup>delighted with "find" - seen it in newspaper</sup> ~~delighted with "find" - seen it in newspaper~~ <sup>10¢</sup>  
 specs) <sup>puts money in cigar box</sup> goes into back yard to take leak, ~~sees~~ <sup>sees</sup> men's clothes,  
 tears down clothes pole, stamps on clothes, <sup>four barrels</sup> breaks into kitchen in  
 mad rage, accuses Grace of fakin' around with Howard. She tries  
 to quiet him down with "blood pressure" - then threatens to go  
 to her sister Eleanor (Willie's whore's next wife born of Jan Layington  
 stamps down into cellar to chop wood.



At 6 o'clock, Willie trudges into house. ~~Door~~ Door open, "Damn in, careless as hell..." Enters living room, Room looks out to sniff at him, sneezes at Sam's smell. Mumbles, "where in hell they all go to. - Sure am tired" He was up at 6<sup>00</sup>, packing last few bundles of cartons in backyard, <sup>by himself</sup> At ~~10~~ 10<sup>00</sup> o'clock big truck from Junk & Paper Company came around & he helped nigger load it. They finished loading at ~~11~~ 1<sup>30</sup>; he got in front with driver & blubbed all way out to Junk-yard. Got sense of power-importance sitting up front looking out at people. As they drove thru market, stopped at red-light, he looked around hopefully that neighbors would see him in his position of eminence. Near the Echo movies a couple of kids from across the street did see him & called out "Hey, look at <sup>the</sup> man Rubberfoot! Four blocks away from home! Guess he's lost!" Willie didn't hear them well, thought it was a feeling, feeling of two neighbors meeting ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> strange foreign country, he waved <sup>fully</sup> back at them. Nigger grinned white teeth flashing. Willie shouts to him above roar of motor although there is no roar - "They live east the street from me -"

Takes everything in as they rattle along - comments on stores, waterfront, cobb-streets, watermelon boats, Day neighborhoods; When he enters yard, junkman gazes in windows

Says: "Got a big load on this ~~truck~~ <sup>VII</sup> trip, Willie. <sup>(2) 55</sup>  
Betcha it's least \$8<sup>00</sup> ... " (guessing wt. is Standard for  
between turn)

"More'n that .."

Stands dully by scales as guy swiftly weighs  
it - hands him \$8.25

"Sure it ain't more?"

"Well, here, check it yourself" Looks blankly  
at weights - "I coulda sworn this was a bigger  
load than last time -"

"Well, it is - last time y' got \$4<sup>00</sup>, remember  
Willie, 'oh, yeh"

"Well, s'long, Willie, see you in a couple weeks?"

Mumbles "yeh" - Stacks crumpled bills in pants pocket

leaves yard, feels cheated. As he starts walking along  
street, feels rising sense of power, & money feels like hot  
golden nugget in pocket. He clamps hand on pocket,  
& gives dirty look to every passerby, especially negro.

Walk back takes about two hours He stops to look  
in windows to catch his breath occasionally Stops at all  
hardware stores - trace & bits, green & white paints, brushes,  
saw blades, plane -

When he gets to market, he goes to  
drug store, asks for big jar of aspirins which were  
advertised in paper. "What?" (white packet)  
nose, can't understand him. "Then!" He points to jar  
on shelf. "Forty <sup>that'll be</sup> -mils cents & a penny tax -" Then he

doesn't  
take  
travelling  
apart  
he'll  
get  
lost

uses for  
headaches  
from  
blood  
pressure -