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ПРИКАРПАТСЬКИЙ НАЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ
ІМЕНІ ВАСИЛЯ СТЕФАНИКА
КАФЕДРА АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ ФІЛОЛОГІЇ

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Since mature reading is always a creative process in which the reader, in a sense, is matching his mind, experience, taste, and sense values with the writer's, there can be no absolute standards for judging the short story or any other kind of literature. But to grow in understanding, to enjoy and appreciate literature, a person needs to form some valid judgments about his reading.

If the passion and the emotion are the artist's distillation of experience, we may sensibly begin, as readers, by trying to feel, not analyze. Then we move with our feelings toward intellect.

If the creation of a story is an act of intense narrative compression, the reading of the same is an act of intense narrative abstraction. Our first task is to see the story whole, piercing its data and its substance, seizing its feeling. We must transcend time, place, occupation, or other local factors and considerations unifying the story in order to receive the story fully: to see any structure whole we stand back before becoming involved with detail at the expense of the overall view.

First, we ought to pursue the print for a total effect. Then we can read for a gathering-in of the parts that make the whole, the building units that form the structure. We can talk in terms of plot, characters, style, and setting, but the end – and the beginning- is not in explication but in emotion.

PLOT.

In writing (especially a short story) an author usually brings together events which form a significant pattern of action with a beginning, a middle and an end – a plot. In many short stories this pattern involves one or more conflicts. Conflict may be of several types:

1) it may be based upon man's struggle against nature. For example, in Pearl Buck's story "The Enemy" the American sailor's efforts to survive against the sea and the rocks are an example of such a conflict.

2) it may pit man against man. In the same story we may observe the enmity of Sadao and the Japanese people towards the sailor, who to them all represents all Americans.

3) it may portray an interior struggle like Sadao's interior struggle in the same story as his sense of patriotic duty fights his training as a doctor.

As a rule, the more complex and rewarding plots are built around mental, emotional, and moral conflicts: they are tangled, relationships between people, moral dilemmas. As in the abovementioned story Sadao's

moral dilemma in which his feeling of duty to his country wars against his professional feeling about a human being who needs medical care.

However, plots involving physical conflict – war, exploration, escapes –often contain more excitement and suspense. In developing a conflict, the writer may use a time arrangement, telling about the events in the order in which they occurred. Or, he may bring in events which occurred earlier but are pertinent to the story, he may use the flashback technique. Thus, in "The Enemy" by having Sadao`s memory flash back to his past, Pearl Buck brings out both the extreme Japanese nationalism and his American education before she initiates her detailed account of the conflict, central to the story.

The author may also omit certain details, relying on information, previously given, to bridge the gap. For example, when Sadao is called to minister to the ailing General, the General`s first speech reads: "Of course... I understand fully. But that is because I once took a degree in Princeton. So few Japanese have.". The reader himself, realizing that Sadao has explained his dilemma to the General, supplies what has gone before.

Sometimes the plot of a story involves a reversal. During the first part, or rising action, one force is winning. Then there is a turning point – a climax- when the opposite force gains the ascendancy. After the reversal comes the last division of the plot – the falling action or denouement (literally, the untying of the plot) which shows the victorious force triumphant. Upon finishing the story, the reader may look back and see that at the point of climax he can tell whether the main character will succeed or fail in his struggle with the opposite force. This climax in the action, which is called the technical climax, must not be confused with the dramatic climax – the point of greatest excitement to the reader- although in some stories the technical and the dramatic climaxes coincide.

When the writer arranges his sequence of events in an effective order linked together in a chain of natural cause and effect consistent with the characters, and leading to a climax and a denouement that seem inevitable, we say that the plot has artistic unity – that it is a good plot.

OUTPLOT ELEMENTS.

Character.

One great merit of literature is that it acquaints us intimately with people of many kinds, from all countries and all ages. It also improves our understanding even of people like those we know well. For while in the

actual world we can only guess at our friends` or enemies` thoughts and feelings or speculate about their motives. From the storyteller, the dramatist, or the poet we can learn exactly what goes on in their minds and hearts. To learn why fictional beings act as they do, it is valuable to notice: 1) how the author acquaints us with his characters; 2) what their traits are; and 3) what their functions are in a story, play or poem.

1) The author may acquaint us with characters in several ways. He may straightforwardly inform us about a character`s habitual way of behaving. The writer may so describe a character as to imply what sort of individual he or she is. Or an author may acquaint us with a character by showing us his dwelling. He may characterize by quoting typical speeches, by showing us how other characters react to a personality, by acquainting us with what goes on in the character`s mind, and by showing the character in action.

If a character is of some importance, the author will probably use several of these methods.

2) Characters depending on their importance may have few or many traits. A miner character may display only one trait, for example, a hot temper. In developing more important characters the author will probably include many traits, and the reader needs to see both what these traits are and how they are interrelated.

To understand "The Enemy", for instance, you must know that Sadao is a patriotic Japanese and an affectionate family man; that he is a surgeon dedicated to saving life and a Japanese citizen impelled to turn an enemy over to the proper authorities; and that therefore he is drawn in two opposite directions.

3) The qualities which an author gives his characters may serve various functions. They may simply make people more "lifelike" than they would be without such qualities. They may make them more attractive or more unattractive to the reader. It`s important because the reader`s attitude toward fictional figures "involves" him in his reading. Certain traits may motivate an incident which is part of action; for example, the cowardice of Sadao`s servants in "The Enemy" causes them to abandon their master and mistress. Or certain traits of the main character may cause the whole plot in a narrative to take the form it does.

Setting.

Setting is the representation of place and time in an imaginative work. Since it helps us picture scenes and actions vividly, the setting can do much to make characters and actions real to us. And in handling setting,

a skilled author can do more than describe the physical background of a poem, drama or short story. For setting can help shape the events that take place, aid the reader to understand the mood of a character or the twist of a plot, establish an emotional effect, and at times serve to underline the meaning of a story. Such uses of settings are called functional. For example: the plot of "The Enemy" gains plausibility through the setting of the story. Because on the particular evening on which the American appears from the sea there is a mist, because there is an island close to the shore, and because Sadao`s home is isolated from the fishing villages, the reader finds it possible to believe that a wounded man could be washed ashore unseen by anyone but Sadao and his wife, and could be helped to escape. The details of setting may be fused with the theme and become an integral part of the whole.

Theme.

Sometimes years after we have read a story, a novel, a poem or a play, it again flashes into mind. With most of the details erased by time, a strong general impression still remains. In recalling "The Enemy", for example, we may find that we have forgotten the names of the characters and the intricacies of the plot, but we remember that in this story an individual shows that the healing code of a doctor is more important than national prejudice. What we are recalling is the theme, the basic idea that underlies a piece of imaginative literature and gives it a meaning larger than the work itself.

Some imaginative works written purely to entertain, to suggest a single impression, or to create a mood or an emotion may be said not to have a theme. But many literary works have a purpose deeper than the mere telling – a theme, a concept which is developed memorably. Neither poet nor prose writer ever regards the expression of a theme as his total purpose in writing. In fact, as far as poetry is concerned, probably only a very poor poet would start with a theme and try to weave a poem around it. A poem or a story develops from a startling impact, from an unexpected glimpse of beauty, from any aspect of living that awakens the imagination and arouses the emotions and then grows with the theme as its core. The reader, shocked into awareness by the writer`s emotion, perceives the general idea behind the specific details, and so grasps the theme. How does the theme develop in a story or a play? In some cases the author has a comment on life to make. He feels his comment to be significant and true. To communicate it to the reader, he creates in his imagination a segment of

life so appealing to our senses, our emotions, and our imaginations that we too may feel its significance and truth. But not all themes develop in this way. Sometimes an author creates a character that seems to grow just as a living person does, and from the personality of this imaginative character the theme develops. Occasionally a setting may suggest a theme. The theme of the story or play may be thought as its skeleton; the setting, characters and action as its living flesh and blood. Sometimes the reader confuses plot with theme, forgetting that plot has relation only to a particular story while theme, is the basic idea to be abstracted from the fusion of plot, characters and setting. In many stories the theme is relatively easy to find. But sometimes, as in William Saroyan's "The Oyster and the Pearl", the reader is left wondering just what meaning the author is trying to bring out.

Tone.

A skilled craftsman blends plot, setting, character and language in a literary work to form a unified whole. But because the writer, like all other individuals, is a personality with his own likes and dislikes, the stamp of his emotional reactions will affect all these elements. This attitude of an author as evident in his work is called tone.

The author's attitude toward characters, actions, settings and feelings may be revealed explicitly or implicitly. It is explicit when he states it directly to the reader, implicit when he conveys his attitude indirectly. Many modern writers of narrative use implicit rather than explicit methods to suggest emotional reactions. In this case the connotative words convey the tone. In many cases the writer of lyric poetry explicitly states his attitude. The "I" he creates may be an idealized version of the person he actually is or may differ in various ways, but the tone of the poem will reflect to some extent his own emotional reaction. And even though Conrad Aiken in "One Star Fell and Another" attributes the idea to an unidentified "he" the reader senses that the reaction expressed is that of the poet himself.

To grasp the full meaning of a work of literature, the reader must learn to sense its tone. It may be comic, tragic, witty, satirical, sentimental, disillusioned, disinterested, idealistic, or a combination of several of these.

It is not difficult to grasp that an author's tone is tragic, comic, or idealistic, but an ironic tone is by its very nature more difficult to detect. The word irony comes from the Greek eiron – a type character in ancient comedy. This character was a wise person who assumed the guise of a

simpleton. By extension, irony has come to refer to writing in which a wise author plays at being stupid. He says one thing while actually meaning another. The clues to what he really means are to be found in the way he uses language, portrays characters, describes events or expresses attitudes. His intent may be to shock or to amuse, to hide a grim comment on life under a light tone, or through banter to provoke a reform; but an approach is indirect. Sinclair Lewis brilliantly sustains an ironic tone throughout "The Hack Diver".

Narrative point of view.

The point of view from which a story is told determines the extent to which a reader is allowed to peer into the minds of the characters. Since the artistic unity of a piece of fiction may depend to a great degree on this aspect of telling a story. That`s why deciding what point of view to use is one of the first and most important considerations a writer must face.

The three following points of view, with variations, are the choices open to the writer:

1. The personal point of view of a participant. When a story is unfolded in the first person by one of the characters involved, the point of view is personal. The narrator may be merely a bystander, or like a young soldier in Hemingway`s "In Another Country", he may be an important character.

2. The objective point of view. When an author tells us what his characters do and say but not what they think, his narration of events is called objective.

3. The omniscient point of view. When an author, writing in the third person, tells us what goes on in the minds of his characters, his point of view is omniscient (knowing all); if he enters the mind of only one character, his point of view is partially omniscient.

One of the outstanding characteristics of modern literature is the indirect way stories are told. To a greater extent than their predecessors, modern writers suggest or imply more than they tell. Earlier writers like W. Irving and N. Hawthorne told directly how their characters felt. They frequently interrupted their narratives to comment on the significance of events. But a modern writer, like Irwin Show is more apt to show how a character feels and to let events speak for themselves. This technique makes a great demand on the reader to grasp an author`s implications.

In brief and tightly written stories a reader must be able to infer character traits, conflicts and theme from sparse details.

DISCUSSION GUIDES.

A. To evaluate the artistry of a work of literature:

1. Consider first of all the plot.
   a) Does it have a well-defined beginning, middle and end or is it closer to the sketch-from-life genre? Explain.
   b) To what extent does the plot depend upon coincidence?
   c) Does the story have a surprise ending?
   d) To what degree is the plot treatment typical of the 20th century innovations?
2. Conflict may be physical, moral, or emotional.
   a) What is the nature of the conflict in the story?
   b) Does it grow naturally out of the characters or situations the story presents?
3. Identify the central character in the story and describe his traits.
   a) Do you wish you knew more about his thoughts and feelings or more about his actions, speeches, appearance?
   b) How much must you infer about the character? How much are you told directly?
   c) Would you say the narrative point of view unifies and lends proper emphasis to the characterization. Why?
4. Setting may be functional or mat merely set the scene.
   a) Determine whether the setting is or is not functional?
   b) To what extent does the author use descriptive details to develop the setting?
   c) Are these details realistic or romantic? Are they symbolic?
   d) What century is the story laid in?
   e) What is the season (interior)? Why is the season (interior) appropriate to the story?
   f) Relate to the setting the message from the main character's mood.
5. Does the story have a theme? Explain:
   a) To what extent does this story make you think?
   b) Does it increase your understanding of individuals, of social problems, of some facet of living? What is the theme of the story?
6. The tone of a story is often related to its theme.

a) Would you identify the tone of the story as comic, tragic, witty, satirical, sentimental, disillusioned, idealistic, or a combination of several of these?
How is tone related to theme in the story?

7. On the basis of the points you have just examined, would you evaluate this story as artistically fair good or excellent?
8. Define the narrative point of view. Prove your opinion.

B. There are short stories and novels of horror or detection, of science or local color. Some of them are humorous, historical allegorical, psychological, naturalistic, or romantic. To which of these broad categories does this one belong? Explain.

C. To what extent does the story reflect the experimentation, attitudes, and interest in psychology typical of the 20th century literature?

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Pearl Buck

THE ENEMY

Dr. Sadao Hoki's house was built on a spot of the Japanese coast where as a little boy he had often played. The low square stone house was set upon rocks well above a narrow beach that was outlined with bent pines. As a boy Sadao had climbed the pines, supporting himself on his bare feet, as he had seen men do in the South Seas when they climbed for coconuts. His father had taken him often to the islands of those seas, and never had he failed to say to the little grave boy at his side, "Those islands yonder, they are the stepping stones to the future for Japan."

"Where shall we step from them?" Sadao had asked seriously.

"Who knows?" his father had answered. Who can limit our future? It depends on what we make it"

Sadao had taken this into his mind as he did everything his father said, his father who never joked or played with him but who spent infinite pains upon him who was his only son. Sadao knew that his education was his father's chief concern. For this reason he had been sent at twenty-two to America to learn all that could be learned of surgery and medicine. He had come back at thirty, and before his father died he had seen Sadao become famous not only as a surgeon but as a scientist. Because he was now perfecting a discovery which would render wounds entirely clean, he had not been sent abroad with the troops. Also, he knew, there was some slight

danger that the old General might need an operation for a condition for which he was now being treated medically, and for this possibility Sadao was being kept in Japan.

Clouds were rising from the ocean now. The unexpected warmth of the past few days had at night drawn heavy fog from the cold waves. Sadao watched mists hide outlines of a little island near the shore and then come creeping up the beach below the house, wreathing around the pines. In a few minutes fog would be wrapped about the house too. Then he would go into the room where Hana, his wife, would be waiting for him with the two children.

But at this moment the door opened and she looked out, a dark-blue woolen haori over her kimono. She came to him affectionately and put her arm through his as he stood, smiled, and said nothing. He had met Hana in America, but he had waited to fall in love with her until he was sure she was Japanese. His father would never have received her unless she had been pure in her race. He wondered often whom he would have married if he had not met Hana, and by what luck he had found her in the most casual way, by chance literally, at an American professor's house. The professor and his wife had been kind people anxious to do something for their few foreign students, and the students, though bored, had accepted this kindness. Sadao had often told Hana how nearly he had not gone to Professor Harley's house that night — the rooms were so small, the food so bad, the professor's wife so voluble. But he had gone and there he had found Hana, a new student, and had felt he would love her if it were at all possible.

Now he felt her hand on his arm and was aware of the pleasure it gave him, even though they had been married years enough to have the two children. For they had not married heedlessly in America. They had finished their work at school and had come home to Japan, and when his father had seen her the marriage had been arranged in the old Japanese way, although Sadao and Hana had talked everything over beforehand. They were perfectly happy. She laid her cheek against his arm.

It was at this moment that both of them saw something black come out of the mists. It was a man. He was flung up out of the ocean – flung, it seemed, to his feet by a breaker. He staggered a few steps, his body outlined against the mist, his arms above his head. Then the curled mists hid him again.

"Who is that?" Hana cried. She dropped Sadao's arm and they both leaned over the railing of the veranda. Now they saw him again. The man

was on his hands and was crawling. Then they saw him fall on face and lie there.

"A fisherman perhaps," Sadao said "washed from his boat." He ran quickly down the steps and behind him Hana came, her wide sleeves flying. A mile or two away on either side there were fishing villages, but here was only the bare and lonely coast, dangerous with rocks. The surf beyond the beach was spiked with rocks. Somehow the man had managed to come through them – he must be badly torn.

They saw when they came toward him that indeed it was so. The sand on one side of him had already a stain of red soaking through.

"He is wounded," Sadao exclaimed. He made haste to the man, who lay motionless, his face in the sand. An old cap stuck to his head soaked with sea water. He was in wet rags of garments. Sadao stooped, Hana at his side, and turned the man's head. They saw the face.

"A white man!" Hana whispered.

Yes, it was a white man. The wet cap fell away, and there was his wet yellow hair, long, as though for many weeks it has not been cut, and upon his young and tortured face was a rough yellow beard. He was unconscious and knew nothing that they did to him.

Now Sadao remembered the wounded, and with his expert fingers he began to search for it. Blood flowed freshly at his touch. On the right side of his lower back Sadao saw that a gun wound had been reopened. The flesh was blackened with powder. Some time, not many days ago, the man had been shot and had not been tended. It was bad chance that the rock had struck the wound.

"Oh, how he is bleeding!" Hanna whispered again in a solemn voice. The mists screened them now completely, and at this time of day no one came by. The fisherman had gone home and even the chance beachcombers would have considered the day at an end.

"What shall we do with this man?" Sadao muttered. But his trained hands seemed of their own will to be doing what they could to stanch the fearful bleeding. He packed the wound with the sea moss that strewed the beach. The man moaned with pain in his stupor but he did not awaken.

"The best thing that we could do would be to put him back in the sea," Sadao said, answering himself.

Now that the bleeding was stopped for the moment, he stood up and dusted the sand from his hands.

"Yes, undoubtedly that would be best," Hana said steadily. But she continued to stare down at the motionless man.

"If we sheltered a white man in our house we should be arrested and if we turned him over as a prisoner, he would certainly die," Sadao said.

"The kindest thing would be to put him: back into the sea," Hana said. But neither of them moved. They were staring with a curious repulsion upon the inert figure.

"What is he?" Hana whispered.

"There is something about him that looks American," Sadao said. He took up the batted cap. Yes, there, almost gone, was the faint lettering. "A sailor," he said, "from an American warship." He spelled it out: "U. S. Navy". The man was a prisoner of war!

"He had escaped," Hana cried softly, "and that is why he is wounded."

"In the back," Sadao agreed.

They hesitated, looking at each other. Then Hana said with resolution:

"Come, are we able to put him back into the sea?"

"If I am able, are you?" Sadao asked.

"No," Hana said. "But if you can do it alone..."

Sadao hesitated again. "The strange thing is," he said "that if the man were whole I could turn him over to the police without difficulty. I care nothing for him. He is my enemy. All Americans are my enemy. And he is only a common fellow. You see how foolish his face is. But since he is wounded..."

"You also cannot throw him back to the sea," Hana said. "Then there is only one thing to do. We must carry him into the house."

"But the servants?" Sadao inquired.

"We must simply tell them that we intend to give him to the police -- as indeed we must, Sadao. We must think of the children and your position. It would endanger all of us if we did not give this man over as a prisoner of war."

"Certainly," Sadao agreed. "I would not think of doing anything else."

Thus agreed, together they lifted the man. He was very light, like a fowl that has been half starved for a long time until it is only feathers and skeleton. So, his arms hanging, they carried him up the steps and into the side door of the house. This door opened into a passage and down the passage they carried the man toward an empty bedroom. It had been the bedroom of Sadao's father and since his death it had not been used. They laid the man on the deeply matted floor. Everything here had been Japanese to please the old man, who would never in his own home sit on a

chair or sleep in a foreign bed. Hana went to the wall cupboards and slid back a door and took out a soft quilt. She hesitated. The quilt was covered with flowered silk and the lining was pure white silk.

"He is so dirty," she murmured in distress.

"Yes, he had better be washed," Sadao agreed. "If you will fetch hot water I will wash him."

"I cannot bear for you to touch him," she said. "We shall have to tell the servants he is here. I will tell Yumi now. She can leave the children for a few minutes and she can wash him."

Sadao considered a moment. "Let it be so," he agreed. "You tell Yumi and I will tell the others."

But the utter pallor of the man's unconscious face moved him first to stoop and feel his pulse. It was faint but it was there. He put his hand against the man's cold breast. The heart too was yet alive.

"He will die unless he is operated on," Sadao said, considering. "The question is whether he will not die anyway."

Hana cried out in fear. "Don't try to save him! What if he should live?"

"What if he should die?" Sadao replied. He stood gazing down on the motionless man. This man must have extraordinary vitality or he would have been dead by now. But then he was very young – perhaps not yet twenty-five.

"You mean die from the operation?" Hana asked.

"Yes," Sadao said!

Hana considered this doubtfully, and when she did not answer Sadao turned away. "At any rate something must be done with him," he said, "and first he must be washed." He went quickly out of the room and Hana came behind him. She did not wish to be left alone with the white man. He was the first she had seen since she left America and now he seemed to have nothing to do with those whom she had known there. Here he was her enemy, a menace, living or dead.

She turned to the nursery and called, "Yumi!"

But the children heard her voice, and she had to go in for a moment and smile at them and play with the baby boy, now nearly three months old.

Over the baby's soft black hair she motioned with her mouth, "Yumi – come with me!"

"I will put the baby to bed," Yumi replied. "He is ready."

She went with Yumi into the bedroom next to the nursery and stood with the boy in her arms while Yumi spread the sleeping quilts on the floor and laid the baby between them.

Then Hana led the way quickly and softly to the kitchen. The two servants were frightened at what their master had just told them. The old gardener, who was also a house servant, pulled the few hairs on the upper lip.

"The master ought not to heal the wound of this white man," he said bluntly to Hana. "The white man ought to die. First he was shot. Then the sea caught him and wounded him with her rocks. If the master heals what the gun did and what the sea did, they will take revenge on us."

"I will tell him what you say," Hana replied courteously. But she herself was also frightened, although she was not superstitious as the old man was. Could it ever be well to help an enemy? Nevertheless she told Yumi to fetch the hot water and bring it to the room where the white man was.

She went ahead and slid back the partitions. Sadao was not yet there. Yumi, following, down her wooden bucket. Then she went over to the white man. When she saw him her thick lips folded themselves into stubbornness. "I have never washed a white man," she said, "and I will not wash so dirty a one now."

Hana cried at her severely, "You will do what your master commands you!"

"My master ought not to command me to wash the enemy," Yumi said stubbornly.

There was so fierce a look of resistance upon Yumi's round dull face that Hana felt unreasonably afraid. After all, if the servants should report something that was not as it happened?

"Very well," she said with dignity. "You understand we only want to bring him to his senses so that we can turn him over as a prisoner?"

"I will have nothing to do with it," Yumi said."I am a poor person and it is not my business."

"Then please," Hana said gently, "return to your own work."

At once Yumi left the room. But this left Hana with the white man alone. She might have been too afraid to stay had not her anger at Yumi's stubbornness now sustained her.

"Stupid Yumi," she muttered fiercely. "Is this anything but a man? And a wounded helpless man!"

In the conviction of her own superiority she bent impulsively and untied the knotted rags that kept the white man covered. When she had his

breast bare she dipped the small clean towel that Yumi had brought into the steaming hot water and washed his face carefully. The man's skin, though rough, with exposure, was of a fine texture and must have been very blond when he was a child.

While she was thinking these thoughts, though not really liking the man better now that he was no longer a child, she kept on washing until his upper body was quite clean. But she dared not turn him over. Where was Sadao? Now her anger was ebbing and she was anxious again and she rose, wiping her hands on the wrung towel. Then lest the man be chilled, she put the quilt over him.

"Sadao!" she called softly.

He had been about to come in when she called. His hand had been on the door and now he opened it. She saw that he had brought his surgeons emergency bag and that he wore his surgeon's coat.

"You decided to operate!" she cried.

"Yes," he said shortly. He turned his back to her and unfolded a sterilized towel upon the floor of the tokonoma alcove, and put his instruments out upon it.

"Fetch towels," he said.

She went obediently, but how anxious now to the shelves and took out the towels. There ought also to be old pieces of matting so that the blood would not ruin the fine floor covering. She went out to the back veranda where the gardener kept strips of matting with which to protect delicate shrubs on cold nights and took a handful of them.

But she went back to the room, she saw this was useless. The blood had already soaked through the packing in the man's wound and had ruined the mat under him.

"Oh, the mat!" she cried. "Yes, it is ruined," Sadao replied, as though he did not care. "Help me to turn him," he commanded her.

She obeyed him without a word, and he began to wash the man's back carefully. "Yumi would not wash him," she said. "Did you wash him then?" Sadao asked, not stopping for a moment his swift concise movements.

"Yes," she said.

He did not seem to hear her. But she was used to his absorption when he was at work. She wondered for a moment if it mattered to him what was the body upon which he worked so long as it was for the work he did so excellently.

"You will have to give the anesthetic if he needs it," he said.

"I?" she repeated blankly. "But never have I!"

"It is easy enough," he said impatiently. He was taking out the packing now and the blood began to flow more quickly. He peered into the wound with the bright surgeon's light fastened on his forehead. "The bullet is still there," he said with cool interest. "Now I wonder how deep this rock wound is. If it is not too deep it may be that I can get the bullet. But the bleeding is not superficial. He has lost much blood."

At this moment Hana choked. He looked up and saw her face the color of sulphur.

"Don't faint," he said sharply. He did not put down his exploring instrument. "If I slop now, the man will surely die." She clapped her hands to her mouth and leaped up and ran out of the room. Outside in the garden he heard her retching. But he went on his work.

"It will be better for her to empty her stomach," he thought. He had forgotten that of course she had never seen an operation. But her distress and his inability to go to her at once made him impatient and irritable with this man who lay like dead under his knife.

"This man," he thought, "there is no reason under heaven why he should live."

Unconsciously this thought made him ruthless and he proceeded swiftly. In his dream the man moaned, but Sadao paid no heed except to mutter at him.

"Groan," he muttered, "groan if you like. I am not doing this for my own pleasure. In fact, I do not know why I am doing it."

The door opened and there was Hana again. She had not stopped even to smooth back her hair.

"Where is the anesthetic?" she asked in a clear voice.

Sadao motioned with his chin. "It is as well that you came back," he said. "This fellow is beginning to stir."

She had the bottle and some cotton in her hand.

"But how shall I do it?" she asked.

"Simply saturate the cotton and hold it near his nostrils," Sadao replied without delaying for one moment the intricate detail of his work. "When he breathes badly move it away a little"

She crouched close to the sleeping face of the young American. It was a piteously thin face, she thought, and the lips were twisted. The man was suffering whether he knew it or not. Watching him, she wondered if the stories they heard sometimes of the sufferings of prisoners were true. They came like flickers of rumor, told by word of mouth and always contradicted. In the newspapers the reports were always that wherever the Japanese armies went the people received them gladly, with cries of joy at

their liberation. But sometimes she remembered such men as General Takima, who at home beat his wife cruelly, though no one mentioned it now that he had fought so victorious a battle in Manchuria. If a man like that could be so cruel to a woman in his power, would he not be cruel to one like this, for instance?

She hoped anxiously that this young man had not been tortured. It was at this moment that she observed deep red scars on his neck, just under the ear. 'Those scars", she murmured, lifting her eyes to Sadao.

But he did not answer. At this moment he felt the tip of his instrument strike against something hard, dangerously near the kidney. All thought left him. He felt only the purest pleasure. He probed with his fingers, delicately, familiar with every atom of this human body. His old American professor of anatomy had seen to that knowledge. "Ignorance of the human body is the surgeon's cardinal sin, sirs!" he thundered at his classes year after year. "When operate without as complete knowledge of the body as if you had made it – anything less than that is murder."

"It is not quite at the kidney, my friend," Sadao murmured. It was his habit to murmur to the patient when he forgot himself in an operation. "My friend," he always called his patients and so now he did, forgetting that this was his enemy.

Then quickly, with the cleanest and most precise of incisions, the bullet was out. The man quivered, but he was still unconscious. Nevertheless he muttered a few English words.

"Guts," he muttered, choking. "They got ... my guts ..."

"Sadao!" Hana cried sharply.

"Hush," Sadao said.

The man sank again into silence so profound that Sadao took up his wrist, hating the touch of it. Yes, there was still a pulse so faint, so feeble, but enough, if he wanted the man to live, to give hope.

"But certainly I do not want this man to live," he thought.

"No more anesthetic," he told Hana.

He turned as swiftly as though he had never paused and from his medicines he chose a small vial and from it filled a hypodermic and thrust it into the patient's left arm. Then, putting down the needle, he took the man's wrist again. The pulse under his fingers fluttered once or twice and then grew stronger.

"'This man will live in spite of all," he said to Hana and sighed.

The young man woke, so weak, his blue eyes so terrified when he perceived where he was, that Hana felt compelled to apology. She served

him herself, for none of the servants would enter the room. When she came in the first time she saw him summon his small strength to be prepared for some fearful thing. "Don't be afraid", she begged him softly. "How come...you speak English..." he gasped.

"I was a long time in America," she replied.

She saw that he wanted to reply to that, but he could not, and so she knelt and fed him gently from the porcelain spoon. He ate unwillingly, but still he ate.

"Now you will soon be strong," she said, not liking him and yet moved to comfort him.

He did not answer.

When Sadao came in the third day after the operation, he found the young man sitting, his face bloodless with the effort. "Lie down," Sadao cried. "Do you want to die?"

He forced the man down gently and strongly and examined the wound. "You may kill yourself if you do this sort of thing"

"What are you going to do with me?" the boy muttured. He looked just now barely seventeen. "Are you going to hand me over?"

For a moment Sadao did not answer. He finished his examination and then pulled the silk guilt over the man.

"I do not know myself what I shall do with you," he said. "I ought of course to give you to the police. You are a prisoner of war – no, do not tell me anything." He put up his hand as he saw the young man about to speak. "Do not even tell me your name unless I ask it."

They looked at each other for a moment, and then the young man closed his eyes and turned his face to the wall.

"Okay," he whispered, his mouth a bitter line.

Outside the door Hana was waiting for Sadao. He saw at once that she was in trouble.

"Sadao, Yumi tells me the servants feel they cannot stay if we hide this man here any more," she said. "She tells me that they are saying that you and I were so long in America that we have forgotten to think of our own country first. They think we like Americans."

"It is not true," Sadao said harshly, "Americans are our enemies. But I have been trained not to let a man die if I can help it."

"The servants cannot understand that," she said anxiously. "No," he agreed.

Neither seemed able to say more, and somehow the household dragged on. The servants grew daily more watchful. Their courtesy was as

careful as ever, but their eyes were cold upon the pair to whom they were hired.

"It is clear what our master ought to do," the old gardener said one morning. He had worked with flowers all his life, and had been a specialist too in moss. For Sadao's father he had made one of the finest moss gardens in Japan, sweeping the bright green carpet constantly so that not a leaf or a pine needle marred the velvet of its surface. "My old master's son knows very well what he ought to do," he now said pinching a bud from a bush as he spoke. "When the man was so near death, why did he not let him bleed?"

"That young master is so proud of his skill to save life that he saves any life," the cook said contemptuously. She split a fowl's neck skillfully and held the fluttering bird and let its blood flow into the roots of a wistaria vine. Blood is the best of fertilizers, and the old gardener would not let her waste a drop of it.

"It is the children of whom we must think," Yumi said sadly. "What will be their fate if their father is condemned as a traitor?"

They did not try to hide what they said from the ears of Hana as she stood arranging the day's flowers in the veranda nearby, and she knew they spoke on purpose that she might hear. That they were right she knew too in most of her being. But there was another part of her which she herself could not understand. It was not sentimental liking of the prisoner. She had come to think of him as a prisoner. She had not liked him even yesterday when he had said in his impulsive way, "Anyway, let me tell you that my name is Tom." She had only bowed her little distant bow. She saw hurt in his eyes but she did not wish to assuage it. Indeed, he was a great trouble in this house.

As for Sadao, every day he examined the wound carefully. The last stitches had been pulled out this morning, and the young man would in a fortnight be nearly as well as ever. Sadao went back to his office and carefully typed a letter to the chief of police reporting the whole matter. "On the twenty-first day of February an escaped prisoner was washed up on the shore in front of my house." So far he typed and then he opened a secret drawer of his desk and put the unfinished report into it.

On the seventh day after that two things happened. In the morning the servants left together, their belongings tied in large square cotton kerchiefs. When Hana got up in the morning nothing was done, the house not cleaned and the food not prepared, and she knew what it meant. She was dismayed and even terrified, but her pride as a mistress would not allow her to show it. Instead, she inclined her head gracefully when they

appeared before her in the kitchen, and she paid them off and thanked them for all that they had done for her. They were crying, but she did not cry. The cook and the gardener had served Sadao since he was a little boy in his father house, and Yumi cried because of the children. She was so grieving that after she had gone she ran back to Hana.

"If the baby misses me too much tonight, send for me. I am going to my own house and you know where it is."

"Thank you," Hana said smiling. But she told herself she would not send for Yumi however the baby cried.

She made the breakfast and Sadao helped with the children. Neither of them spoke of the servants beyond the fact that they were gone. But after Hana had taken morning food to the prisoner she came back to Sadao.

"Why is it we cannot see clearly what we ought to do?" she asked him. "Even the servants see more clearly than we do. Why are we different from other Japanese?"

Sadao did not answer. But a little later he went into the room where the prisoner was and said brusquely, "Today you may get up on your feet. I want you to stay up only five minutes at a time. Tomorrow you may try it twice as long. It would be well that you get back your strength as quickly as possible."

He saw the flicker of terror on the young face that was still very pale.

"Okay," the boy murmured. Evidently he was determined to say more. "I feel I ought to thank you, doctor, for having saved my life."

"Don't thank me too early," Sadao said coldly. He saw the flicker of terror again in the boy's eyes – terror as unmistakable as an animal's. The scars on his neck were crimson for a moment. Those scars! What were they? Sadao did not ask.

In the afternoon the second thing happened. Hana, working hard on unaccustomed labor, saw a messenger come to the door in official uniform. Her hands went weak and she could not draw her breath. The servants must have told already. She ran to Sadao, gasping, unable to utter a word. But by then the messenger had simply followed her through the garden and there he stood. She pointed at him helplessly.

Sadao looked up from his book. He was in his office, the outer partition of which was thrown open to the garden for the southern sunshine.

"What is it?" he asked the messenger, and then he rose seeing the man's uniform.

"You are to come to the palace," the man said, "the old General is in pain again."

"Oh," Hana breathed, "is that all?"

"All?" the messenger exclaimed. "Is it not enough?"

"Indeed it is," she replied. "I am very sorry."

When Sadao came to say good-by, she was in the kitchen, but doing nothing. The children were asleep and she sat merely resting for a moment, more exhausted from her fright than from work.

"I thought they had come to arrest you," she said.

He gazed down into her anxious eyes. "I must get rid of this man for your sake," he said in distress. "Somehow I must get rid of him."

"Of course," the General said weakly, "I understand fully. But that is because I once took a degree in Princeton. So few Japanese have."

"I care nothing for the man, Excellency," Sadao said, "but having operated on him with such success ..."

"Yes, yes" the General said. "It only makes me feel you more indispensable to me. Evidently you can save anyone – you are so skilled. You can think I can stand one more such attack as I have had today?"

"Not more than one," Sadao said.

"Then certainly I can allow nothing to happen to you," the General said with anxiety. His long pale Japanese face became expressionless, which meant that he was in deep thought. "You cannot be arrested," the General said, closing his eyes. "Suppose you were condemned to death and the next day I had to have my operation?"

"There are other surgeons, Excellency," Sadao suggested.

"None I trust," the General replied. "The best ones have been trained by Germans and would consider the operation successful even if I died. I do not care for their point of view." He sighed. "It seems a pity that we cannot better combine the German ruthlessness with the American sentimentality. Then you could turn your prisoner over to execution and yet I could be sure you would not murder me while I was unconscious." The General laughed. He had an unusual sense of humor. "As a Japanese, could you not combine these two foreign elements?" he asked.

Sadao smiled. "I am not quite sure," he said, "but for your sake I would be willing to try, Excellency."

The General shook his head. "I had rather not be the test case," he said. He felt suddenly weak and overwhelmed with the cares of his life as an official in times such as these when repeated victory brought great responsibilities all over the south Pacific. "It is very unfortunate that this man should have washed up on your doorstep," he said irritably.

"I feel it so myself," Sadao said gently.

"It would be best if he could be quietly killed," the General said. "Not by you, but by someone who does not know him. I have my own private assassins. Suppose I send two of them to your house tonight – or better, any night. You need know nothing about it. It is now warm – what would be more natural than that you should leave the outer partition of the white man's room open to the garden while he sleeps?"

"Certainly it would be very natural," Sadao agreed. "In fact, it is so left open every night."

"Good," the General said yawning. "They are very capable assassins – they make no noise and they know the trick of inward bleeding. If you like I can even have them remove die body."

Sadao considered. "That perhaps would be best, Excellency," he agreed, thinking of Hana.

He left the General's presence then and went home, thinking over the plan. In this way the whole thing would be taken out of his hands. He would tell Hana nothing, since she would be timid at the idea of assassins in the house, and yet certainly such persons were essential in an absolute state such as Japan was. How else could rulers deal with those who opposed them?

He refused to allow anything but reason to be the atmosphere of his mind as he went into the room where the American was in bed. But as he opened the door, to his surprise he found the young man out of bed, and preparing to go into the garden.

"What is this!" he exclaimed. "Who gave you permission to leave your room?"

"I'm not used to waiting for permission," Tom said gaily. "Gosh, I feel pretty good again! But will the muscles on this side always feel stiff?"

"Is it so?" Sadao inquired surprised. He forgot all else. "Now I thought I had provided against that," he murmured. He lifted the edge of the man's shirt and gazed at the healing scar. "Massage may do it," he said, "if exercise does not."

"It won't bother me much," the young man said. His young face was gaunt under the stubby blond beard. "Say, doctor, I've got something I want to say to you. If I hadn't met a Jap like you – well, I wouldn't be alive today. I know that."

Sadao bowed but he could not speak.

"Sure, I know that," Tom went on warmly. His big thin hands gripping a chair were white at the knuckles. "I guess if all the Japs were like you there wouldn't have been a war."

"Perhaps," Sadao said with difficulty.

"And now I think you had better go back to bed."

He helped the boy back into bed and then bowed. "Good night," he said.

Sadao slept badly that night. Time and time again he woke, thinking he heard the rustling of footsteps, the sound of a twig broken or a stone displaced in the garden – a noise such as men might make who carried a burden.

The next morning he made the excuse to go first into the guest room. If the American were gone, he then could simply tell Hana that so the General had directed. But when he opened the door he saw at once that it was not last night. There on the pillow was the shaggy blond head. He could hear the peaceful breathing of sleep and he closed the door again quietly.

"He is asleep," he told Hana. "He is almost well to sleep like that."

"What shall we do with him?" Hana whispered her old refrain.

Sadao shook his head. "I must decide in a day or two," he promised.

But certainly, he thought, the second night must be the night. There rose a wind that night, and he listened to the sounds of bending boughs and whistling partitions.

Hana woke too. "Ought we not to go and close the sick man's partition?" she asked.

"No," Sadao said. "He is able now to do it for himself."

But the next morning the American was still there.

Then the third night of course must be the night. The wind changed to quiet rain, and the garden was full of the sound of dripping eaves and running springs. Sadao slept a little better, but he awoke at sound of a crash and leaped to his feet.

"What was that?" Hana cried. The baby woke at her voice and began to wail. "I must go and see."

But he held her and would not let her move.

"Sadao," she cried, "what is the matter with you?"

"Don't go," he muttered, "don't go!"

His terror infected her and she stood breathless, waiting. There was only silence. Together they crept back into the bed, the baby between them.

Yet, when he opened the door of the guest room in the morning, there was the young man. He was very gay and had already washed and was now on his feet. He had asked for a razor yesterday and had shaved himself, and today there was a faint color in his cheeks.

"I am well," he said joyously.

Sadao drew his kimono round his weary body. He could not, he decided suddenly, go through another night. It was not that he cared for this young man's life. No, simply it was not worth the strain.

"You are well," Sadao agreed. He lowered his voice. "You are so well that I think if I put my boat on the shore tonight, with food and extra clothing in it, you might be able to row to that little island not far from the coast. It is so near the coast that it has not been worth fortifying. Nobody lives on it because in storm it is submerged. But this is not the season of storm. You could live there until you saw a Korean fishing boat pass by. They pass quite near the island because the water is many fathoms deep there."

"Young man stared at him, slowly comprehending."Do I have to?" he asked.

Sadao did not see him again until evening. As soon as it was dark he had dragged the stout boat down to the shore and in it he put food and bottled water that he had bought secretly during the day, as well as two quilts he had bought at a pawnshop. The boat he tied to a post in the water, for the tide was high. There was no moon and he worked without a flashlight.

When he came to the house he entered as though he were just back from his work, and so Hana knew nothing. "Yumi was here today," she said as she served his supper. Though she was so modern, still she did not eat with him. "Yumi cried over the baby," she went on with a sigh. "She misses him so."

"The servants will come back as soon as the foreigner is gone," Sadao said.

He went into the guest room that night before he went to bed and himself checked carefully the Americans temperature, the state of the wound, and his heart and pulse. The pulse was irregular, but that was perhaps because of excitement. The young man's pale lips were pressed together and his eyes burned. Only the scars on his neck were red.

"I realize you are saving my life again," he told Sadao.

"Not at all," Sadao said. "It is only inconvenient to have you here any longer."

He had hesitated a good deal about giving the man a flashlight. But he had decided to give it to him after all. It was a small one, his own which he used at night when he was called.

"If your food runs out before you catch a boat," he said, "signal me two flashes at the same instant the sun drops over the horizon. Do not signal in darkness, for it will be seen. If you are all right but still there

signal me once. You will find fish easy to catch but you must eat them raw. A fire would be seen."

"Okay," the young man breathed.

He was dressed now in the Japanese clothes which Sadao had given him, and at the last moment Sadao wrapped a black cloth about his blond head.

"Now," Sadao said.

The young American without a word shook Sadao's hand warmly, and then walked quite well across the floor and down the step into the darkness of the garden. Once – twice – Sadao saw his light flash to find his way. But that would not be suspected. He waited until from the shore there was one more flash. Then he closed the partition. That night he slept.

"You say the man escaped?" the General asked faintly. He had been operated upon a week before, an emergency operation to which Sadao had been called in the night. For twelve hours Sadao had not been sure the General would live. The gall bladder was much involved. Then the old man had begun to breathe deeply again and to demand food. Sadao had not been able to ask about the assassins. So far as he knew they had never come. The servants had returned, and Yumi had cleaned the guest room thoroughly and had burned sulphur in it to get the white man's smell out of it. Nobody said anything only the gardener was cross because he had got behind with his chrysanthemums.

But after a week Sadao felt the General was well enough to be spoken to about the prisoner.

"Yes, Excellency, he escaped," Sadao now said. He coughed, signifying that he had not said all he might have said, but was unwilling to disturb the General farther. But the old man opened his eyes suddenly.

"That prisoner," he said with some energy, "did. I not promise you I would kill him for you?"

"You did, Excellency," Sadao said.

"Well, well!" the old man said in a tone of amazement, "so I did! But you see, I was suffering a good deal. The truth is, I thought of nothing but myself. In short, I forgot my promise to you."

"I wondered, Your Excellency," Sadao murmured.

"It was certainly very careless of me," the General said. "But you understand it was not lack of patriotism or dereliction of duty." He looked anxiously at his doctor. "If the matter should come out, you wound understand that, wouldn't you?"

"Certainly, Your Excellency", Sadao said. He suddenly comprehended that the General was in the palm of his hand and that as a

consequence he himself was perfectly safe. "I can swear to your loyalty, Excellency," he said to the old General, "and to your zeal against the enemy."

"You are a good man," the General murmured and closed his eyes. "You will be rewarded."

But Sadao, searching the spot of black in the twilighted sea that night, had his reward. There was no prick of light in the dusk. No one was on the island. His prisoner was gone – safe, doubtless, for he had warned him to wait only for a Korean fishing boat.

He stood for a moment on the veranda, gazing out to the sea from whence the young man had come that other night. And into his mind, although without reason, there came other white faces he had known – the professor at whose house he had met Hana, a dull men and his wife had been a silly talkative woman, in spite of her wish to be kind. He remembered his old teacher of anatomy, who had been insistent on mercy with the knife, and then he remembered the face of his fat and slatternly landlady. He had had great difficulty in finding a place to live in America because he was a Japanese. The Americans were full of prejudice, and it had been bitter to live in it, knowing himself their superior. How he had despised the ignorant and dirty old woman who had at last consented to house him in her miserable home! He had once tried to be grateful to her because she had in his last year nursed him through influenza, but it was difficult for she was no less repulsive to him in her kindness. But then, white people were repulsive, of course. It was a relief to be openly at war with them at last. Now he remembered the youthful, haggard face of his prisoner – white and repulsive.

"Strange," he thought, "I wonder why I could not kill him?"

The following questions will help you determine how well you understand the plot of "The Enemy" by Pearl Buck:

1. What is the importance to the plot of "The Enemy" of each of the following: a) Sadao's American training; b) his intense nationalism; c) the old General's illness?
2. Speaking of Japanese surgeons the General says: "The best ones have been trained by Germans and would consider the operation successful even if I died... It seems a pity that we cannot better combine the German ruthlessness with the American sentimentality. Then you could turn your prisoner over to execution and yet I could be sure you would not murder me while I was unconscious".

a) What light does this statement throw on Sadao`s attitude toward his American prisoner from the moment of finding him until his recovery?
b) How does it show that the General recognizes Sadao`s dilemma?
c) What solution to the dilemma does the General offer?

3. a) What is the technical climax of "The Enemy"?
b) What is the dramatic climax?
4. What conflict or conflicts is the story built upon?

Some questions which will help to understand the role of characters and characterization in the narration:

1. a) Which characters display a single trait each during the course of the story?
b) Why is each shown as having only a single trait?
c) Which characters have several or conflicting traits?
2. What means does the author use to characterize the main character? (citing instances of various methods from the text).
3. What justification is there for the author`s including the detailed description of the nature, the interior of the house.
4. What actions make the main character attractive\unattractive to the reader? Justify your answer. List the characters in the order of their attractiveness. Justify your listing.
5. What traits of the main character is the ending justified by?

***

Scott Fitzgerald

THE PERFECT LIFE

When he came into the dining room, a little tired, but with his clothes hanging cool and free on him after his shower, the whole school stood up and clapped and cheered until he slunk down into his seat. From one end of the table to the other, people leaned forward and smiled at him.

"Nice work Lee. Not your fault we didn't win."

Basil knew that he had been good. Up to the last whistle he could feel his expended energy miraculously replacing itself after each surpassing effort. But he couldn't realize his success all at once, and, only little episodes lingered with him, such as when that shaggy Exeter tackle stood up big in the line and said, "Let's get that quarter! He's yellow."

Basil shouted back, "Yellow your gra mother!" and the linesman grinned good-naturedly, knowing it wasn't true. During that gorgeous hour bodies had no weight or force; Basil lay under piles of them, tossed himself in front of them without feeling the impact, impatient only to be on his feet dominating those two green acres once more. At the end of the first half he got loose for sixty yards and a touchdown, but the whistle had blown and it was not allowed. That was the high point of the game for St. Regis. Outweighed ten pounds to the man they wilted down suddenly in the fourth quarter and Exeter put over two touch-downs, glad to win over a school whose membership was only one hundred and thirty-five.

When lunch was over and the school was trooping out of the dining hall, the Exeter coach came over to Basil and said:

"Lee, that was about the best game I've ever seen played by a pre-school back, and I've seen a lot of them."

Doctor Bacon beckoned to him. He was standing with two old St. Regis boys, up from Princeton for the day.

"It was a very exciting game, Basil We are all very proud of the team and – ah – especially of you. "And, as if this praise had been an indiscretion, he hastened to add: "And of all the others."

He presented him to the two alumni. One of them, John Granby, Basil knew by reputation. He was said to be a "big man" at Princeton – serious, upright, handsome, with a kindly smile and large, earnest blue eyes. He had graduated from St. Regis before Basil entered.

"That was pretty work, Lee!" Basil made the proper deprecatory noises. "I wonder if you've got a moment this afternoon when we could have a little talk."

"Why, yes, sir." Basil was Battered. "Any time you say."

"Suppose we take a walk about three o`clock. My train goes at five."

"I'd like to very much."

He walked on air to his room in the Sixth Form House. One short year ago he had been perhaps the most unpopular boy at St. Regis – "Bossy" Lee. Only occasionally did people forget and call him "Bossy" now, and then they corrected themselves immediately.

A youngster leaned out of the window of Mitchell House as he passed and cried, "Good work!" The negro gardener, trimming a hedge, chuckled and called, "You almost beatum by y`own self!" Mr. Hicks the housemaster cried, "They ought to have given you that touchdown! That was a crime!" as Basil passed his door. It was a frosty gold October day, tinged with the blue smoke of Indian summer, weather that set him dreaming of future splendors, triumphant descents upon cities, romantic

contacts with mysterious and scarcely mortal girls. In his room he floated off into an ambulatory dream in which he walked up and down repeating to himself tag ends of phrases: "by a prep-school back, and I've seen a lot of them." ... 'Yellow your gra`mother!" ... "You get off side again and I'll kick your fat bottom for you!"

Suddenly he rolled on his bed with laughter. The threatened one had actually apologized between quarters – it was Pork Corrigan who only last year had chased him up two flights of stairs.

At three he met John Granby and they set off along the Grunwald Pike, following a long, low red wall that on fair mornings always suggested to Basil an adventurous quest like in "The Broad Highway." John Granby talked awhile about Princeton, but when he realized that Yale was an abstract ideal deep in Basil's heart, he gave up. After a moment a far-away expression, a smile that seemed a reflection of another and brighter world, spread over his handsome face.

"Lee, I love St. Regis School," he said suddenly. "I spent the happiest years of my life here. I owe it a debt I can never repay." Basil didn't answer and Granby turned to him suddenly. "I wonder if you realize what you could do here."

"What? Me?"

"I wonder if you know the effect on the whole school of that wonderful game you played this morning." "It wasn't so good."

"It's like you to say that," declared Granby emphatically, "but it isn't the truth. However, I didn't come out here to sing your praises. Only I wonder if you realize your power for good. I mean your power of influencing all these boys to lead clean, upright, decent lives."

"I never thought about that," said Basil, somewhat startled; "I never thought about ..."

Granby slapped him smartly on the shoulder.

"Since this morning a responsibility has come to you that you can't dodge. From this morning every boy in this school who goes around smoking cigarettes behind the gym and reeking with nicotine is a little bit your responsibility; every bit of cursing and swearing, or of learning to take the property of others by stealing milk and food supplies out of the pantry at night is a little bit your responsibility."

He broke off. Basil looked straight ahead, frowning.

"Gee!" he said.

"I mean it," continued Granby, his eyes shining. "You have the sort of opportunity very few boys have. I'm going to tell you a little story. Up at Princeton I knew two boys who were wrecking their lives with drink. I

could have said, It's not my affair, and let them go to pieces their own way, but when I looked deep into my own heart I found I couldn't. So I went to them frankly and put it up to them fairly and squarely, and those two boys haven't – at least one of them hasn't – touched a single drop of liquor from that day to this."

"But I don't think anybody in school drinks," objected Basil. "At least there was a fellow named Bates that got fired last year ... "

"It doesn't matter," John Granby interrupted. "Smoking leads to drinking and drinking leads to – other things."

For an hour Granby talked and Basil listened; the red wall beside the road and the apple-heavy branches overhead seemed to become less vivid minute by minute as his thoughts turned inward. He was deeply affected by what he considered the fine unselfishness of this man who took the burdens of others upon his shoulders. Granby missed his train, but he said that didn't matter if he had succeeded in planting a sense of responsibility in Basil's mind.

Basil returned to his room awed, sobered and convinced. Up to this time he had always considered himself rather bad: in fact, the last hero character with which he had been able to identify himself was Hairbreadth Harry in the comic supplement, when he was ten. Though he often brooded, his brooding was dark and nameless and never concerned with moral questions. The real restraining influence on him was fear – the fear of being disqualified from achievement and power.

But this meeting with John Granby had come at a significant moment. After this morning's triumph, life at school scarcely seemed to hold anything more – and here was something new. To be perfect, wonderful inside and out – as Granby had put it, to try to lead the perfect life. Granby had outlined the perfect life to him, not without a certain stress upon its material rewards such as honor and influence at college, and Basil's imagination was already far in the future. When he was tapped last man for Skull and Bones at Yale and shook his head with a sad sweet smile, somewhat like John Granby's, pointing to another man who wanted it more, a burst of sobbing would break from the assembled crowd. Then, out into the world, where, at the age of twenty-five, he would face the nation from the inaugural platform on the Capitol steps, and all around him his people would lift up their faces in admiration and love. ...

As he thought he absent-mindedly consumed half a dozen soda crackers and a bottle of milk, left from a pantry raid the night before. Vaguely he realized that this was one of the things he was giving

up, but he was very hungry. However, he reverently broke off the train of his reflections until he was through.

Outside his window the autumn dusk was split with shafts of lights from passing cars. In these cars were great football players and lovely debutantes, mysterious adventuresses and international spies – rich, gay, glamorous people moving toward brilliant encounters in New York, at fashionable dances and secret cafes, or on roof gardens under the autumn moon. He sighed: perhaps he could blend in these more romantic things later. To be of great wit and conversational powers, and simultaneously strong and serious and silent. To be generous and open and self-sacrificing, yet to be somewhat mysterious and sensitive and even a little bitter with melancholy. To be both light and dark To harmonize this, to melt all this down into a single man – ah, there was something to be done. The very thought of such perfection crystallized his vitality into an ecstasy of ambition. For a moment longer his soul followed the speeding lights toward the metropolis; then resolutely he arose, put out his cigarette on the window sill, and turning on his reading lamp, began to note down a set of requirements for the perfect life.

II

One month later George Dorsey, engaged in the painful duty of leading his mother around the school grounds, reached the comparative seclusion of the tennis courts and suggested eagerly that she rest herself upon a bench.

Hitherto his conversation had confined itself to a few hoarse advices, such as "That's the gym," ... "That's Cuckoo Conklin that teaches French. Everybody hates him." ... "Please don't call me 'Brother' in front of boys," Now his face took on the preoccupied expression peculiar to adolescents in the presence of their parents. He relaxed. He waited to be asked things,

"Now, about Thanksgiving. George. Who is this boy you're bringing home?" "His name is Basil Lee," "Tell me something about him."

"There isn't anything to tell. He's just a boy in the Sixth Form, about sixteen." "Is he a nice boy?"

"Yes. He lives in St. Paul, Minnesota. I asked him a long time ago."

A certain reticence in her son's voice interested Mrs. Dorsey.

"Do you mean you're sorry you asked him? Don't you like him any more?" "Sure I like him."

"Because there's no use bringing anyone you don't like. You could just explain that your mother has made other plans."

"But I like him," George insisted, and then he added hesitantly: "It's just some funny way he's got to be lately."

"How?"

"Oh, just sort of queer."

"But how, George? I don't want you to bring anyone into the house that's queer."

"He isn't exactly queer. He just gets people aside and talks to them. Then he sort of smiles at them."

Mrs. Dorsey was mystified. "Smiles at them?"

"Yeah. He gets them off in a corner somewheres and talks to them as long as they can stand it, and then he smiles" – his own lips twisted into a peculiar grimace – "like that."

"What does he talk about?"

"Oh, about swearing and smoking and writing home and a lot of stuff like that. Nobody pays any attention except one boy he's got doing the same thing. He got stuck up or something because he was so good at football."

"Well, if you don't want him, don't let's have him."

"Oh, no," George cried in alarm. "I've got to have him. I asked him."

Naturally, Basil was unaware of this conversation when, one morning, a week later, the Dorseys` chauffeur relieved them of their bags in the Grand Central station. There was a slate-pink light over the city and people in the streets carried with them little balloons of frosted breath. About them the buildings broke up through many planes toward heaven, at their base the wintry color of an old man's smile, on through diagonals of diluted gold, edged with purple where the cornices floated past the stationary sky.

In a long, low, English town car – the first of the kind that Basil had ever see – sat a girl of about his own age. As they came up she received her brother's kiss perfunctorily, nodded stiffly to Basil and murmured, "how-d'y'-do'" without smiling. She said nothing further but seemed absorbed in meditations of her own. At first, perhaps because of her extreme reserve, Basil received no especial impression of her, but before they reached the Dorseys` house he began to realize that she was one of the prettiest girls he had ever seen in his life.

It was a puzzling face. Her long eyelashes lay softly against her pale cheeks, almost touching them, as if to conceal the infinite boredom in her eyes, but when she smiled, her expression was illumined by a fiery and lovely friendliness, as if she were saying, "Go on; I'm listening. I'm fascinated. I've been waiting – oh, ages – for just this moment with you." Then she remembered that she was shy or bored; the smile vanished, the

gray eyes half closed again. Almost before it had begun, the moment was over, leaving a haunting and unsatisfied curiosity behind.

The Dorseys` house was on Fifty-third Street. Basil was astonished first at the narrowness of its white stone front and then at the full use to which the space was put inside. The formal chambers ran the width of the house, artificial sunlight bloomed in the dining-room windows, a small elevator navigated the five stories in deferential silence. For Basil there was a new world in its compact luxury. It was thrilling and romantic that a foothold on this island was more precious than the whole rambling sweep of the James J. Hill house at home. In his excitement the feel of school dropped momentarily away from him. He was possessed by the same longing for a new experience,that his previous glimpses of New York had aroused. In the hard bright glitter of Fifth Avenue, in this lovely girl with no words to waste beyond a mechanical "How-d'y'-do," in the perfectly organized house, he recognized nothing, and he knew that to recognize nothing in his surroundings was usually a guaranty of adventure.

But his mood of the last month was not to be thrown off so lightly. There was now an ideal that came first. A day mustn't pass when he wasn't, as John Granby put it, "straight with himself – and that meant to help others. He could get in a good deal of work on George Dorsey in these five days; other opportunities might turn up, besides. Meanwhile, with the consciousness of making the best of both worlds, he unpacked his grip and got ready for luncheon.

He sat beside Mrs. Dorsey, who found him somewhat precipitately friendly in a Midwestern way, but polite, apparently not unbalanced. He told her he was going to be a minister and immediately he didn't believe it himself; but he saw that it interested Mrs. Dorsey and let it stand.

The afternoon was already planned; they were going dancing – for those wore the great days: Maurice was tangoing in "Over the River," the Castles were doing a swift stiff-legged walk in the third act of "The Sunshine Girl " – a walk that gave the modern dance a social position and brought the nice girl into the cafe, thus beginning a profound revolution in American life. The great rich empire was feeling its oats and was out for some not too plebeian, yet not too artistic, fun.

By three o'clock seven young people were assembled, and they started in a limousine for Emil's. There were two stylish, anaemic girls of sixteen – one bore an impressive financial name – and two freshmen from Harvard who exchanged private jokes and were attentive only to Jobena Dorsey. Basil expected that presently everyone would begin asking each other such familiar questions as "Where do you go to school?" and "Oh, do

you know So-and-So?" and the party would become more free and easy, but nothing of the sort happened. The atmosphere was impersonal; he doubted if the other four guests knew his name. "In fact," he thought, "it's just as if everyone's waiting for some one else to make a fool of himself." Here again was something new and unrecognizable; he guessed that it was a typical part of New York.

They reached Emil's. Only in certain Paris restaurants where the Argentines step untiringly through their native coils does anything survive of the dance craze as it existed just before the war. At that time it was not an accompaniment to drinking or love-making or hailing in the dawn – it was an end in itself. Sedentary stockbrokers, grandmothers of sixty, Confederate veterans, venerable statesmen and scientists, sufferers from locomotor ataxia, wanted not only to dance but to dance beautifully. Fantastic ambitions bloomed in hitherto sober breasts, violent exhibitionism cropped out in families modest for generations. Nonentities with long legs became famous overnight, and there were rendezvous where they could renew the dance, if they wished, next morning. Because of a neat glide or an awkward stumble careers were determined and engagements were made or broken, while the tall Englishman and the girl in the Dutch cap called the tune.

As they went into the cabaret sudden anxiety attacked Basil – modern dancing was one of the things upon which John Granby had been most severe.

He approached George Dorsey in the coat room.

"There's an extra man, so do you suppose it'd be all right if I only danced when there's a waltz? I'm no good at anything else."

"Sure. It's all right with me." He looked curiously at Basil. "Gosh, have you sworn off everything?"

"No, not everything." answered Basil uncomfortably.

The floor was already crowded. All ages and several classes of society shuffled around tensely to the nervous, disturbing beats of "Too Much Mustard." Automatically the other three couples were up and away, leaving Basil at the table. He watched, trying to pretend to himself that he disapproved of it all but was too polite to show it. However, with so much to see, it was difficult to preserve that attitude, and he was gazing with fascination at Jobena's active feet when a good-looking young man of about nineteen sat down beside him at the table.

"Excuse me," he said with exaggerated deference. "This Miss Jobena Dorsey's table?"

"Yes, it is."

"I'm expected. Name's De Vinci. Don't ask me if I'm any relation to the painter." "My name's Lee."

"All right, Lee. What'll you have? What are you having?" The waiter arrived with a tray, and De Vinci looked at its contents with disgust. "Tea – all tea. ...Waiter, bring me a double Bronx. ...How about you, Lee? Another double Bronx?"

"Oh, no, thanks," said Basil quickly. "One then, waiter."

De Vinci sighed; he had the unmistakable lush look of a man who has been drinking hard for several days.

"Nice dog under that table over there. They oughtn't to let people smoke if they're going to bring dogs in here."

"Why?"

"Hurts their eyes."

Confusedly Basil deliberated this piece of logic.

"But don't talk to me about dogs," said De Vinci with a profound sigh; "I'm trying to keep from thinking of dogs."

Basil obligingly changed the subject for him by asking him if he was in college.

"Two weeks." For emphasis De Vinci held up two fingers.

"I passed quickly through Yale. First man fired out of '15 Sheff."

"That's too bad," said Basil earnestly. He took a deep breath and his lips twisted up in a kindly smile. "Your parents must have felt pretty badly about that."

De Vinci stared at him as if over a pair of spectacles, but before he could answer, the dance ended and the others came back to the table.

"Hello there, Skiddy."

"Well, well, Skiddy!"

They all knew him. One of the freshmen yielded him a place next to Jobena and they began to talk together in lowered voices.

"Skiddy De Vinci," George whispered to Basil. "He and Jobena were engaged last summer, but I think she's through." He shook his head. "They used to go off in his mother's electric up at Bar Harbor; it was disgusting."

Basil glowed suddenly with excitement as if he had been snapped on like an electric torch. He looked at Jobena – her face, infinitely reserved, lightened momentarily, but this time her smile had gone sad; there was the deep friendliness but not the delight. He wondered if Skiddy De Vinci cared about her being through with him. Perhaps, if he reformed and stopped drinking and went back to Yale, she would change her mind.

The music began again. Basil stared uncomfortably into his cup of tea.

"This is a tango," said George. "You can dance the tango, can't you? It's all right; it's Spanish." Basil considered.

"Sure you can," insisted George. "It's Spanish, I tell you. There's nothing to stop your dancing if it's Spanish, is there?"

One of the freshmen looked at them curiously. Basil leaned over the table and asked Jobena to dance.

She made a last low-voiced remark to De Vinci before she rose; then, to atone for the slight rudeness, she smiled up at Basil. He was light-headed as they moved out on the floor.

Abruptly she made an outrageous remark and Basil started and nearly stumbled, doubtful that he had heard aright.

"I'll bet you've kissed about a thousand girls in your time," she said, "with that mouth."

"What!"

"Not so?"

"Oh, no," declared Basil "Really. I..."

Her lids and lashes had drooped again indifferently; she was singing the band's tune:

"Tango makes you warm inside;You bend and sway and glide; There's nothing far and wide..."

What was the implication – that kissing people was all right; was even admirable? He remembered what John Granby had said; "Every time you kiss a nice girl you may have started her on the road to the devil."

He thought of his own past – an afternoon on the Kampfs' porch with Minnie Bible, a ride home from Black Bear Lake with Imogene Bissel in the back seat of the car, a miscellany of encounters running back to games of post office and to childish kisses that were consummated upon an unwilling nose or ear.

That was over; he was never going to kiss another girl until he found the one who would become his wife, It worried him that this girl whom he found lovely should take the matter so lightly. The strange thrill he had felt when George spoke of her "behaving disgustingly" with Skiddy De Vinci in his electric, was transformed into indignation – steadily rising indignation. It was criminal – a girl not yet seventeen.

Suddenly it occurred to him that this was perhaps his responsibility, his opportunity. If he could implant in her mind the futility of it all, the misery she was laying up for herself, his visit to New York would not have been in vain. He could go back to school happy, knowing he had brought to one girl the sort of peace she had never known before.

In fact, the more he thought of Jobena and Skiddy De Vinci in the electric, the madder it made him.

At five they left Emil's to go to Castle House. There was a thin rain falling and the streets were gleaming. In the excitement of going out into the twilight Jobena slipped her arm quickly through Basil's.

"There's too many for the car. Let's take the hansom."

She gave the address to a septuagenarian in faded bottle green, and the slanting doors closed upon them, shutting them back away from the rain.

"I'm tired of them," she whispered. "Such empty faces, except Skiddy's, and in another hour he won't be able to even talk straight. He's beginning to get maudlin about his dog Eggshell that died last month, and that's always a sign. Do you ever feel the fascination of somebody that's doomed; who just goes on and on in the way he was born to go, never complaining, never hoping; just sort of resigned to it all?"

His fresh heart cried out against this.

"Nobody has to go to pieces," he assured her. "They can just turn over a new leaf."

"Not Skiddy."'

"Anybody," he insisted. "You just make up your mind and resolve to live a better life, and you'd he surpirsed how easy it is and how much happier you are."

She didn't seem to hear him.

"Isn't it nice, rolling along in this hansom with the damp blowing in and you and I back here" – she turned to him and smiled – "together,"

"Yes," said Basil abstractedly. "The thing is that everybody should try to make their life perfect. They can't start young enough; in Fact, they ought to start about eleven or twelve in order to make their life absolutely perfect."

"That's true," she said. "In a way Skiddy's life is perfect. He never worries, never regrets. You could put him back at the time of the – oh, the eighteenth century, or whenever it was they had the bucks and beaux – and he'd it right in."

"I didn't mean that," said Basil in alarm. "That isn't at all what I mean by the perfect life."

"You mean something more masterful," she supplied. "I thought so, when I saw that chin of yours. I'll bet you just take everything you want."

Again she looked at him, swayed close to him.

"You don't understand..." he began.

She put her hand on his arm. "Wait a minute; we're almost there. Let's not go in yet. It's so nice with all the lights going on and it'll be so hot and crowded in there. Tell him to drive out a few blocks more. I noticed you only danced a few times; I like that. I hate men that pop up at the first sound of music as if their life depended on it. Is it true you're only sixteen?"

"Yes."

"You seem older. There's so much in your face."

"You don't understand..." Basil began again desperately.

She spoke through the trap to the cabby:

"Go up Broadway till we tell you to stop." Sitting back in the cab, she repeated dreamily, "The perfect life. I'd like my life to be perfect. I'd like to suffer, if I could find something worth suffering for, and I'd like to never do anything low or small or mean, but just have big sins."

"Oh, no!" said Basil, aghast. "That's no way to feel; that's morbid. Why, look, you oughtn't to talk like that – a girl sixteen years old. You ought to – to talk things over with yourself – you ought to think more of the after life." He stopped, half expecting to be interrupted, but Jobena was silent. "Why, up to a month ago I used to smoke as many as twelve or fifteen cigarettes a day, unless I was training for football. I used to curse and swear and only write home once in a while, so they had to telegraph sometimes to see if I was sick. I had no sense of responsibility. I never thought I could lead a perfect life until I tried."

He paused, overcome by his emotion.

"Didn't you?" said Jobena, in a small voice.

"Never. I was just like everybody else, only worse. I used to kiss girls and never think anything about it."

"What – what changed you?"

"A man I met." Suddenly he turned to her and, with an effort, caused to spread over his face a caricature of John Granby's sad sweet smile. "Jobena, you – you have the makings of a fine girl in you. It grieved me a lot this afternoon to see you smoking nicotine and dancing modern suggestive dances that are simply savagery. And the way you talk about kissing. What if you meet some man that has kept himself pure and never gone around kissing anybody except his family, and you have to tell him that you went around behaving disgustingly?"

She leaned back suddenly and spoke crisply through the panel.

"You can go back now – the address we gave you."

"You ought to cut it out." Again Basil smiled at her, straining and struggling to lift her up out of herself to a higher plane. "Promise me you'll

try. It isn't so hard. And then some day when some upright and straightforward man comes along and says, 'Will you marry me?' you'll be able to say you never danced suggestive modern dances, except the Spanish tango and the Boston, and you never kissed anybody – that is, since you were sixteen, and maybe you wouldn't have to say that you ever kissed anybody at all."

"That wouldn't be the truth," she said in an odd voice. "Shouldn't I tell him the truth?"

"You could tell him you didn't know any better."

"Oh."

To Basil's regret the cab drew up at Castle House. Jobena hurried in, and to make up for her absence, devoted herself exclusively to Skiddy and the Harvard freshmen for the remainder of the afternoon. But doubtless she was thinking hard – as he had done a month before. With a little, more time he could have clinched his argument by showing the influence that one leading a perfect life could exert on others. He must find an opportunity tomorrow.

But next day he scarcely saw her. She was out for luncheon and she did not appear at her rendezvous with Basil and George after the matinee; they waited in vain in the Biltmore grill for an hour. There was company at dinner and Basil began to feel a certain annoyance when she disappeared immediately afterwards. Was it possible that his seriousness had frightened her? In that case it was all the more necessary to see her, reassure her, bind her with the invisible cords of high purpose to himself. Perhaps – perhaps she was the ideal girl that he would someday marry. At the gorgeous idea his whole being was Hooded with ecstasy. He planned out the years of waiting, each one helping the other to lead the perfect life, neither of them ever kissing anybody else – he would insist on that, absolutely insist on it; she must promise not even to see Skiddy De Vinci – and then marriage and a life of service, perfection, fame and love.

The two boys went to the theatre again that night. When they came home a little after eleven, George went upstairs to say good night to his mother, leaving Basil to make reconnaissance in the ice box. The intervening pantry was dark and as he fumbled unfamiliarly for the light he was startled by hearing a voice in the kitchen pronounce his name:

"Mr. Basil Duke Lee."

"Seemed all right to me," Basil recognized the drawling tone of Skiddy De Vinci, "Just a kid."

"On the contrary, he's a nasty little prig," said Jobena decisively. "He gave me the old-fashioned moral lecture about nicotine and modern

dancing and kissing, and about that upright, straightforward man that was going to come along some day – you know that upright straightforward man they're always talking about. I suppose he meant himself, because he told me he led a perfect life. Oh, it was all so oily and horrible, it made me positively sick. Skiddy. For the first time in my life I was tempted to take a cocktail."

"Oh. he`s just a kid." said Skiddy moderately. "It's a phase. He'll get over it"

Basil listened in horror; his face burning, his mouth ajar. He wanted above all things to get away, but his dismay rooted him to the floor.

"What I think of righteous men couldn't be put on paper." said Jobena after a moment. "I suppose I'm just naturally bad. Skiddy; at least, all my contacts with upright young men have affected me like this."

"Then how about it. Jobena?"

There was a long silence.

"This has done something to me." she said finally. "Yesterday I thought I was through with you. Skiddy. but ever since this happened I've had a vision of a thousand Mr. Basil Duke Lees, all grown up and asking me to share their perfect lives. I refuse to – definitely. If you like. I'll marry you in Greenwich tomorrow."

III

At one Basils light was still burning. Walking up and down his room, he made out case after case for himself, with Jobena in the role of villainess, but each case was wrecked upon the rock of his bitter humiliation. "A nasty little prig" – the words, uttered with conviction and scorn, had driven the high principles of John Granby from his head. He was a slave to his own admirations, and in the past twenty-four hours Jobena's personality had become the strongest force in his life; deep in his heart he believed that what she had said was true.

He woke up on Thanksgiving morning with dark circles rimming his eyes. His bag, packed for immediate departure, brought back the debacle of the night before, and as he lay staring at the ceiling, relaxed by sleep, giant tears welled up into his eyes. An older man might have taken refuge behind the virtue of his intentions, but Basil knew no such refuge. For sixteen years he had gone his own way without direction, due to his natural combativeness and to the fact that no older man save John Granby had yet captured his imagination. Now John Granby had vanished in the night, and it seemed the natural thing to Basil that he should struggle back to rehabilitation unguided and alone.

One thing he knew – Jobena must not marry Skiddy De Vinci. That was a responsibility she could not foist upon him. If necessary, he would go to her father and tell what he knew.

Emerging from his room half an hour later, he met her in the hall. She was dressed in a smart blue street suit with a hobble skirt and a ruff of linen at her throat. Her eyes opened a little and she wished him a polite good morning.

"I've got to talk to you," he said quickly.

"I'm terribly sorry." To his intense discomfort she flashed her smile at him, just as if nothing had happened. "I've only a minute now."

"It's something very important. I know you don't like me..."

"What nonsense!" She laughed cheerfully. "Of course I like you. How did you get such a silly idea in your head?"

Before he could answer, she waved her hand hastily and ran down the stairs.

George had gone to town and Basil spent the morning walking through large deliberate snowflakes in Central Park rehearsing what he should say to Mr. Dorsey.

"It's nothing to me, but I cannot see your only daughter throw away her life on a dissipated man. If I had a daughter of my own who was about to throw away her life, 1 would want somebody to tell me, and so I have come to tell you. Of course, after this I cannot stay in your house, and so I bid you good-by."

At quarter after twelve, waiting anxiously in the drawing-room, he heard Mr. Dorsey come in. He rushed downstairs, but Mr. Dorsey had already entered the lift and closed the door. Turning about, Basil raced against the machine to the third story and caught him in the hall.

"In regard to your daughter," he began excitedly – "in regard to your daughter..."

"Well," said Mr. Dorsey, "is something the matter with Jobena?"

"I want to talk to you about her."

Mr. Dorsey laughed. "Are you going to ask her hand in marriage?" "Oh, no."

"Well, suppose we have a talk after dinner when we're full of turkey and stuffing, and feeling happy."

He clapped his hand on Basil's shoulder and went on into his room.

It was a large family dinner party, and under cover of the conversation Basil kept an attentive eye on Jobena, trying to determine her desperate intention from her clothes and the expression of her face. She was adept at concealing her real emotions, as he had discovered this

morning, but once or twice he saw her eyes wander to her watch and a look of abstraction come into them.

There was coffee afterward in the library, and, it seemed to Basil, interminable chatter. When Jobena arose suddenly and left the room, he moved just as quickly to Mr. Dorsey's side.

"Well, young man, what can I do for you?"

"Why..." Basil hesitated.

"Now is the time to ask me – when I'm well fed and happy"

"Why—" Again Basil stopped.

"Don't be shy. It's something about my Jobena."

But a peculiar thing had happened to Basil. In sudden detachment he saw himself from the outside—saw himself sneaking to Mr. Dorsey, in a house in which he was a guest, to inform against a girl.

"Why..." he repeated blankly.

"The question is: Can you support her?" said Mr. Dorsey jovially. "And the second is: Can you control her?"

"I forgot what it was I wanted to say," Basil blurted out.

He hurried from the library, his brain in a turmoil. Dashing upstairs, he knocked at the door of Jobena's room. There was no answer and he opened the door and glanced inside. The room was empty, but a half-packed suitcase lay on the bed.

"Jobena," he called anxiously. There was no answer. A maid passing along the hall told him Miss Jobena was having a marcel wave in her mother's room.

He hurried downstairs and into his hat and coat, racking his brains for the address where they had dropped Skiddy De Vinci the other afternoon. Sure that he would recognize the building, he drove down Lexington Avenue in a taxi, tried three doors, and trembled with excitement as he found the name "Leonard Edward Davies De Vinci" on a card beside a bell. When he rang, a latch clicked on an inner door.

He had no plan. Failing argument, he had a vague melodramatic idea of knocking him down, tying him up and letting him lie there until it blew over. In view of the fact that Skiddy outweighed him by forty pounds, this was a large order.

Skiddy was packing – the overcoat he tossed hastily over his suitcase did not serve to hide this fact from Basil. There was an open bottle of whisky on his littered dresser, and beside it a half-full glass.

Concealing his surprise, he invited Basil to sit down.

"I had to come and see you"– Basil tried to make his voice calm – "about Jobena."

"Jobena?" Skiddy frowned. "What about her? Did she send you here?"

"Oh, no." Basil swallowed hard, stalling for time. "I thought – maybe you could advise me – you see, I don't think she likes me, and I don't know why."

Skiddy's face relaxed. "That's nonsense. Of course she likes you. Have a drink?"

"No. At least not now."

Skiddy finished his glass. After a slight hesitation he removed his overcoat from the suitcase.

"Excuse me if I go on packing, will you? Tin going out of town."

"Certainly."

"Better have a drink."

"No. I'm on the water wagon – just now."

"When you get worrying about nothing, the thing to do is to have a drink."

The phone rang and he answered it, squeezing the receiver close to his ear:

"Yes... I can't talk now... Yes... At half-past five then.

It's now about four. ...I'll explain why when I see you. ... Goodby." He hung up. "My office," he said with affected nonchalance ... "Won't you have a little drink?"

"No. thanks."

"Never worry. Enjoy yourself."

"It's hard to be visiting in a house and know somebody doesn't like you."

"But she does like you. Told me so herself the other day"

While Skiddy packed they discussed the question. He was a little hazy and extremely nervous, and a single question asked in the proper serious tone would send him rambling along indefinitely. As yet Basil had evolved no plan save to stay with Skiddy and wait for the best opportunity of coming into the open.

But staying with Skiddy was going to be difficult; he was becoming worried at Basil's tenacity. Finally he closed his suitcase with one of those definite snaps, took down a large drink quickly and said:

"Well, guess I ought to get started."

They went out together and Skiddy hailed a taxi.

"Which way are you going?" Basil asked.

"Uptown – I mean downtown."

"I'll ride with you," volunteered Basil. "We might... we might have a drink in the ... Biltmore."

Skiddy hesitated. "I'll drop you there," he said.

When they reached the Biltmore, Basil made no move to get out.

"You're coming in with me, aren't you?" he asked in a surprised voice.

Frowning, Skiddy looked at his watch. "I haven't got much time."

Basil's face fell; he sat back in the car.

"Well, there's no use my going in alone, because I look sort of young and they wouldn't give me anything unless I was with an older man."

The appeal succeeded. Skiddy got out, saying, "I'll have to hurry," and they went into the bar.

"What'll it be?"

"Something strong," Basil said, lighting his first cigarette in a month.

"Two stingers," ordered Skiddy.

"Let's have something really strong."

"Two double stingers then."

Out of the corner of his eye Basil looked at the clock. It was twenty after five. Waiting until Skiddy was in the act of taking down his drink he signalled to the waiter to repeat the order.

"Oh, no!" cried Skiddy.

"You'll have to have one on me."

"You haven't touched yours."

Basil sipped his drink, hating it. He saw that with the new alcohol Skiddy had relaxed a little.

"Got to be going," he said automatically. "Important engagement."

Basil had an inspiration.

"I'm thinking of buying a dog," he announced.

"Don't talk about dogs," said Skiddy mournfully. "I had an awful experience about a dog. I've just got over it."

"Tell me about it."

"I don't even like to talk about it; it was awful."

"I think a dog is the best friend a man has," Basil said.

"Do you?" Skiddy slapped the table emphatically with his open hand. "So do I, Lee. So do I."

"Nobody ever loves him like a dog," went on Basil, staring off sentimentally into the distance.

The second round of double stingers arrived.

"Let me tell you about my dog that I lost," said Skiddy. He looked at his watch. "I'm late, but a minute won't make any difference, if you like dogs."

"I like them bolter than anything in the world." Basil raised his first glass, still half full. "Here's to man's best friend – a dog."

They drank. There were tears in Skiddy's eyes. "Let me tell you. I raised this dog Eggshell from a pup. He was a beauty – an Airedale, sired by McTavish VI."

"I bet he was a beauty."

"He was! Let me tell you"

As Skiddy warmed to his subject, Basil pushed his new drink toward Skiddy, whose hand presently closed upon the stem. Catching the bartender's attention, he ordered two more. The clock stood at five minutes of six.

Skiddy rambled on. Ever afterward the sight of a dog story in a magazine caused Basil an attack of acute nausea. At half-past six Skiddy rose uncertainly.

"I've gotta go. Got important date. Be mad."

"All right. We'll stop by the bar and have one more."

The bartender knew Skiddy and they talked for a few minutes, for time seemed of no account now. Skiddy had a drink with his old friend to wish him luck on a very important occasion. Then he had another.

At a quarter before eight o'clock Basil piloted Leonard Edward Davies De Vinci from the hotel bar, leaving his suitcase in care of the bartender.

"Important engagement," Skiddy mumbled as they hailed a taxi.

"Very important," Basil agreed. "I'm going to see that you get there."

When the car rolled up, Skiddy tumbled in and Basil gave the address to the driver.

"Good-by and thanks!" Skiddy called fervently. "Ought to go in, maybe, and drink once more to best friend man ever had."

"Oh, no," said Basil, "it's too important."

"You're right. It's too important."

The car rolled off and Basil"followed it with his eye as it turned the corner. Skiddy was going out on Long Island to visit Eggshell's grave.

IV

Basil had never had a drink before and, now with his jubilant relief, the three cocktails that he had been forced to down mounted swiftly to his head. On his way to the Dorseys' house he threw back his head and roared

with laughter. The self-respect he had lost last night rushed back to him; he felt himself tingling with the confidence of power.

As the maid opened the door for him he was aware subconsciously that there was someone in the lower hall. He waited till the maid disappeared; then stepping to the door of the coat room, he pulled it open. Beside her suitcase stood Jobena, wearing a look of mingled impatience and fright. Was he deceived by his ebullience or, when she saw him, did her face lighten with relief?

"Hello." She took off her coat and hung it up as if that was her purpose there, and came out under the lights. Her face, pale and lovely, composed itself, as if she had sat down and folded her hands.

"George was looking for you," she said indifferently.

"Was he? I've been with a friend."

With an expression of surprise she sniffed the faint aroma of cocktails.

"But my friend went to visit his dog's tomb, so I came home."

She stiffened suddenly. "You've been with Skiddy?"

"He was telling me about his dog," said Basil gravely. "A man's best friend is his dog after all."

She sat down and stared at him, wide-eyed.

"Has Skiddy passed out?"

"He went to see a dog."

"Oh, the fool!" she cried.

"Were you expecting him? Is it possible that that's your suitcase?"

"It's none of your business."

Basil took it out of the closet and deposited it in the elevator. "Yon won't need it tonight," he said. Her eyes shone with big despairing tears.

"You oughtn't to drink," she said brokenly, "Can't you see what it's made of him?"

"A man's best friend is a stinger,"

"You're just sixteen. I suppose all that you told me the other afternoon was a joke.I mean, about the perfect life."

"All a joke," he agreed.

"I thought you meant it. Doesn't anybody ever mean anything?"

"I like you better than any girl I ever knew," Basil said quietly. "I mean that."

"I liked you too, until you said that about my kissing people."

He went and stood over her and took her hand.

"Let's take the bag upstairs before the maid comes in."

They stepped into the dark elevator, and closed the door.

"There's a light switch somewhere," she said.

Still holding her hand, he drew her close and tightened his arm around her in the darkness.

"Just for this once we don't need the light."

Going back on the train, George Dorsey came to a sudden resolution. His mouth tightened.

"I don't want to say anything, Basil..." He hesitated. "But look...Did you have something to drink Thanksgiving Day?"

Basil frowned and nodded.

"Sometimes I've got to," he said soberly. "I don't know what it is. All my family died of liquor." "Gee!" exclaimed George.

"But I'm through. I promised Jobena I wouldn't touch anything more till I'm twenty-one. She feels that if I go on with this constant dissipation it'll ruin my life."

George was silent for a moment.

"What were you and she talking about those last few days? Gosh. I thought you were supposed to be visiting me."

"It's... it's sort of sacred," Basil said placidly. ... "Look here; if we don't have anything fit to eat for dinner, let's get Sam to leave the pantry window unlocked tonight."

To increase understanding:

1. Find in the text the paragraphs describing the impression John Granby`s ideas made on Basil. Characterize the tone established in these paragraphs and discuss the way the author creates it.
2. Examine the differences in Basil`s behavior before and after his meeting John Granby
3. Examine the temperaments, minds and moral dispositions of the characters of the story.
4. What is Basil`s moral dilemma? What explicit information given in the story helps you answer this question? What that is relevant is implied?
5. What part does Jobena play? Does she emerge as a true individual or does she seem to be a stereotype? Justify your stand. What might have been Fitzgerald`s purpose in portraying her as he did?
6. What attitude does Fitzgerald have towards the characters who populate this story? Does he pass any moral judgments upon them? Explain.
7. Some of Fitzgerald`s critics claim he is as deluded by his characters` motives and behavior as the characters themselves. Basing your answer on

the impressions you have gained from reading "The Perfect Life" do you agree or disagree with this criticism? Explain why.
8. During the course of the story dancing develops a symbolic significance. What does it symbolize?
9. Did the ending come as a surprise to you? Does Fitzgerald give any prior indication of what Basil's final action will be or is the ending a mere trick one?

***

Carl Sandburg

THE HARBOR

Passing through huddled and ugly walls
By doorways where women
Looked from their hunger-deep eyes,
Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands,
Out from the huddled and ugly walls
I came sudden, at the city's edge,
On a blue burst of lake,
Long lake waves breaking under the sun
On a spray-flung curve of shore;
And a fluttering storm of gulls,
Masses of great gray wings
And flying white bellies
Veering and wheeling free in the open.

Edwin Robinson

RICHARD CORY

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;

But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich – yes, richer than a king –
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

MINIVER CHEEVY

Miniver Cheevy, child of scorn,
Grew lean while he assailed the seasons;
He wept that he was ever born,
And he had reasons.

Miniver loved the days of old
When swords were bright and steeds were prancing;
The vision of a warrior bold
Would set him dancing.

Miniver sighed for what was not,
And dreamed, and rested from his labors;
He dreamed of Thebes and Camelot,
And Priam's neighbors.

Miniver mourned the ripe renown
That made so many a name so fragrant;
He mourned Romance, now on the town,
And Art, a vagrant.

Miniver loved the Medici,
Albeit he had never seen one;
He would have sinned incessantly
Could he have been one.

Miniver cursed the commonplace
And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;
He missed the medieval grace
Of iron clothing.

Miniver scorned the gold he sought,
But sore annoyed was he without it;
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,
And thought about it.

Miniver Cheevy, born too late,
Scratched his head and kept on thinking;
Miniver coughed, and called it fate,
And kept on drinking.

Discussion questions:

1. What is the main idea expressed in "The Harbor"?
2. How does the poet achieve the contrast he wants to emphasize?
3. What details of the poem "Richard Cory" help to make the ending a surprise?
4. What helps us to guess that Cory killed himself?
5. What is the core of Robinson`s philosophy revealed in the poem "Richard Cory"?
6. Compare the problem faced by Richard Cory with that of Miniver Cheevy. In what sense is their solution of the problem similar?
7. Do you think Miniver really would have been happy in ancient Troy, Camelot, or in the Florence of the Medicis`? Explain your answer.

***

Sinclair Lewis

THE HACK DRIVER

I dare say there's no man of large affairs, whether he is bank president or senator or dramatist, who hasn't a sneaking love for some old rum-hound in a frightful hat, living back in a shanty and making his living by ways you wouldn't care to examine too closely. (It was the Supreme Court justice speaking. I do not pretend to guarantee his theories or his

story.) He may be a Maine guide, or the old garageman who used to keep the livery stable, or a perfectly useless innkeeper who sneaks off to shoot ducks when he ought to be sweeping the floors, but your pompous big-city man will contrive to get back and see him every year, and loaf with him, and secretly prefer him to all the highfalutin leaders of the city.

There's that much truth, at least, to this Open Spaces stuff you read in advertisements of wild and woolly Western novels. I don't know the philosophy of it; perhaps it means that we retain a decent simplicity, no matter how much we are tied to Things, to houses and motors and expensive wives. Or again it may give away the whole game of civilization; may mean that the apparently civilized man is at heart nothing but a hobo who prefers flannel shirts and bristly cheeks and cussing and dirty tin plates to all the trim, hygienic, forward-looking life our womenfolks make us put on for them. When I graduated from law school, I suppose I was about as artificial and idiotic and ambitious as most youngsters. I wanted to climb, socially and financially. I wanted to be famous, and dine at large houses with men who shuddered at the Common People who don't dress for dinner. You see, I hadn't learned that the only thing duller than a polite dinner is the conversation afterward; when the victims are digesting the dinner and accumulating enough strength to be able to play bridge. Oh, I was a fine young calf! I even planned a rich marriage. Imagine then how I felt when, after taking honors and becoming fifteenth assistant clerk in the magnificent law firm of Hodgins, Hodgins, Berkman, and Taupe, I was set not at preparing briefs but at serving summonses! Like a cheap private detective! Like a mangy sheriff's officer! They told me I had to begin that way and, holding my nose, I feebly went to work. I was kicked out of actresses' dressing rooms, and from time to time I was righteously beaten by large and indignant litigants. I came to know, and still more to hate, every dirty and shadowy corner of the city. I thought of fleeing to my home town, where I could at once become a full-fledged attorney at law. I rejoiced one day when they sent me out forty miles or so to a town called New Mullion, to serve a summons on one Oliver Lutkins. This Lutkins had worked in the Northern Woods, and he knew the facts about a certain timberland boundary agreement; we needed him as a witness, and he had dodged service.

When I got off the train at New Mullion, my sudden affection for sweet and simple villages was dashed by the look of the place, with its mud-gushing streets and its rows of shops either paintless or daubed with a sour brown. Though it must have numbered eight or nine thousand inhabitants, New Mullion was as littered as a mining camp. There was one

agreeablelooking man at the station – the expressman. He was a person of perhaps forty, redfaced, cheerful, thick; he wore his overalls and denim jumper as though they belonged to him; he was quite dirty and very friendly, and you knew at once that he liked people and slapped them on the back out of pure easy affection,

"I want," I told him, "to find a fellow named Oliver Lutkins."

"Him? I saw him 'round here 'twa'n't an hour ago. Hard fellow to catch, though – always chasing around on some phony business or other. Probably trying to get up a poker game in the back of Fritz Beineke's harness-shop. I'll tell you, boy – Any hurry about locating Lutkins?"

"Yes. I want to catch the afternoon train back." I was as impressively secret as a stage detective.

"I'll tell you. I've, got a hack. I'll get out the old boneshaker; and we can drive around together and find Lutkins. I know most of the places he hangs out."

He was so frankly friendly, he so immediately took me into the circle of his affection, that I glowed with the warmth of it. I knew, of course, that he was drumming up business, but his kindness was real, and if I had to pay hack fare in order to find my man, I was glad that the money would go to this good fellow. I got him down to two dollars an hour; he brought from his cottage, a block away, an object like a black piano-box on wheels.

He didn't hold the door open, certainly he didn't say: "Ready, sir." I think he would have died before calling anybody "sir." When he gets to Heaven's gate he'll call St. Peter "Pete," and I imagine the good saint will like it. He remarked, "Well, young fellow, here's the handsome equipage," and his grin – well, it made me feel that I had always been his neighbor. They're so ready to help a stranger, those villagers. He had already made it his own task to find Oliver Lutkins for me.

He said, and almost shyly: "I don't want to butt in on your private business, young fellow, but my guess is that you want to collect some money from Lutkins – he never pays anybody a cent; he still owes me six bits on a poker game I was fool enough to get into. He ain't a bad sort of Yahoo, but he just naturally hates to loosen up on coin of the realm. So if you're trying to collect any money off him, we better kind of, you might say, creep up on him and surround him. If you go asking for him – anybody can tell you come from the city, with that trick fedora of yours – he'll suspect something and take a sneak. If you want me to, I'll go into Fritz Beineke's and ask for him, and you can keep out of sight behind me,"

I loved him for it. By myself I might never have found Lutkins. Now, I was an army with reserves. In a burst I told the hack driver that I

wanted to serve a summons on Lutkins; that the fellow had viciously refused to testify in a suit where his knowledge of a certain conversation would clear up everything. The driver listened earnestly – and I was still young enough to be grateful at being taken seriously by any man of forty. At the end he pounded my shoulder (very painfully) and chuckled: "Well, we'll spring a little surprise on Br'er Lutkins."

"Let's start, driver."

"Most folks around here call me Bill. 0: Magnuson. William Magnuson, fancy carting and hauling."

"All right, Bill. Shall we tackle this harness-shop – Beineke's?"

"Yes, jus' likely to be there as anywhere Plays a lot of poker, and a great hand a bluffing – damn him!" Bill seemed to admir Mr. Lutkins' *ability as a scoundrel; I fancied that if he had been sheriff he would have* caught Lutkins with fervor and hanged him with affection.

At the somewhat gloomy harness-shop we descended and went in. The room was odorous with the smell of dressed leather, scanty sort of man, presumably Mr. Beineke was selling a horse collar to a fanner.

"Seen Nolly Lutkins around today. Friend of his looking for him," said Bill with treacherous heartiness.

Beineke looked past him at my shrinking alien self; he hesitated, and owned: "Yuh, he was in here little while, ago. Guess he's gone over to the Swede's to get a shave."

"Well, if he comes in, tell him I'm looking for him. Might get up a little game of poker. I've heard tell that Lutkins plays these here immoral games of chance."

"Yuh, I believe he's known to sit in on Authors," Beineke growled.

We sought the barbershop of "the Swede." Bill was again good enough to take the lead, while I lurked at the door. He asked not only the Swede but two customers if they had seen Lutkins. The Swede decidedly had not; he raged: "I ain't seen him, and I don't want to, but if you find him you can just collect the dollar thirty- five he owes me!" One of the customers thought he had seen Lutkins "hiking down Main Street, this side of the hotel."

"Well, then," Bill concluded, as we labored up into the hack, "his credit at the Swede's being ausgewent, he's probably getting a scrape at Heinie Gray's. He's too darn lazy to shave himself." At Gray's barbershop we missed Lutkins by only five minutes. He had just left – presumably for the poolroom. At the poolroom it appeared that he had merely bought a pack of cigarettes and gone on. Thus we pursued him, just behind him but never catching him, for an hour, till it was past one and I was hungry.

Village born as I was and in the city, often lonely for good coarse country wit, I was so delighted by Bill's cynical opinions on the barbers and clergymen and doctors and draymen of New Mullion that I scarcely cared whether I found Lutkins or not. "How about something to eat?" I suggested. Let's go to a restaurant and I'll buy you a lunch."

"Well, ought to go home to the old woman. And I don't care much for these restaurants – ain't but four of 'em and they're all rotten. Tell you what we'll do. Like nice scenery? There's an elegant view from Wade's Hill. We'll get the old woman to put us up a lunch – she won't charge you but half a dollar, and it'd cost you that for a greasy feed at the caif – and we'll go up there and have a Sunday-school picnic."

I knew that my friend Bill was not free from guile; I knew that his hospitality to the Young Fellow from the City was not altogether a matter of brotherly love. I was paying him for his time; in all I paid him for six hours (including the lunch hour!) at what was then a terrific price. But he was no more dishonest than I, who charged the whole thing up to the Firm, and it would have been worth paying him myself to have his presence.

His country serenity, his natural wisdom, was a refreshing bath to the city-twitching youngster. As we sat on the hill-top, looking across orchards and a creek which slipped among the willows, he talked of New Mullion, gave a whole gallery of portraits. He was cynical yet tender. No tiling had escaped him, yet there was nothing, no matter how ironically he laughed at it, which was beyond his understanding and forgiveness. In ruddy color he painted the rector's wife who, when she was most in debt, most loudly gave the responses of what he called the "Episcopalopian church." He commented on the boys who came home from college in "ice-cream pants," and on the lawyer who, after years of torrential argument with his wife, would put on either a linen collar or a necktie, but never both. He made them live. In that day I came to know New Mullion better than I did the city, and to love it better.

If Bill was ignorant of universities and of urban ways, yet much had he traveled in the realm of jobs. He had worked on railroad section gangs, in harvest fields and contractors' camps, and from his adventures he had brought back a philosophy of simplicity and laughter. He strengthened me. Nowadays, thinking of Bill, I know what people mean (though I abominate the simpering phrase) when they yearn over "real he-men."

We left that placid place of orchards and resumed the search for Oliver Lutkins. We could not find him. At last Bill cornered a friend of Lutkins and made him admit that "he guessed Oliver's gone out to his ma's farm, three miles north."

We drove out there, mighty with strategy.

"I know Oliver's ma. She's a terror. She's a cyclone." Bill sighed. "I took a trunk out for her once, and she pretty near took my hide off because I didn't treat it like it was a crate of eggs. She's somewheres about nine feet tall and four feet thick and quick's a cat, and she sure manhandles the Queen's English. I'll bet Oliver has heard that somebody's on his trail, and he's sneaked out there to hide behind ma's skirts. Well, we'll try bawling her out. But you better let me do it, boy. You may be great at Latin and geography, but you ain't educated in cussing." We drove into a poor farmyard; we were faced by an enormous and cheerful old woman. My guardian stockily stood before her and snarled, "Remember me? I'm Bill Magnuson, the expressman. I want to find your son Oliver. Friend of mine here from the city got a present for him."

"I don't know anything about Oliver, and I don't want to," she bellowed.

"Now you look here. We've stood for just about enough plenty nonsense. This young man is the attorney general's provost, and we got legal right to search any and all premises for the person of one Oliver Lutkins."

Bill made it sound terrific, and the Amazon seemed impressed. She retired into the kitchen and we followed. From the low old range, turned by years of heat into a dark silvery gray, she snatched a sadiron, and she marched on us, clamoring, "You just search all you want to – providin' you don't mind getting burnt to a cinder." She bellowed, she swelled, she laughed at our nervous retreat.

"Let's get out of this. She'll murder us," Bill groaned and, outside: "Did you see her grin? She was making fun of us. Can you beat that for nerve?"

I agreed that it was *lese-majeste.*

We did, however, make adequate search. The cottage had but one story. Bill went round it, peeking in at all the windows. We explored the barn and the stable; we were reasonably certain that Lutkins was not there. It was nearly time for me to catch the afternoon train, and Bill drove me to the station. On the way to the city I worried very little over my failure to find Lutkins, I was too absorbed in the thought of Bill Magnuson. Really, I considered returning to New Mullion to practice law. If I had found Bill so deeply and richly human, might I not come to love the yet uncharted Fritz Beineke and the Swede barber and a hundred other slow-spoken, simple, wise neighbors? I saw a candid and happy life beyond the neat learnings of universities and law firms. I was excited, as one who has found a treasure.

But if I did not think much about Lutkins, the office did. I found them in a state, next morning; the suit was ready to come to trial; they had to have Lutkins; I was a disgrace and a fool. That morning my eminent legal career almost came to an end. The Chief did everything but commit mayhem; he somewhat more than hinted that I would do well at ditch-digging. I was ordered back to New Mullion, and with me they sent an ex-lumber-camp clerk who knew Lutkins. I was rather sorry, because it would prevent my loafing again in the gorgeous indolence of Bill Magnuson.

When the train drew in at New Mullion, Bill was on the station platform, near his dray. What was curious was that the old dragon, Lutkins mother, was there talking to him, and they were not quarreling but laughing.

From the car steps I pointed Bill out to the lumber-camp clerk, and in young hero worship I murmured: "There's a fine fellow, a real man."

"Meet him here yesterday?" asked the-clerk.

"I spent the day with him."

"He help you hunt for Oliver Lutkins?"

"Yes, he helped me a lot."

"He must have! He's Lutkins himself!"

But what really hurt was that when I served the summons, Lutkins and his mother laughed at me as though I were a bright boy of seven, and with loving solicitude they begged me to go to a neighbor's house and take a cup of coffee.

"I told 'em about you, and they're dying to have a look at you," said Lutkins joyfully. "They're about the only folks in town that missed seeing you yesterday."

Some questions which will help to understand the tone of Sinclair Lewis` story "The Hack Driver":

1. The narrator of "The Hack Driver" is a Supreme Court justice recalling an experience he had as a young man. Why is this a good situation for the use of an ironic tone?
2. In describing his meeting with the hack driver, the narrator comments: "They are so ready to help a stranger, those villagers" (page 72, column 1, paragraph 6).

a) At what point did you realize that this comment and the passage from which it is taken are ironic?

b) Locate similar passages throughout the story and explain why they are ironic.

3. How do these passages prepare for the ending of the story?

***

Irwin Shaw

THE DRY ROCK

"We're late," Helen said, as the cab stopped at a light. "We're twenty minutes late." She looked at her husband accusingly.

"All right," Fitzsimmons said. "I couldn't help it. The work was on the desk and it had to ..."

This is the one dinner party of the year I didn't want to be late for," Helen said."So naturally . . ."

The cab started and was halfway across the street when the Ford sedan roared into it, twisting, with a crashing and scraping of metal, a high mournful scream of brakes, the tinkling of glass. The cab shook a little, then subsided.

The cabby, a little gray man, turned and looked back, worriedly. "Everybody is all right?" he asked nervously.

"Everybody is fine," Helen said bitterly, pulling at her cape to get it straight again after the jolting.

"No damage done," said Fitzsimmons, smiling reassuringly at the cabby, who looked very frightened.

"I am happy to hear that," the cabby said. He got out or his car and stood looking sadly at his fender, now thoroughly crumpled, and his headlight, now without a lens. The door of the Ford opened and its driver sprang out. He was a large young man with a light gray hat. He glanced hurriedly at the cab.

"Why don't yuh watch where the hell yer goin'?" he asked harshly.

"The light was in my favor," said the cabby. He was a small man of fifty, in a cap and ragged coat, and he spoke with a heavy accent. "It turned green and I started across. I would like your license, Mister."

"What for?" the man in the gray hat shouted. "Yer load's all right. Get on yer way. No harm done." He started back to his car.

The cabby gently put his hand on the young man's arm. "Excuse me, friend," he said. It is a five-dollar job, at least. I would like to see your license."

The young man pulled his arm and glared at the cabby. "Aaah," he said and swung. His fist made a loud, surprising noise against the cabby's nose. The old man sat down slowly on the running board of his cab,

holding his head wearily in his hands. The young man in the gray hat stood over him, bent over, fists still clenched. "Didn't I tell yuh no harm was done?" he shouted. "Why didn't yuh lissen t' me? I got a good mind to . . ."

"Now, see here," Fitzsimmons said, opening the rear door and stepping out.

"What d'you want?" The young man turned and snarled at Fitzsimmons, his fists held higher. "Who asked for you?"

"I saw the whole thing," Fitzsimmons began, "and I don't think you ..."

"Aaah," snarled the young man. "Dry up."

"Claude," Helen called. "Claude, keep out of this."

"Claude," the young man repeated balefully. "Dry up, Claude."

"Are you all right?" Fitzsimmons asked, bending over the cabby, who still sat reflectively on the running board, his head down, his old and swollen cap hiding his face, blood trickling down his clothes.

"I'm all right," the cabby said wearily. He stood up, looked wonderingly at the young man. "Now, my friend, you force me to make trouble. Police!" he called, loudly. "Police!"

"Say, lissen," the man in the gray shouted. "What the hell do yuh need to call the cops for? Hey, cut it out!"

"Police!" the old cabby shouted calmly, with fervor deep in his voice. "Police!"

"I ought to give it to yuh good." The young man shook his fist under the cabby's nose. He jumped around nervously. "This is a small matter," he shouted, "nobody needs the cops!"

"Police!" called the cabby.

"Claude," Helen put her head out the window. "Let's get out of here and let the two gentlemen settle this any way they please."

"I apologize!" The young man held the cabby by his lapels with both large hands, shook him, to emphasize his apology. "Excuse me. I'm sorry. Stop yelling police," he shouted.

"I'm going to have you locked up" the cabby said. He stood there, slowly drying the blood off his shabby coat with his cap. His hair was gray, but long and full, like a musi-cian's. He had a big head for his little shoulders, and a sad, lined little face and he looked older than fifty, to Fitzsimmons, and very poor, neglected, badly nourished. "You have committed a crime" the cabby said, "and there is a punishment for it."

"Will yuh talk to him?" The young man turned savagely to Fitzsimmons. "Will yuh tell him I'm sorry?"

"It's entirely up to him" Fitzsimmons said. "We're a half hour late" Helen announced bitterly. "The perfect dinner guests."

"It is not enough to be sorry," said the cab driver. "Police . . ."

"Say, listen, Bud," the young man said, his voice quick and confidential, "what's yer name?"

"Leopold Tarloff," the cabby said. "I have been driving a cab on the streets of New York for twenty years, and everybody thinks just because you're a cab driver they can do whatever they want to you."

"Lissen, Leopold," the young man pushed his light gray hat far back on his head. "Let's be sensible. I hit yer cab. All right. I hit you. All right,"

"What's all right about it?" Tarloff asked. "What I mean is, I admit it, I confess I did it, that's what I mean. All right." The young man grabbed Tarloff's short ragged arms as he spoke, intensely. "Why the fuss? It happens every day. Police are unnecessary. I'll tell yuh what I'll do with yuh Leopold. Five dollars, yuh say, for the fender. All right. And for the bloody, rose, another pound. What do yuh say? Everybody is satisfied. Yuh've made yerself a fiver on tire transaction; these good people go to their party without no more delay." Tarloff shook his arms free from the huge hands of the man in the gray hat. He put his head back and ran his fingers through his thick hair and spoke coldly. "I don't want to hear another word. I have never been so insulted in my whole life."

The young man stepped back, his arms wide, palms up wonderingly. "I insult him!" He turned to Fitzsimmons. "Did you hear me insult this party?" he asked.

"Claude!" Helen called. "Are we going to sit here all night?"

"A man steps up and hits me in the nose," Tarloff said. "He thinks he makes everything all right with five dollars. He is mistaken. Not with five hundred dollars."

"How much d'yuh think a clap in the puss is worth?" the young man growled. "Who d'yuh think y'are – Joe Louis?"

"Not ten thousand dollars," Tarloff said, on the surface calm, but quivering underneath. "Not for twenty thousand dollars. My dignity."

"His dignity!"

"What do you want to do?" Fitzsimmons asked, conscious of Helen glooming in the rear seat of the cab.

"I would like to take him to the station house and make a complaint," Tarloff said. "You would have to come with me, if you'd be so kind. What is your opinion on the matter?"

"Will yuh tell him the cops are not a necessity!" the young man said hoarsely. "Will yuh tell the bum?"

"Claude!" called Helen.

"It's up to you," Fitzsimmons said, looking with what he hoped was an impartial, judicious expression at Tarloff, hoping he wouldn't have to waste any more time. "You do what you think you ought to do."

Tarloff smiled, showing three yellow teeth in the front of his small and childlike mouth, curved and red and surprising in the lined and weather-beaten old hackie's face. "Thank you very much," he said. "I am glad to see you agree with me."

Fitzsimmons sighed.

"Yer drivin' me crazy!" the young man shouted at Tarloff. "Yer makin' life impossible!"

"To you," Tarloff said with dignity, "I talk from now, on only in a court of law. That's my last word."

The young man stood there, breathing' heavily, his fists clenching and unclenching, his pale gray hat shining in the light of a street lamp. A policeman turned the corner, walking in a leisurely and abstract manner, his eyes on the legs of a girl across the street.

Fitzsimmons went over to him. "Officer," he said, "there's a little job for you over here." The policeman regretfully took his eyes off the girl's legs and sighed and walked slowly over to where the two cars were still nestling against each other.

"What are yuh?" the young man was asking Tarloff, when Fitzsimmons came up with the policeman. "Yuh don't act like an American citizen. What are yuh?"

"I'm a Russian," Tarloff said. "But I'm in the country twenty-five years now, I know what the rights of an individual are."

"Yeah," said the young man hopelessly. "Yeah ..."

The Fitzsimmonses drove silently to the police station in the cab, with Tarloff driving slowly and carefully, though with hands that shook on the wheel. The policeman drove with the young man in the young man's Ford. Fitzsimmons saw the Ford stop at the cigar store and the young man jump out and go into the store, into a telephone booth.

"For three months," Helen said, as they drove, "I've been trying to get Adele Lowrie to invite us to dinner. Now we've finally managed it. Perhaps we ought to call her and invite the whole party down to night court."

"It isn't night court," Fitzsimmons said patiently. "It's a police station. And I think you might take it a little better. After all, the poor old man has no one else to speak up for him."

"Leopold Tarloff," Helen said. "It sounds impossible. Leopold Tarloff. Leopold Tarloff."

They sat in silence until Tarloff stopped the cab in front of the police station and opened the door for them. The Ford with the policeman and the young man drove up right behind them and they all went in together.

There were some people up in front of the desk lieutenant, a dejected-looking main with long mustaches and a loud, blonde woman who kept saying that the man had threatened her with a baseball bat three times that evening. Two Negroes with bloody bandages around their heads were waiting, too.

"It will take some time," said the policeman. "There are two cases ahead of you. My name is Kraus."

"Oh, my," said Helen.

"You'd better call Adele," Fitzsimmons said. "Tell her not to hold dinner for us."

Helen held her hand out gloomily for nickels.

"I'm sorry," Tarloff said anxiously, "to interrupt your plans for the evening."

"Perfectly all right," Fitzsimmons said, trying to screen his wife's face from Tarloff by bending over to search for the nickels in his pocket.

Helen went off, disdainfully holding her long formal skirt up with her hand, as she walked down the spit- and butt-marked corridor of the police station toward a pay telephone. Fitzsimmons reflectively watched her elegant back retreat down the hallway.

"I am tired!" Tarloff said. "I think I will have to sit down, if you will excuse me." He sat on the floor, looking up with a frail, apologetic smile on his red face worn by wind and rain and traffic policemen. Fitzsimmons suddenly felt like crying, watching the old man sitting there among the spit and cigarette butts, on the floor against the wall, with his cap off and his great bush of musician's gray hair giving the lie to the tired, weathered face below it.

Four men threw open the outside doors and walked into the police station with certainty and authority. They all wore the same light-gray hats with the huge flat brims. The young man who had hit Tarloff greeted them, guardedly. "I'm glad you're here, Pidgear," he said to the man who, by some subtle mixture of stance and clothing, of lift of eyebrow and droop of mouth, announced himself as leader.

They talked swiftly and quietly in a corner,

"A Russian!" Pidgear's voice rang out angrily. "There are 10,000 cab drivers in the metropolitan area, you have to pick a Russian to punch in the nose!"

"I'm excitable!" the young man yelled. "Can I help it if I'm excitable? My father was the same way; it's a family characteristic."

"Go tell that to the Russian," Pidgear said. He went over to one of the three men who had come with him, a large man who needed a shave and whose collar was open at the throat, as though no collar could he bought large enough to go all the way around that neck. The large man nodded, went over to Tarloff still sitting patiently against the wall.

"You speak Russian?" the man with the open collar said to Tarloff. "Yes, sir," Tarloff said.

The large man sat down slowly beside him, gripped Tarlofff's knee confidentially in his tremendous hairy hand, spoke excitedly, winningly, in Russian.

Pidgear and the young man who had hit Tarloff came over to Fitzsimmons, leaving the other two men in the gray hats, small, dark men with shining eyes, who just stood at the door and looked hotly on.

"My name is Pidgear," the man said to Fitzsimmons, who by now was impressed with the beautiful efficiency of the system that had been put into motion by the young driver of the Ford – an obviously legal mind like Pidgear's, a man who spoke Russian, and two intense men with gray hats standing on call just to see justice done, and all collected in the space of fifteen minutes. "Alton Pidgear," the man said, smiling professionally at Fitz-simmons. "I represent Mr. Rusk."

"Yeah," said the young man.

"My name is Fitzsimmons."

"Frankly, Mr. Fitzsimmons," Pidgear said, "I would like to see you get Mr. Tarloff to call this whole thing off. It's an embarrassing affair for all concerned; nobody stands to gain anything by pressing it."

Helen came back and Fitzsimmons saw by the expression on her face that she wasn't happy. "They're at the soup by now," she said loudly to Fitzsimmons. "Adele said for us to take all the time we want, they're getting along fine."

"Mr. Rusk is willing to make a handsome offer," Pidgear said. "Five dollars for the car, five dollars for the nose ..."

"Go out to dinner with your husband," Helen muttered, "and you wind up in a telephone booth in a police station. "Excuse me for being late, darling, but I'm calling from the 8th precinct, this is our night for street fighting."

"Sssh, Helen, please," Fitzsimmons said. He hadn't eaten since nine that morning and his stomach was growling with hunger.

"It was all a mistake," Pidgear said smoothly. "A natural mistake. Why should the man be stubborn? He is being reimbursed for everything, isn't he? I wish you would talk to him, Mr. Fitzsimmons; we don't want to keep you from your social engagements. Undoubtedly," Pidgear said, eyeing their evening clothes respectfully, "you and the madam were going to an important dinner party. It would be too bad to spoil an important dinner party for a little thing like this. Why, this whole affair is niggling," he said, waving his hand in front of Fitzsimmons' face. "Absolutely, niggling."

Fitzsimmons looked over to where Tarloff and the other Russian were sitting on the floor. From Tarloff's face and gestures, even though he was talking in deepest Russian, Fitzsimmons could tell Tarloff was still as firm as ever. Fitzsimmons looked closely at Rusk, who was standing looking at Tarloff through narrow, baleful eyes.

"Why're you so anxious?" Fitzsimmons asked.

Rusk's eyes clouded over and his throat throbbed against his collar with rage. "I don't want to appear in court!" he yelled. "I don't want the whole damn business to start all over again, investigation, lawyers, fingerprints..."

Pidgear punched him savagely in the ribs, his fist going a short distance, but with great violence.

"Why don't you buy time on the National Broadcasting System?" Pidgear asked. "Make an address, coast to coast!"

Rusk glared murderously for a moment at Pidgear, then leaned over toward Fitzsimmons, pointing a large blunt finger at him. "Do I have to put my finger in your mouth?" he whispered hoarsely.

"What does he mean by that?" Helen asked loudly. "Put his finger in your mouth? Why should he put his finger in your mouth?"

Rush looked at her with complete hatred, turned, too full for words, and stalked away, with Pidgear after him. The two little men in the gray hats watched the room without moving.

"Claude?" Helen began.

"Obviously," Fitzsimmons said, his voice low, "Mr. Rusk isn't anxious for anyone to look at his fingerprints. He's happier this way."

"You picked a fine night!" Helen shook her head sadly. "Why can't we just pick up and get out of here?"

Rusk, with Pidgear at his side, strode back. He stopped in front of the Fitzsimmonses. "I'm a family man," he said, trying to sound like one. "I ask yuh as a favor. Talk to the Russian."

"I had to go to Bergdorf Goodman," Helen said, too deep in her own troubles to bother with Rusk, "to get a gown to spend the evening in a police station. "Mrs. Claude Fitzsimmons was lovely last night in blue velvet and silver fox at Officer Kraus' reception at the 8th precinct. Other guests were the wellknown Leopold Tarloff, and the Messrs. Pidgear and Rusk, in gray hats. Other guests included the Russian ambassador and two leading Italian artillerymen, also in gray hats.'"

Pidgear laughed politely. "Your wife is a very witty woman," he said.

"Yes," said Fitzsimmons, wondering why he'd married her.

"Will yuh just ask?" Rusk demanded. "Can it hurt yuh?"

"We're willing to do our part," Pidgear said. "We even brought down a Russian to talk to him and clear up any little points in his own language. No effort is too great."

Fitzsimmons' stomach growled loudly. "Haven't eaten all day," he said, embarrassed.

"That's what happens," Pidgear said. "Naturally."

"Yeah," said Rusk.

"Perhaps I should go out and get you a malted milk," Helen suggested coldly.

Fitzsimmons went over to where Tarloff was sitting with the other Russian. The others followed him.

"Are you sure, Mr. Tarloff," Fitzsimm said, "that you still want to prosecute?"

"Yes," Tarloff said promptly.

"Ten dollars," Rusk said. "I offer yuh dollars. Can a man do more?"

"Money is not the object." With his cap Tarloff patted his nose, which was still bleeding slowly and had swelled enormously, making Tarloff look lopsided and monstrous.

"What's the object?" Rusk asked.

"The object, Mr. Rusk, is principle."

"You talk to him," Rusk said to Fitzsimmons.

"All right," Officer Kraus said, "you can go up there now."

They all filed in in front of the lieutenant sitting high at his desk.

Tarloff told his story, the accident, the wanton punch in the nose.

"It's true," Pidgear said, "that there was an accident, that there was a slight scuffle after by mistake. But the man isn't hurt. A little swelling in the region of the nose. No more." He pointed dramatically to Tarloff.

"Physically," Tarloff said, clutching his cap, talking with difficulty because his nose was clogged, "physically that's true. I am not badly hurt. But in a mental sense . . ." He shrugged. "I have suffered an injury."

"Mr. Rusk is offering the amount of ten dollars," Pidgear said. "Also, he apologi zes; he's sorry."

The lieutenant looked wearily down Rusk. "Are you sorry?" he asked.

"I'm sorry," said Rusk, raising his right hand. "On the Bible, I swear I'm sorry."

"Mr. Tarloff," the lieutenant said, "if you wish to press charges there are certain steps you will have to take. A deposition will have to be taken. Have you got witnesses?"

"Here," Tarloff said with a shy smile at Fitzsimmonses. "

"They will have to be present," the lieutenant said sleepily.

"Oh, great," Helen said.

"A warrant will have to be sworn out, there must be a hearing at which the witnesses must also be present..."

"Oh, great," Helen said.

"Then the trial," said the lieutenant.

"Great!" Helen said loudly.

"The question is, Mr. Tarloff," said the lieutenant, yawning, "are you willing to go through all that trouble?"

"The fact is," Tarloff said unhappily, "he hit me in the head without provocation. He is guilty of a crime on my person. He insulted me. He did me an injustice. The law exists for such things. One individual is not to be hit by another individual in the streets of the city without legal punishment." Tarloff was using his hands to try to get everyone, the Fitzsimmonses, the lieutenant, Pidgear, to understand. "There is a principle. The dignity of the human body. Justice. For a bad act a man suffers. It's an important thing ..."

"I'm excitable," Rusk shouted. "If yuh want. Yuh can hit me in the head."

"That is not the idea," Tarloff said.

"The man is sorry," the lieutenant said, wiping his eyes, "he is offering you the sum of ten dollars; if will be a long, hard job to bring this man to trial; it will cost a lot of the taxpayers' money; you are bothering these good people here who have other things to do. What is the sense in it, Mr. Tarloff?"

Tarloff scraped his feet slowly on the dirty floor, looked sadly, hopefully, at Fitzsimmons. Fitzsimmons looked at his wife, who was

glaring at Tarloff, tapping her foot sharply again and again. Fitzsimmons looked back at Tarloff, standing there, before the high desk, small, in his ragged coat and wild gray hair, his little worn face twisted and grotesque with the swollen nose, his eyes lost and appealing. Fitzsimmons shrugged sadly. Tarloff drooped inside his old coat, shook his head wearily, shrugged, deserted once and for all before the lieutenant's desk, on the dry rock of principle.

"OK," he said.

"Here," Rusk brought the ten-dollar bill out with magical speed.

Tarloff pushed it away. "Get out of here," he said, without looking up.

No one talked all the way to Adele Lowrie's house. Tarloff opened the door and sat, looking straight ahead; while they got out. Helen went to the door of the house and rang. Silently, Fitzsimmons offered Tarloff the fare. Tarloff shook his head. "You have been very good," he said. "Forget it."

Fitzsimmons put the money away slowly.

"Claude!" Helen called. "The door's open."

Fitzsimmons hated his wife, suddenly, without turning to look at her. He put out his hand and Tarloff shook it wearily.

"I'm awfully sorry," Fitzsimmons said. "I wish I..."

Tarloff shrugged. "That's all right," he said. "I understand." His face, in the shabby light of the cab, worn and old and battered by the streets of the city, was a deep well of sorrow. "There's no time. Principle." He laughed, shrugged. "Today there is no time for anything."

He shifted gears and the taxi moved slowly off, its motor grinding noisily.

"Claude!" Helen called.

"Oh, shut up!" Fitzsimmons said as he turned and walked into Adele Lowrie's house.

To increase understanding:

1. Since "The Dry Rock" by Irwin Shaw is told from the objective point of view, the speech of various individuals is extremely important in establishing character.

a) Describe the speech of Rusk, Tarloff, Fitzsimmons, and Helen.

b) With which character are you most sympathetic? Why?

c) List the other characters mentioned in order of the sympathy you feel for which, ending with the least sympathetic character.

d) Explain why recognizing sympathetic and unsympathetic characters is important in understanding a story.
2. a) Relate the speech of each character to the details Shaw gives about the appearance, dress, and manner of each.
b) How do such details strengthen the impression created by the characters` speech?
3. a) State the theme of "The Dry Rock".
b) Describe the conflicts developed in the story.
c) How does each conflict underscore Shaw`s theme?
4. Do you think that the characters in this story are used symbolically? Explain.
5. What is Shaw protesting against in "The Dry Rock"? Explain why you approve or disapprove of this protest.
6. One of the outstanding characteristics of modern short stories is the indirect way they are told. To a greater extent than their predecessors, modern writers suggest or imply more than they tell. Reread the first three paragraphs of "The Dry Rock". The dialogue states that a man and his wife are late for a dinner party. The characters are named; the immediate setting is a taxicab. But much more is implied. From what Helen says and how she says it we may infer that she is an impatient social-climber. From what Fitzsimmons says we may infer that he is a rather harried business man who attaches less importance to the dinner party than his wife does but who, nevertheless, is anxious to placate her. We also detect the first clues to the conflict that will develop between them. Find these clues.
7. Is the characterization of Tarloff more or less dependent upon implication than the characterization of Helen? Explain.
8. How much of the theme of "The Dry Rock" were you able to infer before reading that Tarloff was "deserted on the dry rock of principle?" Was this summation necessary to your understanding? Explain.

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John Cheever

THE SUTTON PLACE STORY

Deborah Tennyson waited in her nursery on Sunday morning for a signal from her father that would mean she could enter her parents' bedroom. The signal came late; for her parents had been up the night

before with a business friend from Minneapolis and they both had had a good deal to drink, but when Deborah was given the signal she ran clumsily down the dark hall, screaming with pleasure. Her father took her in his arms and kissed her good morning, and then she went to where her mother lay in bed. "Hello, my sweet, my love," her mother said. "Did Ruby give you your breakfast? Did you have a good breakfast?"

"The weather is lovely out," Deborah said. "Weather is divine."

"Be kind to poor Mummy," Robert said. "Mummy has a terrible hangover."

"Mummy has a terrible hangover," Deborah repeated, and she patted her mother's face lightly.

Deborah was not quite three years old. She was a beautiful girl with wonderful, heavy hair that had lights of silver and gold. She was a city child and she knew about cocktails and hangovers. Both her parents worked and she most often saw them in the early evening, when she was brought in to say good night. Katherine and Robert Tennyson would be drinking with friends, and Deborah would be allowed to pass the smoked salmon, and she had naturally come to assume that cocktails were the axis of the adult world. She made Martinis in the sand pile and thought all the illustrations of cups, goblets, and glasses in her nursery books were filled with Old-Fashioneds.

While the Tennysons waited for breakfast that morning, they read the Times. Deborah spread the second news section on the floor and began an elaborate fantasy that her parents had seen performed so often they hardly noticed it. She pretended to pick clothing and jewelry from the advertisements in the paper and to dress herself with these things. Her taste, Katherine thought, was avaricious and vulgar, but there was such clarity and innocence in her monologue that it seemed like a wonderful part of the bright summer morning. "Put on the shoes," she said, and pretended to put on shoes. "Put on the mink coat" she said.

"It's too hot for a mink coat, dear," Katherine told her. "Why don't you wear a mink scarf?"

"Put on the mink scarf," Deborah said. Then the cook came into the bedroom with the coffee and orange juice, and said that Mrs. Harley was there. Robert and Katherine kissed Deborah goodbye and told her to enjoy herself in the park.

The Tennysons had no room for a sleep-in nurse, so Mrs. Harley came to the house every morning and took care of Deborah during the day. Mrs. Harley was a widow. She had lived a hearty and comfortable life until her husband's death, but he had left her with no money and she had

been reduced to working as a nursemaid. She said that she loved children and had always wanted children herself, but this was not true. Children bored and irritated her. She was a kind and ignorant woman, and this, more than any bitterness, showed in her face when she took Deborah downstairs. She was full of old-country blessings for the elevator man and the doorman. She said that it was a lovely morning, wasn't it, a morning for the gods.

Mrs. Harley and Deborah walked to a little park at the edge of the river. The child's beauty was bright, and the old woman was dressed in black, and they walked hand in hand, like some amiable representation of winter and spring. Many people wished them good morning. "Where did you get that enchanting child?" someone asked. Mrs. Harley enjoyed these compliments. She was sometimes proud of Deborah, but she had been taking care of her for four months, and the little girl and the old woman had established a relationship that was not as simple as it appeared.

They quarrelled a good deal when they were alone, and they quarrelled like adults, with a cunning knowledge of each other's frailties. The child had never complained about Mrs. Harley; it was as though she already understood the evil importance of appearances. Deborah was taciturn about the way in which she spent her days. She would tell no one where she had been or what she had done. Mrs. Harley had found that she could count on this trait, and so the child and the old woman had come to share a number of secrets.

On several late-winter afternoons when the weather had been bitter and dark and Mrs. Harley had been ordered to keep Deborah out until five, she had taken, the child to the movies. Deborah had sat beside her in the dark theatre and never complained or cried. Now and then she craned her neck to look at the screen, but most of the time she just sat quiet, listening to the voices and the music. A second secret – and one much less sinful, in Mrs. Harley's opinion – was that on Sunday mornings, sometimes, and sometimes on weekday afternoons, Mrs. Harley had left the little girl with a friend of the Tennysons. This was a woman named Renee Hall, and there was no harm in it, Mrs. Harley thought. She had never told the Tennysons, but what they didn't know wouldn't hurt them. When Renee took Deborah on Sundays, Mrs. Harley went to the eleven-o'clock Mass, and there was nothing wrong, surely, with an old woman's going into the house of God to pray for her dead.

Mrs. Harley sat down on one of the benches in the park that morning. The sun was hot and it felt good on her old legs. The air was so clear that the perspective of the river seemed to have changed. You could throw a

stone onto Welfare Island, it seemed, and a trick of the light made the downtown bridges look much closer to the center of the city. Boats were going up and down the river, and as they cut the water they left in the air a damp and succinct odor, like the smell of fresh earth that follows a plow. Another nurse and child were the only other people in the park. Mrs. Harley told Deborah to go play in the sand. Then Deborah saw the dead pigeon. "The pigeon is sleeping," Deborah said. She stooped down to touch its wings.

"That dirty bird is dead, and don't you dare touch it!" Mrs. Harley shouted.

"The pretty pigeon is sleeping," Deborah said. Her face clouded suddenly and tears came into her eyes. She stood with her hands folded in front of her and her head bowed, an attitude that was a comical imitation of Mrs. Harley's reaction to sorrow, but the grief in her voice and her face came straight from her heart.

"Get away from that dirty bird!" Mrs. Harley shouted, and she got up and kicked the dead bird aside. "Go play in the sand," she told Deborah. "I don't know what's the matter with you. They must have given twenty-five dollars for that doll carriage you have up in your room, but you'd rather play with a dead bird. Go look at the river. Go look at the boats! And don't climb up on that railing, either, for you'll drop in, and with that terrible current that will be the end of you." Deborah walked obediently over to the river. "Here I am," Mrs. Harley said to the other nurse, "here I am, a woman going on sixty who lived forty years in a house of her own, sitting on a park bench like any old bum on a Sunday morning while the baby's parents are up there on the tenth floor sleeping off last night's liquor." The other nurse was a well-bred Scotch woman who was not interested in Mrs. Harley. Mrs. Harley turned her attention to the steps leading down to the park from Sutton Place, to watch for Renee Hall. The arrangement between them had been established for about a month.

Renee Hall had met Mrs. Harley and the child at the Tennysons', "where she had frequently been a guest for cocktails that winter. She had been brought there by a business friend of Katherine's. She was pleasant and entertaining, and Katherine had been impressed with her clothes. She lived around the corner and didn't object to late invitations and most men liked her. The Tennysons knew nothing about her other than that she was an attractive guest and did some radio acting.

On the evening when Renee first went to the Tennysons', Deborah had been brought in to say good night, and the actress and the neglected child had sat together on a sofa. There was an odd sympathy between the

two, and Renee let the child play with her jewelry and her furs. Renee was kind to Deborah, for she was at a time in her life when she appreciated kindness herself.

She was about thirty-five years old, dissipated and gentle. She liked to think of the life she was living as an overture, to something wonderful, final, and even conventional, that would begin with the next season or the season after that, but she was finding this hope more and more difficult to sustain. She had begun to notice that she always felt tired unless she was drinking. It was just that she didn't have the strength. When she was not drinking she was depressed, and when she was depressed she quarrelled with headwaiters and hairdressers, accused people in restaurants of staring at her, and quarrelled with some of the men who paid her debts. She knew this instability in her temperament well, and was clever at concealing it – among other things – from casual friends like the Tennysons.

Renee had come to the house again a week later, and when Deborah heard her voice, she escaped from Mrs. Harley and flew down the hall. The child's adoration excited Renee. They sat together again. Renee wore a string of furs and a hat piled with cloth roses, and Deborah thought her the most beautiful lady in the world.

After that, Renee went to the Tennysons often. It was a standing joke that she came there to see the child and not the Tennysons or their guests. Renee had always wanted children of her own, and now all her regrets seemed centered in Deborah's bright face. She began to feel possessive toward the child. She sent her expensive clothes and toys. "Has she ever been to the dentist?" she asked Katherine. "Are you sure of your doctor? Have you entered her in nursery school?" She made the mistake one night of suggesting that Deborah saw too little of her parents and lacked the sense of security they should give her. "She has eight thousand dollars in the bank in her own name" Katherine said. She was angry. Renee continued to send Deborah elaborate presents. Deborah named all her dolls and her pleasures after Renee, and on several nights she cried for Renee after she had been put to bed. Robert and Katherine thought it would be better if they didn't see Renee any more. They stopped asking her to the house. "After all" Katherine said, "I've always felt that there was something unsavory about that girl." Renee called them twice and asked them for cocktails, and Katherine said no, no thanks, they were all suffering with colds.

Renee knew that Katherine was lying and she determined to forget the Tennysons. She missed the little girl, but she might never have seen her again if it hadn't been for something that happened later that week. One

night she left a dull party early in the evening and went home by herself. She was afraid of missing telephone calls and she used a telephone-answering service. They told her that night that a Mrs. Walton had called and left a number.

Walton, Walton, Walton, Renee thought, and then she remembered that she had once had a lover named Walton. That would have been eight or ten years ago. She had once been taken to dinner with his mother, who was visiting from Cleveland. She remembered the evening clearly then. Walton drank too much and his mother had taken Renee aside and told her what a good influence she thought she was and couldn't she make him stop drinking and go to church oftener? Walton and she had quarrelled over his drinking, in the end, Renee remembered, and she had never seen him after that. He might be sick, or drunk, or getting married. She had no idea how old he was, because the thirties were all jumbled in her memory and she could not tell the beginning of the decade from its end. She dialled the number. It was a hotel on the West Side. Walton's voice, when she answered, was the small, cracked voice of an old woman. "Billy's dead, Renee," she said. She began to sob. "I'm so glad you called. He's going to be buried tomorrow. I wish you'd come to the funeral. I feel so alone."

Renee put on a black dress the next day and took a cab to the funeral parlor. As soon as she opened the door, she was in the hands of a gloved and obsequious usher, ready to sympathize with a grief more profound and sedate than any grief of hers would ever be. An elevator took her up to the chapel. When she heard the electric organ playing "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning!," she thought she would have to sit down before she had the strength to see Mrs. Walton, and then she saw Mrs. Walton standing by the open door of
the chapel. The two women embraced, and Renee was introduced to Mrs. Walton's sister, a Mrs. Henlein. They were the only people there. At the far end of the room, under a meagre show of gladioli, lay her dead lover. "He was so alone, Renee dear," Mrs. Walton said. "He was so terribly alone. He died alone, you know, in that furnished room." Mrs. Walton began to cry. Mrs. Henlein cried. A minister came in and the service began. Renee knelt and tried to remember the Lord's Prayer, but she got no further than ". . .on earth as it is in Heaven." She began to cry, but not because she remembered the man tenderly; she had not remembered him for years and it was only by forcing her memory that she could recall that he sometimes brought her breakfast in bed, and that he sewed the buttons on his own shirts. She cried for herself, she cried because she was afraid that she herself might die in the night, because she was alone in the world, because

her desperate and empty life was not an overture but an ending, and through it all she could see the rough, brutal shape of a coffin.

The three women left the chapel, helped by the obsequious usher, and rode down in the elevator. Renee said she couldn't go to the cemetery, that she had an appointment. Her hands were shaking with fright. She kissed Mrs. Walton goodbye and took a taxi to Sutton Place. She walked down to the little park where Deborah and Mrs. Harley would be. Deborah saw Renee first. She called Renee's name and ran toward her, struggling up the steps one at a time. Renee picked her up. "Pretty Renee," the little girl said. "Pretty, pretty Renee." Renee and the child sat down beside Mrs. Harley. "If you want to go shopping," she said, "I'll take Deborah for a few hours."

"Now, I don't know whether I ought to or not," Mrs. Harley said.

"She'll be perfectly safe with me," Renee said. "I'll take her up to my apartment and you can call for her there at five. Mr. and Mrs. Tennyson needn't know."

"Well, maybe I'll do that, now," Mrs. Harley said. In this way, Mrs. Harley had begun an arrangement that gave her a few free hours each week.

When Renee hadn't come by half past ten that Sunday, Mrs. Harley knew that she wasn't coming, and she was disappointed because she had counted on going to church that morning. She thought of the Latin and the bells, and the exhilarating sense of having been sanctified and cleansed that she always felt when she got up from her knees. It angered her to think that Renee was lying in bed and that only Renee's laziness was keeping her from prayer. As the morning passed, a lot of children had come to the park, and now she looked for Deborah's yellow coat in the crowd. The warm sun excited the little girl. She was running with a few children of her age. They were skipping and singing and circling the sand pile with no more purpose than swallows. Deborah tagged a little behind the others, because her coordination was still impulsive and she sometimes threw herself to the ground with her own exertions. Mrs. Harley called to her, and she ran obediently to the old woman and leaned on her knees and began to talk about some lions and little boys. Mrs. Harley asked if she would like to go and see Renee. "I want to go and stay with Renee," the little girl said. Mrs. Harley took her hand and they climbed the steps out of the playground and walked to the apartment house where Renee lived. Mrs. Harley called upstairs on the house phone, and Renee answered after a little delay. She sounded sleepy. She said she would be glad to watch the child for an hour if Mrs. Harley would bring her upstairs. Mrs. Harley took

Deborah up to the fifteenth floor and said goodbye to her there. Renee was wearing a negligee trimmed with feathers, and her apartment was dark.

Renee closed the door and picked the little girl up in her arms. Deborah's skin and hair were soft and fragrant, and Renee kissed her, tickled her, and blew down her neck until the child nearly suffocated with laughter. Then Renee pulled up the blinds and let some light into the room. The place was dirty and the air was sour. There were whiskey glasses and spilled ashtrays, and some dead roses in a tarnished silver bowl.

Renee had a lunch elate, and she explained this to Deborah. "I'm going to the Plaza for lunch," she said. "I'm going to take a bath and dress, and you'll have to be a good girl." She gave Deborah her jewel box arid turned on the water in the bathtub. Deborah sat quietly at the dressing table and loaded herself with necklaces and clips. While Renee was drying herself, the doorbell rang, and she put on a wrapper and went put to the living room. Deborah followed her. A man was there.

"I'm driving up to Albany," he told Renee. "Why don't you put some things in a bag and come on up with me? I'll drive you back on Wednesday."

"I'd love to, darling," Renee said, "but I can't. I'm having lunch with Helen Foss. She thinks she might be able to get me some work."

"Call off the lunch," the man said. "Gome on."

"I can't, darling," Renee said. "I'll see you on Wednesday."

"Who's the kid?" the man asked.

"It's the Tennysons' little girl. I take care of her while the nurse goes to church."

The man embraced Renee vigorously and kissed her and left after they arranged to meet Wednesday night.

"That was your rich Uncle Loathsome," Renee told the child.

"I have a friend. Her name is Martha," the little girl said.

"Yes, I'm sure you have a friend named Martha," Renee said. She noticed that the child was scowling and that her eyes were full of tears. "What's the matter, darling?" she asked. "What is the matter? Here, here, you sit on the sofa and listen to the radio. I've got to fix my face." She went into the bedroom to arrange her face and brush her hair.

A few minutes later the doorbell rang again. This time it was Mrs. Harley. "Did you enjoy the service?" Renee asked. "I'll put on Deborah's coat." She looked for the hat and coat. They were not where she had left them, and the child was not in the living room. Her heart began to beat fiercely. She went into her bedroom. "It does my soul so much good to go to church," she heard Mrs. Harley say. Renee thought in terror of the open

windows. The window in her bedroom was open. She looked out, and fifteen stories below she could see the sidewalk and the canopy and the doorman at the corner whistling for a cab and a blonde walking a poodle. Renee ran back to the living room.

"Where's Deborah?" Mrs. Harley asked. "I was dressing," Renee said. "She was in here a minute ago. She must have slipped out. She could have opened the door herself."

"You mean you've lost the little girl!" Mrs. Harley shouted.

"Please don't get excited," Renee said. "She can't have gone very far. The only way she could get downstairs would be the elevators." She went out the kitchen door and rang for the service elevator. She noticed the perilous service stairs. They were made of iron and concrete, painted a dirty gray, and they fell fifteen stories to the ground. She listened down the stair well, but all she could hear was the hiss of cooking and someone, way below, singing,

I'm a soldier, in the army of the Lord,
I'm a soldier,
In the army...

The service elevator was full of stinking garbage. "There was a little girl in my apartment," Renee said to the man who had brought the elevator up. "She's disappeared. Would you look for her?" Then she ran into the front hall and rang for the passenger elevator. "Why, yes," the man said. "I took a little girl down, about ten minutes ago. She had on a yellow coat." Renee smelled whiskey on his breath. She called to Mrs. Harley. Then she went back into the apartment to get some cigarettes. "I'm not going to stay here by myself," Mrs. Harley said. Renee pushed her into a chair. She closed the door and rode down in the elevator. "I thought it was strange, her going down by herself," the elevator man said. "I thought maybe she was going to meet somebody in the lobby." As he spoke, Renee smelled the whiskey on his breath again. "You've been drinking," she said. "If you hadn't been drinking, this wouldn't have happened. You ought to know that a child of that age can't be left alone. You ought not to drink while you're working."

When he reached the ground floor, he brought the elevator to a sudden stop and slammed the door open. Renee ran into the lobby. The mirrors, the electric candles, and the doorman's soiled ascot sickened her. "Yes," the doorman said. "It seems to me that I saw a little girl go out. I didn't pay much attention to it. I was out there, trying to get a cab." Renee ran into the street. The child was not there. She ran down to where she could see the river. She felt helpless and feeble, as though she had lost her

place in the city in which she had lived for fifteen years. The traffic on the street was heavy. She stood at the corner with her hands cupped to her mouth and screamed, "Deborah! Deborah!"

The Tennysons were going out that afternoon, and they had begun to dress when the telephone rang. Robert answered. Katherine could hear Renee's voice. ".. .I know it's a terrible thing, Bob, I know I should never have done it."

"You mean Mrs. Harley left her with you?"

"Yes, yes. I know it's a terrible thing. I've looked everywhere. Mrs. Harley is here now. Do you want her to come over?"

"No."

"Shall I call the police?"

"No," Robert said. "I'll call the police. Tell me what she was wearing." When Robert had finished talking with Renee, he called the police. "I'll wait here until you come up," he said. "Please come as quickly as you can."

Katherine was standing in the bathroom doorway. She walked over to Robert, and he took her in his arms. He held her firmly, and she began to cry. Then she left his arms and sat on the bed. He went to the open window. Down in the street he could see a truck with COMFORT CARPET COMPANY painted on its roof. There were some tennis courts in the next block, and people were playing tennis. There was a hedge of privet around the tennis courts, and an old woman was cutting some privet with a knife. She wore a round hat and a heavy winter coat that reached to her ankles. He realized that she was stealing the privet. She worked quickly and furtively, and she kept looking over her shoulder to make sure that no one saw her. When she had cut a good bunch of the green branches, she stuffed them into a bag and hurried down the street.

The doorbell rang. A police sergeant and a plainclothesman were there. They took off their hats. "This kind of thing is hard on the ladies," the sergeant said. "Now, if you'd give me the facts again, Mr. Tennyson. We already have men looking for her. You say she went down in the elevator herself. That was about an hour ago." He checked all the facts with Robert. "Now, I don't want to alarm either of you," he said, "but would anyone have any reason to kidnap the child? We have to consider every possibility."

"Yes," Katherine said suddenly and in a strong voice. She got up and began to walk back and forth in the room. "It may be unreasonable, but it's at least worth considering. She may have been kidnapped. I've seen that woman in the neighborhood twice this week and I had a feeling that she

was following me. I didn't think anything about it then. And she did write me that letter. I'm not making myself clear. You see, before we had Mrs. Harley to take care of Deborah, we had a woman named Mrs. Emerson. I quarrelled with her about Deborah, and she told me, while we were quarrelling – I never told you any of this, darling, because I didn't want to worry you and I didn't think any of it was important – but when we quarrelled, she said the child would be taken away from me. I tried to forget about it, because I thought she was eccentric. The city is full of strange women like that. Then I saw her on the street twice this week, and I had a sense that she was following me. She lives at the Hotel Princess. It's on the West Side. At least, she used to live there."

"I'll go over," Robert said. "I'll get the car."

"I'll drive you over, Mr. Tennyson," the sergeant said.

"Do you want to come?" Robert asked Katherine.

"No, darling," Katherine said. "I'll be all right."

Robert put on his hat, and he and the sergeant left. The elevator man spoke to Robert. "I'm very sorry, Mr. Tennyson," he said. "We all loved her in this house. I telephoned my wife and she went right over to St. John's and lit a vigil light for the little girl."

There was a police car in front of the house, and Robert and the sergeant got into it and drove west. Robert kept turning his head from side to side, and he did this to avert his eyes from the image of the child's death. He imagined the accident in the cliches of "Drive Safely" posters, badly drawn and in crude colors. He saw a stranger carrying the limp body away from the fenders of a taxi; he saw the look of surprise and horror on a lovely face that had never known any horror; he heard the noise of horns, the shrieking of brakes; he saw a car coming over the rise of a hill. He made a physical effort to force his eyes to look beyond these images into the bright street.

The day had got hot. A few low, swift clouds touched the city with shadow, and he could see the fast darkness travelling from block to block. The streets were crowded. He saw the city only in terms of mortal danger. Each manhole cover, excavation, and flight of stairs dominated the brilliance of the day like the reverse emphasis of a film negative, and he thought the crowds and the green trees in Central Park looked profane. The Hotel Princess was on a dingy street in the West Seventies. The air in the lobby was fetid. The desk clerk became uneasy when he saw the policeman. He looked for Mrs. Emerson's key and said that she was in. There was no telephone in her room. They could go up.

They went up in an elevator cage of gilded iron, driven by an old man. They knocked on the door, and Mrs. Emerson told them to come in. Robert had never known the woman. He had only seen her when she stood in the doorway of the nursery and sent Deborah in to say good night. She was English, he remembered. Her voice had always sounded troubled and refined. "Oh, Mr. Tennyson," she said when she recognized him. The sergeant asked her suddenly where she had been that morning.

"It's all right, Mrs. Emerson," Robert said. He was afraid she would become hysterical and tell them nothing. "Deborah ran away this morning. We thought you might know something about it. Mrs. Tennyson said you wrote her a letter."

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry to hear about Deborah," she said. It was the fine, small voice of someone who knew her place as a lady. "Yes, yes. Of course I wrote that letter to Mrs. Tennyson. It came to me in a dream that you would lose the little girl unless you were very careful. I have a profession, you know. I interpret dreams. I told Mrs. Tennyson when I left her that she should take very good care of the little girl. She was born, after all, under that dreadful new planet, Pluto. I was on the Riviera when they discovered it, in 1938. We knew something dreadful was going to happen then.

"I loved the little girl dearly and I regretted my disagreement with Mrs. Tennyson," she went on. "The little girl was one of the fire people – banked fire. I gave her palm a good deal of study. We were left alone a great deal, of course. She had a long life line and a good sense of balance and a good head. There were signs of imprudence there, but a great deal of that would depend upon you. I saw deep water there and some great danger, some great hazard. That's why I wrote the letter to Mrs. Tennyson. I never charged Mrs. Tennyson for any of my professional services."

"What did you and Mrs. Tennyson fight about?" the sergeant asked.

"We're wasting time," Robert said "We're wasting so much time. Let's go back." He got up and went out of the room, and the sergeant followed him. It took them a long time to drive back. The Sunday crowds crossing the streets; stopped them at every intersection. The plainclothesman was waiting in front of the house. "You'd better go up and see your wife," he told Robert. Neither the doorman nor the elevator man spoke to him. He stepped into his apartment and called to Katherine. She was in their bedroom, sitting by the window. She had a black book in her lap. He saw that it was the Bible. It was a Gideon copy that, a drunken friend of theirs had stolen from a hotel. They had used it once or twice as a

reference. Beyond the open window, he could see the river, a wide, bright field of light. The room was very still.

"What about Mrs. Emerson?" Katherine asked.

"It was a mistake. It was a mistake to think that she would hurt the child."

"Renee called again. She took Mrs. Harley home. She wants us to telephone her when we find Deborah. I never want to see Renee again."

"I know."

"If anything happens to Deborah," Katherine said, "I can never forgive myself. I can never forgive myself. I'll feel as though we had sacrificed her. I've been reading about Abraham." She opened the Bible and began to read. " 'And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.' " She closed the book. "The thing I'm afraid of is that I'll go out of my mind. I keep repeating our address and telephone number to myself. That doesn't make any sense, does it?"

Robert put his hand on her forehead and ran it over her hair. Her dark hair was parted at the side and brushed simply, like a child's.

"I'm afraid I'm going out of my mind," Katherine said. "You know what my first impulse was when you left me alone? I wanted to take a knife, a sharp knife, and go into my closet and destroy my clothes. I wanted to cut them to pieces. That's because they're so expensive. That's not a sensible thing to want to do, is it? But I'm not insane, of course. I'm perfectly rational.

"I had a little brother who died. His name was Charles – Charles, junior. He was named after my father and he died of some kind of sickness when he was two and a half years old, about Deborah's age. Of course it was very hard on Mother and Dad, but it wasn't anything as bad as this. You see, I think children mean much more to us than they did to our parents. That's what I've been thinking. I suppose it's because we're not as religious and because the way we live makes us much more vulnerable. I feel filthy with guilt. I feel as though I'd been a rotten mother and a rotten wife and as though this were punishment. I've broken every vow and every promise that I've ever made. I've broken all the good promises. When I was a little girl, I used to make promises on the new moon and the first snow. I've broken everything good. But I'm talking as though we'd lost her,

and we haven't lost her, have we? They'll find her, the policeman said they'd find her."

"They'll find her," Robert said.

The room darkened. The low clouds had touched the city. They could hear the rain as it fell against the building and the windows.

"She's lying somewhere in the rain!" Katherine cried. She wrenched her body around in the chair and covered her face. "She's lying in the rain."

"They'll find her," Robert said. "Other children get lost. I've read stories about it in the Times. This sort of thing happens to everyone who has children. My sister's little girl fell downstairs. She fractured her skull. They didn't think she was going to live."

"It does happen to other people, doesn't it?" Katherine asked. She turned and looked at her husband. The rain had stopped suddenly. It left in the air a smell as powerful as though ammonia had been spilled in the streets. Robert saw the rain clouds darken the bright river. "I mean there are all the sicknesses and the accidents," Katherine said, "and we've been so lucky. You know, Deborah hasn't had any lunch. She'll be terribly hungry. She hasn't had anything to eat since breakfast."

"I know."

"Darling, you go out," Katherine said. "It will be easier for you than staying here." "What will you do?"

"I'm going to clean the living room. We left the windows open last night and everything's covered with soot. You go out. I'll be all right." She smiled. Her face was swollen from crying. "You go out. It will be easier for you, and I'll clean the room."

Robert went down again. The police car was still parked in front of the house. A policeman came up to Robert, and they talked for a while. "I'm going to look around the neighborhood again," the policeman said, "if you want to come with me." Robert said that he would go. He noticed that the policeman carried a flashlight.

Near the apartment house was the ruin of a brewery that had been abandoned during prohibition. The sidewalk had been inherited by the dogs of the neighborhood and was littered with their filth. The basement windows of a nearby garage were broken, and the policemen flashed his light through a window frame. Robert started when he saw some dirty straw and a piece of yellow paper. It was the color of Deborah's coat. He said nothing and they walked along. In the distance he could hear the vast afternoon noise of the city.

There were some tenements near the brewery. They were squalid, and over the door to one hung a crude sign: "Welcome Home Jerry." The

iron gate that led to the steep cellar stairs was open. The policeman flashed his light down the stairs. They were broken. There was nothing there.

An old woman sat on the stoop of the next house, and she watched them suspiciously when they looked down the cellar stairs. "You'll not find my Jimmy there," she screamed, "you – you –" Someone threw open a window and told her to shut up. Robert saw that she was drunk. The policeman paid no attention to her. He looked methodically into the cellar of each house, and then they went around a corner. There were stores, here, along the front of an apartment house. There were no stairs or areaways.

Robert heard a siren. He stopped, and stopped the policeman with him. A police car came around the corner and drew up to the curb where they stood. "Hop in, Mr. Tennyson," the driver said. "We found her. She's down at the station." He started the siren, and they drove east, dodging through the traffic. "We found her down on Third Avenue," the policeman said. "She was sitting out in front of an antique store, eating a piece of bread. Somebody must have given her the bread. She isn't hungry."

She was waiting for him at the station house. He put his hands on her and knelt in front of her and began to laugh. His eyes were burning. "Where have you been, Deborah? Who gave you the bread? Where have you been? Where have you been?"

"The lady gave the bread," she said. "I had to find Martha."

"What lady gave you the bread, Deborah? Where have you been? Who is Martha? Where have you been?" He knew that she would never tell him and that as long as he lived he would never know, and against his palm he could feel the strong beating of her heart, but he went on asking, "Where have you been? Who gave you the bread? Who is Martha?"

To increase understanding:

1. In the opening paragraphs of the story how does Cheever show that Deborah saw too little of her parents.
2. What can you say about the Tennysons` way of living?
3. What is the narrative point of view of "The Sutton Place Story"?
4. During the course of the story Renée`s attitude to Deborah changes. How does it change?
5. Did Deborah`s nurse take good care of her? What way did they spend time in?
6. Why did Katherine consider that her daughter had the sense of security?
7. What kind of games did Deborah prefer?

8. Comment on the following: "Deborah named all her dolls and her pleasures after Renée".
9. What did Deborah's escape make her mother think about?
10. Do you think the way the Tennysons treat the girl may change after the incident? Justify your answer.

***

John Updike

GESTURING

She told him with a little gesture he had never seen her use before. Joan had called from the station, having lunched, Richard knew, with her lover. It was a Saturday, and his older son had taken his convertible; Joan's Volvo was new and for several minutes refused to go into first gear for him. By the time he had reached the center of town, she had walked down the main street and up the hill to the green. It was September, leafy and warm, yet with a crystal chill on things, an uncanny clarity. Even from a distance they smiled to see each other. She opened the door and seated herself, fastening the safety belt to silence its chastening buzz. Her face was rosy from her walk, her city clothes looked like a costume, she carried a small package or two, token of her "shopping." Richard tried to pull a U-turn on the narrow street, and in the long moment of his halting and groping for reverse gear, she told him. "Darley" she said and, oddly, tentatively, soundlessly, tapped the fingers of one hand into the palm of the other, a gesture between a child's clap of glee and an adult's signal for attention, "I've decided to kick you out. I'm going to ask you to leave town."

Abruptly full, his heart thumped; it was what he wanted. "O.K.," he said carefully. "If you think you can manage." He glanced at her rosy, alert face to see if she meant it; he could not believe she did. A red, white, and blue mail truck that had braked to a stop behind them tapped its horn, more reminder than rebuke; the Maples were known in the town. They had lived here most of their married life.

Richard found reverse, backed up, completed the turn, and they headed home, skimming. The car, so new and stiff, in motion felt high and light, as if it, too, had just been vaporized in her little playful clap. "Things are stagnant," she explained, "stuck; we're not going anywhere."

"I will not give her up," he interposed.

"Don't tell me, you've told me."

"Nor do I see you giving him up."

"I would if you asked. Are you asking?"

"No. Horrors. He's all I've got."

"Well, then. Go where you want, I think Boston would be most fun for the kids to visit. And the least boring for you."

"I agree. When do you see this happening?" Her profile, in the side of his vision, felt brittle, about to break if he said a wrong word, too rough a word. He was holding his breath, trying to stay up, high and light, like the car. They went over the bump this side of the bridge; cigarette smoke jarred loose from Joan's face.

"As soon as you can find a place," she said. "Next week. Is that too soon?" "Probably."

"Is this too sad? Do I seem brutal to you?"

"No, you seem wonderful, very gentle and just, as always. It's right. It's just something I couldn't do myself. How can you possibly five without me?"

In the edge of his vision her face turned; he turned to see, and her expression was mischievous, brave, flushed. They must have had wine at lunch. "Easy," Joan said. He knew it was a bluff, a brave gesture; she was begging for reprieve. But he held silent, he refused to argue. This way, he had her pride on his side.

The curves of the road poured by, mailboxes, trees, some of which were already scorched by the turn of the year. He asked, "Is this your idea, or his?"

"Mine. It came to me on the train. All Andy said was, I seemed to be feeding you all the time."

Richard had been sleeping, most nights, in the weeks since their summer of separated vacations, in a borrowed seaside shack two miles from their home; he tried to sleep there, but each evening, as the nights grew longer, it seemed easier, and kinder to the children, to eat the dinner Joan had cooked. He was used to her cooking; indeed, his body, every cell, was composed of her cooking. Dinner would lead to a post-dinner drink, while the children (two were off at school, two were still homebound) plodded through their homework or stared at television, and drinking would lead to talking, confidences, harsh words, maudlin tears, and an occasional uxorious collapse upward, into bed. She was right; it was not healthy, nor progressive. The twenty years were by when it would have been convenient to love each other.

He found the apartment in Boston on the second day of hunting. The real-estate agent had red hair, a round bottom, and a mask of make-up worn as if to conceal her youth.

Richard felt happy and scared, going up and down stairs behind her. Wearier of him than he was of her, she fidgeted the key into the lock, bucked the door open with her shoulder, and made her little openhanded gesture of helpless display.

The floor was neither wall-to-wall shag nor splintered wood, but black-and-white tile, like the floor in a Vermeer; he glanced to the window, saw the skyscraper, and knew this would do. The skyscraper, for years suspended in a famous state of incompletion, was a beautiful disaster, famous because it was a disaster (glass kept falling from it) and disastrous because it was beautiful: the architect had had a vision. He had dreamed of an invisible building, though immense; the glass was meant to reflect the sky and the old low brick skyline of Boston, and to melt into the sky. Instead, the windows of mirroring glass kept falling to the street and were replaced by ugly opacities of black plywood. Yet enough reflecting surface remained to give an impression, through the wavery old window of this sudden apartment, of huge blueness, a vertical cousin to the horizontal huge blueness of the sea that Richard awoke to each morning, in the now bone-deep morning chill of his unheated shack. He said to the redhead, "Fine," and her charcoal eyebrows lifted. His hands trembled as he signed the lease, having written "Sep" in the space for marital status. From a drugstore he phoned the news, not to his wife, whom it would sadden, but to his mistress, equally far away. "Well," he told her in an accusing voice, "I found one. I signed the lease. Incredible. In the middle of all this fine print, there was the one simple sentence, There shall be no water beds.'"

"You sound so shaky."

"I feel I've given birth to a black hole."

"Don't do it, if you don't want to." From the way Ruth's voice paused and faded, he imagined she was reaching for a cigarette, or an ashtray, settling herself to a session of lover babying.

"I do want to. She wants me to. We all want me to. Even the children are turned on. Or pretend to be."

She ignored the "pretend." "Describe it to me."

All he could remember was the floor, and the view of the blue disaster with reflected clouds drifting across its face. And the redhead. She had told him where to shop for food, where to do his laundry. He would have laundry?

"It sounds nice," was Ruth's remote response, when he had finished saying what he could. Two people, one of them a sweating black mailman, were waiting to use the phone booth. He hated the city already, its crowding, its hunger.

"What sounds nice about it?" he snapped.

"Are you so upset? Don't do it if you don't want to."

"Stop saying that." It was a tedious formality both observed, the pretense that they were free, within each of their marriages, to do as they pleased; guilt avoidance was the game, and Ruth had grown expert at it. Her words often seemed not real words but blank counters, phrases of an etiquette, partitions in a maze. Whereas his wife's words always opened in, transparent with meaning.

"What else can I say," Ruth asked, "except that I love you?" And at its far end, the phone sharply sighed. He could picture the gesture: she had turned her face away from the mouthpiece and forcefully exhaled, in that way she had, expressive of exasperation even when she felt none, of exhaling and simultaneously stubbing out a cigarette smoked not halfway down its length, so it crumpled under her impatient fingers like an insect fighting to live. Her conspicuous unthriftiness pained him. All waste pained him. He wanted abruptly to hang up but saw that, too, as a wasteful, empty gesture, and hung on.

Alone in his apartment, he discovered himself a neat and thrifty housekeeper. When a woman left, he could promptly set about restoring his bachelor order, emptying the ashtrays that, if the visitor had been Ruth, brimmed with long pale bodies prematurely extinguished and, if Joan, with butts so short as to be scarcely more than niters. Neither woman, it somehow pleased him to observe, ever made more than a gesture toward cleaning up – the bed a wreck, the dishes dirty, each of his three ashtrays (one glass, one pottery, and one a tin cookie-jar lid) systematically touched, like the bases in baseball. Emptying them, he would smile, depending, at Ruth's messy morgue or at Joan's nest of filters, discreet as white pebbles in a bowl of narcissi. When he chastised Ruth for stubbing out cigarettes still so long, she pointed out, of course, with her beautiful unblinking assumption of her own primary worth, how much better it was for her, for her lungs, to kill the cigarette early; and, of course, she was right, better other-destructive than self-destructive. Ruth was love, she was life, that was why he loved her. Yet Joan's compulsive economy, her discreet death wish, was as dearly familiar to him as her tiny repressed handwriting and the tight curls of her pubic hair, so Richard smiled emptying her ashtrays also. His smile was a gesture without an audience.

He, who had originated his fact among parents and grandparents, siblings and pets, and who had developed it for a public of schoolmates and teachers, and who had carried it to new refinements before an initially rapt audience of his own children, could not in solitude stop performing. He had engendered a companion of sorts, a single grand spectator – the blue skyscraper. He felt it with him all the time. I Blue, it showed greener than the sky. For a time Richard was puzzled, why the clouds reflected in it drifted in the same direction as the clouds behind it. With an effort of spatial imagination he perceived that a mirror does not reverse our motion, though it does transpose our ears, and gives our mouths a tweak, so that the face even of a loved one looks unfamiliar and ugly when seen in a mirror, the way she – queer thought! – always sees it. He saw that a mirror posed in its midst would not affect the motion of an army; and often half a reflected cloud matched the half of another beyond the building's edge, moving as one, pierced by a jet trail as though by Cupid's arrow. The disaster sat light on the city's heart. At night, it showed as a dim row of little lights, as if a slender ship were sailing the sky, and during a rain or fog, it vanished entirely, while the brick chimney pots and ironstone steeples in Richard's foreground swarthily intensified their substance. He tried to analyze the logic of window replacement, as revealed in the patterns of gap and glass. He detected no logic, just the slow-motion labor of invisible workers, emptying and filling cells of glass with the brainlessness of bees. If he watched for many minutes, he might see, like the condensation of a dewdrop, a blank space go glassy, and reflective, and greenish-blue. Days passed before he realized that, on the old glass near his nose, the wavery panes of his own window, ghostly previous tenants armed with diamonds had scratched initials, names, dates, and, cut deepest and whitest of all, the touching, comical vow, incised in two trisyllabic lines,

With this ring
I thee, wed

What a transparent wealth of previous lives overlay a city's present joy! As he walked the streets, his own happiness surprised him. He had expected to be sad, guilty, bored, instead, his days were snugly filled with his lists, his quests for food and hardware, his encounters with such problematical wife substitutes as the laundromat, where students pored over Hesse and picked at their chins while their clothes tumbled in eternal circular fall, where young black housewives hummed as they folded white linen. What an unexpected pleasure, walking home in the dark hugging to himself clean clothes hot as fresh bread, past the bow windows of Back

Bay glowing like display cases. He felt sober and exhilarated and justified at the hour when, in the suburbs, rumpled from the commute, he would be into his hurried second pre-dinner drink. He liked the bringing home of food the tautological satisfaction of cooking a meal and then eating it all, as the radio fed Bach or Bechet into his ears and a book gazed open-faced from the reading stand he had bought; he liked the odd orderly game of consuming before food spoiled and drinking before milk soured. He liked the way airplanes roamed the brown night sky, a second, thinner city laid upon this one, and the way police sirens sang, scooping up some disaster not his. *It could not last, such happiness. It was an interim, a holiday.* But an oddly clean and just one, rectilinear, dignified, though marred by gaps of sudden fear and disorientation. Each hour had to be scheduled, lest he fall through. He moved like a water bug, like a skipping stone, upon the glassy tense surface of his new life. He walked everywhere. Once he walked to the base of the blue skyscraper, his companion and witness. It was hideous. Heavily planked and chicken-wired tunnels, guarded by barking policemen, protected pedestrians from falling glass and the owners of the building, already millions in the hole, from more lawsuits. Trestles and trucks jammed the cacophonous area. The lower floors were solid plywood, of a Stygian black; the building, so lovely in air, had tangled mucky roots. Richard avoided walking that way again.

When Ruth visited, they played a game, of washing – scouring, with a Brillo pad – one white square of the Vermeer floor, so eventually it would all appear clean. The black squares they ignored. Naked, scrubbing, Ruth seemed on her knees a plump little steed, long hair swinging, soft breasts swaying in rhythm to her energetic circular strokes. Behind, her pubic hair, uncurly, made a kind of nether mane. So lovably strange, she rarely was allowed to clean more than one square. Time, so careful and regular for him sped for them, and vanished. There seemed time even to talk only at the end, her hand on the door. She asked, "Isn't that building amazing, with the sunset in it?"

"I love that building. And it loves me."

"No. It's me who loves you."

"Can't you share?"

"No."

She felt possessive about the apartment; when he told her Joan had been there, too, and, just for "fun," had slept with him, her husband, Ruth wailed into the telephone, "In our bed?"

"In my bed," he said, with uncharacteristic firmness.

"In your bed," she conceded, her voice husky as a sleepy child's.

Evening would soften its shade to slate; night would envelop its sides. Richard's focus shortened and he read, with irritation, for the hundredth time, that impudent, pious marring, that bit of litany, etched bright by the sun's fading fire.

With this ring I thee wed

Ruth, months ago, had removed her wedding ring. Coming here to embark with him upon an overnight trip, she wore on that naked finger, as a reluctant concession to imposture, an inherited diamond ring. In the hotel, Ruth had been distressed to lose her name in the false assumption of his, though he explained it to her as a mere convenience. "But I like who I am now," she protested. That was, indeed, her central jewel, infrangible and bright: She liked who she was. They had gone separate ways and, returning before him, she had asked at the hotel desk for the room key by number.

The clerk asked her her name. It was a policy. He would not give the key to a number.

"And what did you tell him your name was?" Richard asked, in this pause of her story. In her pause and dark-blue stare, he saw recreated her hesitation when challenged by the clerk. Also, she had been, before her marriage, a second-grade teacher, and Richard saw now the manner – prim, fearfill, and commanding – with which she must have confronted those roomfuls of children. "I told him Maple." Richard had smiled. "That sounds right."

Taking Joan out to dinner felt illicit. She suggested it, for "fun," at the end of one of the children's Sundays. He had been two months in Boston, new habits had replaced old, and it was tempting to leave their children, who were bored and found it easier to be bored by television than by their father, this bossy visitor. "Stop telling me you're bored," he had scolded John, the most docile of his children and the one he felt guiltiest about. "Fifteen is supposed to be a boring age. When I was fifteen, I lay around reading science fiction. You lie around looking at Kung Fu. At least I was learning to read."

"It's good," the child protested, his adolescent voice cracking in fear of being distracted from an especially vivid piece of slow-motion *tax chi*. Richard, when living here, had watched the program with him often enough to know that it was, in a sense, good, that the hero's Oriental passivity, relieved, by spurts of mystical violence, was insinuating into the child a system of ethics, just as Richard had taken ideals of behavior from dime movies and comic books – coolness from Bogart, debonair recklessness from Errol Flynn, duality and deceit from Superman.

He dropped to one knee beside the sofa where John, his upper lip fuzzy and his eyebrows manly dark, stoically gazed into the transcendent flickering; Richard's own voice nearly cracked, asking, "Would it be less boring if Dad still lived here?" "No-o/i": the answer was instantaneous and impatient, as if the question had been anticipated. Did the boy mean it? His eyes did not for an instant glance sideways, perhaps out of fear of betraying himself, perhaps out of genuine boredom with grownups and their gestures. On television, satisfyingly, gestures killed. Richard rose from his supplicant position, relieved to hear Joan coming down the stairs. She was dressed to go out, in the timeless black dress with the scalloped neckline, and a collar of Mexican silver. At least – a mark, perhaps, of their fascinating maladjustment – he had never bored her, nor she, he dreaded to admit, him. He was wary. He must be wary. They had had it. They must have had it.

Yet the cocktails, and the seafood, and the wine, displaced his wariness; he heard himself saying, to the so familiar and so strange face across the table, "She's lovely, and loves me, you know" (he felt embarrassed, like a son suddenly aware that his mother, though politely attentive, is indifferent to the urgency of an athletic contest being described), "but she does spell everything out, and wants everything spelled out to her. It's
like being back in the second grade. And the worst thing is, for all this explaining, for all this glorious fucking, she's still not real to me, the way – you are." His voice did break, he had gone too far.

Joan put her left hand, still bearing their wedding ring, flat on the tablecloth in a sensible, level gesture. "She will be," she said. "It's a matter of time."

The old pattern was still the one visible to the world. The waitress, who had taught their children in Sunday school, greeted them as if their marriage were unbroken; they ate in this restaurant three or four times a year, and were on schedule. They had known the contractor who had built it, this mock-antique wing, a dozen years ago, and then left town, bankrupt, disgraced, and oddly cheerful. His memory hovered between the beams, Another couple, older than the Maples – the husband had once worked with Richard on a town committee – came up to their booth beaming, jollying, loving, in that obligatory American way. Did they know? It didn't matter, in this country of temporary arrangements. The Maples jollied back as one, and tumbled loose only when the older couple moved away. Joan gazed after their backs. "I wonder what they have," she asked, "that we didn't?"

"Maybe they had less," Richard said, "so they didn't expect more."

"That's too easy." She was a shade resistant to his veiled compliments; he was grateful. Please resist.

He asked, "How do you think the kids are doing? John seemed withdrawn." "That's how he is. Stop picking at him."

"I just don't want him to think he has to be your little husband. That house feels huge now."

"You're telling me."

"I'm sorry." He was; he put his hands palms up on the table. "Isn't it amazing," Joan said, "how a ftill bottle of wine isn't enough for two people anymore?"

"Should I order another bottle?" He was dismayed, secretly: the waste.

She saw this and said, "No. Just give me half of what's in your glass." "You can have it all." He poured.

A swallow of his wine inside her, Joan began to swell with impending hilarity. She leaned as close as the table would permit. "You must promise" – a gesture went with "promise," a protesting little splaying of her hands – "never to tell this to anybody, not even Ruth."

"Maybe you shouldn't tell me. In fact, don't." He understood why she had been laconic up to now; she had been wanting to talk about her lover, holding him warm within her like a baby. She was going to betray him. "Please don't," Richard said.

"Don't be such a prig. You're the only person I can talk to; it doesn't mean a thing."

"That's what you said about our going to bed in my apartment."

"Did she mind?"

"Incredibly."

Joan laughed, and Richard was struck, for the thousandth time, by the perfection of her teeth, even and rounded and white, bared by her lips as if in proof of a perfect skull, an immaculate soul. Her glee whirled her to a kind of heaven as she confided stories about herself and Andy – how he and a motel manageress had quarreled over the lack of towels in a room taken for the afternoon, how he fell asleep for exactly seven minutes each time after making love. Richard had known Andy for years, a slender, swarthy specialist in corporation law, himself divorced, though professionally engaged in the finicking arrangement of giant mergers. A fussy dresser, a churchman, he brought to many occasions an undue dignity and perhaps had been more attracted to Joan's surface glaze, her smooth New England ice, than to the mischievous demons underneath. "My psychiatrist thinks Andy was symbiotic with you, and now that you're gone, I can see him as absurd."

"He's not absurd. He's good, loyal, handsome, prosperous. He tithes. He has a twelve handicap. He loves you."

"He protects you from me, you mean. His buttons! – we have to allow a half hour afterward for him to do up all his buttons. If they made four-piece suits, he'd wear them. And he washes – he washes everything, every time."

"Stop," Richard begged. "Stop telling me all this."

But she was giddy amid the spinning mirrors of her betrayals, her face so flushed and tremulous the waitress sympathetically giggled, pouring the Maples their coffee. Joan's face was pink as a peony, her eyes a blue pale as ice, almost transparent. He saw through her words to what she was saying – that these lovers, however we love them, are not us, are not sacred as reality is sacred. We are reality. We have made children. We gave each other our young bodies. We promised to grow old together.

Joan described an incident in her house, once theirs, when the plumber unexpectedly arrived. Richard had to laugh with her; that house's plumbing problems were an old joke, an ongoing saga. "The back-door bell rang, Mr. Kelly stomped right in, you know how the kitchen echoes in the bedroom, we had had it." She looked, to see if her meaning was clear. He nodded. Her eyes sparkled. She emphasized, of the knock, "Just at the very moment" and, with a gesture akin to the gentle clap in the car a world ago, drew with one fingertip a v in the air, as if beginning to write "very." The motion was eager, shy, exquisite, diffident, trusting: he saw all its meanings and knew that she would never stop gesturing within him, never; though a decree come between them, even death, her gestures would endure, cut into glass.

To increase understanding:

1. How does the story reveal Updike`s interest in psychology?
2. Reread the abstract "But she... old together". How does this passage give you deeper insight into Richard`s mental confusion?
3. Why is the story entitled "Gesturing"?
4. Review the characterization of Richard and Joan and trace the implications that provide important clues to their traits and to the nature of their conflict.
5. Updike gives a detailed description of the reflection. What is it done for? What mood does Richard`s attempt "to analyze the logic of window replacement" create?
6. Updike remarks that Richard "could not in solitude stop performing". How does this statement reveal Richard`s real feelings?
7. The details of Joan`s appearance are frequent and vivid in the story. What is the function of this portraiture?
8. Comment on: " ... she would never stop gesturing within him, never".

Toni Morrison

RECITATIF

My mother danced all night and Roberta's was sick. That's why we were taken to St. Bonny's. People want to put their arms around you when you tell them you were in a shelter, but it really wasn't bad. No big long room with one hundred beds like Bellevue. There were four to a room, and when Roberta and me came, there was a shortage of state kids, so we were the only ones assigned to 406 and could go from bed to bed if we wanted to. And we wanted to, too. We changed beds every night and for the whole four months we were there we never picked one out as our own permanent bed.

It didn't start out that way. The minute I walked in and the Big Bozo introduced us, I got sick to my stomach. It was one thing to be taken out of your own bed early in the morning-it was something else to be stuck in a strange place with a girl from a whole other race. And Mary, that's my mother, she was right. Every now and then she would stop dancing long enough to tell me something important and one of the things she said was that they never washed their hair and they smelled funny. Roberta sure did. Smell funny, I mean. So when the Big Bozo (nobody ever called her Mrs. Itkin, just like nobody every said St. Bonaventure)-when she said, "Twyla, this is Roberta. Roberta, this is Twyla. Make each other welcome." I said, "My mother won't like you putting me in here."

"Good," said Bozo. "Maybe then she'll come and take you home."

How's that for mean? If Roberta had laughed I would have killed her, but she didn't. She just walked over to the window and stood with her back to us."

Turn around," said the Bozo. "Don't be rude. Now Twyla. Roberta. When you hear a loudbuzzer, that's the call for dinner. Come down to the first floor. Any fights and no movie." And then, just to make sure we knew what we would be missing, "The Wizard of Oz.

"Roberta must have thought I meant that my mother would be mad about my being put in the shelter. Not about rooming with her, because as soon as Bozo left she came over to me and said, "Is your mother sick too?"

"No," I said. "She just likes to dance all night."

"Oh," she nodded her head and I liked the way she understood things so fast. So for the moment it didn't matter that we looked like salt and pepper standing there and that's what the other kids called us sometimes. We were

eight years old and got F's all the time. Me because I couldn't remember what I read or what the teacher said. And Roberta because she couldn't read at all and didn't even

listen to the teacher. She wasn't good at anything except jacks, at which she was a killer: pow scoop pow scoop pow scoop.

We didn't like each other all that much at first, but nobody else wanted to play with us because we weren't real orphans with beautiful dead parents in the sky. We were dumped. Even the New York City Puerto Ricans and the upstate Indians ignored us. All kinds of kids were in there, black ones, white ones, even two Koreans. The food was good, though. At least I thought so. Roberta hated it and left whole pieces of things on her plate: Spam, Salisbury steak-even jello with fruit cocktail in it, and she didn't care if I ate what she wouldn't. Mary's idea of supper was popcorn and a can of Yoo-Hoo. Hot mashed potatoes and two weenies was like Thanksgiving for me.

It really wasn't bad, St. Bonny's. The big girls on the second floor pushed us around now and then. But that was all. They wore lipstick and eyebrow pencil and wobbled their knees while they watched TV. Fifteen, sixteen, even, some of them were. They were put-out girls, scared runaways most of them. Poor little girls who fought their uncles off but looked tough to us, and mean. Goddid they look mean. The staff tried to keep them separate from the younger children, but sometimes they caught us watching them in the orchard where they played radios and danced with each other. They'd light out after us and pull our hair or twist our arms. We were scared of them, Roberta and me, but neither of us wanted the other one to know it. So we got a good list of dirty names we could shout back when we ran from them through the orchard.

I used to dream a lot and almost always the orchard was there. Two acres, four maybe, of these little apple trees. Hundreds of them. Empty and crooked like beggar women when I first came to St. Bonny's but fat with flowers when I left. I don't know why I dreamt about that orchard so much. Nothing really happened there. Nothing all that important, I mean. Just the big girls dancing and playing the radio. Roberta and me watching. Maggie fell down there once. The kitchen woman with legs like parentheses. And the big girls laughed at her. We should have helped her up, I know, but we were scared of those girls with lipstick and eyebrow pencil. Maggie couldn't talk. The kids said she had her tongue cut out, but I think she was just born that way: mute. She was old and sandy-colored and she worked in the kitchen. I don't know if she was nice or not. I just remember her legs like parentheses and how she rocked when she walked. She worked from early in the morning till two o'clock, and if she was late, if she had too much cleaning and didn't get out till two-fifteen or so, she'd cut through the orchard so she wouldn't miss her bus and have to wait another hour. She wore this really stupid little hat- a kid's hat with ear flaps-and she wasn't much taller than we were. A really awful little hat. Even for a mute, it was dumb-dressing like a kid and never saying anything at all."

But what about if somebody tries to kill her?" I used to wonder about that. "Or what if she wants to cry? Can she cry?"
"Sure," Roberta said. "But just tears. No sounds come out." "She can't scream?"
"Nope. Nothing."
"Can she hear?"
"I guess."
"Let's call her," I said. And we did.
"Dummy! Dummy!" She never turned her head
"Bow legs! Bow legs!" Nothing. She just rocked on, the chin straps of her baby-boy hat swaying from side to side. I think we were wrong. I think she could hear and didn't let on. And it shames me even now to think there was somebody in there after all who heard us call her those names and couldn't tell on us.
We got along all right, Roberta and me. Changed beds every night, got F's in civics and communication skills and gym. The Bozo was disappointed in us, she said. Out of 130 of us statecases, 90 were under twelve. Almost all were real orphans with beautiful dead parents in the sky. We were the only ones dumped and the only ones with F's in three classes including gym. So we got along-what with her leaving whole pieces of things on her plate and being nice about no tasking questions.
I think it was the day before Maggie fell down that we found out our mothers were coming to visit us on the same Sunday. We had been at the shelter twenty-eight days (Roberta twenty-eight and a half) and this was their first visit with us. Our mothers would come at ten o'clock in time for chapel, then lunch with us in the teachers' lounge. I thought if my dancing mother met her sick mother it might be good for her. And Roberta thought her sick mother would get a big bang out of a dancing one. We got excited about it and curled each other's hair. After breakfast we sat on the bed watching the road from the window. Roberta's socks were still wet. She washed them the night before and put them on the radiator to dry. They hadn't, but she put them on anyway because their tops were so pretty- scalloped in pink. Each of us had a purple construction-paper basket that we had made in craft class. Mine had a yellow crayon rabbit on it. Roberta's had eggs with wiggly lines of color. Inside were cellophane grass and just the jelly beans because I'd eaten the two marshmallow eggs they gave us. The Big Bozo came herself to get us. Smiling she told us we looked very nice and to come downstairs. We were so surprised by the smile we'd never seen before, neither of us moved.
"Don't you want to see your mommies?"
I stood up first and spilled the jelly beans all over the floor. Bozo's smile disappeared while we scrambled to get the candy up off the floor and put it back in the grass.

She escorted us downstairs to the first floor, where the other girls were lining up to file into the chapel. A bunch of grown-ups stood to one side. Viewers mostly. The old biddies who wanted servants and the fags who wanted company looking for children they might want to adopt. Once in a while a grandmother. Almost never anybody young or anybody whose face wouldn't scare you in the night. Because if any of the real orphans had young relatives they wouldn't be real orphans. I saw Mary right away. She had on those green slacks I hated and hated even more now because didn't she know we were going to chapel? And that fur jacket with the pocket linings so ripped she had to pull to get her hands out of them. But her face was pretty-like always, and she smiled and waved like she was the little girl looking for her mother-not me.

I walked slowly, trying not to drop the jelly beans and hoping the paper handle would hold. I had to use my last Chiclet because by the time I finished cutting everything out, all the Elmer's was gone. I am left-handed and the scissors never worked for me. It didn't matter, though; I might just as well have chewed the gum. Mary dropped to her knees and grabbed me, mashing the basket, the jelly beans, and the grass into her ratty fur jacket.

"Twyla, baby. Twyla, baby!"

I could have killed her. Already I heard the big girls in the orchard the next time saying, "Twyyyyyla, baby!" But I couldn't stay mad at Mary while she was smiling and hugging me and smelling of Lady Esther dusting powder. I wanted to stay buried in her fur all day.

To tell the truth I forgot about Roberta. Mary and I got in line for the traipse into chapel and I was feeling proud because she looked so beautiful even in those ugly green slacks that made her behind stick out. A pretty mother on earth is better than a beautiful dead one in the sky even if she did leave you all alone to go dancing.

I felt a tap on my shoulder, turned, and saw Roberta smiling. I smiled back, but not too much lest somebody think this visit was the biggest thing that ever happened in my life. Then Roberta said, "Mother, I want you to meet my roommate, Twyla. And that's Twyla's mother."

I looked up it seemed for miles. She was big. Bigger than any man and on her chest was the biggest cross I'd ever seen. I swear it was six inches long each way. And in the crook of her arm was the biggest Bible ever made.

Mary, simple-minded as ever, grinned and tried to yank her hand out of the pocket with the raggedy lining-to shake hands, I guess. Roberta's mother looked down at me and then looked down at Mary too. She didn't say anything, just grabbed Roberta with her Bible-free hand and stepped tout of line, walking quickly to the rear of it.

Mary was still grinning because she's not too swift when it comes to what's really going on. Then this light bulb goes off in her head and she says "That bitch!" really loud and us almost in the chapel now. Organ music whining; the Bonny Angels singing sweetly. Everybody in the world turned around to look. And Mary would have kept it up-kept calling names if I hadn't squeezed her hand as hard as I could. That helped a little, but she still twitched and crossed and uncrossed her legs all through service. Even groaned a couple of times. Why did I think she would come there and act right? Slacks. No hat like the grandmothers and viewers, and groaning all the while. When we stood for hymns she kept her mouth shut. Wouldn't even look at the words on the page. She actually reached in her purse for a mirror to check her lipstick. All I could think of was that she really needed to be killed. The sermon lasted a year, and I knew the real orphans were looking smug again.

We were supposed to have lunch in the teachers' lounge, but Mary didn't bring anything, so we picked fur and cellophane grass off the mashed jelly beans and ate them. I could have killed her. I sneaked a look at Roberta. Her mother had brought chicken legs and ham sandwiches and oranges and a whole box of chocolate-covered grahams. Roberta drank milk from a thermos while her mother read the Bible to her.

Things are not right. The wrong food is always with the wrong people. Maybe that's why I got into waitress work later-to match up the right people with the right food. Roberta just let those chicken legs sit there, but she did bring a stack of grahams up to me later when the visit was over. I think she was sorry that her mother would not shake my mother's hand. And I liked that and I liked the fact that she didn't say a word about Mary groaning all the way through the service and not bringing any lunch.

Roberta left in May when the apple trees were heavy and white. On her last day we went to the orchard to watch the big girls smoke and dance by the radio. It didn't matter that they said, "Twyyyyyla, baby." We sat on the ground and breathed. Lady Esther. Apple blossoms. I still go soft when I smell one or the other. Roberta was going home. The big cross and the big Bible was coming to get her and she seemed sort of glad and sort of not. I thought I would die in that room of four beds without her and I knew Bozo had plans to move some other dumped kid in there with me. Roberta promised to write every day, which was really sweet of her because she couldn't read a lick so how could she write anybody. I would have drawn pictures and sent them to her but she never gave me her address. Little by little she faded. Her wet socks with the pink scalloped tops and her big serious-looking eyes-that's all I could catch when I tried to bring her to mind.

I was working behind the counter at the Howard Johnson's on the Thruway just before the Kingston exit. Not a bad job. Kind of a long ride from Newburgh, but okay once I got there. Mine was the second night shift- eleven to seven. Very light until a Greyhound checked in for breakfast around six-thirty. At that hour the sun was all the way clear of the hills behind the restaurant. The place looked better at night-more like shelter- but I loved it when the sun broke in, even if it did show all the cracks in the vinyl and the speckled floor looked dirty no matter what the mop boy did.

It was August and a bus crowd was just unloading. They would stand around a long while: going to the john, and looking at gifts and junk-for- sale machines, reluctant to sit down so soon. Even to eat. I was trying to fill the coffee pots and get them all situated on the electric burners when I saw her. She was sitting in a booth smoking a cigarette with two guys smothered in head and facial hair. Her own hair was so big and wild I could hardly see her face. But the eyes. I would know them anywhere. She had on a powder-blue halter and shorts outfit and earrings the size of bracelets. Talk about lipstick and eyebrow pencil. She made the big girls look like nuns. I couldn't get off the counter until seven o'clock, but I kept watching the booth in case they got up to leave before that. My replacement was on time for a change, so I counted and stacked my receipts as fast as I could and signed off. I walked over to the booths, smiling and wondering if she would remember me. Or even if she wanted to remember me. Maybe she didn't want to be reminded of St. Bonny's or to have anybody know she was ever there. I know I never talked about it to anybody.

I put my hands in my apron pockets and leaned against the back of the booth facing them.

"Roberta? Roberta Fisk?" She looked up. "Yeah?"

"Twyla."

She squinted for a second and then said, "Wow."

"Remember me?"

"Sure. Hey. Wow."

"It's been a while," I said, and gave a smile to the two hairy guys. "Yeah. Wow. You work here?"

"Yeah," I said. "I live in Newburgh."

"Newburgh? No kidding?" She laughed then a private laugh that included the guys but only the guys, and they laughed with her. What could I do but laugh too and wonder why I was standing there with my knees showing out from under that uniform. Without looking I could see the blue and white triangle on my head, my hair shapeless in a net, my ankles thick in white oxfords. Nothing could have been less sheer than my stockings. There was this silence that came downright after I laughed.

A silence it was her turn to fill up. With introductions, maybe, to her boyfriends or an invitation to sit down and have a Coke. Instead she lit a cigarette off the one she'd just finished and said, "We're on our way to the Coast. He's got an appointment with Hendrix."

She gestured casually toward the boy next to her.

"Hendrix Fantastic," I said. "Really fantastic. What's she doing now?"

Roberta coughed on her cigarette and the two guys rolled their eyes up at the ceiling."

Hendrix. Jimi Hendrix, asshole. He's only the biggest-Oh, wow. Forget it."

I was dismissed without anyone saying goodbye, so I thought I would do it for her.

"How's your mother?" I asked. Her grin cracked her whole face. She swallowed.

"Fine," she said. "How's yours?"

"Pretty as a picture," I said and turned away. The backs of my knees were damp. Howard Johnson's really was a dump in the sunlight.

James is as comfortable as a house slipper. He liked my cooking and I liked his big loud family. They have lived in Newburgh all of their lives and talk about it the way people do who have always known a home. His grandmother is a porch swing older than his father and when they talk about streets and avenues and buildings they call them names they no longer have. They still call the A & P Rico's because it stands on property once a mom and pop store owned by Mr. Rico. And they call the new community college Town Hall because it once was. My mother-in-law puts up jelly and cucumbers and buys butter wrapped in cloth from a dairy. James and his father talk about fishing and baseball and I can see them all together on the Hudson in a raggedy skiff. Half the population of Newburgh is on welfare now, but to my husband's family it was still some upstate paradise of a time long past. A time of ice houses and vegetable wagons, coal furnaces and children weeding gardens. When our son was born my mother-in-law gave me the crib blanket that had been hers.

But the town they remembered had changed. Something quick was in the air. Magnificent old houses, so ruined they had become shelter for squatters and rent risks, were bought and renovated. Smart IBM people moved out of their suburbs back into the city and put shutters up and herb gardens in their backyards. A brochure came in the mail announcing the opening of a Food Emporium. Gourmet food it said- and listed items the rich IBM crowd would want. It was located in a new mall at the edge of town and I drove out to shop there one day-just to see. It was late in June. After the tulips were gone and the Queen Elizabeth roses were open everywhere. It railed my cart along the aisle tossing in smoked oysters and Robert's sauce and things I knew would sit in my cupboard for years. Only when I found some Klondike ice

cream bars did I feel less guilty about spending James's fireman's salary so foolishly. My father-in-law ate them with the same gusto little Joseph did.

Waiting in the check-out line I heard a voice say, "Twyla!"

The classical music piped over the aisles had affected me and the woman leaning toward me was dressed to kill. Diamonds on her hand, a smart white summer dress.

"I'm Mrs. Benson," I said.

"Ho. Ho. The Big Bozo," she sang.

For a split second I didn't know what she was talking about. She had a bunch of asparagus and two cartons of fancy water.

"Roberta!"

"Right."

"For heaven's sake. Roberta."

"You look great," she said.

"So do you. Where are you? Here? In Newburgh?"

"Yes. Over in Annandale."

I was opening my mouth to say more when the cashier called my attention to her empty counter.

"Meet you outside." Roberta pointed her finger and went into the express line.

I placed the groceries and kept myself from glancing around to check Roberta's progress. I remembered Howard Johnson's and looking for a chance to speak only to be greeted with a stingy "wow." But she was waiting for me and her huge hair was sleek now, smooth around a small, nicely shaped head. Shoes, dress, everything lovely and summery and rich. I was dying to know what happened to her, how she got from Jimi Hendrix to Annandale, a neighborhood full of doctors and IBM executives. Easy, I thought. Everything is so easy for them. They think they own the world.

"How long," I asked her. "How long have you been here?"

"A year. I got married to a man who lives here. And you, you're married too, right? Benson, you said."

"Yeah. James Benson."

"And is he nice?"

"Oh, is he nice?"

"Well, is he?" Roberta's eyes were steady as though she really meant the question and wanted an answer."

He's wonderful, Roberta. Wonderful."

"So you're happy."

"Very."

"That's good," she said and nodded her head. "I always hoped you'd be happy. Any kids? I know you have kids."
"One. A boy. How about you?"
"Four."
"Four?"
She laughed. "Step kids. He's a widower." "Oh."
"Got a minute? Let's have a coffee."
I thought about the Klondikes melting and the inconvenience of going all the way to my car and putting the bags in the trunk. Served me right for buying all that stuff I didn't need. Roberta was ahead of me."
Put them in my car. It's right here."
And then I saw the dark blue limousine. "You married a Chinaman?"
"No," she laughed. "He's the driver."
"Oh, my. If the Big Bozo could see you now."
We both giggled. Really giggled. Suddenly, in just a pulse beat, twenty years disappeared and all of it came rushing back. The big girls (whom we called gar girls-Roberta's misheard word for the evil stone faces described in a civics class) there dancing in the orchard, the ploppy mashed potatoes, the double weenies, the Spam with pineapple. We went into the coffee shop holding onto one another and I tried to think why we were glad to see each other this time and not before. Once, twelve years ago, we passed like strangers. A black girl and a white girl meeting in a Howard Johnson's on the road and having nothing to say. One in a blue and white triangle waitresshat-the other on her way to see, Hendrix. Now we were behaving like sisters separated for much too long. Those four short months were nothing in time. Maybe it was the thing itself. Just being there, together. Two little girls who knew what nobody else in the world knew-how not to ask questions. How to believe what had to be believed. There was politeness in that reluctance and generosity as well. Is your mother sick too? No, she dances all night. Oh--and an understanding nod.
We sat in a booth by the window and fell into recollection like veterans." Did you ever learn to read?"
"Watch." She picked up the menu. "Special of the day. Cream of corn soup. Entrees. Two dots and a wriggly line. Quiche. Chef salad, scallops . . .
I was laughing and applauding when the waitress came up. "Remember the Easter baskets?"
"And how we tried to introduce them?"

"Your mother with that cross like two telephone poles." "And yours with those tight slacks."
We laughed so loudly heads turned and made the laughter harder to suppress."
What happened to the Jimi Hendrix date?" Roberta made a blow-out sound with her lips." When he died I thought about you."
"Oh, you heard about him finally?"
"Finally. Come on, I was a small-town country waitress."
"And I was a small-town country dropout. God, were we wild. I still don't know how I got out of there alive."
"But you did."
"I did. I really did. Now I'm Mrs. Kenneth Norton." "Sounds like a mouthful."
"It is."
"Servants and all?"
Roberta held up two fingers.
"Ow! What does he do?"
"Computers and stuff. What do I know?"
"I don't remember a hell of a lot from those days, but Lord, St. Bonny's is as clear as daylight. Remember Maggie? The day she fell down and those gar girls laughed at her?"
Roberta looked up from her salad and stared at me. "Maggie didn't fall," she said."
Yes, she did. You remember."
"No, Twyla. They knocked her down. Those girls pushed her down and tore her clothes. In the orchard."
"I don't--that's not what happened."
"Sure it is. In the orchard. Remember how scared we were?"
"Wait a minute. I don't remember any of that."
"And Bozo was fired."
"You're crazy. She was there when I left. You left before me."
"I went back. You weren't there when they fired Bozo."
"What?"
"Twice. Once for a year when I was about ten, another for two months when I was fourteen. That's when I ran away."
"You ran away from St. Bonny's?"
"I had to. What do you want? Me dancing in that orchard?"
"Are you sure about Maggie?"
"Of course I'm sure. You've blocked it, Twyla. It happened. Those girls had behavior problems, you know."

"Didn't they, though. But why can't I remember the Maggie thing?"
"Believe me. It happened. And we were there."
"Who did you room with when you went back?" I asked her as if I would know her. The Maggie thing was troubling me."
Creeps. They tickled themselves in the night."
My ears were itching and I wanted to go home suddenly. This was all very well but she couldn't just comb her hair, wash her face and pretend everything was hunky-dory. After the Howard Johnson's snub. And no apology. Nothing.
"Were you on dope or what that time at Howard Johnson's?" I tried to make my voice sound friendlier than I felt."
Maybe, a little. I never did drugs much. Why?"
"I don't know; you acted sort of like you didn't want to know me then."
"Oh, Twyla, you know how it was in those days: black-white. You know how everything was."
But I didn't know. I thought it was just the opposite. Busloads of blacks and whites came into Howard Johnson's together. They roamed together then: students, musicians, lovers, protesters. You got to see everything at Howard Johnson's and blacks were very friendly with whites in those days. But sitting there with nothing on my plate but two hard tomato wedges wondering about the melting Klondikes it seemed childish remembering the slight. We went to her car, and with the help of the driver, got my stuff into my station wagon.
"We'll keep in touch this time," she said.
"Sure," I said. "Sure. Give me a call."
"I will," she said, and then just as I was sliding behind the wheel, she leaned into the window. "By the way. Your mother. Did she ever stop dancing?"
I shook my head. "No. Never."
Roberta nodded.
"And yours? Did she ever get well?"
She smiled a tiny sad smile. "No. She never did. Look, call me, okay?"
"Okay," I said, but I knew I wouldn't. Roberta had messed up my past somehow with that business about Maggie. I wouldn't forget a thing like that. Would I?
Strife came to us that fall. At least that's what the paper called it. Strife. Racial strife. The word made me think of a bird-a big shrieking bird out of 1,000,000,000 B.C. Flapping its wings and cawing. Its eye with no lid always bearing down on you. All day it screeched and at night it slept on the rooftops. It woke you in the morning and from the Today show to the eleven o'clock news it kept you an awful company. I couldn't figure it out from one day to the next. I knew I was supposed to feel

something strong, but I didn't know what, and James wasn't any help. Joseph was on the list of kids to be transferred from the junior high school to another one at some far-out-of-the-way place and I thought it was a good thing until I heard it was a bad thing. I mean I didn't know. All the schools seemed dumps tome, and the fact that one was nicer looking didn't hold much weight. But the papers were full of it and then the kids began to get jumpy. In August, mind you. Schools weren't even open yet. I thought Joseph might be frightened to go over there, but he didn't seem scared so I forgot about it, until I found myself driving along Hudson Street out there by the school they were trying to integrate and saw a line of women marching. And who do you suppose was in line, big as life, holding a sign in front of her bigger than her mother s cross? MOTHERS HAVE RIGHTS TOO! it said.

I drove on, and then changed my mind. I circled the block, slowed down, and honked my horn.

Roberta looked over and when she saw me she waved. I didn't wave back, but I didn't move either. She handed her sign to another woman and came over to where I was parked."

Hi."

"What are you doing?"

"Picketing. What's it look like?"

"What for?"

"What do you mean, 'What for?' They want to take my kids and send them out of the neighborhood. They don't want to go."

"So what if they go to another school? My boy's being bussed too, and I don't mind. Why should you?"

"It's not about us, Twyla. Me and you. It's about our kids." "What's more us than that?"

"Well, it is a free country."

"Not yet, but it will be."

"What the hell does that mean? I'm not doing anything to you." "You really think that?"

"I know it."

"I wonder what made me think you were different."

"I wonder what made me think you were different."

"Look at them," I said. "Just look. Who do they think they are? Swarming all over the place like they own it. And now they think they can decide where my child goes to school. Look at them, Roberta. They're Bozos."

Roberta turned around and looked at the women. Almost all of them were standing still now, waiting. Some were even edging toward us. Roberta looked at me out of some refrigerator behind her eyes. "No, they're not. They're just mothers."
"And what am I? Swiss cheese?" "I used to curl your hair."
"I hated your hands in my hair."
The women were moving. Our faces looked mean to them of course and they looked as though they could not wait to throw themselves in front of a police car, or better yet, into my car and drag me away by my ankles. Now they surrounded my car and gently, gently began to rock it. I swayed back and forth like a sideways yo-yo. Automatically I reached for Roberta, like the old days in the orchard when they saw us watching them and we had to get out of there, and if one of us fell the other pulled her up and if one of us was caught the other stayed to kick and scratch, and neither would leave the other behind. My arm shot out of the car window but no receiving hand was there. Roberta was looking at me sway from side to side in the car and her face was still. My purse slid from the car seat down under the dashboard. The four policemen who had been drinking Tab in their car finally got the message and strolled over, forcing their way through the women. Quietly, firmly they spoke. "Okay, ladies. Back in line or off the streets."
Some of them went away willingly; others had to be urged away from the car doors and the hood. Roberta didn't move. She was looking steadily at me. I was fumbling to turn on the ignition, which wouldn't catch because the gearshift was still in drive. The seats of the car were a mess because the swaying had thrown my grocery coupons all over it and my purse was sprawled on the floor."
Maybe I am different now, Twyla. But you're not. You're the same little state kid who kicked a poor old black lady when she was down on the ground. You kicked a black lady and you have the nerve to call me a bigot."
The coupons were everywhere and the guts of my purse were bunched under the dashboard. What was she saying? Black? Maggie wasn't black.
"She wasn't black," I said.
"Like hell she wasn't, and you kicked her. We both did. You kicked a black lady who couldn't even scream."
"Liar!"
"You're the liar! Why don't you just go on home and leave us alone, huh?"
She turned away and I skidded away from the curb.
The next morning I went into the garage and cut the side out of the carton our portable TV had come in. It wasn't nearly big enough, but after a while I had a decent sign: red spray-painted letters on a white background- AND SO DO

CHILDREN****. I meant just to go down to the school and tack it up somewhere so those cows on the picket line across the street could see it, but when I got there, some ten or so others had already assembled- protesting the cows across the street. Police permits and everything. I got in line and we strutted in time on our side while Roberta's group strutted on theirs. That first day we were all dignified, pretending the other side didn't exist. The second day there was name calling and finger gestures. But that was about all. People changed signs from time to time, but Roberta never did and neither did I. Actually my sign didn't make sense without Roberta's. "And so do children what?" one of the women on my side asked me. Have rights, I said, as though it was obvious.

Roberta didn't acknowledge my presence in any way and I got to thinking maybe she didn't know I was there. I began to pace myself in the line, jostling people one minute and lagging behind the next, so Roberta and I could reach the end of our respective lines at the same time and there would be a moment in our tum when we would face each other. Still, I couldn't tell whether she saw meand knew my sign was for her. The next day I went early before we were scheduled to assemble. I waited until she got there before I exposed my new creation. As soon as she hoisted her MOTHERS HAVE RIGHTS TOO I began to wave my new one, which said, HOW WOULD YOU KNOW? I know she saw that one, but I had gotten addicted now. My signs got crazier each day, and the women on my side decided that I was a kook. They couldn't make heads or tails out of my brilliant screaming posters.

I brought a painted sign in queenly red with huge black letters that said, IS YOUR MOTHER WELL? Roberta took her lunch break and didn't come back for the rest of the day or any day after. Two days later I stopped going too and couldn't have been missed because nobody understood my signs anyway.

It was a nasty six weeks. Classes were suspended and Joseph didn't go to anybody's school until October. The children- everybody's children-soon got bored with that extended vacation they thought was going to be so great. They looked at TV until their eyes flattened. I spent a couple of mornings tutoring my son, as the other mothers said we should. Twice I opened a text from last year that he had never turned in. Twice he yawned in my face. Other mothers organized living room sessions so the kids would keep up. None of the kids could concentrate so they drifted back to The Price Is Right and The Brady Bunch. When the school finally opened there were fights once or twice and some sirens roared through the streets every once in a while. There were a lot of photographers from Albany. And just when ABC was about to send up a news crew, the kids settled down like nothing in the world had happened. Joseph hung my HOW WOULD YOU KNOW? sign in his bedroom. I don't know

what became of AND SO DO CHILDREN****. I think my father-in-law cleaned some fish on it. He was always puttering around in our garage. Each of his five children lived in Newburgh and he acted as though he had five extra homes.

I couldn't help looking for Roberta when Joseph graduated from high school, but I didn't see her. It didn't trouble me much what she had said to me in the car. I mean the kicking part. I know I didn't do that, I couldn't do that. But I was puzzled by her telling me Maggie was black. When I thought about it I actually couldn't be certain. She wasn't pitch-black, I knew, or I would have remembered that. What I remember was the kiddie hat, and the semicircle legs. I tried to reassure myself about the race thing for a long time until it dawned on me that the truth was already there, and Roberta knew it. I didn't kick her; I didn't join in with the gar girls and kick that lady, but I sure did want to. We watched and never tried to help her and never called for help. Maggie was my dancing mother. Deaf, I thought, and dumb. Nobody inside. Nobody who would hear you if you cried in the night. Nobody who could tell you anything important that you could use. Rocking, dancing, swaying as she walked. And when the gar girls pushed her down, and started roughhousing, I knew she wouldn't scream, couldn't-just like me and I was glad about that.

We decided not to have a tree, because Christmas would be at my mother-in-law's house, so why have a tree at both places? Joseph was at SUNY New Paltz and we had to economize, we said. But at the last minute, I changed my mind. Nothing could be that bad. So I rushed around town looking for a tree, something small but wide. By the time I found a place, it was snowing and very late. I dawdled like it was the most important purchase in the world and the tree man was fed up with me. Finally I chose one and had it tied onto the trunk of the car. I drove away slowly because the sand trucks were not out yet and the streets could be murder at the beginning of a snowfall. Downtown the streets were wide and rather empty except for a cluster of people coming out of the Newburgh Hotel. The one hotel in town that wasn't built out of cardboard and Plexiglas. A party, probably. The men huddled in the snow were dressed in tails and the women had on furs. Shiny things glittered from underneath their coats. It made me tired to look at them. Tired, tired, tired. On the next corner was a small diner with loops and loops of paper bells in the window. I stopped the car and went in. Just for a cup of coffee and twenty minutes of peace before I went home and tried to finish everything before Christmas Eve.

"Twyla?"

There she was. In a silvery evening gown and dark fur coat. A man and another woman were with her, the man fumbling for change to put in the cigarette machine.

The woman was humming and tapping on the counter with her fingernails. They all looked a little bit drunk.
"Well. It's you."
"How are you?"
I shrugged. "Pretty good. Frazzled. Christmas and all."
"Regular?" called the woman from the counter.
"Fine," Roberta called back and then, "Wait for me in the car."
She slipped into the booth beside me. "I have to tell you something, Twyla. I made up my mind if I ever saw you again, I'd tell you."
"I'd just as soon not hear anything, Roberta. It doesn't matter now, anyway."
"No," she said. "Not about that."
"Don't be long," said the woman. She carried two regulars to go and the man peeled his cigarette pack as they left.
"It's about St. Bonny's and Maggie."
"Oh, please."
"Listen to me. I really did think she was black. I didn't make that up. I really thought so. But now I can't be sure. I just remember her as old, so old. And because she couldn't talk- well, you know, I thought she was crazy. She'd been brought up in an institution like my mother was and like I thought I would be too. And you were right. We didn't kick her. It was the gar girls. Only them. But, well, I wanted to. I really wanted them to hurt her. I said we did it, too. You and me, but that's not true. And I don't want you to carry that around. It was just that I wanted to do it so bad that day-wanting to is doing it."
Her eyes were watery from the drinks she'd had, I guess. I know it's that way with me. One glass of wine and I start bawling over the littlest thing.
"We were kids, Roberta."
"Yeah. Yeah. I know, just kids."
"Eight."
"Eight."
"And lonely."
"Scared, too."
She wiped her cheeks with the heel of her hand and smiled. "Well that's all I wanted to say."
I nodded and couldn't think of any way to fill the silence that went from the diner past the paperbells on out into the snow. It was heavy now. I thought I'd better wait for the sand trucks before starting home.
"Thanks, Roberta."

"Sure."
"Did I tell you My mother, she never did stop dancing."

"Yes. You told me. And mine, she never got well." Roberta lifted her hands from the tabletop and covered her face with her palms. When she took them away she really was crying. "Oh shit, Twyla. Shit, shit, shit. What the hell happened to Maggie?"
1983

To increase understanding:
Récitatif is the French form of recitative, a style of musical declamation that hovers between song and ordinary speech, particularly used for dialogic and narrative interludes during operas and oratories.

1. Why is this story entitled «Recitatif»? What nature of this story is accented by this title?

2. Comment on the settings of the story. Why are they significant?

3. How old are the girls when they meet first? Why are they drawn together despite their initially hostile feelings?

4. What is significant in continual references to the orchard and to Maggie?

5. Why is the race of the two main characters never revealed in this story?

6. Can you observe the effect of postmodern elements in «Recitatif»?

7. What are the differences between the mothers in «Recitatif»? What happened when Twyla and Roberta introduced their mothers to each other?

8. Identify indirect and direct characterization in Toni Morrison's «Recitatif».

9. What kind of time arrangement is observed in this story?

10. Define the main themes of the story.

11. Comment on the rising action, the climax, the falling action. Does the denouement seem inevitable? How is the final discussion between Twyla and Roberta about their mothers different from how they see their mothers after the girls leave St. Bonny's?