

One

Apparently what happened was that Anthea, after her arrival in New York--dressed in a Thirties cloche hat and a multiple pleated skirt that gathered at a tiny waist and billowed like a ballerina's tutu when she swung round (as she did when she turned a corner in the subway to run up the stairs)--went straight from the Village apartment she was about to share where the walls were naked brick and the bath squeezed into a corner of the kitchen, straight from there (I'm so feverishly eager to tell the tale I'm stumbling over the details) to the seventeenth floor office on Madison Avenue where Beatty Masumerov was--provided she (Beatty) hadn't forgotten the appointment--waiting for her.

Beatty was there behind her desk. No pleats for her, only firm tight lines in a cloud of over-sweet perfume, with the most enormous bag ever seen on her desk--big enough, she always explained, to take memoranda, sometimes fifty pages at a time, yet still a pocket book. She had what she called a desk warning system because of her amnesia. This was a series of intercom messages that started twenty minutes before any appointment and were repeated with rising frequency until zero hour was reached.

In the case of an interview following straight after the one she was in messages were phoned to her privately, not put over the intercom speaker. Today the pre-

appointment intercom messages ran, 'There's an interview with Mrs Anthea Tellidge in twenty minutes---', '---in ten minutes', '---in five minutes', 'Mrs Tellidge is right here'.

They were old friends so Beatty said to the intercom, 'I'll come out', and got up. It was also her way of explaining to the secretaries that this wasn't a job interview (which in fact she suspected it would be) but a cozy blood-letting chat between old friends. Which meant it needn't be interrupted as it might otherwise have to be in the case of an importunate job seeker who kept saying 'But there must be *something* for me!' and who didn't see why she, with her British accent and extraordinary skin glowing like a fairy light in a forest, shouldn't be able to help.

She stood at her door, hanging on to the knob and swaying with a wild smile that made the upper whites of her eyes like those of a horse rearing, as she'd done as a schoolgirl. Anthea jumped up with a skirt swirl and flung herself forward on heels much too high for that sort of carpeting. The pleated skirt smacked clothily against Beatty's Italian-cut knee-length dress, cut so tight as to make her walk with bent legs (a friend in Fashions called it back cleavage). Meanwhile the amnesia secretary filed away 'Tellidge' and substituted 'Toys, 2:15 p.m.', to be phoned repeatedly to Beatty over the next thirty minutes since she was now 'in conference'.

'I'm leaving my boyfriend Nick,' Anthea said, breathless from sitting down so fast. Her bag was tiny, hanging on an unsuitably long gilt chain which made it slip almost to the floor as she hung it on her chair arm.

'Why?' Beatty asked, her eyes still signalling alarmed delight as she quickly looking at her appointments book to verify Anthea's name and to see if she should know anything about a boyfriend.

'First I need a job and wondered if you have anything.' There, a jobs interview, Beatty felt like withdrawing her earlier journey to the door.

'When did you get here?' Beatty asked her, just to get off the jobs tack.

'Two hours ago. I'm staying at that girl Myra Plate's place, it's a slum just off Washington Square. You're looking well. I remember we had the two narrowest hips in the school.'

So it was at school!

'In Penge,' Beatty said, hoping that this at least would get her some good non-amnesiac marks.

'Penge? I've never been to Penge!' Anthea made a burlesque death-slump in her chair---'You don't remember me after all, I knew you wouldn't!'

Beatty's face underwent its amnesiac tic---a half yawn that turned to a smile. The incipient yawn was like the first motion of a scream but she had learned from a therapist in Kennington, London, how to 'manage' facial shock, hence the covering smile. Beatty was no longer 'wasp-waisted', as they used to say at school, she had a belly, not more than could be made to adapt to a slim line but a secret embarrassment to her while being also a source of comfort since it belonged to that smoothly yielding part of herself which she fought so hard. The belly was also partially due to therapy---an abdominal breathing system she'd followed, it had calmed her nerves and strengthened the muscles, which had then slackened, but her digestion had improved no end, and this was partly responsible for her skin-glow.

'You walked out on him?' she asked (this to get away from slim hips and memory lapses as to where school had been).

'Yes and no,' Anthea said. 'He works in Harrods under the street'.

'Under the street?'

'It's a beehive of tunnels, he's in despatching and sorting, it's very heavy work. You know how I always said I hated muscle-bound men' (she knew Beatty hadn't a

hope in hell of remembering) `well, his arms *ripple* if he wants them to and I'm perfectly happy with that because he's capable of crying.'

This woman is definitely goofy, Beatty thought, trying to identify from among her school friends a goofy one.

A voice in the intercom. `Five.'

`Five what?' Anthea asked.

`Minutes.'

`To what?'

`Five minutes is up. Actually four---she says it one minute ahead.'

`Anyway,' Anthea said, remembering that Beatty had always been somewhat out of it, `I need a break. We've got a wonderful flat in Trevor Square but I don't like being there. But it isn't the flat. Anyway, I just packed my bags and flew. I feel sorry for Nick, all alone there. Have you got a boyfriend?'

Beatty laughed. `With two kids and a husband and homework every evening I don't have the time!'

`Oh, I see, you're married.'

`How did you find me if you didn't know the new name?'

`Our mothers keep up with each other.' She gazed at Beatty for a moment.

`How do you hold a job down with this memory problem?'

`I do it better. Other people in my position have to remember, so they forget, but I don't, my husband built a perfect system for me.'

`Is he nice?'

`On weekends. After work we just have time to sleep.'

`You look sad.'

`Oh no, I shouldn't be. Coffee?' she asked, to conceal the lie, though it had

shown too well in her face to be expunged by a word.

When Anthea said yes Beatty pressed her intercom and said 'Two coffees.' Then she said, 'How will you manage for a work permit? I mean you're not married to an American like me' (little suspecting that this would throw her headlong into another memory gaffe).

'Yes I am,' Anthea said. 'Don't you remember Andy? He went to Hong Kong. We haven't divorced yet so I can apply for residence.'

To her own astonishment Beatty said, 'He worked in the City for an Arkansas bank and used to go skiing' (this sometimes happened, a sudden automatic recall).

'That's right! And you had an affair with him.'

The half yawn and smile were followed by an evasive 'If you can call it that' (struggling to recall features, body, touch).

'What do you mean? You talked about no one else for weeks!'

Desperately Beatty switched. 'I married Joe in a flash. I didn't talk about *him*, as far as I know. I mean I was unaware of his having any characteristics.' Anthea laughed but realized that Beatty wasn't intending a joke. 'It was like our names had been called out and we just had to step forward. Then we were kind of stuck with each other.'

The door opened to admit a tray with cups and saucers and a pot of coffee, a small jug of cream, sugar in the form of fashionably large uneven brown chunks and a plate loaded with chocolate chip cookies. All this was borne forward on two heels higher even than Anthea's so that it looked for a moment as if the flexible stem of a desk lamp had walked in.

'And what about *your* husband?' Beatty asked, having already forgotten that she ought to know him as well as Anthea did. She murmured 'Great' under her breath to

the lamp stem.

'You mean my almost-ex?' Anthea asked.

'Yes.'

'He remembers you. He was really quite keen on you.'

Tears started in Beatty's eyes. 'And I talked about him a lot?'

'Yes, darling,' Anthea said very quietly. 'Never mind, he's still somewhere inside you.'

All of a sudden Beatty decided to give her a job. She pulled out a thick file marked FESTIVAL and said 'Pull your chair round here' as she poured two coffees.

Two

The idea was this. The department store for which Beatty worked, called Mondelier's, had won a place in the upper echelons of multi-floored stores. Without so much as one branch outside New York it had built a nation-wide reputation. The directors had decided to run a sort of cultural festival lasting one month. These weren't to be exactly annual, after all they were quite difficult to organize, but similar things at other stores had proved sales-efficient. Part of each floor would try to convey the atmosphere of a European city. There were to be Parisian and Viennese cafes (croissants and zacher torte flown over)---authentic replicas down to the last bit of worn wickerwork, parquet floor, yellowed travertine marble, tasselled frayed velvet-covered cord for the staircase etc. But this wasn't all. An epoch was chosen. It was to be the Thirties. Nostalgia being a huge market, people were to be immersed in this decade as a way of bringing their attention to goods whose only reference to the Thirties was on the label. Not that Mondelier's was foolish about it. You knew it was all an imitation, you knew you weren't in a *real* cafe, apart from the croissant you might be eating, but this gave you an even more wistful sense of the past---and of Europe---as a distant ideal, a dream held in place for a giddy moment by authentic mimicry and authentic indigenous people (well, they would try to behave like that) serving the food or playing

the role of hostess or simply sitting about opening up conversations with clients who looked curious. Importing Europeans to be themselves would have been too costly, apart from the complication of work permits. But it was precisely here that Anthea fitted in so perfectly---being both in New York already and a Brit with residence rights.

But she qualified in another way that Beatty couldn't have predicted in a million years (she kept saying afterwards that Anthea had obviously been `sent' to them). Anthea was a Thirties bug. She lived, thought, tried to dress Thirties. It had been going on since she was a girl until now she had a formidable collection of Thirties memorabilia. The art directors could fake to some extent the French or Italian `pavilions' because of the language difference but Brit travel to New York was increasing and it was important to have a real live Brit as a consultant.

Anthea was shown round the store. And she was soon, a little to Beatty's dismay, being goofy with the Festival chief. She persuaded him to design a London tea shop in the Thirties, which fitted in with his need to sell lingerie and other feminine accessories (long cigarette holders, cloche hats of the kind Anthea had arrived in, huge loudspeakers like twisted elephant trunks that opened into vast toothless mouths, framed ads for Bovril etc). There would be a plastic mock-up of an Austin Seven. It was decided (again Anthea's idea) to make the tea room like the railroad station buffet in the film `Brief Encounter' (this was actually Forties and not Thirties `but there were no stylish differences,' Anthea said, hoping it was true). The Buffet was where the star Trevor Howard met the other star Celia Johnson by accident one rainy day between trains and they fell in love but marital fidelity won and they said goodbye to each other without even having brushed lips together. A pity because their love bond was clearly strong enough to survive twenty marriages while their actual marriages sounded to be on the rocks. But then, Anthea said, Noël Coward had written it at the end of World

War Two and love was bound to look clandestine compared with duty, just as it was for poor old Princess Margaret a few years later when she too fell in love but duty required her loveless. The pinched disapproval of the Fifties made the Thirties all the warmer and naughtier, a last fling before war swallowed up the human heart. Even Noël Coward had thought the war and the duty pointless in the end (Beatty was actually blushing to hear all this pouring out but the Festival chief and his architectural consultant were lapping it up).

Partly Anthea Tellidge owed her Thirties mania to her Mum, who had collected her first set of Thirties 'things'---ash trays, polished brass cupids and naked ceramic ladies in bad taste, and bulbous radio 'grams' that came up to your hips and paper doilies and fountain pens and pocket watches with chains and meat mincers and skewers and tasselled lamp shades and vividly colored plaster hobgoblins the size of your fingernail which you set in the sugar coating on top of currant cakes, things she had lived with at home in Watford and were now in storage. She had even got herself a vintage Austin with flip-up arms as traffic indicators, worked manually from your seat so you didn't have to get cold putting your arm out. The reason she disliked her London flat was that it didn't exude a Thirties atmosphere, having been erected about a hundred and fifty years before.

Beatty Masumerov, being Personnel manager, slowly gathered that she'd made a good impression with her choice of Anthea and that her goofiness was going down a treat among the other department heads. Anthea knew the song hits of the period, she could sing 'My Brother Makes the Noises for the Talkies' ('there's not a single noise that he can't do!') and 'Nobody Loves a Fairy When She's Forty'. She had a dainty soprano voice, suitably in period even that.

She was introduced to the other Festival personnel, most of whom were in-

house. There was one binding rule. Not a piece of jewelry worn during the Festival, not a stitch of clothing was to come from anywhere but Mondelier's and handsome discounts were given with that in mind. There was something comfortingly protective about that, from Anthea's point of view, it refuted the outside world with its police-siren haunted nights and the erosion of what politicians who wanted to sound literate called the city's infrastructure. That eroded infrastructure screamed and bellowed and brawled all night on the sidewalks outside her window.

The pay wasn't good, after all there were two months to go before the Festival was scheduled to start but the Festival month would be salaried and she stood a chance after that of assisting one of the buyers who did trips to the UK, and maybe one day when she'd mastered the required melange of rapacity and camaraderie she would be a fully fledged buyer herself.

Beatty Masumerov had her to dinner several times, and to drinks and after-dinner coffee if there was anything to discuss. She and her husband Joe had an apartment on 65th and Fifth Avenue, noisy as hell but so were the kids, which made it hell anyway, Beatty said. She and Anthea saw less and less of each other as the Festival plans became physical. The scaffolding and floors arrived and a small version of the Brief Encounter buffet. Beatty was busy organizing the floor people in such a way that the Festival preparations didn't hinder sales or involve personnel in too much overtime.

She decided on wage and insurance scales, and overtime rates sometimes had to be negotiated individually, and then there were the immigration and work-permit formalities to be worked out for those non-US personnel who were indispensable. Anthea buzzed incessantly about the store and the fact that Beatty's office was four blocks away made a meeting between them ever less likely.

There was another reason they saw little of each other. This was Gertrude

Tellingas, who had once been buyer for French jewelry, antiques and marketable art, and was now in real estate, though still one of Beatty's closest friends. At the upper end of the Village she had a tenth-floor apartment twice as large as she needed, and she invited Anthea to share with her. Anthea was to pay little more than half the mortgage and all of the cleaning lady, which was a strain for her in the pre-Festival weeks but then she had feeding rights at the Mondelier canteens and could get underwear and anything she needed for her daily comfort at advantageous discounts. It included cold meats, frozen television suppers and books on the Thirties.

Gertrude was a somewhat frightening room mate, tall and dark-haired 'like an Amazon', people said. But appearances are notoriously at variance with the artful souls who adopt them, they display opposite traits to those safely hidden inside. Gertrude was full of tricks, screamed with laughter, seemed never to have an introspective thought yet she wore somber browns and dark brooches and provincial bel epoque jewelry beautifully dulled by time. At home she was raucous and romping and never kept to her room, outside she hailed everybody on the sidewalk and talked to anybody accompanying her as if addressing the traffic. If ever she broke down privately in floods of tears or had prolonged migraine attacks behind drawn blinds or fell into depression, she hid it heroically and didn't venture into the public eye until she was ready to scream and write shopping reminders on the bathroom mirror with her lipstick.

Anthea Tellidge needed Gertrude---to help her forget her boyfriend Nick and the London flat and the fact that her Thirties things were in containers and that she hadn't anything 'going on' in her sex life and that the city outside looked to her like a bomb site (*crap*, Gertrude said, New York's *always* been a mess!). It was perplexing though, living with Gertrude. She couldn't get it out of her head that Gertrude was going to

break down one day and give up her public performance. As for men, Gertrude seemed to know many but have none. Anthea tried to shift their conversation to the subject but at once Gertrude was off on a jocular 'Oh *men*---!' followed by a jumbled mocking account of encounters she'd had which didn't sound authentic. Yet they were authentic because one or two of the men she described turned up for drinks and they laughed together over the incidents she'd described.

Once or twice Beatty came, sometimes with her husband, who was chairman of a Young Executive Club which took up most of his evenings ('that's what he tells her,' Gertrude said). Joe wore casual clothes, nearly always blue, no sportswear but just very easy going. His talk was easy too and trivial with never an alarming theme so you felt you might one day get beyond his amiability to where his heart beat but it never happened, at least not to Anthea. But perhaps, she thought, it was his way of seeing that his heart didn't get hurt, that it didn't have to pay blood money for its obvious enjoyment of life.

Anthea expected Beatty and Joe to have a tidy non-committal home but there were signs of hasty improvised living in every square inch of it. The two children, Jeff and Martie, nine and ten respectively, wrecked it daily and the fact that Beatty worked all day at the office and went home to cook the evening meal and see the children bathed and to bed put her in a remote zone for Anthea, too well organized ever to be a friend to anybody.

Not that she gave Beatty much thought. They'd never been close enough to quarrel even at school, and then amnesia had swallowed up their relationship. But it seemed that whenever they changed their lives the other one turned up, despite the fact that Beatty mostly forgot who she was between the meetings. They were both in their mid-thirties and one evening they worked out that their life changes had happened

three or four times so far, making a change every six or seven years, thus fulfilling the seven year itch theory. In Beatty's case she and Joe had nearly split up seven years before, when the kids were two and three. They had stayed together because they couldn't be bothered to divide the mutual property. If the itch principle was true she was up for another change right now---and felt like it.

One evening Anthea got home to find Gertrude green and sunken-eyed, surrounded by pillows and with a hot water bottle hugged to her belly. It was her Monthly Hell. For three or four days, sometimes a week, she hardly spoke above a whisper and moved painfully and didn't answer the phone and barely ate, though she sometimes with a peculiar desperate dash went to the drinks table and poured herself a stiff bourbon, then sat sipping it, a quilt round her ankles. She took precautions, among them regular doses of evening primrose oil, but a few days before menstruation began a wary look started in her eye and she would slow in her speech and movements. There, you see, Anthea told herself, you have to step off the stage sometimes.

Anthea jumped out of bed at half past six in the morning and was happy to go to work because of its clean separation from the fretful life she felt all round her. Mondelier's was a good place to spend your day. It resembled the Neiman Marcus store that used to be in Dallas, Texas, and was a bigger version of the one that remains today in San Francisco. Some of the Neiman Marcus ideas had been adopted too, among them the idea of a cultural festival. A chic afternoon tea on the top floor with scones and cream and a perilous view of the city below was another. In the darker recesses of each floor, behind tarpaulin, lit by giant hot lamps, the Festival was being set up. The Brief Encounter Buffet with its steaming hot water urn on the counter and its Bath buns under glass was already in embryo. One day Beatty sent a message down to her saying she would be with her in a minute---`Let's have tea together, are they already

serving in the buffet?'. They sat together among the carpenters. The cups and saucers were authentically heavy and unsuitable for tea, as they'd been in the real buffet. 'This tea is awful,' Beatty said. 'Can't we do better than that?'

They walked the four blocks to her office and there they had coffee.

'You know I do volunteer work in the evenings,' Beatty said.

'As well? How do you find the time?'

'I do a prison. There's a man called Jarvis, he's coming out at the end of the week. This disturbs me because I shall have to go on seeing him but I won't have the cover of the volunteer work, he's a specially interesting case, I think there's a lot of hope for him and I wondered if you could persuade Gertrude to let me see him at her place.'

There was a pause of consternation while Anthea wondered why Beatty couldn't ask Gertrude herself, seeing they were close friends.

'I could see him at my own home but I want a different setting, apart from the fact that I'd have to explain to the kids who he was.'

'Who is he?'

'A rapist. This will have been his third conviction.'

'I don't think I *will* talk to Gertrude,' Anthea said quietly. 'What's he look like?'

'Not very handsome. Not very big.'

'Anyway, I hardly know Gertrude,' Anthea said. 'Why not ask her yourself?'

'I *daren't*,' Beatty told her. 'She'd laugh at me.'

And, indeed, when Anthea mentioned it to Gertrude that evening there was a scream of laughter (the monthly green-faced vigil was over) and Gertrude shouted, 'Isn't that typical of Beatty Masumerov!'

'So should she bring him along?' Anthea asked her.

‘Why sure!’

‘Well, you tell her that,’ Anthea said. ‘I mean, why should I have to ask you?’

‘Because if *she* asked me I’d say no.’

As it turned out this Jarvis didn’t get his release on the date expected. There had been an objection from one of his victims and this required a routine appeal procedure. The prison psychiatrist, Mike Dormund, was being consulted as part of this procedure. He asked to see Beatty Masumerov, knowing she had conversed abundantly with Jarvis in prison. Being keen on the Jarvis case she wanted the earliest release possible and knew she might have to invent a little in order to secure this. But inventions were risky under this particular psychiatrist’s deadly gaze. She decided to tell the truth.

‘He strikes me as quite balanced and reasonable,’ she said.

‘Me too,’ the psychiatrist said.

‘He said an odd thing once, he said he saves his victims as much bother as he can.’

‘Depends on what you mean by bother.’

‘He says if he can help it he doesn’t inflict pain.’

‘Breaking the hymen’s pretty painful,’ Dormund said in a dry manner, gazing at the papers on his desk. ‘He’s done it once, maybe twice.’

‘That rather contradicts what he says about how he doesn’t choose his victims, they choose him,’ Beatty said.

The psychiatrist smiled, wondering what on earth use these volunteer people were.

‘Sounds to me like a heap of rationalization,’ he said. ‘The strength required to subdue a woman is considerable, you know. For a man of his fairly slight structure to employ the right degree of force there has to be a lot of determination, which I suggest

is involuntary and blind, which would add many pounds pressure to the attack. My conclusion is that he is no less brutal than any other rapist.'

'He says he gets no pleasure from the preliminary struggle.'

'I take leave to doubt that. Without the preliminary struggle there's no rape, it becomes a legal state of wooing, which would leave him cold.'

'But still he doesn't seem like other rapists.'

'It's a question of how many you've known, Mrs Masumerov,' he said icily. 'He has a philosophy. But they all have one, whether they tell it or not. Well, there are one or two who are just grunting idiots. But the grunt state requires such heavy drugs or such extreme parental abuse as a background that you can say it's rare.'

'I'm disappointed,' she said.

'What by,' he asked cleverly, 'Jarvis or the fact that he won't be released?'

'I'm sorry he isn't in fact different.'

'But he *is*,' Dormund said. 'All of them are different. The philosophies are different. I hear more philosophies in this office than---'

But he wasn't good at analogies.

Since a number of brutal rapes had been committed by people with excellent psychiatric reports the courts nowadays listened more closely to appeals from past victims for further incarceration. Jarvis's psychiatric report was certainly good---'extremely rational and cogent, denies even a grudge against his victims, displays a superior power of reflection, weighs questions judiciously, respected by other inmates'.

As a matter of fact, precisely on account of the appeal procedure, he got out a day sooner than scheduled. This being the age of technicalities, after his outstanding good behavior discount had been deducted a hidden state law concerning the retraction

of judiciary promises (worth another discount) was invoked by his lawyer (who, like Beatty, respected Jarvis's philosophy) and forty-eight hours were gained. So he arrived at Gertrude's apartment with the air of a man on whom providence smiles.

Beatty had quickly gathered the other two together with the news and the three of them were waiting for him with drinks out on the sideboard. When he arrived Anthea began trembling and realized what a suburbanite she was. As to Gertrude, not even she knew what her feelings were, only that they were tumultuous, which set her talking loudly about everything *but* prisons and illicit sex, with the result that these subjects filled the room. Jarvis was looking tired, perplexed. He sat straight in his armchair. He had walked fifteen blocks in a pair of black jeans and a sweater, with sneakers on. He had a dark moustache with a little grey in it and slightly drooping eyes. He hadn't started in on his philosophy yet---well, he couldn't with Gertrude rattling on.

Anthea managed to get in a question, meek but rather steely, 'Are you looking forward to a new life now?'

This was something of a blow to Beatty as it implied that she'd been telling them all about him. But he took it calmly. It even seemed to relax him and he stretched himself further into the armchair.

'Well, ma'am,' he said quietly, 'I'm certainly enjoying my freedom. I have a problem---it won't be easy finding a job. I mean I never had a profession or skill, ma'am.'

'We're working on it,' Beatty told Anthea with a touch of proud complicity. 'There are training schemes.'

'Fact is, ma'am,' he went on, still to Anthea, 'I have a whole lot to say about myself, things I want the world to know, and training schemes ain't going to help that.'

‘And what does the world need to know from you?’ Anthea asked.

‘Well, for starters, ma'am, I would ask you to look at my hands, they're as delicate as yours, is that not so?’ (actually Anthea's were rather blunt square jobs). ‘I wish to correct the notion that I'm a cruel man, ma'am. Would you believe me if I said that I've *given* women something too?’

‘What have you given them?’ she said with a frightened smile.

‘A hint,’ he said, ‘that they've never had an act of sex in their lives.’

‘Oh!’ said Anthea, her mettle up. ‘Did you ever consult *them* on the subject?’

‘Oh, I know my way's a bad way, ma'am. I know it's wrong.’ He smiled at her and continued to speak quietly. ‘You seem to believe I'm just taking and snatching but I'm receiving too. They may not know it but they give me something.’

‘Is that what it feels like?’ Beatty asked quietly.

‘Yes ma'am. Our educated friend here may say I'm making it up but I choose women very carefully, my sense of smell oftentimes guides me to them, and also ma'am they're choosing me, yes *sir!*’

‘Oh come on!’ was the only educated remark Anthea could think of.

‘Let me tell you something else ma'am. And here's where the psychiatrist decided to let me play basketball in his hour. You people believe in friends having sex. I don't. I say friends shouldn't do that kind of thing. It's not seemly.’

The silence, even Anthea's, urged him to go on.

‘You invite male friends to dinner, you have 'em up here in this nicely appointed residence and then suddenly you're diving into their pants or they're pulling your lace underwear off and you maybe only purchased it that day and for that very occasion. And I say it isn't seemly and doesn't lead to any good and the high divorce rate is evidence of that.’

`Could you elaborate?' Beatty asked like a nervous promoter.

`Let me tell you another thing,' he said, without needing her encouragement or being aware of it, `there's hardly a man of your acquaintance capable of sitting where I'm sitting now and not feeling sex desires of a rapacious nature toward one or more of you. And all the while he's talking some crud about real estate or the pig bellies market he's feeling what he's feeling and so are you. That's *dirty* ma'am. That's real two-faced low-down mean ma'am.'

`You'd prefer it if he just jumped on us?' Anthea asked.

`No, ma'am, *you* would.' Before she could make an explosive reply he went on, `All sex that isn't sudden and in some degree forced is incest.'

`Incest?'

`Don't you see the connection?' he asked with a long-suffering gaze. `Would you have sex with your father or brother? Is it so different to having it with a bosom friend? Listen to me carefully ma'am---' He leaned forward in Anthea's direction. `It happens first in your head, this sex thing. You wear mini skirts so tight you can hardly move your butt, and also it's not healthy for bowel movements, you put the lights low, you need mirrors maybe, perfumes, special effects and above all, ma'am, your fantasies, and *why*---because you're having sex with a friend and you're trying to forget he's familiar to you, you have to dress it up like we dress crab, you know he's your husband or boyfriend or a boss you want to ingratiate yourself with, you want him to be a stranger because you know like I said it's the only real sex there is, so you dress the crab as a stranger, you're making it all up ma'am and when it comes to the unholy communion or act of darkness it's a failure and a sorrow and a gnashing of teeth and then look at the mess afterwards.'

Gertrude threw herself in the air and said, `I'll bring the sandwiches!', and Beatty,

flushed, decided to help her. In the kitchen Gertrude said in a whisper, 'I think he's a riot!'

But that night, when Beatty and her charge were gone, she got worried. Sitting on Anthea's bed she said, 'Maybe I should have the locks changed,'

'Why?'

'We had a criminal here, that's for why! He's been mixing with thieves and arsonists and sex aberrants and didn't you see the way he was looking at me?'

'No.'

'Never in my eyes.'

Anthea laughed. 'That's wishful thinking!'

The night outside roared as usual, with the blare now and then of fire trucks. Anthea tried to sleep but Jarvis's quiet words revolved and revolved in her brain, seeming neither right nor wrong. She tried to imagine herself in bed at Trevor Square with Nick snoring but it didn't work. She heard a man's cough in the corridor. She found herself moist in the sexual area. She thought of Nick again and began trembling very slightly. Her work load was becoming a heavy one, the alarm would be going at six because she liked to breakfast at Mondelier's at seven sharp. She was still awake at four. She began to feel a fevered numbness and fell asleep. When she left at twenty before seven the corridor had an early-morning stuffiness that excited her. She hugged her cup of coffee to her in the top-floor canteen and wondered if the art deco stuff would be arriving that morning. A woman from the PR department came to her table and said the Festival date had been brought forward and there was a panic on and they would all be working late from now on. Something had gone wrong with the boilers and the air was chilly. She did some sewing and tacking but mostly she sat over designs with the art director. The miracle of having found a job in a recession was now

plainly before her. She thought she would phone Nick that afternoon to tell him she'd left London, because he wouldn't have cottoned on yet, only thought she'd gone to her Mum. Also he mustn't forget the cat's tray before he went out in the morning. His replies would be monosyllabic. She liked that. His emotions took place in a caldron which he fuelled with booze. It meant you never had to feel guilty about him, or a cheat when you cheated.

At midday the heating came on and the store filled up as if the news had gone out on the radio. She didn't see Beatty all day. The sky was much in motion, low over the city, with hardly a breath stirring.

Three

She couldn't find a taxi and walked the twenty blocks to 15th Street, not wanting to brave the subway. It was midnight. There wasn't a soul in the apartment. Gertrude's shoes were everywhere. In her bedroom a wet towel lay on the floor, a skirt on the bed.

Next morning Anthea was allocated a small office behind Lingerie, airless but she could phone whenever she wanted. She called Beatty and gave her the extension number. Gertrude came to the office to pick her up around seven that evening with tickets for a revival of 'The Odd Couple' and they took a snack at Sardi's. Luckily she didn't have to work late---still, she felt she should have stayed and made herself available. She was afflicted by unaccountable worries. Gertrude rattled on until curtainrise. Oscar Madison was well played. She'd seen the play aeons ago in London---was it at Wyndham's? The two English women, Cecily and Gwendolyn, weren't bad. As a matter of fact they reminded Anthea of herself and Beatty as they might have been had they never left Watford. In the middle of the show she phoned Nick, using Gertrude's phone card. He said, 'Oh, 'allo. You left sudden didn't you?' and 'Oh well as long as you're keepin' all right' and 'Let me know how it goes' and 'What cat? Oh that tabby one! I 'ad it for breakfast, mate' in his implacably intimate

manner which eschewed intimacy.

That night she masturbated and was surprised by her forlorn little cry at the climax. At around two o'clock in the morning Gertrude burst into her room saying that Jarvis the rapist was pacing up and down in the corridor outside. They went to the kitchen and stood on the sink and watched him through the narrow window-vent. Gertrude was excited and Anthea simply sleepy and mute. The janitor who woke up only after persistent ringing said he'd come up and get rid of the man. Anthea thought Jarvis looked pathetic, his head down, gazing at the carpet as he walked up and down. She could see that Gertrude was gleefully excited and trying to hide it.

The janitor came up and, still at the window vent, they heard him call to Jarvis quietly, 'Hey, Mac---what you doin?'. Jarvis looked up and went to the end of the corridor where the janitor was and some minutes later there was a call from the janitor saying the man must have been there two or three hours because he came in before midnight asking for Miss Tellingas. Gertrude and Anthea hastened to their bedrooms after the front door had been chain-fastened.

Next morning Beatty called her in her cubby hole and asked 'Is it true Jarvis was outside Gertrude's apartment last night?'

'Yes.'

'Don't be alarmed---'

'I'm not.'

'I was going to say he needs to talk after being in prison so long, they're all the same, he says he's never had a conversation like he had with the three of us in all his life---'

'I didn't notice any conversation, he did the talking.'

'But we *listened*. He says the conversation's going round and round in his head

and he's dying to go on with it, which I'm sure was why he was in the corridor last night, they tend to lose their sense of time, you know.'

Anthea spent all day at the depot trying to dig out the art deco features that had come from Chicago. When she returned to the flat, quite early, Gertrude was dressing.

She'd had a bath---the smell of her bath gel was drifting festively through the apartment. Anthea thought she was going out but Gertrude, squeezing herself painfully into evening jeans, said, 'You'd better hurry, they'll be here in a bit.'

'Who?'

'Jarvis and co.'

'Again? You're happy about that?'

Gertrude made one of her mock helpless upward glances---what-we-do-for-our-friends!

Anthea deliberately took her makeup off. She wanted to cry but there was no pretext. She put on a sweater and old slacks---as dingy as possible. In the kitchen she found a huge platter of sandwiches. She ate a strawberry yoghurt. Then she realized she was looking forward to the evening and wanted to go and change but the bell rang at that instant. He was a little subdued on arrival, nodding apprehensively to Anthea before going to 'his' armchair unasked. He had the same clothes on, even to the button collar which was still flying loose and curled. Gertrude occupied herself with the coffee while he made chat with Anthea about Mondelier's and how was the 'British pavilion' doing (Beatty's briefing no doubt). Anthea asked herself if his drawl was Texas but he turned out to be from Alabama.

'I need very much to talk to you,' he said, looking at her, not Beatty, 'you stirred up a number of concerns in my mind---'

'That's good'.

'The women I choose are a certain respectable, usually well married, constant type, I wanted to tell you.'

'That sounds particularly devilish,' Anthea said. 'To violate only decent marriages.'

'The idea of violation's in *your* mind, ma'am. The woman in fact has her first act of sex.'

'What?' She squealed with laughter that cracked uncertainly at the end.

'I'm telling you what my *feeling* is, ma'am, not what I think or know. I feel I'm giving the woman the first real sex of her life!'

'But what's your feeling *based* on for God's sake?'

'My senses attest to certain things during intercourse and this is what they attest to. I'm not claiming it, I'm finding it. You know better than I do, ma'am, there are certain signs in a woman, anatomical signs, which tell us if she's abandoning herself to a man or not.'

'So why do they run to the police afterwards, those that have the courage to do so?'

'As I keep on saying to the psychiatrists, ma'am, because they want to wipe out that knowledge. And the law will help them. I tried, God knows how I tried, to get it into the heads of the DA and my lawyer that I'm doing something that cannot be classified as rape.'

'You're doing a service,' Anthea said. Then she got up and said, 'I'm going to bed.'

To her astonishment he said, 'You'll be better for a good night's rest, ma'am. I noticed when you opened the door to us your eyes were swollen.'

She looked in her bedroom mirror. Yes. Like she'd been crying. She felt

ashamed of her cruel feelings toward him. After all, he was obviously *trying*, and he was a nut. She unwrapped the nostalgia CD her mother had sent her. She took her sweater off---it was several sizes too big, she hated skin-tight things (wore them just the same). She was embarrassed by any attention to her breasts---they'd been prematurely large in puberty (the boys at school had used plastic periscopes to look in at the girls' changing room). She earphoned Thirties hits to herself. Her mother, even her grandmother, only enjoyed this nostalgia stuff in a mocking sort of way whereas she listened with her *body*. She felt she was right there back in the Thirties listening to the radio. She just knew what it felt like---the dresses that fell past the hips in an unbroken line from the shoulders, the long pointed shoes, the trams and long bridal trains and Gracie Fields's voice. She dozed with Jack Payne's orchestra blaring in her ears, then she tore the earphones off and went and had a bath. No one was about.

She put the chain across the door, thinking Gertrude must be asleep. In the middle of the night she was woken by the bell and had to stand on the kitchen sink to look out of the window-vent to see who it was. She was amazed to see Gertrude. When she opened the door Gertrude walked past her without a word, head down, dressed in blacks and browns (not the best wear for crossing busy roads in the dead of night, Anthea thought).

Next day Beatty brought egg and salad panini from the Italian shop to her cubby hole for what she called a Hunch Lunch. Neither had more than thirty minutes to spare. Their job was to think up ways of engaging the interest of the sales persons in the Festival.

'You look off color,' Beatty said. 'A ten-hour day behind tarpaulin's catching up with you.'

'Oh, I'm OK,' Anthea said.

Films were arriving, there was to be non-stop Thirties cinema in one of the top floor rooms. The films had to be vetted and Anthea had been asked to make her selection. There were obvious choices for Germany and France like 'M' and 'The Blue Angel' and '*La Femme du Boulanger*' and '*Quai des Brumes*' but the English material was less interesting. She took two Ben Travers farces, 'Rookery Nook' and 'Cuckoo in the Nest', because they made the world seem amiably safe with their silly-fool vicars and henpecking wives and tipsy horse fanciers. Somebody suggested the H.G.Wells film 'The Shape of Things to Come' but it was all about Piccadilly going up in flames and that meant the end of the Thirties so she said no. Costumes were arriving for the waiters and waitresses.

Anthea asked Beatty, 'Why was Gertrude out so late?'

'We went to a bar.'

'You must have been there hours,' Anthea said, 'she didn't come in till four.'

'Four? We weren't there more than ten minutes! He ran out of talk. She walked home and I took a cab and that was round midnight.'

When Gertrude came in that evening Anthea asked her, 'What happened last night?'

Gertrude, looking washed out, said nothing, only drank milk and ate toast with peanut butter. Then when Anthea had forgotten her question she said, 'I was just pacing round.'

'After you'd left the other two?'

'No. He came with me'.

'Who's he?'

'Jarvis.'

'The *rapist*? But Gertrude---!'

`We walked together. He said he did a prowl every night. He calls it a prowl. He said he does it to see if he's tempted.'

`You walked the streets all those hours with *him*?'

`Sure.'

`And it didn't scare you?'

`Well if it did I enjoyed it.'

`What did you talk about?' Anthea asked.

`We just walked. I noticed he got alert when certain women passed.' Gertrude gazed at her with uncharacteristic concentration. `He didn't go alert for *me*.'

`You're *attracted* to him for God's sake?'

`He repels me but that's what attracts me. I didn't know things could get like this where you don't know what you're doing or feeling.'

They drank wine together, a gift from the French pavilion.

Four

I sometimes (admittedly only in silly moments) wonder why things couldn't have gone more smoothly. I imagine to myself how it might have been had Jarvis visited the apartment only a few more times and then either become a friend of theirs or gone his ways. I imagine the circle round Beatty shrinking and expanding in those gentle waves created by new dreams, I imagine the work relation between Beatty and Anthea stretching along the years as the source of a friendship that---what? cast its glow on everyone round them? How could I be such a fool? What *work* relation? They had none, right from the beginning! No, no, this isn't the way things work. Between people a certain momentum gathers and they are no longer the choosers of their own actions (they never were but by changing situations from time to time they make it seem so). They go headlong into tragedy with sensible and even righteous expressions. Yet the momentum isn't *outside* them---this is where we can make a bad mistake. They themselves are the momentum! They are the ones sucking each other into the eye of the typhoon! `Smooth' indeed! Who looks for things to go `smoothly'? I shall be saying next that people seek their own well-being!

Most week-ends Beatty took a subway journey to Brighton Beach. Many times have I taken that journey myself. It passes through some bleakly girdered dereliction

but always makes me feel good in that strange way that works by a process of inner contradiction. The very bleakness seems to make certain non-bleak things happen, or certain memories stir in the head which then gild the bleakness---it might be a chance conversation with a neighbor whose fetish it is to visit Coney Island off season, or an enquiry from an innocent face asking 'Is this the right train?' before she remembers to name her destination. Or it may simply be lashings of sunlight. But also the girders have something to do with it, the remains of a rash but still brave adventure, so that optimism shines in their rust, dimly. With so many homeless on the streets these girders, no longer industrial in function, serve as open bedrooms free from police harassment. So the optimism still magnetizes. What people wish and dream about passes into things. It seems you can't keep a human desire from beckoning to other humans, not even if the desire has been dead this fifty years, and that's young.

She did the same journey with her two children most Saturday mornings, winter included, so that for her too the dereliction was a moving background for her thoughts.

Joe joined them in the afternoon, by car. He spoke Russian and spent much of his week-end time at the two or three restaurants favored by his parents. What had promised to be an intolerable invasion of Soviet Jews in recent years had turned out to be a non-stop party---for Joe, anyway. There was always something going on---dancing, a comedian, a new refugee with tales, a special dish from a once top Odessa cook. Joe also called Brighton Beach the perfect refuge from White Russians.

She enjoyed the planes turning in silently over the ocean, dipping toward the coastline and Kennedy airport, because---of all absurdities---in reminding her of New York they reminded her of work. They made her see her office, an enclave within a secretarial enclave, made her feel at the secret hub of a vast important wheel of retailing, thereby so much bigger than her life, dwarfing her children and her week-

ends, making them enjoyable for her only because she would in two days be returning to *it*.

She would sit before the log fire sipping coffee or Joe's devilish punch while the children romped or played one of their absorbing dice games when you heard only their breath, and she would taste what she was drinking in a way that made it seem the same as the splash of warm apricot on the walls from the fire. Being with Joe was simply a rest from the work, and the glow within that rest was cast by the work, the thought that it was always there to return to. The desk at this moment was tenantless, waiting for her to give it life on Monday morning and that was enough to make the most boring evening, with Russian only spoken, thrilling to her. And then it was a pleasure to get away from Joe. They emptied each other. Her friendships derived from her work, not him, the latest example being Anthea---whom, incidentally, she would never have seen again had it not been for her office and the swivel chair that was for her butt alone. Not a friend did she have who didn't come to her through her work---her in-laws didn't count as friends, she had nothing to say but yes and no to them but even so she'd met Joe through Mondelier's financing department. He and she would always be friends but their brief infatuation of eleven years ago had left no trail, even of affection. Those years included two separations, each lasting about eighteen months. A quarrel between them always seemed the finish. They'd both had a lot of infatuations in their lives but theirs didn't figure among the memorable ones. But two salaries made for lavish Christmases and summer vacations (which she never enjoyed). Really they'd married to protect themselves against the sex war, in the sense that they needed a steady home, not camping arrangements any more. They observed a false, deliberately anachronistic courtesy toward each other, productive of lifeless smiles and dead men's hugs and selfless enquiries that were actually loaded with

egotism.

It was partly this unbearable simulation that made Beatty devote her few hours of free time to prison work. Prison inmates tended not to pretend, they had raw things to say. In Beatty's family untamed feelings only came out in the form of bitter denunciations, foul language, the throwing of objects across the room. The love was sickly smiles and fakely gentle hands laid on the wrist or solicitous glances for the benefit of visitors and even for the children. The pout both Jeff and Martie had, their frowning stares, said `we're being gypped'---cases of under-nourishment in life's most essential food.

Also there were parts of Beatty and Joe which they wished to hide from each other---not parts of their minds, which they poured out liberally on to each other, curling their lips and narrowing their eyes, but parts of those bodies whose cells had combined to produce Jeff and Martie. In Beatty's case she didn't like to be seen naked below the waist. It had something to do with a certain unspecifiable (because non-existent) fatness round her thighs which to her mind gave an impression of sexual immaturity. She couldn't bear to look at media legs, in the fashion magazines or on television, because it was *their* shape, not hers, which determined male judgments (what she thought were male judgments). On his side Joe recoiled from too public a display of his hands which were chubby and too big like a child's, and should they be resting on any part of a naked woman they had a way of seeming to be there for reasons of sport or a post-game massage in the changing room. They weren't really chubby and ten-year-old at all but to him they were, so that the sexual arts he practiced almost every day on other women were unnecessarily hindered.

Beatty hastened to tell Mike Dormund, the prison psychiatrist, how Jarvis had paced up and down the corridor outside Gertrude's apartment. There was momentary

alarm in Dormund's eyes. After all, it had been largely his report that had secured Jarvis's release. He questioned her, his gaze lowered. All the other facts came tumbling out---how she'd invited Jarvis to that apartment not once but twice etc. Dormund asked her 'Why this interest in Jarvis?'. He knew the answer better than she did but waited for a reply, which came more readily than either of them thought it would: 'He *always* took up more of my time than the others.'

'The thing is how will you pull out now?'

'Why pull out?'

'You presumably won't go on seeing him at your friend's apartment?'

'I might not do *that* again but he expects to see me regularly, he depends on me for his rehabilitation, surely I have to bite the bullet and see it through?'

'That's a dangerous practice,' he said, 'and could become servitude'.

What she didn't tell him was that she had Jarvis down to Brighton Beach most week-ends. They walked by the sea or sat at one of the beach cafes sipping samovar tea made with tea-bags. She was ready with a volunteer-work alibi if Joe should pass, though, as she well knew, Joe would be relieved to see that he wasn't the only one with a separate life. She never divulged to Jarvis her Brighton Beach address or even that she had one. Her caution was due to a certain alert attention to her children's welfare which she discovered in herself. She gave him to understand that the ocean air would do him good. And as a matter of fact their meetings were far more therapeutic than Dormund, with his limited school wisdom, allowed for. Jarvis was beginning, because of the idle ease of their relationship, to feel he ought to be giving up his old habits and finding better ways of penetrating the female mystery than forced entry in cold parks or behind bleak warehouses. He could see himself teaching people, though for the moment this feeling was of the vaguest. As for his feelings toward Beatty, they were

ones of cold detachment, whatever they might have been had he passed her as a stranger on a lonely path. Once friends with a woman, he found, she became sexually dead for him. Or so he, at this stage, thought.

As they walked through the sunlit street-market in the thick of people (he seemed quite unmindful of listening ears) he said, 'At one time, Mrs Masumerov, before it all began, I used to go to prostitutes, *street* prostitutes since I would have nothing to do with houses of ill fame. Everything would work while I was looking for the right one and then approaching her and discussing the transaction but the moment we were in a room and I knew that what I was seeking would be given to me without resistance I was unable to feel any attraction and had to go away.'

'But suppose---'Beatty said, a little shocked at herself and thinking of her children again '---a woman made it difficult for you, any woman, would that increase your---?'

'No, ma'am,' he said with a flat finality, almost brusque. 'It would do nothing for me at all. That means calculation, aforethought, and nothing freezes the sensual faculties more.'

Dr Dormund had told her, 'These people have mostly had hundreds of hours of psychiatry which you and I pay for and they think we actually need their talk, even that that's why they're in prison, to provide research material.'

At the same Brighton Beach market a week later she asked him, 'What would I feel if I was raped?'

'Mortal fear.'

'And what else?'

'Just fear.'

'Which of us three do you like best?'

`You mean of you and your two friends, Miss Tellingas and Miss Anthea?'

`Yes.'

`I haven't given it a thought ma'am. You see these thoughts usually start from a sexual interest and---'

`Which of us would you follow at night and select as your victim, supposing she was a stranger to you?'

`Anthea.'

`She dislikes you.'

`Exactly.'

He put his hand on her arm and said, `Mrs Masumerov, don't imagine too much an event you don't want to experience. That has a way of attracting it and believe me, whatever I say, it isn't what I would want to be inflicted on you or any friend. Don't take your volunteer work too far, there's such a thing, you know, as over-zealousness.'

She repeated this diplomatic little speech to Dr Dormund because it gave the impression that---since she was getting over to Jarvis as a zealous volunteer worker (not that she was)---this impression would spill over to Dr Dormund. But he wasn't deceived either. She gazed at him secretly. He registered this look of hers and decided to cooperate, that is listen with simulated interest to everything she had to say about Jarvis. He did it because she was in fact giving him information about herself, in which he was much more interested.

When she quoted Jarvis's advice to her not to think about the `event' too much lest she call it on to herself Dormund had his eyes down and quietly said, `He doesn't want you to become a victim for *other* rapists. He doesn't savor the idea of other rapes taking place at all. You must remember that what the criminal does is always for the first and last time. It isn't that he dislikes competition but it presses uncomfortably on

his fantasies if someone else is shown to share them, he starts thinking about them and is in danger of seeing himself as what he is, a simple thug.' That was his parthian shot of the day. He intended to advise her one day to seek help from an analyst and was only waiting for her to mention her husband (most women did).

That evening she made chicken pepper dumplings followed by hot pepper jelly and cream cheese, her excuse for pepper in both courses being that the air was suddenly chill but it was really because she felt uncomfortably distracted. Joe's parents had gone dancing with neighbors, being less sedentary than either of them. 'We can't imagine why you sit still so much,' they said. 'Because we do all day,' Joe said, 'they even pay us to do it.' 'But weekends, son!' the parents said. 'Does jogging once a week compensate for a week of doing nothing?' Playing cards, which the in-laws did by the hour, didn't count as sitting. Nor did two visits to the cinema each week. Joe's father had a store two blocks down and was always heaving boxes and driving to and from wholesalers. Mother worked in the shop and was never off her feet. She only spoke Russian but had a number of Italians come in on Fridays for her salted cod and she even baked it their way for those who worked near by. That was how tall swivel stools and marble wall counters got into the shop. It was a good life and they believed in small numbers.

Joe said, 'Do you think we'd do better separated?'. She thought this heralded one of their divorce discussions, always timed for after the kids went to bed. But he put her right. 'No,' he said, 'I just want to know what you think. I'm pretty sure myself it's better to have a family.' 'Obviously I don't make you very happy,' she said, overlooking the fact that she didn't make *him* happy either. 'I don't know what happy means,' he said. 'Anyway, we didn't meet *yesterday* did we?'. 'What on earth do you mean by that?' she asked. 'Well,' he said, 'if everything was fresh between us we'd be

happy maybe!'.

Of course *his* way of keeping fresh was known to the both of them, though neither ever mentioned it. His long hours of work restricted him but he managed three or four affairs a year. Since these were conducted in Russian, or Latvian sometimes (he could manage Polish if he'd had some wine), there was little chance of Beatty knowing too much, for which she was thankful. Joe didn't have a shrink but not because he didn't believe in shrinks. In fact he thought they would straighten him out a bit. He meant to go to one but was always postponing the first visit until the good time he was having was finished. He saw his life spinning away from him simply because he was enjoying it. Most of his male friends, who were further away from their ethnic origins than he was, needed the shrinks in order to have the good time while he had it naturally, which made him try to be unnatural because everybody else was. He resolved to change radically after the dancing had stopped but it never did. It meant that Beatty could be perfectly alone even in his company. Sometimes she saw it as the ideal marriage if that was what you wanted.

It added to her yearning for the office and the vibration of the Madison Avenue traffic and the amnesiac warning system. She wanted to burst into Anthea's little cubby hole but rarely did---she felt Anthea was sexless, which contradicted her other view of Anthea, that she was too much on the look-out for men. Joe showed some interest in Anthea though not what Beatty called of a Russian kind. He said, 'Why does she ask such a lot of questions?' 'She wants to trip you up,' Beatty said. 'It's a power game.' 'How can asking questions be a power game?' 'Well she's got her own little life and it all goes on inside her head and she's not going to come out for anybody, that's why her shoulders are bony.' 'How does it make her shoulders bony?' 'She never sits back and relaxes so she doesn't get any flesh on her shoulders, she used to

have enormous tits and I suppose all the flesh went there. Now she's a workaholic, she only came to see me because she wanted a job, I knew her at school but not all that well, she was a man-hater even then.' 'She's a lesbian?' 'I never thought of that, could be.' 'You seem not to like her very much.' When he asked about Gertrude she just shrugged and said 'She yells and jumps up and down at ball games and throws plastic cups of coke at the television screen if the Seattle Seahawks lose'.

One morning at work Anthea told her that Gertrude had been with Jarvis on one of his 'night prowls' and Beatty nearly fell through the floor. To her astonishment she felt jealousy. She also found herself liking Anthea more than Gertrude because she disliked Jarvis. But at once she disliked her again because Jarvis liked her. These were the kind of thoughts that made her choose two pepper dishes for the same dinner.

She told Dr Dormund about the 'night prowls'. She wanted him to ask her if Gertrude was receiving any 'help' but he didn't (she hadn't checked whether Gertrude had her own shrink). She also wished he would give her a volunteer assignment, like planting certain questions in her conversations with Jarvis. But he didn't. In fact he had noticed that her visits to the prison had declined recently. The other prisoners had seemingly become uninteresting for her, including a student killer who had failed (though only just) to kill himself at the end of a graduation day spree. Previously she would have made a beeline for him.

Dr Dormund said something interesting which she could take two ways. He said, 'Everybody's obsessed with crime nowadays, we'll soon have TV ads with crime themes. I have to deal with people under restraint but believe me if I had a private non-institutional practice' (he did) 'I'd feel the need for iron bars on my windows and a bodyguard.' He was in the act of picking up his papers. 'The guys in this prison are tit-suckers in comparison. It's the millions going free that worry me.' She left (or

rather he left, papers under arm, before her). She felt an instant of shame and then, to cover it, hot anger.

His private practice was small and he selected his clients carefully. He slept with a percentage of the women, being expert at transference problems (but not their resolution) and he would have preferred Beatty as a patient rather than a phoney volunteer worker. This way, with her coming to his private office twice a week, he'd have done away with the phoney element. His appetite for her was both whetted and discouraged by her treating him as an official and thus obliging him to treat her as potential prison staff. She had a wildly voluptuous look that suggested to him a unique power to 'receive' (his language) a man. He daydreamed about her body---the very parts she thought looked pre-sexual to a 'practiced' eye. But he listened to her crap about Jarvis just the same. He was terrified the man would screw up, and soon. He'd done it before on parole. Dormund covered his interest in her with a snarling irritability, which he felt didn't sit well on him as a practitioner, and which naturally enough he blamed on her.

Five

It was an excellently appointed New Jersey house of wood quite without character inside or out with a sloping shaved lawn fore and aft and a semi-circling fringe of beeches that cast a look of ancient wonder on the property. There were three bathrooms, a newly fitted kitchen and no corridors on the ground floor so that each room gave out on to another and those walls that existed seemed designed only to defend the proprieties. It had no more sense of interior than an open gym. But realtors have to sell places, with heartfelt insincerity. Upstairs, where a corridor was necessary for sleeping privacy, the rooms were six equal chopped-out spaces built without respect for function, mood or comfort. The owners had done what they could.

Hanging carpets and rubber plants and some plaster copies of Roman heads produced some interior feeling of a puzzling kind and helped you overlook the fact that there were too many windows and too many apertures altogether.

It was a house defying laws of magnetic fields, wind, water courses and sunlight. Not exactly south in aspect, it failed, because of its trees, to get a good northern one too. A stream had been cemented up, which promised floods for the future, though mostly for home owners down the hill. But if this one was tough to sell Gertrude of all people in the floundering real estate business was the one to do it. In order not to buy

a house of hers you had to have a head of iron, which isn't easily yours if you're looking at a house for the first time. You more or less absorbed whatever she said, true or not, along with the fittings, and by the end the fact that you disliked the house and found the price too high seemed irrelevant compared with the fact that you wanted to buy it.

For one thing she could organize Open Houses better than anyone in the business, perhaps because of her background in the fashion and jewelry trades. She arrived at eight in the morning and before she put the signs out on the sidewalk she `reorganized' the furniture and if necessary lit a log fire. If it was the Christmas season she brought portable festive bunting and even a tree and put gifts under it---brochures and lighters and pen flashlights. In the summer she erected a trellis table in the garden for drinks and had all the house apertures open.

The days were closing in, so this was a log fire occasion. On the entrance table she set out house descriptions in which termite reports were cited and average heating and lighting costs estimated. She told the owners to get their cars out of the car port and park them by the sidewalk to make the road look well filled up. She brought her own cassettes and if necessary provided the hi-fi outfit too. She knew the music that clients liked. You avoided hard rock at one end and Beethoven at the other and you also avoided piped industrial sound. At a house which instinct told her rednecks would love she supplied recordings of football game commentaries with breaks for the national anthem and Frank Sinatra singing `America'. She sat down and studied the house, the season, the likely client, and she approached Open House days as if they were theatrical events except that the audience were the unwitting actors, enacting in their minds the cozy family events which she was subliminally beaming into their brains through her non-stop but never strident or intrusive chit chat.

She had been haunted by the idea of sex with strangers since a child. Her

fantasies were the usual ones---a close crowd in a swaying subway train, a rush of spectators at a football game, a sudden encounter in a momentarily deserted corridor or office with danger but a few inches away. That they were also the key to her ability to sell a house is easy to explain. There was no direct connection at all, nothing overt, since directness is poison to fantasies like hers. Nothing happened, never had and never would. But the sounds of movement through an empty house, the fact that she might be alone with the male of a couple, the rustle of jackets, the striking of a match, the proximity on staircases contributed to an inner state of high excitement that was like an unheard musical accompaniment to everything she said.

Gertrude was an extraordinarily brown person---the brown of her hair and her eyes was so intense that it just missed being deepest black. That was somehow an important mark of her aura, it stamped something definite on to her behavior, made her eyes seem wide and more peering than they really were, as if the images they were taking in, if possible at close proximity, were being gobbled up by a deep brown omnivorous source. A remarkable thing was the fact that being brown by nature she didn't eschew brown colors. On the contrary, she went in for every shade of brown and even wore hats that enveloped her brown hair in extended versions of itself so that sometimes the hair looked as if it was growing out of her hat rim.

She was almost always elegant. This wasn't the outcome of an interest in elegance but an effort to hide one appalling (to her) defect of her structure. Like Anthea and Beatty and every other woman she had a sense of physical defect which determined the way she stood and dressed. But in fact she created the defect by trying to disguise it. To tell the truth, her figure was excellently balanced but she was convinced that she was a little too tall, that she gave a *too long* impression, that her *length* outweighed her width and that the appendages---the *too long* arms and *too long*

legs and *too long* hands---made for an unruly aspect which the color brown might happily have the effect of framing, though in fact, since she was always thrashing about with these appendages, the brown emphasized her movements to the point of making her from time to time look like an electronic witch. Since her fictional 'long' look was her own secret other people were unable to advise her about it or stop her building herself out sideways as if layers of gross fat lay hiding under the layers of abundant cloth, while in fact her limbs were pricelessly well formed. As a result she didn't steal glances at long mirrors in passing but averted her whole body from them with a grim decisiveness which made the very few observant people she knew think she was pleasantly lacking in vanity.

As for herself naked she couldn't bear it, which was another reason she could never verify what kind of figure she had. The breasts, in her view, sagged, which they did a very little but this was because they were large and had to obey gravity. Hers was an unreliable view of the matter, being based on guesswork and not looking. Her hips, in her view, were huge globes of opaque glass but in fact they were wonderfully lacking in cellular drift and in any case how was this globe impression reconcilable with the supposed *long* look? Another thing, her breasts were spaced very slightly too far apart, they missed the right biological boundary lines by a fraction of a millimeter but for her it was a mile. So when she was choosing a new bra she tried to bunch them together, which evoked altogether too much cleavage. With so much to correct, you couldn't throw on anything you felt like wearing, as Anthea could (she supposed). It forced her to be elegant. You spent hours sniffing out the right things in boutiques, and it always happens that the right things are the most expensive. Once properly fitted out she took it all to a football game or the ice rink, which was absurd---sneakers and ski pants and billowing multi-colored sweaters and ski jackets would have done

fine while a pair of shoulder pads would have horizontalized her splendidly. But no, she wasn't satisfied with obliterating her enviable natural lines, she had to divert attention from them by means of contrived dazzlement which usually meant an outfit so desirable she had to borrow to make it hers. Yet it worked too, especially as when she talked and her voice turned out to be husky you wanted to hear what she had to say, you found yourself reacting to her as a dynamic personality (such as you had sometimes heard about) rather than a body. The clothes, especially the conflict with her real lines that they set up, somehow made this possible. Not that she said anything important. She was so full of stadium jargon it couldn't be otherwise. But again---such was her peculiar, one might say insidious appeal---she was exactly the girl you would want to take to a football game if you didn't like football games. Her elegance balanced her cheering. Not that she went overboard and stamped and screamed herself hoarse and hugged other spectators every time there was a score, she did it more like a man, with measure, which, since she didn't really know the difference between a man and a woman, she considered the feminine thing to do (as Dr Dormund said, it's a difficult world if you have hormones).

The whole problem of what it was to be feminine seemed more marked in her even than it did in other women. When deciding how to pitch certain remarks ('Really,' with a laugh, 'you *are* something!' for example) she felt she had an infinite range of pitches to choose from and was sometimes in a panic as to whether to go high or low, loud or modulated. It was the same with walking across a room. Should she slouch intimately, stride imperiously, shuffle daintily or just walk collectedly? And the arms? The hands? Where, how fast, how brusquely or otherwise? Much of the problem of what it was to be a woman, what other people meant by it, was settled in front of a mirror, in private, but the *acting* part, that was a real bitch. In boutiques and

department stores you felt safe and looked after, as you did when you flipped through the fashion magazines, you saw what a woman was supposed to look like---but how was she supposed to *be*?

Should she let herself be picked up (literally) by Hank Schwanger when in playful mood and carried about the room? Should she laugh till she was sick, as she did now and then in female company? Should she dig people in the ribs when feeling particularly warm? Should she spit? How far could she belch? Could she belch at all? Could she even *know* about belching? There were a lot of other things too that she had doubts about, particularly in the intimate zone where a man was concerned---how much should she do on her own initiative and how much not even know about? How much should you fumble and hesitate, how much grasp decisively?

Even the nature of the cry emitted at climax was a matter for inner debate, especially as it happened so close to somebody's ear. But she rarely did emit it. More often she had to simulate it, letting out a long breath through the mouth which she hoped conveyed satisfaction and even, but this was much more difficult, delight.

Football games threw her into the company of women she contemptuously called (to herself only) dikes and these she felt were in *real* trouble, trying to pull down an image of womanhood which was by no means secure anyway. Whatever you had to say about this image it did exist and slovenly bra-less behavior and unpermed and even uncombed and unwashed hair and pants that should have belonged to an automobile mechanic was no way to help matters. She knew some men wanted women permanently in high heels and tight skirts and here she agreed with the lesbians that she mustn't behave like a sex object. But this raised the question of whether womanhood existed *except* as a sex object, namely a male expectation, and it was this that the lesbians, to her mind, made more horribly complicated than it need be. Not

that her lesbian friends actually did look slovenly or unwashed. All but one of them was as careful in self-presentation as she was. But that was Gertrude. She had a strange mental habit of forming durable impressions *despite* examples, not because of them. So among lesbian friends, in spite of their being as groomed as she was, she wanted to tear off her pinching bra and kick off her shoes and drink with a gurgling sound and belch (and worse) and run her fingers through her hair to disrupt sixty-dollarsworth of recent attention. She felt that their being lesbian implied this behavior in spite of their never behaving this way. Yes, Gertrude had a puzzling mind. It made a beeline for wherever she didn't fit in, then it tried to make her fit in, but what she was trying to fit into was a chimera, like the unwashed lesbian friends she didn't have. This despite the fact that she frequently found closer friends among the lesbians than among the married and mated ones. They emanated a certain self sufficiency which, strangely, since they were women, managed to suspend the daily search into what a woman was. She wondered 'what it would be like' with a woman but only in the way she might wonder what it would be like with a heavyweight champion.

Men---the sneakers and T-shirt and crewcut type she liked (no, the type she consorted with most)---represented something of a painful sexual challenge for her, which was probably why she chose them. It provoked her to fretful inner research, making her wonder whether the way she had decided to behave was the one they would acknowledge as womanly. As these men were wondering precisely the same thing about their *own* behavior it was a biological quandary indeed. Did she receive their simulated deep voices, their over-hearty cries in front of a television ball game, their manner of grasping their cans of beer and loping with that strange upward and downward motion of one shoulder and then the other, as the way a man should be? Mercifully, for both parties, one biological side never shared notes on the subject with

the other, never doubted that the other side was straight and sound and, well, just as they'd always been. For example, when feminists pilloried `men' they rarely had a doubt as to what a man was---rarely even considered that the question could be raised. And Gertrude's image of `men' was as fixed as theirs of her. Had she known that *particularly* in her set the male-identity question (being the cause, so to speak, of the red in the redneck) was as fretful as the female-identity one she would have felt that a major support in her life had collapsed. Men did certain things, women did other certain things. But here Gertrude and Hank Schwanger were lucky. They kept to the fixed image through thick and thin. He knew she would cook and wash the dishes and refuse his help in the kitchen, while she could call him any time there was a sudden plumbing difficulty at one of her houses or a tile had slipped or she needed a tree trimmed.

Hank didn't always wear sneakers and jeans. He was an accountant and worked in a building a stone's throw from Wall Street where the lack of a collar and tie would have been noticed. He was a tall, heavy-shouldered man of that reassuring type which while brawny seems not to know how to apply the brawn harmfully. He wouldn't hurt a fly and was the one man Gertrude could put her head against (it came up to his middle chest) and feel as consoled as a child, especially as parental consolation had rarely come her way in childhood. Hank gave lectures in accountancy and had once taught at Columbia. He took an interest in real estate and often gave her advance information about a property that hadn't got on to the computers yet. She was grateful for his paternal watchfulness, not that he was older than she, just very much bigger. He had lately started attending her Open Houses. Yet, for all his paternity, he had the look of a round bright boy with slightly mottled fair skin. It wasn't that he inspired trust by being always there when she needed him:

an automatic confidence simply clicked on inside her the minute he appeared, a vast benign shadow in the doorway. Not that he was particularly benign. For one thing he was possessive, the more as his care for you grew. He sent flowers, he called up just when you were going to the bath on Sunday mornings and said he'd be picking you up in an hour for a champagne brunch at a place he knew. He broke all the genderless rules and it was thoroughly enjoyable. Even his jealousy became enjoyable---his way of guarding your person. She couldn't tolerate the idea of being guarded but what felt good about it was that it showed how genuine her womanly comportment must be, otherwise what was there for him to guard? As soon as another male form lurked nearby a frown would draw like a veil over his brow, it wasn't a real physical frown---it indicated more a state of gentle concern, for *her*---why worry the poor woman now, you awkward dude, please take your feeble repartee some place else! If they had a date to watch a ball game on television in a bar and she turned up with another man he would actually draw back, almost take her aside to get her assurance as to the guy's validity, giving him long hooded glances as he said good evening to her---all so endearingly against the genderless rules. Then he snapped out of it (he seemed to time this quite unconsciously) and gave the other man a handshake that nearly twisted his arm off. Nothing aggressive. His candid steady gaze and easy smile combined with the handshake to relay a message of buddyship subtly spiced with an invisible wink (what are we doing with women anyway?). A computer couldn't have done it better. Yet he calculated none of it. If it looked like bad acting it wasn't because it had been in any way rehearsed but because it was unreal. Men simply didn't behave like that. But this simple statement was rendered false the moment it was uttered---by the fact that he, a man, clearly *did* behave like that (and only hormones complicate life, Dr Dormund?).

Had Gertrude but known it, his jealousy was a simple nervous tic which had

nothing to do with any feelings for the woman it was supposed to be about. In fact he'd often had to shake a woman gently off over a period of months after she'd begun to assume that she was *his*, primally---otherwise he wouldn't be so proprietary and put her other men friends at a distance, would he? And she may never have so much as pecked him on the cheek. Luckily, his tic got worse if he felt desire, and even began to look like authentic or old-world passion.

Toward Gertrude he *thought* he felt desire, which was almost the same, for him, as feeling it (because how could you know if you desired a woman until you had tried her?). Gertrude had had two divorces, so had he. Their ages were within two years of each other. An accountant and a realtor wouldn't do badly together.

There was a contradiction working here, however. While he found Gertrude made him feel a man, and he made her feel a woman, they behaved like a couple of kids in that pre-genital state of life when everything is pushing and shoving and tripping and exploding paper bags. They whooped and jumped and hugged each other at the football games, they drank an equal measure, they got ravenously hungry at the same moment---what else could they become except inseparable? They would stand hugging each other in silence and for much more time than seemed (secretly) natural to them. There was no kissing or fumbling. They had got themselves so far back into the pre-democratic gender world (almost as back as top hats and broughams) that the physical stuff was obviously being consigned by mutual consent to when it would be legally condoned in the form of marriage, if ever it happened. It was after all what real respect demanded. Not that either of them had the minimal intention of marrying the other. It was just another idea that their being together induced. True, they made each other feel a man and a woman but it was *another* man and woman, an imagined one, not them at all. Romping around throwing popcorn at each other they might have guessed

this but didn't.

His jealous tic was in full throb today. He appeared on the doorstep in casual but not sportive wear just when the first clients were slamming their car doors and peering at the house like it was a giant weasel. Gertrude's hand and voice activity excised their helpless look right away while Hank put himself at the front door with his wrist-sprainer and his 'How you doin' today?' at the ready.

Today was a very special day for him because he'd chosen it as the day on which he would express himself, namely, put into words his feelings (by which he meant dimly perceived unfinished notions already weakened by doubts as to whether he was really having them or not). These feelings were about Gertrude. And she had a right to know about them. Self-expression of this kind had happened twice in his life before and had led to two divorces, having first of course led to the marriages. As it happened he had several chances to talk to Gertrude alone since the house wasn't evoking much interest and viewers only came in sporadic humble bursts, with long pauses in between when the music continued to drift across the lawn (it had turned out warm) and the upstairs floor let in the afternoon sunlight and the breeze shook the drapes in a balmy idyllic way. They sat about, looked at the magnolia trees and ate the canapes and he quietly told her that they seemed to feel pretty good around each other (he had had a couple of years in California) and he didn't see there was anybody else in his life who made him feel that great. Her face went through an alarming series of changes which he didn't notice because he was expressing so carefully, but none of these faces looked like her own and they even suggested that she didn't *have* a composite face of her own. Some of the faces demonstrated shock, others plain fear, yet others a raw rude anger. She just didn't feel THAT way about him! Who else could she go around with *now?* on what enormous chest could she lay her ten-year-old

head on *now*? why was he screwing it up, why did he want to make it difficult for her? was he one of those daddies who shot their own feet and then pissed on your leg? By the time he was finished she thought she was going to faint for lack of a place to put her eyes. The upstairs drapes were like handkerchief distress signals to her now, the music sounded like an Irish wake.

When she was quite certain it was over she smiled very broadly, with a kind of freak delighted look, and said, 'Oh Hank! It's fantastic hearing you say these things!'. When the Open House notices were taken in and the front door locked he said, 'And now I think we should grab dinner together, don't you?', to which she said she couldn't she had to rush, she'd be in touch and almost before he'd taken breath she was in her car and off. To *his* mind she went away in a cloud of girlish confusion, understandable in a real woman. He walked to his car thoughtfully and proudly---proudly because his self-expression had paid off.

But now that he had her implicit assent, as he thought, he began to undo mentally what he had so carefully constructed. Her confusion, pretty and modest as it was, made him actually look at his own remarks for the first time and absorb their sense. First he was dumbfounded and then he said to himself, Well, well, well, so Gerty Tellingas is going to be turned into a Schwanger is she? He was entertaining the thought for the first time. And he had no idea at all as to whether that prospect appealed to him. He felt perplexity, a little alarm and then a lot, in that order. An engagement, a common abode etc would have to be arranged! So Hank Schwanger wanted to marry Gertrude Tellingas did he? Well, well, well! Well, if he felt sure about it---! This thought produced nausea in him---he saw himself touching Gertrude on a bare area of her body and recorded only sensations of horror. But listen, son, an idiotic voice kept croaking at him, if you wanna marry the lady---

He drove faster than he should have to Long Island without noticing that he was even going there. Most every week-end he went to Maidie Panipoulos's place and they sat about and cooked and smoked pot and looked at ball games on television. They slept together, in the fullest sense, and this evening they would sleep together too. If you had asked either of them if they were attracted to each other you wouldn't have got a quick or certain reply, the cohabitory habit had simply established itself over the years and from the habit had grown a certain---well, cohabitory pleasure. As he walked into the dimly lit den where Maidie was sprawling amid the New York Times he suddenly thought, 'Everything's a scam', and then couldn't believe he'd had the thought and that it seemed like the sincerest he'd had that day. It was equivalent to a dull metallic taste in the mouth, a chasm of unfulfillment opened before him and it rendered even the familiar Maidie, bra-less and shoe-less, as remote from him as a boulder in the Mohabi desert.

He called Gertrude later that evening only because, in his view, she expected it. They agreed to meet a week-day evening but not at her place---she liked to get out, she explained (having been out all day). After the call he wanted to cry, and actually put his head in his hands. The meeting took place the following Wednesday and they were still in their status clothes. They munched and stared like a couple of senior citizens at a pancake place watching their cholesterol. She told him she had a lot to talk about and he said they needed an intimate bar for that. They went to a place with armchairs in remote palmed corners and concealed wall lights with classical jazz on the speakers. He felt sick and still wanted to cry. He behaved paternally, spoke very quietly. She was ridiculously dressed, from her own point of view. She had got up real early and nothing she tried on worked until finally in a panic she threw on whatever wasn't lying on the floor. She wanted not to cry but scream. If he put his hand on her knee or even

her arm she was going to do it too.

'Listen Hank,' she said, 'I'm flattered but it's not on.'

'Why?' he said, his mouth dry because now she didn't want him he suddenly wanted her, not that in fact he did but he thought he did and this was frequently the nearest he got to a feeling he could actually describe. To his bemusement she then began talking about a guy called Jarvis. But not about the Jarvis as we know him. This was a transformed Jarvis who had never been in prison and was actually quite well set up in life. He emerged from her obscure staccato sentences as possibly a business executive a tad or two higher than Hank to say the least. Hank nodded, his lips set, and stared into his beer with that hooded look on his brow, not that he was feeling the slightest jealousy. She asked herself if her aim was just to use Jarvis to put him off. But it wasn't. She was talking about Jarvis because she wanted to. And gradually this became clear to Hank as it became clear to her. By the end of her account he was sympathetic, even proud of her. He put his hand on her knee but it was congratulatory so she didn't scream. He said, 'Go for it, lady,' and she said, 'Thank you, Hank, I really mean that.' 'That's OK, it's OK,' he murmured into his glass just as he was tipping it back to drink so that he sounded like a horror movie voice-over for a moment.

As they walked out of the bar she said, 'Come home and have a coffee'---this an instant after he'd started looking forward to his own bed and record player and had happily surrendered her to Jarvis and was thinking about which of the other girls he could chum up with and maybe he'd be her new husband's buddy and their best man (was she catholic maybe or presbyterian?). By the time they got to her block it was past midnight. Just as they were turning into the foyer she saw Jarvis hanging about outside. He didn't even try to conceal himself. He was looking right at her. She felt a thick hot wave of deliriously enjoyable panic flooding her middle, almost buckling her

knees. Anthea was already in bed and Gertrude signalled to Hank to be as quiet as possible. She led the way straight to her bedroom, running. They waded noisily through shoes and skirts on the floor. She turned to him before she'd closed the door and put her head on his chest and a moment later they were flung by a combined compulsion on to the bed (which took the sudden four hundred pounds combined pressure with a huge crack) and suddenly found themselves locked not in the opening stages of copulation but the final. There had been only a minor few seconds of delay due to Gertrude's urgent need being momentarily beyond his comprehension so that at first, literally, he failed to rise to the occasion but the sudden astonishing availability of a dark and guarded and secret area drove her meaning home to him and the matter was ended hardly a moment after it had begun.

A strange event, that, with the door still ajar and the hall lights on and shoes all over the floor and most of her and his clothes on and no precautions taken and he lying on his back with the beer bubbling in him and she continuing to ride on the waves of a vision that, unknown to him, had started downstairs in the street---until she too collapsed in a heap with a haunted cry as if someone had just beaten her. He left her lying there. No good nights. She slept in her state of half dress until almost dawn, one foot touching the floor, and when she woke she recollected nothing, simply dragged herself between the sheets and fell asleep again.

Six

Dr Lisa Tensevic had been analyzed as a girl by Anna Freud so it was assumed she knew her business and visits to her, once achieved after a year or so on a waiting list, were a matter for awe. You arrived unnecessarily early and you didn't throw on any clothes you felt like wearing since this was a special occasion and you might as well look good if you were going to be stripped naked, as people said you were. Dr Tensevic's first glance from over her eye-glasses was sternly appraising as if to say 'What for God's sake have we got here?'. She didn't shake hands, she didn't get up from her little chair at the head of the couch. You followed a brief pen-in-hand sign from her to get lain down. You had already heard (for you only got to her by referral) that you must never under any circumstances address her before she addressed you, no matter how many times you had been to her. And at the end of a session you simply got up and left, without any form of farewell even it was your last visit. This had the effect of making you tell the truth, that is tell her the story about yourself you most believed in, because you weren't going to have a relationship with her anyway. It was *she* who decided on truth or otherwise---you simply babbled. Not that she told you what she thought was true and what not. After a time it didn't seem to matter what you said. A number of clients sulked and said nothing for a whole session, to pay her

back in the same coin of silence, but she remained quite unperturbed, indeed she seemed to like it that way and the sulks soon dried up (at a hundred dollars an hour they were in any case an expensive luxury). With some analysts you could recount any junk that came into your head on the grounds that since it came into your head it must have some relevance. The junk you talked to Lisa was received (or so it seemed, for you had no way of being sure) not at all as an account of your life, much less as an account of reality, but as non-verbal noises in which a certain grotesque pre-musical cacophony could be detected (Lisa was very musical). It was the cacophony Lisa listened to, which accounted for her smile when she listened to tears, and her shocked contempt when listening to something `funny'.

Also she never helped you out of your guilt. When you were writhing in its suffocating vapors on the couch she allowed you silence and time enough to begin to watch these vapors, and without a word of direction from her you found yourself learning to observe them with a certain curious interest, even irony. When Gertrude told her about Hank Schwanger and reported (inaccurately---but most things are recounted inaccurately anyway) her conversation with him in the bar and then her glimpse of Jarvis on the sidewalk, followed by the tumbling event on her bed with the man she couldn't bear to think of in any erotic mode, there was a silence so long that Gertrude thought their time had run out and they must already be into somebody else's session.

`Did he express satisfaction?' the doctor asked (these were the first words she had ever uttered to Gertrude, after perhaps six sessions).

`Who?'

`The jilted gentleman.'

`He got up and dressed and perhaps he thought I was asleep but he just tiptoed

out.'

'Did he dress quickly?'

'No, very slowly.'

'Then he expressed satisfaction.'

There was another silence that seemed to stretch into the next client's session.

'I wouldn't advise you to take another walk in the dark,' the doctor said.

'I won't.'

'Will you repeat that to me, having first considered whether this 'I won't' vow you've just taken has any relationship with what you actually intend to do?'

Gertrude didn't understand the words but a desperate sentence boomed out of her mouth like a call through a megaphone, 'I want to go on my night prowls, I want to, I want to!' followed by anguished sobs.

After the sobs had gone the doctor asked quietly, 'Would you like me to recommend hospital care for you?'

'No, no, please! I can stop myself!'

She felt her analyst lean forward in the dimness of the room by her head.

'I repeat,' she heard Dr Tensevic whisper, 'you're in great danger, I have certain responsibilities, I must look to your safety, I will give you a number to call.'

She felt herself beginning to cry again but the little reminding bell, discreet as a cat's purr, told her to get up and leave behind whatever passions were setting her bowels alight. That evening she told Anthea not to let her go out. 'If I do, if I insist, call this number', and she handed her Dr Tensevic's card with the emergency number written on it.

Gertrude told Dr Tensevic next time, 'I omitted to tell you that Hank Schwanger said 'mother' too.'

`When did he say mother?'

`At his orgasm.'

`And why did you omit saying it?'

`I suppose I rejected it.'

`You don't want a husband.'

`I didn't say that!'

`I didn't say you did say it.'

Gertrude had `rejected' something else too---the fact that she was `prowling' the streets almost every night. Anthea didn't find her at home any more, so had no chance to restrain her. The result was that only Anthea was in when Hank Schwanger called to see Gertrude, which he did regularly. He had in the meantime told Maidie Panipoulos what we call Everything. She stroked his head and saw tears starting in his eyes, which made her realize that what he was saying might even be true. She murmured, concealing her determination to get him out of the house before anybody got hungry, `You're a real man, you can cry, a man's tears should be as hot as his sperm.' As she was of Greek parentage he took this to be some form of Mediterranean earth wisdom but Maidie was always quite happy not to know what she was talking about---it was part of her lazy attraction. She wished to give him a manly boost after the shame of his tears, and her idiotic remark had this effect. In fact she didn't throw him out but fed him a huge dish of pan-sauteed catfish fillets with parsley pecan sauce followed by chess pie. The big darling boy needed consoling, that was all, and she had enough New Jersey earth wisdom to see that people end up with their cooks and consolers, not their soul mates.

What he didn't tell Maidie---what would have got him thrown out long before the farm-bred cat-fish had been take out of freeze---was the fact that from his point of

view he had never had sex until that word `mother' had escaped from his lips in Gertrude's dim bedroom. Since that moment he had been fumbling about in his mind for an explanation of why it had happened but his mind, used to figuring out rebates, simply didn't get it. After all, it wasn't as if he was attracted to Gertrude. She was a riot when jumping around trying to get the popcorn out of her blouse but that was fellow-feeling of the kind you could have with a man, it wasn't love. How explain, then, the rush of warm utter meltingness, that sense of being lost in her, that most perfect of all helplessnesses he had ever experienced, making him murmur pleadingly, reluctantly the word `mother'? Surely he *must* be attracted to her? And how explain the fact that during the pre-`mother' limbo in which he had once lived he had all but proposed marriage to her? Surely *that* had been in the nature of a premonition of things to come? Yet still the idea of having sex with Gertrude (now that he'd had it) was repugnant to him. What did being attracted to someone mean, then? Surely it meant getting on with them, wanting to live with them, being happy to see them and above all---well, presumably above all---going to football games with them? Then he *was* attracted to her! But he didn't want to kiss her, put his nose in her hair, clasp her in more than a hail-fellow way (and in fact he'd done none of these things). So how explain the `mother' episode which he urgently, tearfully wanted to repeat at all costs as soon as possible even if he went to prison for rape?

Having told Everything to Maidie, he next poured himself out to Anthea---like beer going into a tankard. She was fascinated by this huge man on to whom, she felt, one could literally climb, as he put his head in his hands and then looked up at her with reddened eyes and stared about him like a Midland Bank Amateur Dramatic Society Macbeth she had once seen. On his earlier visits to the apartment, when she was settling in and before all this Jarvis business began, he hadn't seemed real to her at all as

he had lumbered about, mostly biceps and deep voice and hail laughter but now, as she saw, Aeschylus would have found him intriguing. It was easy to laugh at him but laughing at another human being has an uncanny way of referring to a similarly laughable weakness in oneself. Anthea was falling in love with Hank Schwanger, beginning to dream about him even while he was sitting there, and allowing the dream to become extravagant, then outrageous the moment he left.

The first evening he appeared she waited up for Gertrude afterward and told her everything he'd said. Gertrude could hardly conceal her tedium. She potted about getting herself a cup of chocolate and undressing and creaming her face and brushing her hair out and at the end, to Anthea's joy, she shrugged and said, 'To hell with him'. But next evening she was at home when Anthea arrived. Her bedroom door was ajar and she could just be glimpsed at her dressing table spraying fixative on her hair.

'Shouldn't I be telling you not to go out?' Anthea asked her.

'I'm going out with the Shwanger fink.' Anthea suffered a stab of jealousy. She put on her earphones in her bedroom and listened to an enchantingly sweet version of 'The Night Is Young and You're So Beautiful'. The crooner had such a delicate tremolo. It hadn't been unmale in the Thirties, apparently, to be tender. She wondered what on earth her imagination was doing with Hank Schwanger's vast bulk but her imagination refused to budge from him, even for Roy Fox and his orchestra from all of sixty years ago.

She was asleep when Gertrude returned and so didn't know that Hank returned with her or that they left the bedroom door ajar or that there was a vast resounding crash from the four hundred pound impact on the master bed. Downstairs on the sidewalk Gertrude had turned to him and said, 'Well, Gert's had it for tonight, see you!' and held out her hand for him to shake just at the moment when she glimpsed Jarvis

standing more or less where he'd been standing on the previous occasion---and staring at her again. She at once said, 'Hell, why not come up for a last drink?'

Well, the drink didn't happen but another 'mother' event did and with almost the same speed as before and with only the hall lights providing illumination. He didn't say 'mother' this time. Apparently the satisfaction was too deep even for this one word. They said nothing to each other before, during or after. She had the presence of mind this time to drag her head to a pillow and get between the sheets as he lifted himself off the bed. She didn't even hear him leave. For the second time in a week she had to tear the sheets off the bed when she woke in the morning and plunge them into the dirty wash basket.

This second 'mother' event bit hard into her work schedule. She woke too late to have a bath, even to make up. That would all have to be done at the house she was to look over (she grabbed her makeup kit and a bath towel on her way out). Thankfully the tenants were in Mexico City. She would have given anything for a bidet right now but New York wasn't a Greek island. There was a smell of bacon and hash browns on the street as she flung herself into her car and that too, with bagels on the side, would have been welcome. Love made you hungry. *Love?* What love? She wanted to drop Hank Shwanger into molten lava, painlessly of course but finally. She flushed with shame as she drove past the winos and mounted police in Washington Square park, they seemed to know all about last night and were grinning about it.

Hank sped to Maidie again over the week-end to tell her more but this time she didn't stroke his head. She said, 'You're getting yourself involved up to your eyeballs and you'll live to repent it.' To her astonishment (since not even she knew what she meant) he said, 'You're damned right.' So again he got a meal. Only afterward, when he'd made a log fire and behaved like he was staying the night, did she realize how

insulting to her womanhood his presence was. 'I'm sorry I couldn't ever give you what you really wanted,' she said, unaware of the corn that lay heavy on this remark, 'it's been so much wasted time hasn't it?'

'What are you saying Maidie?' he asked (corn for corn). 'You're the most important person in my life and you know it' (she *didn't* know it and he didn't either, though his remark made it seem possible in a funny sort of way).

'I do know it,' she said, 'but you've moved on to a bigger world.'

'How, bigger?' he asked, feeling that this might explain events that were completely mysterious for him.

'You've found yourself.' (What a let-down!). He said, to revive her sympathy for him, 'Between you and me I've landed myself in a load of trouble. Anyway---' He found himself taking her shoulders in his hands and gazing into her eyes---not an easy thing to do when sitting on the floor---'let's go to bed shall we?'. As he said that his head seemed to swing off his neck and leave the house. As they went upstairs he felt nauseous---why the hell had he suggested this thing? He couldn't understand the movement of his own legs even. Yet it was Hank Schwanger's body that lay down at Maidie's side, and the noisy breathing ten-year-old fumbling event they had been practicing for years, with no 'mother' ever uttered, repeated itself. They had a breakfast next morning worth three meals, they thought they were never going to stop making fresh toast. It was a chill downcast Sunday outside. You could hear a distant car start up, and a dog barked. He took the sports section of The Times while she sat in the rest.

They didn't expect to be disturbed that day but they were. There was a knock on the door. A kind of limp looking guy was standing outside, Maidie thought it was a panhandler but he was dressed a little too well, though only a little. It was Jarvis.

Hank went to the door and when he heard 'I'm a friend of Mrs Masumerov and Miss Tellingas' he gave the man his wrist-sprain treatment and on-the-level gaze and made way for him to enter. By this time there was another log fire and the television was on but minus the sound. Jarvis accepted a cup of coffee, which could be had at Maidie's at any time of the day.

'You'll want to know how I found you,' Jarvis said---an untrue statement which suddenly became true because he'd said it (Hank thought what a fine gentleman he seemed). 'Mrs Masumerov---'

'Beatty, yes I know her,' Hank said.

'It's a very worrying situation and if you don't mind sir I'd like to talk to you alone.'

He couldn't have said a better thing. Hank came into his own vast self, so to speak. As for Maidie, she wondered how the hell he'd got himself mixed up with Beatty too or had she got the names confused? Rising from and at first mostly with The Times she said, 'Well, I'll leave you two guys alone, there's some things want doing upstairs, why don't you give this gentleman some more coffee, Hank, when he's ready?'

'A nice lady,' Jarvis said just within her earshot as she left.

Hank couldn't prevent his hooded look and said nothing in such a way that conveyed the thought 'let's keep to business in hand' to Jarvis.

'It's Gertrude.'

Hank found himself flushing generously and wondered if Jarvis was a brother, a lawyer or, worst, a lover.

'I've observed her a number of times roaming the streets at night and I frankly think that's dangerous.'

'Roaming the streets for God's sake?' Hank's vast paternal self loomed from his

armchair.

'I follow her at a safe distance from time to time but I'm a busy man,' Jarvis said.

'You *follow* her? So you're in the habit of roaming the streets too?'

'I'm often in the area in the small hours.' Jarvis looked at him gently. 'Are you sure the lady really wanted to go upstairs?'

'The lady?'

'Your lady.'

'Oh *my* lady. Why sure, you said you wanted to see me alone, huh?'

'I don't like to offer offence.'

Christ, what language! he must be some aristo!

'I'm mainly Beatty's friend,' Jarvis said. 'We meet quite often at Miss Tellingas's residence.'

'Oh you do!'

'I never call her Beatty. She's a great help to me, I need her several times a week.'

'You do huh?' (sickly look).

'I've been in prison, you see.'

'Oh you have!' Hank all but shouted, trying not to explode out of his armchair and call the emergency number. 'What for?'

'Rape.'

'Jesus Christ,' Hank whispered. 'And you're Beatty's friend? And Gertrude's? And you go to Gertrude's place regular?'

'Beatty does prison volunteer work you remember.'

'Oh yes! Yes!' Hank puffed out air and stretched his legs as if momentarily intending to walk vertically. 'I'd forgotten. So Gertrude takes long walks at night.'

Now that's dangerous---at night.'

`It's dangerous Mr Schwanger.'

`Call me Hank' (now why the hell did he say that?).

`Hank.'

`Maybe I should go with her, I mean she clearly needs to do it, I don't see what the mystery's about, she's an active woman, she may even be viewing houses.'

`At four o'clock in the morning Hank?'

`So what's it all about?'

`I'm afraid I can't discuss her motives,' Jarvis said.

`Do you *know* them?'

`I have my hunches.'

`Such as?'

`I'm afraid I can't communicate further on that.' Jarvis got up.

Hank jumped up too. `Where'd you put your car?'

`I don't have one. I came by train.'

`You did? Then you have to stay for a meal!'

And stay Jarvis did. He asked to help Maidie in the kitchen and said he could make a wonderful jambalaya some time, if he ever got invited again. Hank settled back jealously into the sports section. He didn't think about Gertrude walking the dark streets. He wanted to give up thinking altogether. He ducked into the kitchen and drew himself off a pint of beer from a barrel he kept there. They barely noticed him.

But think he would have to. First, there was a rapist in the house. Somehow he had to get that news to Maidie, and quick (so why the hell had he asked the creep to stay?). He sat in the den, coughed, he even called Maidie's name once. But the tranquil hum of kitchen chatter continued. What did rapists do? After all, one

thought of them as kin to thieves, murderers and arsonists. Did they take an impression of the keys, look for safes in the wall? Did they rape with gloves on? Since just about any woman would do for them, would a man do equally well? The absurdest thoughts took precedence over practical ones. In fact, as he sat there, rosy from the leaping flames, he could hardly convince himself that Jarvis was in the house, that he hadn't seen the whole thing on television. Should he not be calling Beatty or at least trying to find her number? Above all, he needed to get worried about Gertrude. But he didn't know how to do that, especially as he didn't give a damn. He required only one thing from her, and to this degree only was he interested in her safety---how could she continue to be the purveyor of `mother' events if she got herself attacked and hospitalized? But apart from that one requirement she could walk the streets until the soles of her feet wore off. As for her Open Houses, she could stuff them. Football games he preferred to go alone to. He was dumbfounded by these thoughts! This was the woman he loved, the woman he wished to marry! But he didn't love her, and he only wanted to marry her so as to increase the probability of `mother' events. He was beginning seriously to dislike himself and, since she was the cause of his self-distaste, Gertrude too. The fact that Jarvis, not she, had caused these thoughts didn't even occur to him, mostly because that was the case.

Suppose Gertrude walked the streets that very night, he asked himself, did he intend to drive to New York to stop her? Not if he could help it. Did he prefer sleeping in Maidie's bed? He certainly did. So how could even the `mother' event remain safe if its source of supply was left to the dogs? He was still sitting in his log-warmed island of indifference, half dozing, when Maidie's special bouillabaisse in a huge tureen was borne in by the rapist. The three of them squatted round the coffee table and slooped and slurped their way through it as if DAs and paroles didn't exist.

'What the hell am I supposed to say to her?' Hank asked himself with shrimp in his teeth. 'He's a rapist so watch out for yourself!'

'Like me to drive you back to the city?' he asked Jarvis.

'Only if you're going anyway.'

'I am,' he said. Maidie glanced at him---the first Sunday night missed for quite a while.

He thought it was the least he could do---see what Gertrude was up to. But how it could help anybody, least of all himself, he didn't know. She was a hard head. In fact he was in the deepest don't-know state he'd ever known. He was quite prepared to find Gertrude doing the street-corner like a whore.

She was. He and Jarvis were just arriving on foot from where he'd parked. She was so enveloped in brown she was like a blob. In the car Hank had suddenly announced, 'Let's play it this way, we'll *both* follow her. And see what she gets up to.'

'Oh I don't think she'll get up to anything,' Jarvis said, as if to give her his moral protection. 'But we can see she doesn't get harmed.'

They didn't have to follow her long. She slipped down a side street to the left and suddenly came out at them as they passed. When she realized that Hank Schwanger, no less, was knowingly in Jarvis's company there broke on to her face a little electric storm of fury and she screamed---at Hank, 'What the hell are you doing here?'. She repeated it and nothing Hank or Jarvis could stutter made it anything but worse. She walked toward her apartment block and they again followed her. Just short of the entrance she turned and addressed Hank again, this time hissing, 'You've made a gigantic screw-up haven't you? A SCREW UP!' And that was the last they saw of her for the night.

I've often wondered why Beatty took it into her head to tell Jarvis to seek Hank

Schwanger out at his Sunday funkhole as he sometimes called it. It led, after all, to a series of events she was the last person to want. But perhaps I'm being a fool again. She *did* want those events perhaps, though they cost her her life, or that part of it which was worth living. The fact is that she had no more idea why, when on the phone to Jarvis (they were making plans for the next day, Sunday, a 'Brighton Beach day'), she had suddenly told him she knew about Gertrude's 'night prowling' and was worried about it and maybe he should get in touch with her boyfriend Mr Schwanger and if he called her back in twenty minutes she would have his number. Then Joe had asked her if she'd like a Russian lunch with dancing the following day and she'd found herself saying yes because she wanted to be in the half darkness with those haunting sounds and in a vodka haze. Then she phoned Gertrude who quite unsuspectingly gave her Hank's week-end number. Jarvis called her back and she passed the number on. 'It's Long Island,' she said. Then she said, 'No, you'd better call on him. It might be difficult explaining yourself on the phone. I'll get the address.' And this is what she did, calling Gertrude a second time. Afterwards she thought, 'Why did I do all that?'. Most of all I think she wanted to engineer some trouble. She preferred chaos to an order that left her out increasingly. She didn't feel any attraction for Jarvis but this very fact compelled her to think about him altogether too much. It was as if his lack of attraction hid a surprise---suggested a power he might exercise---just because he *had* exercised that fearful power for which he'd been jailed. For the first time she thought about a man in a sexual contact without having any desire for him, and its fascination lay in the fact that it simply posed a question, a possibility, almost abstract---some deed he seemed to promise her but which she shrunk from trying to specify.

But I haven't yet dealt with Jarvis's motive in agreeing to go to Long Island. He was a rather inflexible man and was likely to refuse. He received suggestions,

especially ones designed for his or someone else's welfare (prison had made him suspicious of these), with poor grace. But he leapt at this one of Beatty's---perhaps because he too wanted to stir things up and felt a dim premonitory excitement at what was to come. Also my feeling is that he wished to have the night streets to himself. We must try to see it from his point of view. On the evenings Schwanger came round the corner with Gertrude on his arm Jarvis was a free man. It was when Schwanger *didn't* appear and she emerged from her apartment block like an enormous brown fern and began prowling *on his beat* that chagrin gnawed at his heart. I'm certain that this too drove him to Long Island (not that certainty is a guide to truth).

When Gertrude got to her bedroom that night after screaming at Hank she began smashing things. Anthea crawled from her bed thinking that someone was beating her up. She went and hugged the poor crazed creature and Gertrude began crying or rather bawling, her feet turned in, her knees slightly buckled, like a child. She sounded so forlorn, so immeasurably and irretrievably lonely, as if she'd never known what it was to be loved, that Anthea began weeping too, silently, the tears gushing down her face. Is there no such thing as enjoyment nowadays, she asked herself as they clung together, only work and then getting sleep for more work? She glanced over Gertrude's shoulder at the clock. It was half past midnight.

She helped Gertrude off with her clothes and tucked her in and Gertrude was still sobbing with those heart-rending convulsive movements of a child when Anthea withdrew to make her a cup of chocolate. Then, the sobs over and the chocolate drunk, Anthea stole to her own bed hugging a hot water bottle. She tried to think of a Thirties play that would do for the Festival but could only think of obvious choices like the early Noël Coward comedies. Why on earth had the Festival director asked *her* of all people? It gave her a thrilling feeling. She knew she was getting a reputation for tireless

ingenuity that did better than knowledge. She had a swift impression of sparkling sunlight along Madison Avenue---meaning projects and bustle and rushed appointments and evenings of gentle numbed fatigue. Suddenly work seemed the only thing there was and at that moment, just before she fell asleep, she realized that neither night prowls nor work were over-taxing Gertrude's nerves---it must be love! Was she in love with Jarvis then? A distinct air of sex hung round Gertrude as they'd hugged each other. Hank Schwanger appeared voluminosely in Anthea's mind but before anything disreputable could happen in her daydream she fell asleep.

That same night Jarvis and Hank spent a couple of hours in close conference. They chose a bar on Seventh Avenue that was an imitation of a dusky Twenties speakeasy. They huddled together---only the bar lights were on---and verbally cooled each other's burns from the hot shafts of Gertrude's anger (we should remember that a woman's anger is more devastating than a man's in that it threatens abandonment---having established this possibility in the first months of life).

'I can tell you what I didn't want to tell you before, especially with your lady about,' Jarvis said with three bourbons sans ice or anything inside him. 'I think she would like to prostitute herself.'

Had he not taken the same medicine in roughly the same dosage Hank Schwanger might well have swiped him. But at this late hour life was so like what you saw on television that you accepted anything.

'Is that why she was standing there?' Hank asked with a bleary effort at wise reflection.

'You know, with my background I have some experience of the way the mind works,' Jarvis said. 'I mean you can get to a level of tension where the last thing you want is an intimate act with somebody you know'. Hank was unacquainted with

Jarvis's philosophy so all he could make of this was words that sounded like bubbles and stank of alcohol. Jarvis went on, 'I myself call having intimacy with someone you know *incest*. People say to me that's why it's exciting and my reply is it's disgusting. In some way I feel responsible for what Gertrude's going through, Hank, because I started these thoughts in her, maybe I turned her against intimate sex, I have to tell you that this is why I follow her, not just because I want her safe but because I'd feel the culprit if anybody attacked her.'

'I'm surprised you haven't attacked yourself,' Hank found himself saying.

'I know her.'

'You know her, so?'

'So I couldn't touch her.'

'Right,' said Hank in utter mystification, wondering if a human stomach could marshal such disparate material as bouillabaisse, beer and bourbon without discarding some or all of it. But even in the midst of this bubbling drama he felt Jarvis's words signalling something to him, though he didn't know what the signal was. So he said, dashing the rules of grammar to the ground with rough paternal heartiness, 'Let's you and me get together and have a talk some time, what you say?'. They stumbled into the dark and after an ungainly hug which, to tell the truth, put Jarvis into a little convulsion of disgust, went their ways, Jarvis to pace the sidewalks in well-lit zones urging himself to see all passing women as close personal friends and therefore untouchables, Hank to the parking lot. Oddly---Hank felt it unforgivable of himself---the words formed in his brain as he turned round to glance at Jarvis's back, 'You raping son of a bitch, I wouldn't meet you again for all the coals in China.' But in fact he would and did and very soon.

Seven

Sometimes the inner drama is so gripping you can't believe other people aren't witnessing it. When Jarvis told Beatty that he and Hank Schwanger had *together* trailed Gertrude she rushed to the prison to tell Dr Mike Dormund. He gave her his dry, patience-tried look and was about to return to his papers when she said something that introduced a new drama. This one he would have to share. She said, 'I think you're the only person who can help me. I know you only work with inmates but that's also an advantage from my point of view.' He fished out a card and handed it to her. Like all those who believe they have poker faces he revealed himself---a tiny glitter of triumph which Beatty didn't notice. Anyway, she was too bucked at being accepted as a patient to notice transformations in eye muscles. The card said 'East 65th and Fifth Avenue, seventh floor' and he added, 'Could you manage nine o'clock in the evening, today week, I only have after-dinner hours available for private clients, unless you want the week-ends?'. She opted for the week-day appointment and already saw herself walking the five blocks to his lair like it was her first date. She had an inkling of what was to come and this created furtive twinges of hot excitement.

Work at Mondelier's was now ahead of schedule and everyone on the Festival staff was in optimistic mood, even Beatty had to be carried along by the mood, though

enthusiasm lasted but a minute for her. Hardly had the Budgets office started smiling about how low costs were being kept when Anthea started making trouble, and Beatty took this personally. The result of the trouble was that Budgets no longer smiled. Anthea managed to persuade the Festival chief, after long pestering, that the Brief Encounter Buffet should be scrapped as too downbeat and something brighter put in its place. After all, Anthea said in that annoying sincere bleat of hers, nobody went to a railway station buffet for fun, which was probably why Noël Coward had chosen it for his story of two people meeting and falling in love and then never seeing each other again. What you wanted, she said, was a Lyons Corner House, of which there had been three or four in the West End of London in the Thirties. There the entire working classes of London's suburbs used to go of a Saturday to enjoy their pot of tea and Welsh rarebit and listen to an orchestra and be served by girls with frilled bands round their heads and natty little aprons. The lights had been bright, the table cloths clean and for instance at the Viennese cafe in the Tottenham Court Road Corner House (these immense `houses' were on several floors) the tables were marble and you could get mocca coffee and wonderful fake Viennese pastries but of course you wouldn't want a replica of that because it would belong to the Austrian Pavilion. Also there was the difficulty that the Corner Houses were so big. Then Anthea came out with a show stopper of an idea. Why not do a replica of an ordinary Lyons Tea Shop such as every shopping center used to have? These shops weren't enormous, they clattered merrily with dishes and chatter, housewives stormed them for lunches of sausage and mash and Brussels sprouts or lamb stew or fish and chips followed by apple pie and custard or blancmange or stewed prunes or you might be brave and order a dizzily tall Peach Melba.

When Anthea talked this way only someone like her boyfriend Nick could turn

skeptically away. The Festival chief ate out of her hand and Beatty would have suspected him of having an affair with Anthea had he not been gay. The interior decorator responsible for the Brief Encounter Buffet, and now for the Lyons Tea Shop, wanted to board Anthea up under the improvised flooring and starve her for a week, especially as he had devised wonderful puffs of evil-smelling smoke synchronized with the shunting roar of a steam engine drawing out of a station. But when the photos arrived from London and he'd been made to confess that Tea Shops were brighter and happier he worked closer with Anthea than he'd done before. The Festival chief even called Beatty 'the talent spotter' for having given Anthea a job. Budgets didn't. As it happened the Budgets chief was something of a sponsor for Beatty, he watched over her, the result being that she fell over herself to save the company money. His name was Tim Braddle and he was always talking about the profit margin, not that he came anywhere near it in his job. He said a quick optimal profit created its own equilibrium (for the profit maker of course). And now he called her and said your British import is proving very expensive, the advantage of the Buffet was that it was self-service but I won't carp. Beatty took it as a bad mark against her. She phoned him back later and said, 'Anthea Tellidge has applied for a permanent work permit and I was thinking of offering her a job but in view of what you told me this morning I don't think we can go on encouraging expensive ideas.' 'Oh,' he said, 'I wouldn't hold *that* against her.' But she did. She quickly filled the job with somebody else, ahead of time, before it could fall vacant.

She told Dr Dormund what she'd done. It was at their first meeting in his New York apartment (the office had an independent entrance but you could hear his family on the other side of the wall---it sounded like war games). She said she hated Anthea and was ashamed of her own conduct. 'This isn't a confessional,' he said, 'you've come

here with something on your mind and I need to know what it is.' 'Well,' she said, 'I have a little problem.' 'Little problems usually mean big ones,' he answered.

She was on the point of telling him about her amnesia---she had even prepared the details in her mind---but when she opened her mouth to start she found herself uttering astonishing words which she wanted to withdraw at once, even while they were still leaving her mouth. 'I have difficulty in the matter of orgasms,' she said. 'Do you have the problem of dryness in intercourse?' he asked---without hesitation or delicacy (really, he should confine himself to teenage murderers and gang leaders, she thought). But with equal insouciance she said, 'Oh not at all, the reverse.' He noted something down. 'When did you last have intercourse with your husband?' 'About two months ago.' 'That's a long time.' 'He smells of other women.' 'Badly?' 'Oh, I don't mean that, I mean their perfume.' 'Is it a source of sorrow to you that you can't enjoy an orgasm?' 'Very much.' 'And I imagine your husband feels the same sorrow?' 'Perhaps, he's such an extravert type I can't really tell, he's very fond of me, we feel we may as well stay together, for the children's sake, all marriages are the same anyway.' He made no response to this, only another note. 'What has that got to do with your obsession with Jarvis?' he asked. 'First, I haven't got an obsession with Jarvis,' she said, 'and no, it doesn't have anything to do with it.' Again he said nothing. 'What have you got against Anthea?' he asked. 'Oh I think that's a work problem.' 'Does Jarvis find her attractive?' he asked. She half opened her mouth and then smiled---the amnesiac tic. 'I don't know about that,' she said, 'but when I asked him which of us three---Gertrude, Anthea or me---seemed to him the best material for rape he said Anthea and when I said she dislikes you he said exactly.' 'Philosophers are verbally very crisp and precise,' he murmured without explaining. At the end of the hour he said, 'Please come again at the same time next week.' 'That seems an awful long time,'

she said, 'I feel I can't stand a minute more sometimes, I start crying at work---' 'Come tomorrow,' he said, 'same time.'

The following evening, when she'd settled down in her chair (he didn't use couches) Dormund said, 'You don't really like your husband do you?' 'It isn't that---' 'Do you like him? do you *love* him?' he asked. 'I don't love him in the sense of throwing myself all over him and that sort of thing but I feel close to him, he's a lot of fun, he keeps me amused, you see.' 'But you don't reject Jarvis?' 'I don't love him either, I don't even think he's fun, I'd hate to live with him and what's more he has nothing to do with why I'm here!' 'If you *did* live with him you'd reject him?' 'Yes.' 'Despite the autonomic flow of juices?' 'I don't understand.' He made a note and was silent for a time. 'Do you enjoy phoning and being phoned?' he asked. 'No I don't.' 'When you have a lunch appointment and have to be warned about it several times beforehand do you feel fear?' She gasped at this---he must have been spying! 'How do you know this?' she asked. 'I called your office once at your request and you weren't there and the girl explained that you had this system of reminders and if I cared to set a time for my phone call she would see to it that you were there.' 'She had no right to proffer that information unasked.' 'Tell *her* that, not me. What you *do* tell me is the answer to my question.' 'Do I feel fear before an appointment---yes.' 'Of the person having lunch or whatever with you?' 'Yes.' 'If you know them well?' 'Yes.' 'But not if they're strangers?' 'No.' She added, 'After all, what am I going to be afraid of if I don't know them?' He made a note.

She found her sessions with him uncomfortable. There was no repose or release in them, no guilt shedding as she'd been led to believe would be the case at the hand of a shrink (she had no real notion of the differences between an analyst and a psychiatrist). She failed to see that her discomfort was due to his method, which

was---appropriately enough since he worked in a prison---that of a prosecuting attorney. His habit was to build up a case, then make a kind of summing up or rather a series of summings up throughout the treatment. This was what he moved into now, shuffling his notes together and glancing from one page to another.

'I think you understand this already,' he said, 'that you're as deeply involved in what I sometimes call the crime industry as the rest of us, I mean the police, the prison system, including the psychiatrists like myself. I'm going to leave aside your little problem as you call it, for the moment. A different rehabilitation has to take place first.

You must realize what profession you've chosen, even though that profession may take up very few hours of your time compared with what I might call your official or alibi job.'

'Alibi job! My *work*? Listen,' she said, 'I go to that prison to ease the lives of a few of the inmates, that's the long and short of it. I haven't joined any profession.'

'You aren't fascinated by the Jarvis case, by Jarvis himself, that was all a deceit and lie?'

'Not at all.'

'In other words you are showing symptoms typical of someone working in the crime industry. To some extent *all* human beings demonstrate those symptoms since they gloat over crime in every dramatized form in films and books and on television. The prisoners do too. They watch dramatizations of themselves with great attention, as the police and police warders watch dramatizations of themselves. The crime industry extends far beyond law courts and the actual incarcerated criminals, it involves film and television crews and the acting profession and especially those most articulate of died-in-the-wool crime-obsessed individuals who may never see the inside of a prison but sell their ideas sometimes for huge revenues which only the drug barons could

equal---they call themselves, self-flatteringly, writers.'

He paused for her to speak---she obviously wanted to (not having made much of what he'd said).

'I would have thought my little problem is the root of it all, not a desire to be criminal,' she said.

'A little problem of that nature is *always* at the root. I tried to point that out in the last session but you weren't willing to entertain it. I'm simply trying to familiarize you with a few of the things that happen to people in the crime industry, even when they're only dabbling in it like you. The dabblers often have to be watched more closely than anybody---indeed that's why people like myself are in business. For instance, if a crime writer comes to me, which has happened because of my particular professional experience---they often just want to tap my knowledge---I follow roughly the same program I follow with prison inmates and which incidentally I'm following with you. In nearly all cases those writers have at some time hit their wives on the head with bottles or smashed chairs on them or even tied them up and beaten them, or they have meted out cruelty to animals or their own children or husbands or wives, discreetly so to speak, sometimes in undiscernible doses. They also show the major criminal symptoms---demonic rages, extreme verbal abuse usually carried out in the safety of the home, and that most hysterical of all symptoms, aggressiveness.'

'What are *your* symptoms then?' she asked, 'since you're in the crime industry too?'

'Verbal abuse,' he said. 'My specialty was to tear down anyone unfortunate enough to live at close quarters with me, I left them with nothing but the clothes they stood up in. Why else is my household so noisy?'

'You don't seem to have gotten the symptoms under control do you?'

‘This is the aftermath, you ought to have heard them before. I’m one of those ever rarer creatures who’ve been married to the same woman most of their lives. I managed to rehabilitate her but only after the children had been born. And then to marry me, above all to stay with me, she had to share my symptoms to some extent.’

‘Does she scream back at you?’

‘No. She throws. Pots, knives, glasses, often full of liquid, sometimes hot. A long silence is enough to provoke it.’

‘Still?’

‘Still.’

‘What about her rehabilitation then?’

‘The size and lethality of the objects she throws have diminished. But I agree, it’s not much to show for twenty years of effort.’

The sympathy she was feeling for him moved the transference one stage further, as he, not she, saw at once.

‘I have another client waiting,’ he said. ‘How soon do you require the next session?’

‘Oh,’ she said, ‘it can wait a week.’

In other words his program was working nicely. She was purporting to be bored.

It was a very different program from Dr Lisa Tensevic’s, which was Socratic in nature. She never did summings up. Her teaching, if she had one, took place in her silences. In those awful chasms (as her clients felt them to be) there was no limit to the feelings of panic and self-accusation you might experience. Only if the program was working well did those silences become zones of rest in which the mind took everything in with a dreamy sympathy and, sometimes, feelings of bliss.

The awful chasms were what Gertrude was again experiencing in her weekly hour, which she had now come to dread but to which a kind of compulsion always led her. Dr Lisa's silences seemed to contain nightmares which engulfed all of New York. Gertrude left the room in a rage usually. Also now and then in tears. The worst of it was that she had to recount the most ridiculous things which a professionally well-regarded realtor shouldn't even be thinking about, such as her screaming on the street at Jarvis and Schwanger, and her unwilling choice of Anthea's skinny arms to weep in. It wasn't that these things were wrong in themselves but that they had no meaning in her eyes and Dr Lisa's silences were rubbing this fact in---what you do has no meaning whatever, you will never make sense of it. What did she get out of roaming the streets at night? She didn't know! So why do them? But she couldn't stop doing them. On the other hand she *did* know---her prowls made her vibrate with a sort of low-frequency throb all over her skin, a poor satisfaction maybe but it was something. Simply being close to Jarvis did this to her, even simply knowing he was there. But she 'felt' nothing for him. Why was life like that? She stated this a dozen times to Dr Lisa, or rather she addressed it to the silence. How to live a life at the mercy of a man who asked nothing of you and whom she didn't find attractive? She'd noticed Anthea glancing at her with concern recently and this infuriated her, she could have hit her for it, she resolved to get her out of her apartment, whatever Beatty might have to say about it, she'd rather have Hank Schwanger in the spare bedroom than that eye-popping spook who knew too much of her business and was probably gloating, *gloating!* She'd shake her by the shoulders and tell her get off my back you meddling asshole (all this in one of the silences)!

To her astonishment Dr Tensevic suddenly said at the end of the hour (or rather fifty-five minutes), 'Tell Hank Schwanger you need his protection against Jarvis, he has

to see you home every night.' As she spoke a great white light grew in the dimness and all of a sudden Gertrude wanted to hug Anthea and dance her round the kitchen.

Eight

Hank Schwanger and Jarvis were now as thick as thieves. Jarvis wanted their next meeting to be on Long Island again but Hank said no, he never went to Maidie's but on week-ends. So they met in the replica speakeasy as before and Jarvis was sufficiently expansive (he had spent the earlier part of the evening with Beatty) to communicate a few ideas from his philosophy. They were on beer this time. Hank was deeply absorbed in what Jarvis said, his head forward toward the table, giving the man his straight every-word-is-being-weighed-and-by-God-it-had-better-be-true look. This was his stock response to any `serious' talk but soon, as he listened more closely to Jarvis's soft and reasonable voice, he found himself wondering why the Senate didn't legalize rape like they should legalize marijuana, on the grounds that rapists had hitherto been misunderstood and should be treated for addiction. It seemed to him that Jarvis was describing (more graphically than he would have ventured to do with a woman) something like a `mother' event, except that it happened on a windy sidewalk in the dead of night. He still thought Jarvis a pain in the ass (he must warn Maidie to keep her doors locked) but then he wasn't in the least bit interested in Jarvis. Something about Jarvis's claim that his women had their first genuine act of sex in his arms (Hank took whatever was addressed to him in a quiet balanced voice to be

incontestably true) made him see women in a new light, and then himself in a new light. Was it possible---could it be the case---what if it *were* the case---but surely---! His mind gasped and sputtered out before it reached the end of a thought but had he been capable of a consecutive statement it would have been as follows: `People like me and Gertrude have been barking up the wrong tree so far, we've treated each other with respect and sex is disrespectful; if you prepare for marriage or an affair on the basis of such respect it is bound to damage the act of sex because you'll be on your best behavior and everything shows that you need to be yourself, your gut self' (this kind of cerebral jargon was native to his mind), `you must behave badly'. It was a jumbled and subversive thought because he also believed in behaving *good* with a woman (a woman could trust him like a brother and if she said a football game and not his arms was what she wanted he would give it to her and no less and no more). He didn't ask to be one of those slimy woman-fanciers who slobbered all over them like a labrador. At least he could say that whatever his two former wives had criticized him for (they both thought he was a slob) they at least had found him decent.

It seemed to him that he could say (but never would, not to a living soul, he was too much of a man, unlike Jarvis) that he and Gertrude had found real sex together and thereby laid the basis for years of happy domestic life by being the opposite of decent. In fact, if there'd been anything decent in what they'd done he wouldn't have enjoyed it.

Other couples would continue to get divorces and fight and go to marriage counsellors but he and Gertrude had a secret between them. In their rather outspoken beery set he and she were regarded as perhaps the least sexy of them all. Little did they know! Thus did it behove one to hide one's light under a bushel (a little fundamentalist voice sometimes spoke in Hank's brain).

Jarvis's long calming lecture answered so many questions for him, particularly

certain puzzling ones he'd been putting to himself over the last twenty-four hours (such as did he love Gertrude, did he after all find her attractive, enjoyed touching the unclothed areas?), that he almost clasped the man by the hand and thanked him. The answer to ALL his questions was---they're irrelevant to the matter of sex! The idea of a couple being compatible or finding each other nice or getting along with each other or sharing pursuits was so wide of the mark as to make you want to laugh! All you needed was a `mother' event now and then to compensate for the hell of being with the wrong person, except that your hell wouldn't be so hellish as being with the right person because you'd be looking forward to the next `mother' event all the time and with the right person you could never have a `mother' event because you would love and respect her. The idea of all that screwball love and respect scenario plus no `mother' event! How had he been so dumb? And it took a raping son of a bitch to put him straight! There was now no doubt in his mind that he must ask Gertrude to marry him. He hated her enough to be able to do that.

Imagine his surprise the following morning, the moment he'd got himself settled between his eleventh-floor window and the desk in a room not five by six feet, when Gertrude called and said, `Hank, I'm worried stiff, that man's always outside my apartment block.'

`Who the hell do you mean?' he asked (a gruff tone helped the women to steady themselves).

`Jarvis. I need you to see me home every night.'

`Listen if that guy's worrying you nothing's easier than having him restrained, he's on parole---'

`Oh no, that wouldn't be fair to Beatty. Her standing at the prison depends a lot on whether he lasts out. And anyway he never tries to talk to me or get in my

apartment. I mean he never really *bothers* me.'

'As a matter of fact,' he said, 'it's been on my mind' (it hadn't) 'that you needed help' (oh for christsakes don't screw up again, she was thinking) 'as a matter of fact I think Beatty's been a very unwise lady to introduce him round like this, I mean volunteer work's OK but---

Thinking 'you stoopid nit' she said, 'Could you do it, Hank, I hate to obligate you this way!'

'What time do I call at your office?'

As it turned out he picked her up at different times each evening and not always at her office. It was a real run-around. He now rarely got an evening of television and potato chips and cans of beer, also the times he met her tended to get later and later but in such a way that he could never tell if he was free for an evening, he had to stay by the phone and then at say two in the morning she might call and say 'I'm at home, forget it for tonight.' Equally, she would call him at midnight and say in an urgent voice, 'See you in a couple of minutes'.

And then, would you believe it, just when he thought he was in for a thousand nights of 'mother' events, she skids to a halt right outside her apartment building and with her hand stretched out says, 'Well thanks a lot Hank, you're a real Schwanger, see you tomorrow!' and walks inside! Wasn't that just his luck? He hated her even more, which made him desire a 'mother' event even more. And he didn't even have the company of that rube Jarvis over bourbons *he* always paid for---Jarvis was nowhere to be seen! Though, as to that, good riddance to him. He must be sussing out the female populations of another district.

Hank was going to put his foot down. He would scare her pants off by getting Jarvis back on his beat and then he'd refuse to escort her home any more. That would

show her who was boss! He had to contact Jarvis quick and as Jarvis never volunteered identity-oriented information he didn't even know where he lived. So he called Beatty and said would you please ask Jarvis to contact me at my office and she, suddenly suspicious that Jarvis and Anthea were at the stage of assignation, said she would do so. When Jarvis's call came through two days later Hank said, 'Where the hell have you been? I thought you'd got yourself raped. Listen, Gertrude's doing the sidewalks again, you need to keep an eye on her, I'm a working man' (as a matter of fact she'd been going to shows with Anthea and meeting some of the Festival personnel). 'I'm sorry, Hank,' Jarvis said in a dusty voice, 'I've had a chill. I'll be there tonight.'

And he was. They saw him immediately they turned the corner. She put her hand on Hank's arm and said, 'There he is! Quick, let's get upstairs!' and they almost ran to the entrance, scooted to the lift. But by one of those ironies for which we hold fate responsible Anthea was having a night-cap in the lounge and they couldn't but greet her. They sat around making talk that could have been piped from a cliché-production agency, then they separated, he to the street, they to unruffled beds.

Next evening Anthea expected Gertrude to go out with her as usual but she didn't turn up. So she went to her bedroom and listened to CDs. On coming in from work she had seen Jarvis downstairs. She was used to it now. The man was a nutcase.

She thought Beatty a twit for not getting him off the streets but Beatty just got icy when she mentioned it (after all, the two nights Jarvis had had his 'chill' on were spent with Anthea in Beatty's mind).

Anthea left her door ajar and was woken from a slight doze by the front door opening and she distinctly saw Gertrude's shadowy figure rush across the faintly lit hall followed by a man and she could swear that man was Jarvis, though she didn't fully see him, it was something about his tread. Next morning she told Beatty. 'I didn't

actually see him but I knew he was a man because there weren't *four* rapid high-heeled steps but a set of two followed by another heavier and slower set' (what kind of balls is this, Beatty thought, the product of sexual hysteria?) 'and I could swear he was in sneakers.'

Beatty laughed so falsely even she wanted to blush. 'I detect a little envy in your voice!'

'Oh sure!' Anthea said. 'It's my night on the odd days, she gets the even!'

When Anthea said 'Shall we have lunch?' Beatty said 'I'm busy' and threw the phone down. Before settling to work again she imagined tearing Anthea's blouse and bra off and feeding them through her shredder. The intercom voice said 'No lunch appointments today Mrs Masumerov' (Beatty was in the habit of flying out of the office for an appointment she had miraculously remembered which was for two days' time).

Far from having had a chill, Jarvis had taken two journeys to Long Island. There he had waited for Maidie Panipoulos to return home from her nursery school job, around three in the afternoon. Whether he had evil intent not even he knew. What he did know was that he didn't have the courage to present himself at her front door. As he had constantly complained to Dr Dormund, his nocturnal habits made it impossible for him to have normal social intercourse with women in case it prejudiced his chances of illegal intercourse with them at a later date. An absurd thought of course but since when were human thoughts otherwise? He liked Maidie, yet not as he liked Beatty or Anthea. He wished to unburden himself in her soft, yielding, well rounded presence. His night prowling in New York had so far been therapeutically successful, he thought (unknown to him, the police were reporting on these prowls---'so far so good'). He now wished for darker, lonelier areas, above all he wished to entrust himself to someone---and that would be Maidie because in New York one was too much in the

public eye, no intimacy could be built up like it could in a small community. A community could help him and he wistfully considered whether he might belong to this one.

But suppose Hank Schwanger hadn't told Maidie he was a rapist? Then she wouldn't know what he was on to. And the explaining of it would be very difficult in a one-to-one conversation with nobody else there. He should wait for a week-end when he could cook jambalaya, talk to her in the kitchen. But being a highly collected individual Jarvis soon rejected these hectic frightened thoughts and selected from them a cogent plan---he would approach Hank Schwanger, tell him he'd enjoyed that Sunday with them so much but he couldn't think of coming again unless Hank explained to Maidie without stinting detail just who he was.

Hank had silently vowed to dip Jarvis in the sewage ditch if he *did* turn up at Maidie's again but he found himself saying, 'Oh sure. As a matter of fact I've been thinking she should know.' Then, with the phone in its cradle again, he told himself he'd only obliged the son of a bitch because he needed him standing at the entrance of Gertrude's apartment building. Sometimes he wondered at himself. What the hell was he doing inviting a rapist to a decent woman's home? Was this how he repaid two years of the most somnolent weekends he had ever known?

He needn't have worried. When he explained to Maidie on Friday evening, just after he'd brought in the logs, 'That Jarvis guy is coming Sunday, you ought to know he's a rapist, you remember Gertrude's friend Mrs Masumerov does prison volunteer work, three convictions and on his fourth parole,' all she said was a rosy, well-fleshed, 'I *thought* there was something like that,' just before she walked back to the kitchen and called out to him, 'Maybe he'll do us that jambalaya dish he promised, I have the ingredients.'

By ten o'clock Sunday morning those ingredients were laid out on the kitchen table. Jarvis turned up about an hour later and didn't even show surprise at this, much less pleasure. He simply pitched in and started cooking. He chopped and broiled and cleaned and soaked, looking, Maidie thought, like a prison cook---somebody not free anyway, beaten at the edges kind of, he deprived the knife he was handling of its culinary look, it made her feel uneasy. He tried to get it over to her---his plan, but found himself tongue-tied. He couldn't even get any philosophy out of his mouth. The two of them jabbered contentedly about shrimps and the use of chili and how to marinate with herbs. Hank Schwanger's Sunday destiny seemed to be to bury his head in the sports section of The Times by the den fire while this went on. Maidie began to feel she was doing a good rehabilitation job on this parole man. The knife began to look less dangerous. But she was still fearful of him, though this only increased her sense of vocation. The cooking smells started to allure, she invited him to share some wine with her and they sat at the kitchen table with nothing to do but watch the pots. The house dozed. The thought passed through her mind that here was a more peaceful man than Hank. Not that she was choosing. Just observing.

Wine had no appeal for Jarvis but its effect is universal---it loosened his tongue. He began to say that he found her a very special person and that she'd made a great difference to his life simply by, please allow me to say it, existing. A witness might have sworn that she fluttered eyelashes and looked down, quite as if time had been still for two centuries. She had always liked delicate manners and had often suspected that some of our finest citizens were in jail. Hank Schwanger was plain lazy, she thought as Jarvis continued spreading honey with his words. `I'm going to ask you something you have every right to refuse, I mean I insist you refuse it if it causes you the slightest alarm, and on second thoughts I'm not going to ask it, let's get the lunch together and

forget about it'. Well, when a man talked like that you did more than half listen. Sometimes Maidie had a very conclusive manner. 'You'd better spit it out,' she said, 'whatever you have on your mind.'

He did. 'I have great difficulty, Mrs Panipoulos, establishing superficial relations with a woman.'

'What does that mean?'

'Other men can pass the time of day with a strange woman, say at the grocery store, tipping their hats and so on' (it *was* two centuries back!) 'and then they go their way, they can help a woman with a heavy suitcase and that woman doesn't have the feeling she might lose the suitcase or her honor.'

'No man in *my* life never helped me with a suitcase', Maidie said, 'not unless I told him to.'

'In a manner of speaking then.'

'What you mean is you're scared of women.'

'Very probably, Mrs Panipoulos.'

'Funny way to express it, violation in the dark.'

'Not always in the dark.'

'In broad daylight too? How do you manage that?'

'If it's something I can't hold back it has to happen, that's all---I'm only grateful it hasn't happened in a crowded thoroughfare yet, I'd have been lynched and rightly ma'am.'

'Rightly, for sure. Do you read a lot?' she asked him with a little narrowing of the eyes.

'In prison.'

'You could be a professor. Ever thought of that?'

`Mrs Masumerov's working along those lines right now.'

`Academic people are very like you, know that?'

He evidently didn't, or didn't hear her. He went on, 'I have a lot to share with people.'

`Like what?'

`Certain knowledge. Like homosexuality in prisons.'

`Have you practiced that?'

`That's equivalent to asking me if I wear the same underpants the whole year round ma'am.'

`Do you?'

`No ma'am.'

She thought he had a screwy line of talk but said nothing. He felt he was losing time---and here a witness might have noticed a very slight panic on his upper lip of all places in the form of a slightest film of sweat.

`I'm going to ask you Mrs Panipoulos to walk round at night with me, the route can be of your choice, I have to stop this lone prowling habit ma'am, if there's a woman by my side people won't look at me strange, it's when women pass by me very quick, try to get past because they're scared, that's what sets me off, I lose myself, but you ma'am can say hello to people when they go past, I'm sure you know a number of people round here, and I can be presented as your friend and that's going to normalize me Mrs Panipoulos.'

`Call me Maidie.'

`Maidie.'

`I could come over one week day, say just after three when you get back from work,' he said.

'How do you know I get back from work at three?' she snapped.

'Oh ma'am I've wrecked my chances haven't I? Let's forget it. I've been trying to get the courage to knock on your door, just to pay my respects, I was here four times this week, it's the respect I feel for women I have to get over, it's that what gets me into trouble Maidie, I get bottled up with this respect and then the valve bursts and there's a fine lady lying on the sidewalk or under a gorse bush.'

'Are you in a bad way!' she murmured as she moved easily from her chair to the stove and looked in a pot.

He made a big sigh---'Well, there it is! What say we eat? Hey Hank!' he called out, 'let's get the feed bag on!'

Some would say that Maidie led a peculiar life. Her week-end visits from Hank Schwanger weren't the only male visits she got. An ex-husband of hers, Don, passed by on Monday or Tuesday, usually around six in the evening---they had coffee and sandwiches or it might be a salade nicoise or an omelette or corn bread and bacon or cheese nachos, and he stayed the night in her bed, they didn't seem able to give up their marital habits though she was glad to see his back the next morning. Then on Thursdays Ricco came, he taught at the nursery school, he came late and they drank wine followed by a couple of espressos before they too went to bed but this was just a joke, a laugh, you couldn't count it as real sex. Both Don and Ricco had other ports of call during the week---as we know Hank Schwanger had too. So it seemed that the vast mass of the population had their hands too full to make time for prowling the streets or developing an appetite for strangers (in his misery Jarvis had to decoy on icy nights what *they* took as freely as fresh baked brownies!).

As they sat eating a not-bad-at-all jambalaya (it tasted like Jarvis had withheld a major ingredient which you couldn't identify) Maidie, defying the laws of self-

preservation, began thinking what evening she could spare for him. It had to be Wednesday, didn't it? Hank Schwanger turned up on Fridays with his huge digestive system flashing red for emergency and the other two took care of the other days.

They ate in the den as before, round the coffee table, squatting on the floor, the flames leaping in the hearth and the television on without sound, and Jarvis was complimented on the food which---of course, this was it---was really just good institutional food.

'Hard to beat it huh?' Maidie asked Hank confidentially as they ate.

'You're damned right,' he said with that sternness he thought should go with any true as opposed to polite statement (that is, he was just being polite, so had to cover it with the truth look).

Maidie gave Jarvis no sign that she intended to see him again, let alone go for a walk with him on a dark night. He looked sorrowful like a child, namely without any reflective side-glance at the ironies of fate etc. Jarvis's mind was in this respect like a court of justice, as well as a DA's office and the supreme court of appeal, and the thoughts that passed through these chambers were invested with unimpeachable authority, just as the impressions those chambers received from the outside world were seen as being as objective as a photograph. The court had cases up for review, considered them and passed judgement or dropped them at whim but all decisions taken were the only ones possible. In other words his mind differed little from most minds in the world. It wasn't that he considered himself infallible, in fact he felt he was rather hopeless, it was just the way his mind worked, dividing people into good and bad, which meant those who inconvenienced him and those who didn't. His court decisions were made on the same enlightened basis. Other people's conduct was reviewed in the light of his requirements of it, and these requirements had an absolute

ethical sanctity and those people who fell short of these requirements had to suffer the death sentence in his mind (no further contact), or a commuted death sentence (a long absence) or various short periods of degrees of coldness, with some remission for good behavior. Dr Dormund would have said that this was how *all* criminals thought (i.e. identically with their judges), and if most people did too they it was their criminality that made it so. However that may be, Jarvis left Maidie's house with a stranded glance in her direction and began to judge her inwardly as of bad faith. Hank drove him to the station, having decided to stay this Sunday night as well, since he didn't have to get in until late on Monday mornings.

‘Well, what do you think of our guest?’ he asked Maidie when he got back.

‘As nutty as a fruit cake,’ she said as they piled dishes into the machine.

‘I think I should discourage his visits, don't you think?’

‘I enjoyed his jambalaya but---!’

‘I'll tell him you like to rest on weekends,’ Hank said, ‘you have a demanding job in the city, you commute, get back home late--’

‘Don't tell him that,’ she said. ‘Don't lie on my behalf.’ She had decided definitely on Wednesdays.

Nine

On the face of it the fact that Beatty was the most voluptuous-looking of her women friends should have meant that she had more of a voluptuous time than they did. But this isn't how things work---not because voluptuous people don't have voluptuous experiences but because looking voluptuous is frequently a symptom of its opposite. The odd thing is that a voluptuous appearance often arises from a *hunger* for the voluptuous, not the thing itself, and little by little this gives birth to a voluptuous body out of sheer delirious desire. Dreams about *what would it feel like* infiltrate and nourish the cells with imagined sensual delights, giving the skin a rosy promising bloom and smoothing away creases. Her breasts and hips and long thighs confounded her, therefore, with their bloom, though she had no idea from whence the bloom came. She certainly found nothing sensual in her appearance. She thought her hips girlishly fat and therefore unsightly for the practiced male eye. Her breasts she preferred, like Anthea, to camouflage, cleavage she fled from like an insult unless she wanted to create a sensation at an intimate dinner party where one of the other wives (a similar non-sensual case?) might be notorious for sensual resonance. When she passed workers on a building site she never knew where to put her eyes, knowing they were going to whistle (which they did because of her confusion), but on what *physical* account they

whistled her she wasn't sure. Of course she knew it had something to do with feminine appeal but the element of ridicule in their whistling might, she felt, contain a criticism of some part of her that was too girlishly exposed or too obviously not for grown erotic tastes.

It meant that she invariably remained at the thought-end of any sexual ferment going on, as in the case of Jarvis. She saw him more than anyone else but she was still Mrs Masumerov for him. Also he had secretly decided not to confide in her any more.

Reacting to this she began to suppress her desire to hear more his confessions. Their previous conversations had revolved round this one fascination of hers---how had he approached a woman, in what degree of darkness, at what hour exactly, were there others about, was she heavily clothed, in what manner and to what degree did she resist, did she cry out, what---what was her, no she couldn't say it, her anatomical state, her---? Of course with questions like that you could hardly maintain a volunteer-officer detachment but Jarvis, knowing full well what her fascination was (he shared it), helped her over the humps diplomatically. And he was tired of doing that. The mutual sense between them of forbidden territory being trodden was replaced with formal guardedness.

Dr Dormund never really tackled this fascination of hers---and so was unable to compare it with Jarvis's same fascination. It was surely pointless to insist that she had an obsession with Jarvis and then leave it unexamined. But this is what he did. And I suggest it was because he never questioned that she was 'in fact' voluptuous. He simply couldn't believe---like almost any man---that the sum of those healthy ripe parts didn't make a sensual nature. He couldn't see that she only had a *will* toward such a nature---a will that roamed at large and was never, could never be brought to earth. Convention made him desire her but analysis, of which he wasn't really capable and for

which he wasn't trained, could have shown him her battle area. And this would have helped him to see her amnesia as an aspect of it. So she remained alone with her `obsession', refusing to see it as an obsession only because he didn't trouble to expose its nature to her. He could easily have brought it in line with her `little problem' (and he tried to do so at the very end) but let it lapse. Had he but known it her amnesia extended to lovers. She never, so to speak, retained a lover in her cells. And often she failed to recognize him in a public place. Once she actually left a bar where he'd been sitting bang in front of her reading. He happened to look up as she was going. Even then it seemed she had never spoken to him before. So her sensual life was always slipping through her fingers, which was a great sorrow to her, especially these days when she felt she was failing to participate in the best secretest drama of her life---that with Jarvis.

It made her touchy and irritated, sharp and sarcastic in retort. She decided to speak to, of all people, Hank Schwanger. She had a certain sympathy for him as a man in the wrong crowd. It wrung her heart to see how his earnest and honest endeavors to follow some Boy Scout principle---from keeping all the glasses in a room of forty people filled with beer to offering his arm to a woman on a flight of steps---had no audience and when it did have one it excited gasping disbelief. Yet his vast form gave it authenticity. Of all people *he* could help a woman down steps since he could have helped most men. A woman had to be a Juno not to look frail at his side. Why she wanted to meet him she didn't know, except that she was going to talk about Jarvis and he had presumably talked recently with Jarvis at the Long Island place. Yet some inkling she did have that the chaos she'd initiated by giving Jarvis Maidie Panipoulos's address would be deepened a little by her meeting with Hank, and hopefully its effects would now begin to reach her too (tragic thought!).

But how to contact him? Asking Gertrude for his office number having previously asked for his Long Island number would be ucky. The only thing was to call the Long Island number but she didn't know Mrs Panipoulos. And then where could they meet? He was beery and she was an orange juice and yoghurt person. So no bars. Restaurants would give the matter too much importance. So it had to be a coffee house, the one a block down from her office. She called and got Maidie's answer phone. That was in the morning. She kept on ringing and at four o'clock that afternoon got her. Maidie said, 'Sure, I have his office number', to which Beatty said meekly, 'I'm Beatty Masumerov'. 'Oh yes,' said Maidie, 'you're in prison volunteer work.' A few minutes later she was talking to Hank.

'I think we should meet, I'm worried about Gertrude,' she said in a rush.

Again! he thought, how many lives does that crazy cow have? He said with a gruff you've-come-to-the-right-man finality, 'What happened? We were together last evening and she was OK.'

'If I could tell you what had happened I wouldn't be asking to meet you.'

Phew! What was biting everybody? 'It's that serious huh?' he said.

'I don't know how near you are to Madison Avenue at 50th Street but---'

'Just name the place and I'll be there.'

She named it and described the boutique on one side and the deli on the other.

This evening, 6:30.

She felt so impatient with him (guilt?) that she almost forgot the time of the appointment the moment she put the phone down. Then she quickly scribbled 6:45 on a pad. And she saw her hand was trembling. It happened when she was dehydrated. She drank two tumblers of water. She was sick with jealousy, horror, loneliness, above all a sense that all she'd been doing for weeks was preparing a lover for Gertrude or

Anthea! And she didn't like either of them. She felt a sudden warm attachment toward Anthea, however, due to her latest conclusion that she couldn't after all be Jarvis's lover, but this was curtailed by the thought that Anthea was a dissembler.

When she saw Hank Schwanger's form at one of the tables, dwarfing it, she thought how impressive he was in his dark faintly pinstriped suit and fashionably loud tie. They shook hands (he gave her his special gentle version of the wrist-sprainer) and he sat down with that reassuring steadiness she had dreamed about in adolescence. Her husband Joe would have knocked something over by now and trodden on one of her feet while greeting a waitress across the room---he knew everybody. Also here was Schwanger leaning his chin on his hands and gazing at her with solemn paternal eyes (he was probably younger than she was) and saying, 'She's in trouble huh?'. She wanted to tell him never to wear a T-shirt and sneakers again because all of us need you daddy but she passed at once to the business in hand.

'She's going into her bedroom with Jarvis every night.'

'What's that for christsakes?' His chin left his hand, his paternal gaze was gone and he looked like a teenager who'd just missed a ball.

'That's what Anthea tells me.'

'She's *seen* Jarvis? She tells you that?'

'Yes.'

'Seen him go in the bedroom?'

'That's what she tells me.'

'I'll have a word with Anthea,' he said, looking straight into the face of the waitress who was wanting their order. 'I'll get to the bottom of it.'

'Sir?' said the waitress.

'Bring us a couple of coffees,' Beatty murmured confidentially and the girl was

gone.

'Would you let me know what she says?' she asked him.

'Why sure. But I thought you'd spoken with her.'

'I have to be certain it's Jarvis. And that it's Gertrude going into the bedroom with him.'

'Well unless she puts her room out for rent---'

'When I hand in my report it has to be a reliable one---'

'Oh Mrs Masumerov, I wouldn't hand in no report ma'am---he's a decent guy, he makes a wonderful jambalaya and I'm sure he doesn't mean any harm going in her bedroom if she lets him!'

This remark unsettled her version of Schwanger as steady but then she considered that he was seeing the thing objectively despite being Gertrude's boyfriend, which was strong of him. Or he was being decent, not a word against Gertrude would he allow from his lips.

'It seems funny,' Beatty said, 'that she should invite him in her bedroom and not the living room or the kitchen. Anthea says they just make straight for the bedroom and he's not there but three minutes.'

'Oh my God!' said Schwanger, his chin hanging down his collar.

'You see,' she said, 'I've accumulated a certain amount of experience where Jarvis is concerned, he can inspire confidence and the confidence can be justified say twenty or thirty times but the thirty-first---!'

'Yes, yes, I get you!!---he almost wept the words. 'But what I can't understand is that---! I mean she called me up not three days back and said you've got to protect me Hank, that man's standing outside my apartment block all the time!'

So it *was* Anthea! She'd *known* it, she should trust her instincts, it had been

obvious all the way through!

'I've been seeing her home every night,' Hank went on. 'So his visits have got to be after *mine*. She's got to be cheating everybody, *everybody*!'

She found herself putting her hand on his wonderfully huge paw, as warm as a hot water bottle. 'I wouldn't jump to conclusions,' she said. 'This is only the testimony of one person and for all we know Anthea may have an axe to grind.'

'You're damned right,' he said, without hearing a word. 'I'm going to see Jarvis too. He's going to have to do some talking. I mean what the hell goes on? Do you mean to say he stands on the sidewalk waiting for her to come in and me to go out and then takes the lift straight up to her apartment? Sometimes I think the whole world's going crazy. What kind of a devilish hold does that man have on her? Did Gertrude ever talk to you about the possibility of a devilish hold?'

'Well she has an imagination like all of us,' Beatty said flutteringly.

'Did you order that?' he asked, pointing to the coffee.

She nodded and sipped while he put three spoonfuls of sugar in his.

'Maidie gave you my number, you said?' he asked.

'Yes.'

'I'd better call her and tell her to be extra careful,' he said. 'I told her last weekend you need to change all the locks and she said I'll defend myself with the kitchen knife like it was a joke, these jokes are always jokes before something happens!' He shook his head. 'Going in her bedroom! Man!'

How he left the coffee shop, who paid the bill, he never knew. He woke up to himself two blocks away, walking alone. His head was buzzing, his eyes were small beady affairs. He got home quick. Just as he had a tiny office in which only a small thin man should have worked, so he had a flat where the kitchen walls could be

touched simultaneously by stretching out the arms and the bedroom only served as such once the door had been closed. Yet the fact that such an imposingly large man should be destined for ever to squeeze and be squeezed was strangely of a piece with his personality with its fatal penchant for creating confined situations of which even the exits were too small.

He sat at his cans of beer without the television on. He had some turkey pot pie from the fridge without knowing it and was surprised to find no turkey pot pie when he looked an hour later. All he saw and heard and tasted were his thoughts, whereas usually it was vice versa. He waited until almost midnight for Gertrude's call and was just about to get up and take a cab to her apartment when it came.

'Sorry Hank, I've just got out of a show,' she said. 'What say we meet at your place? I'll be in a cab, hang about downstairs.'

'Sure,' he said.

He ran downstairs though he had a good ten minutes to spare, he needed the air. He stood outside the dingy unlighted entrance, secure in his hugeness against seedy hustlers. Here was he suggesting marriage to a---! He couldn't believe it, he couldn't! But here was the cab. She had the door open for him. He squeezed himself in.

'Hi.'

'Hi.'

'That son of a bitch was standing outside my place four or five hours ago!' she said. 'Anthea saw him on her way out.'

'Uh huh.'

As they turned the corner on to her block she said, 'There he is, look.'

And he was. Shwanger's lips were trembling, he wanted to cry, he couldn't find the money for the cab. He followed her into the entrance---yes, the son of a bitch was

there OK, staring blandly---and then they were in the lift. He hurried along behind her to her door, she was suddenly inside and so was he and before a thought could form in his brain the `mother' event had happened again, only this time they all but broke the bed.

And as usual he crept out. By the time he got downstairs Jarvis had gone. Schwanger was too much in a dream to hang about. He wanted home. He needed to lie in his bed and simply remember, again and again, the event that took place so fast it might never have taken place.

Anthea wasn't in the habit of locking her door. She was perplexed by the fact that Hank Schwanger had stopped visiting her, just as she was by the fact that Gertrude suddenly began asking her out every evening again. She had Schwanger's phone number but lacked the courage to call him. Her mother had always told her it was something only unattractive women had to do. She almost felt his enormous arms round her, experienced an ache in the ribs from the pressure. She would have masturbated but when she felt a straight attraction for a man she could never utilize her feelings toward this solitary end, it required daringly illicit scenes with undesirable, not desired, men.

But as if to console her there was a call for her next morning in her little cubby hole. She heard Schwanger's voice.

`I have to see you, Anthea.'

He invited her to the speakeasy, which had become for him a cave of sorrows oddly illuminated with the promise of unexpected events. He found himself yearning for the old clean days when he'd thrown popcorn at Gertrude and put a rude-noises cushion on her chair just before she sat down to dinner. Almost---but no, surely not!--he could have sacrificed the `mother' event rather than endure his present chin-

wobbling uncertainty. The bar was a dark prohibition symbol of all the ecstatic pain that had ensued since those days---too great a struggle for too little contraband! Theirs was a decent relation, essentially. Neither of them ever made a sign or reference in their talk to the fact that they had `been together'---what could be more decent than that? The thing they did was cleanly and quickly done, they didn't maul each other about in that sweaty way other people seemed to go in for (with Maidie it was sometimes all he could do not to jump out of bed and scream `For God's *sake!*'), there was no `leading up to' between them, no billing and cooing afterward. And, after all, he and Gertrude achieved in three or four minutes flat more than most other couples achieved after long exhausting hours of slapping and slobbering and salival exchanges of the most disgusting kind and also (yes, he had heard it from someone) mutual obscene imprecations. Gertrude didn't have to expose parts of her private body to him (they were her business, not his). As for himself he was right ashamed to strip off with a lady present unless of course everybody was having fun at the pool and wore a disguising tan. With Gertrude he saw nothing, touched nothing. No confusion of salivas. The part of them meant for such operations was the part used and that part only. It was washed afterward, it retired to its hidden existence and waited with discreet controlled expectation for the next brief escape into its rightful complementary counterpart. This created mutual confidence---one person's part in its retirement knew that the other person's part, even while being borne along the street or being jolted in a bus, was unseen and, being secret and silent, maintained a lone awareness of the other which rendered the moment of escape all the more momentous when it came. Had she violated all that? Would he have to return to the old routines of flirting and touching and mauling? Would there never be another `mother' event in his life? He couldn't bear it, he wanted like Oedipus to shatter his own vision, his hearing, his power of

touch---let me not know, he cried, let me not know the truth, yet tell it to me quick!

Anthea had had to tell Gertrude a lie, that she was working late and therefore couldn't watch the Oscar awards or whatever it was on television after all, and Hank had to tell her he was meeting a client who had an urgent capital gains problem. All of a sudden he knew why Gertrude had been walking the streets in the dead of night---it had nothing to do with prostitution, that was just Jarvis's damn-fool story. She had needed the air and exercise---yes! to throw off her desire, nothing more nor less! She had been yearning for the 'mother' event just like he had and like him she had no idea from whence it would come or whether she would be in the mood and so on. With this conviction ringing in his head he called out for another beer. Then---he couldn't believe it---the conviction was gone as quickly as it had come and he was left, just as the beer was put down in front of him, with a sickening sense of deflation. He looked into the beer and saw a stagnant pool of---but at that moment Anthea walked in.

He'd never seen such a neatly got up creature in all his born life. She had skin-tight black pants on with a silver-buckled belt and a clinging midnight-blue jacket with a silver-white shirt underneath and pearls at her neck and even the barman, his massive grey eyebrows like fur tables under which his eyes were hiding, paused in his thoughtful wiping of the counter. Hank Schwanger clambered up and whispered, 'Well, take a look at this!'. He knew how to perform this kind of thing because in a situation where a suit and collar and tie were needed you played according to the rules and luckily his dad (who was on the desk at a Houston, Texas hotel) had taught him what these rules were in respect of women. At this moment you could no more see Schwanger throwing popcorn than standing on his head in the subway.

He asked what would she drink and she replied just as he liked a woman to reply: 'What are *you* having?'

They sat drinking beer together and for every one of his she had one too, which again was how he liked it since one hoped for the same degree of moroseness in one's partner as in oneself, otherwise drinking became too transparently what it was, a lone experience. Quite absurdly, as he sat on the other side of the tiny table between them gazing at her, his previous thoughts about the wrongness of the flirtation and mauling game were overturned and he began to see Anthea like a college kid would in an atmosphere of Coke and too much crushed ice and outdoor movies and pawing and smooching with a decent sized house and a neat set of kids appearing on the horizon. Surely *that* was decent, above board, not this surreptitious thing he was indulging in? What children did he hope to have with Gertrude---ghouls? All this while Anthea talked about the Festival and his eyes said `Go for it, kid' while he heard not a word. Meanwhile she felt, as she talked about the possibility of their doing a `sports gazette' of the most famous wins in football, tennis etc of the year, that she'd found a listener for the first time in years.

There was in the glitter of his falsely listening eyes desire too---not for her as she thought, yet a *little* for her. He was desiring that Little Lady in his mind who was somewhere in the world and wouldn't cheat him and whose children washed round the backs of their necks. Somehow Anthea's black pants, her pert white shirt with the flowing bow, her manner of appearing from top to bottom wholesome and sincere, made him feel American and Gertrude, who was American while Anthea wasn't, abruptly became an illegal immigrant.

How Anthea put six beers inside her she never knew. She couldn't see straight and her consonants began to slide disconcertingly. Luckily their brief exchange on the subject of Gertrude was over, for it was this that made her drink in huge gulps. It had run as follows:

`Seems Gertrude's in a spot of trouble.'

`I'm surprised you didn't know,' said Anthea.

`You mean because I see her home every night?'

`You see her home?'

`I see her up to her apartment every night or almost. So this guy has got to be coming in after I leave! I mean, for christsakes! I can't believe it!'

Having started to drink the foul-tasting stuff as an act of flattery toward him she now wanted to pour it down his neck. Especially as she now recognized, wondering at her former dumbness, that of course it was *his* heavy long stride she'd heard in flight from the front door to Gertrude's bedroom.

`He comes in with her when, would you say?' the flatulent lump of lard opposite her asked.

She was astonished how quickly she could hate someone she not two minutes before had begun to see as the ideal husband, namely one who qualified as the father of her future children (not that she wanted any) after first performing the role of *her* father.

The fact that her bladder was about to perforate was the only reason she nodded when he suggested, of all idiotic things, that he see her back to the apartment. His motive was to show Gertrude that he too could cheat---he wanted to see her face when he came in with Anthea, while Anthea's was to get to a john (she suspected that the speakeasy one was a health hazard). So they walked the four blocks, her arm in his, looking, she thought, ridiculous (`the long and short of it'), and not an hour before she would have felt newly engaged.

Sitting on the john at last, she knew she'd committed a dreadful error---Gertrude wasn't home but she might be here any minute. She hurried back to the lounge but he was nowhere to be seen. He was sitting on Gertrude's bed, his head in his hands!

'I have an early morning,' she said.

'Oh, sure, sure,' he murmured without taking his hands away, 'you hurry along to bed and thanks for a wonderful evening.'

She couldn't sleep. Gertrude got in about half an hour later and there was a simply frightening row though not a lengthy one. The front door slammed and she heard the chain go across. At dawn she crept out and there on the kitchen table was the note she was expecting---'Please let me have my apartment to myself and stop meddling in my business, Gertrude.' She went empty all over and panicked. If only anger came to her aid in situations like this but it never did! She took a meek shower, tiptoed even in her own fully carpeted room. It was just seven and the lights of the city always thrilled her at this hour. She found a coffee shop and ordered two eggs sunny side up, bacon, hash browns, toast, coffee---'You name it, I'll have it' she said to the black waitress who winked and said 'Enjoy' when she brought the food.

Ten

The first thing she did when she got to the office was phone Beatty and tell her Gertrude had thrown her out. Beatty thought 'Good for Gertrude!' but said, 'Could you step over to my office, Anthea?'. When she arrived Beatty began assailing her like she was her boss. She felt almost giddy these days---forces hanging over her she couldn't understand or marshal.

'You're making my life hard,' she said. 'You know what a huge extra expense the new Lyons Tea Shop has been---'

'That's nothing to do with me! I'm not the Festival director.'

'But you're now persuading him to serve authentic national food in the British and French sections and we can't afford first-class catering facilities' (almost she had said 'Jarvis' instead of 'him').

'Well tell *him*, not me! I'm a consultant,' Anthea shouted and walked out of the room.

Beatty called the Festival director and joked with him about the mounting budget, and praised Anthea, at which he praised Anthea more than she did, then she teasingly suggested that Budgets could only be taken 'by the nose' so far and for God's sake don't let's make matters worse with quite unjustified catering expenses which I

know Budgets won't stand for (Budgets had already allowed for them, which only she knew). Taking alarm, the Festival director, a permanent employee, decided against engaging one of the top catering outfits in New York, and Beatty was left to make in-house arrangements, that is for watery coffee and tasteless industrial snacks vitalized in the microwave oven. As it later turned out, it worked. There were lines at the cafes throughout the Festival, someone said that elegant dishes nicely served would only have intimidated people. As for menus printed in French, that oftentimes offended richer clients who didn't like their illiteracy exposed. Anyway, Beatty was able to tell Budgets that she had saved them a lot of money, which, though she never knew this, actually made Tim Braddle feel wary of her for the first time.

She also called Gertrude and found her in her car. The note telling Anthea to get out seemed to have been forgotten already. But Beatty brought it into new focus by saying, 'I must say I'm a little pissed with Anthea'. However, Gertrude could hardly hear because of the crackling and the fact that due to Beatty's call she'd missed a turn and would be late (you didn't turn up late for a sale-hungry client) made her inwardly curse Beatty and she just said a mechanical 'Is that right?' now and then without hearing anything. She wasn't in fact late and called Anthea afterward to say she had a couple of comps (she was proud of her theatrical language) for a Vanessa Redgrave show that night. The note was never mentioned again. Gertrude did that evening ask her what she'd been doing with Hank and Anthea said, 'He asked me out to get some feedback on you, he's worried you'll take to prowling again,' at which they both laughed, not because it was funny but because it wasn't.

Beatty burst into tears after her phone call, she really had been catty about Anthea and was of course unaware that Gertrude hadn't heard a word, and she forgot her lunch appointment despite three or four intercom warnings. The screw-up then

made her angry---with Anthea again. Most of her day was spent internally arguing with Anthea, organizing dazzling speeches for herself and poor replies for Anthea, until Anthea made a tearful apology and booked a flight back to London (all very childish but we have to face it that salaries the world over finance hours of it a week).

She took her seething mind along to Dr Dormund that very evening---and it wasn't a minute too soon either. For the first time he saw her shed tears and, of course, as he knew it must be, the tears were on account of what the world was doing to her. Out it all came, they were all `on' her---Jarvis, Gertrude, Joe her husband, Anthea, the kids, Budgets, the Festival director (`Am only I left off the hook?' Dormund asked himself as he presented to her a grim face which expressed neither commiseration for nor connivance with the small army of people `on' her). When she was quiet again and he had lit a musk-scented incense stick (always soothing after what he secretly called `an eyewash interlude') he returned precisely to the point he had left off at the previous week. *This* time, he prophesied, she won't be bored.

`All people involved in the criminal industry,' he began---a little naughtily, he had to admit.

She interrupted at once, `Why do you insist on saying I'm a criminal?'

`Do you feel a criminal?' he asked with simple wonder.

`Leave me alone!' she screamed. `Leave me alone!' (I hope she can hear that across the wall, he thought, it usually stops her being hysterical if she can hear somebody else being hysterical).

`Please attend to my question,' he said almost in a whisper.

`You're a sadist!' (Tears again). `A bloody sadist! OK I *am* a criminal.'

`As I said the first time you came this isn't a confessional" (he was afraid of her spending an hour on office shit) `so we'll leave it as read and understood that you've

got yourself involved in the criminal industry---after all, you wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Jarvis would you?' He waited. Nothing but a wild stare (baby after cry wants tit, toy, bedtime story or better still daddy). 'Would you?'

'No,' she said, hardly audible as if to say I'm-beaten-do-what-you-will-with-me. Then, to his astonishment (even psychiatrists get surprises) she said in a perfectly collected tone, 'Jarvis is having an affair with my friend Gertrude---'.

At last! What a long interstellar odyssey in order to find a piece of rotting meat that had been under her nose all the time! (Ah, a little voice told him, but that odyssey took place *because* it was under her nose).

'What do you feel about Gertrude as a result of knowing that?' he asked her.

'Disgust. As a matter of fact I've always found her disgusting.'

'But you introduced Jarvis to her.'

'Yes.'

'And clearly you wouldn't be happy to be having an affair with him yourself.'

'Of course not.'

'It's complicated, isn't it?' he said wryly.

'What riles me,' she said, 'is that people go around behind one's back and get one involved.'

'How does Gertrude having an affair with Jarvis get *you* involved?'

'Well she has a boyfriend and he's eating himself away with grief and naturally I have to let him know she's having an affair with Jarvis---oh, my God, I'm so sick of all the *talk*!'

He lifted his notes in such a way that she couldn't see what he was looking at---it was Jarvis's police report (weeks before, Dr Dormund had decided to shift the buck to the police by requesting surveillance). The report showed Jarvis prowling the streets at

night but without incident. He was usually in the company of a woman, 'probably a prostitute', but no incidents. Jarvis had never reentered the apartment block since that first time. One or two visits to Long Island. Perhaps an old friend. They had no clues on that, Long Island being outside their surveillance area. Jarvis could have been reported for breaking his parole terms but they let it go.

He dropped the papers back and said with a smile, 'Where's he sleeping with her?'

'In her apartment.'

'Regularly?'

'About every night.'

'He enters the apartment block with her?'

'That's right.'

He smiled again. 'I agree with you,' he said. 'It's your nerves we have to attend to. Forget the others. Even Jarvis. Now people in the criminal industry---' (she took it lying down this time) '---can't hope to remain stable if they don't pay special attention to their nervous systems, as you showed your intention of doing when you asked me for help.'

She was already demonstrating boredom. He jumped up smartly and said, 'Will you lie down please?'

She was startled and all but refused---until she saw him indicating a massage couch on to which clean white paper had recently been unrolled.

'Take your shoes off please.'

And when she was lying down he said, 'Close your eyes.'

He sat near her head, but not behind it as Dr Lisa Tensevic did. He was watching her. 'I'm going to ask you to visualize light,' he said.

But she was already asleep.

After thirty minutes he woke her gently and said, 'You may go now.'

That sleep incensed Beatty. She worked her imagination up into quite a drama about it and the title of the drama was 'I don't pay doctors for falling asleep!'

Not so Gertrude Tellingas in her relationship with Dr Tensevic---she would have paid her even for that. And far from being critical of her she was grateful (always a dangerous emotion for the analyst, meaning either a new crisis or flight). After all, the latter end of most evenings brought Gertrude sensations she had never dreamed of before, and they seemed not to pall. Her heart beat fast now when she approached her apartment block leaning on Schwanger's arm. He was being stiff and reticent of late but that was OK by her so long as he was there. Also the last thing she wanted from him was talk. In any case, Jarvis, not he, was the one who held their lives in balance. She little thought it was also Schwanger---he and he alone kept Jarvis on his thankless midnight beat. On the evenings the faithful sentinel wasn't there on the ramparts she suffered a distressing abdominal lapse into vacancy and was invariably rude to Schwanger in her haste to get rid of him. Yet she was also glad for an unruffled entry to her bed with a cup of chocolate, though there was always the fear that Jarvis's absence would prove permanent.

Schwanger had more complicated fears about Jarvis. First, if Jarvis failed to turn up there would be no reason for Gertrude to be escorted home any more but, second, Jarvis's continued attendance meant that he went into Gertrude's bedroom straight after he, Schwanger, came out. Clearly, some spying had to be done. Schwanger waited until the next 'mother' event and then lurked near the apartment block for two frozen hours. He saw arrests, was solicited several times (not only by women) and every drug on the market was offered him but he saw neither hair nor hide of Jarvis.

So they had another speakeasy meeting. Schwanger lacked the frankness of spirit to say 'You're following me into her bedroom at night' so he kept putting oblique questions which Jarvis saw as a spy job for the police (he was aware that his Long Island visits were in flagrant violation of parole terms). They parried each other from inside their separate obsessions. Jarvis's absences from his beat were becoming frequent. And now Wednesday evenings too were going to be out of town for sure (he had phoned Maidie and heard her say 'You can come next Wednesday' with an excitement that made him momentarily stagger) and he didn't want Schwanger to get a whiff of that.

Maidie booked her friend Ricco to 'hang about outside' on Wednesday and follow them armed with a stout stick. He suggested a gun but she said 'I don't want boob-tube dramas in my lane' and gave him her father's stick from the period of race riots in Philadelphia. She explained that her 'night prowling with a rapist' was a therapeutic job to do with Schwanger's friend Mrs Masumerov who was a prison volunteer officer.

Schwanger left the speakeasy more or less satisfied---not that Jarvis would stop going to Gertrude's apartment after he did but that he would continue to be on his beat, a mixed blessing indeed.

Jarvis's first Wednesday at Long Island went well. Maidie kept him to a fairly well-lighted zone and she talked to passers by---'a pity I don't have dog,' she said, 'there are a lot of doggy contacts round here'. Ricco lurked discreetly behind with his stick.

So Wednesday was now definitely added to Jarvis's truant nights. Schwanger began to view these Wednesdays with an especially jaundiced eye because he was convinced that Gertrude and Jarvis had hit on that evening for an earlier assignation

than their usual ones. Anthea's line, when he asked her where Gertrude went after working hours, was that they saw a lot of shows 'and things' together---he didn't like 'things'.

Jarvis was afraid Schwanger would hear of his Long Island prowls, especially when Schwanger asked him one evening, in what he hoped was a jocular tone (it was on the occasion of another hastily arranged speakeasy meeting), 'Where do you get to on your off nights you old scoundrel?'. Finally Schwanger's patience gave out and he opted for a threat. 'Listen,' he said, 'it's me keeping you out of jail, know that? I'm the one who tells Beatty what your night activities are. Now don't give me reason to say I don't know where the guy goes. Do you hear me?' 'Oh I hear you,' Jarvis said with the insipid look that comes over a prisoner's face when pride wars with prudence. 'Then don't make me mad,' Schwanger said, 'I happen to think you're a nice guy and I happen to know Gertrude and Anthea are shit scared and it's me who's holding up your good conduct status' (it was risky mentioning Gertrude but he was watching Jarvis's eyes, which told him nothing). Schwanger went on, 'I'm supposed to be your pal, right? I tell them we do the bars together, now just you be right there on that corner between ten and midnight man, Wednesdays included, and no horse-fartin' around.'

'You mean I don't get one evening to myself?' Jarvis asked.

'Sure but that one evening has got to be in the company of somebody I know, such as Gertrude' (cunning touch!). 'If you have evenings with Gertrude sometimes,' he said with a squeaky lift in his voice, 'why, that's fine as long as they're in public places. I hope you don't go to *private* places with her for christsakes?'

To his horror Jarvis said nothing.

Instead Jarvis said with a sigh, 'I'll be there then. It seems, Hank,' with a smile, 'I go from one kind of imprisonment to another.'

But what Jarvis did was simply not be there on Wednesday nights. He was there every other night and knew that Schwanger would have to accept this as at least better than his being absent several nights a week, as it had been before. Whether or not he ever asked himself why he was required to stand at a certain place late at night, and to be seen to be standing there, we don't know. He certainly couldn't have guessed the truth. He might have felt he'd been appointed Gertrude's night guardian, in case she took to prowling again. After all he did know the streets, their night language was different from the day's and if you didn't speak it you were in trouble. Being publicly charged with a crime and sentenced is a highly dramatic procedure and Jarvis always saw himself dramatically and at the center of the piece.

Sexual encounters which depend on a specialized scene become a source of nervous perplexity for all concerned. Even Anthea was unbeknownst to herself a reed to their storms. She no longer feared Jarvis but she saw him at that corner every evening. Something did tell her, however, that she was being allowed to stay on at Gertrude's apartment because she was serving a purpose. She didn't know what this was (as a matter of fact, Gertrude feared that once she was out of the way Beatty would resume her visits to the apartment, with Jarvis perhaps, so that the present delicate balance of power, which excluded Beatty, would topple). As for Beatty herself, each of her efforts to enter the Jarvis situation seemed to take her further away. She still saw him as a clean, abstemious individual with a number of serious ideas which the world needed to recognize---and she even began to believe that this was why she was interested in him. Did Joe, her husband, notice changes in her? He certainly didn't know that once or twice a week she too went to Gertrude's apartment block and looked for Jarvis, and sometimes even followed him.

At this point Jarvis was probably the most sincere of the bunch. He was trying

nightly, poor devil, to exorcise the demons of his past. But it seems to be the lot of the sincere to be used. He got colder and colder as the Christmas season drew nearer. He would follow a woman of the type that 'called' to him and he would make himself turn back at last, returning to his 'hotel' in the Village which housed illegal immigrants and panhandlers, feeling that prison was better.

We see the city as its skyscrapers and subway and parks but these lonely human fevers are the real city. They and they alone are the reason for the way faces look and for the manner of walking and the lonesome strolls and sometimes hurtling steps toward one more setback or advance in the fulfillment of the dreadfully secret inner design, secret because not even its fevered pursuer is allowed to know what it is. 'Do you know New York?'---*know* it? What kind of knowledge would you need in order to know a world whose faces and striding legs are *concealments* of that world, whose noises *conceal* the real sound and whose sights *conceal* the visions that drive a million along this way, a million along that, while the city's inner services handle massive daily supplies of the things these fevers need, from paper handkerchiefs to gloves against the cold? And we dare to think of the city as a structure and visible and even durable! The life it is *supposed* to be teeming and clattering and roaring with is in fact the mere inanimate discard of the fevers that preceded its making and determined its forms and survive its changes and its degeneration (although this 'degeneration' is illusory, meaning a momentary dominance of fever over law). Even the rolling winos in the dead of night, the junkies and doorway slumberers are only the tail end of the fevers, in fact their mildest expression. What do the sky's overhead thunders or the police sirens or shoot-outs that sound like pop guns from the twentieth floor have except *substance*---they can be heard and seen but the *real* event is the shape of the thoughts in unheeded rooms as millions of rats, influenced to fevers by their consumption of the

fast food made by fevered human hands, climb the interior of domestic walls or swim in massive defaecatory plenitude in the sewers to imitate their feeders. Do we wonder at the depletion of immune systems? What immune system could resist these inner buffetings, the dreams that leave no deathly possibility unturned, that will not rest but continue to sing like Orpheus's head even when the body is torn to a million pieces? Know New York? What knowledge could cover a cosmos of inner communications so refined as to be inaudible, sustained along millions of utterly hidden lines and emerging in fevers that rack the flesh and drag it to its end?---except that the fevers have no end, they are hardier than stone, more durable than Manhattan rock.

A fool might say that Dr Dormund and Dr Lisa Tensevic were observers of the fevers, or simply cashed in on them (what a travail-laden way of making cash!), but not at all, they were part of them just as analysis, even the spasmodic analysis employed by Dormund, was a fever that could burn the flesh more easily than night prowling (was Freud not a passionate man, then?). Dormund and Tensevic pursued fevers (thinking they were other people's) with demonic persistence, thus increasing the invisible communication lines between the feverish quite as if they themselves were maintaining a thousand lovers and rushing night and day between them---they dipped their hands in blood which was actually their own and touched others with them in a delicious bacchanalia of fevers that turned all substantial things like real events into mimicking servants. Could you call Dr Lisa an *observer* of all things? She threw flaming swords into the arena, scorched the atmosphere! And shortly Dr Dormund will throw one too.

Do you notice that there is no mention in this fever story, sexual as the fevers are, of the little ones, the eager, joyfully expectant creatures who emerge no bigger than Schwanger's hand and are happily for a few days blind, like the baby rats that learn to pick their way through lethal poison bait before they have tasted milk? When I use the

expression 'mother' event , by the way, it mustn't be thought to indicate the possibility, even in the remotest degree, of a desire for golden babes, nor even a minimal passing impression of surrogate maternity, let alone ecstatic lactation. No gentle adult hand is waiting to sustain those first chubby stumbling steps. No gurgling, deliriously happy cries can confidently expect to bring sunlight into homes already made ready and warm for the visitation. We aren't in such a world. The rats learn to shift for themselves or perish, the baby falls like a defaecatory afterthought in the dusky underground canals.

Fevers have to develop under cover, contact each other in secret, so that their unconscious pursuers aren't shocked by what is feverishly going on sometimes at their own expense, sometimes to their delectation, in waves of up and down fortune that never cease, and never form a lake. All must have its excuse, mandate, and this is where *events* come in, they are a cover and a blind. There must, after all, be a language among humans not simply of what is hidden and unheard and closed to the conscious mind but what can be acted out, what can move and be reasonably exchanged, but still---only in so far as it allows the fevers to continue their lives uninvestigated (in the political sense), otherwise they would topple the Statue of Liberty.

Eleven

When it started in the middle of November the Festival attracted attention like a media event (say a televised rape trial). It was reviewed like a concert or a film. Anthea got a lot of verbal 'support'---not from the media because they didn't know about her (Beatty stopped that happening) but from other in-house people. This wasn't to her favor, however, since the others expected the same appreciative word but found they didn't get it, with the quaint result that even more of it went to her.

Schwanger was several times at the Lyons Tea Shop and sat with her---to her delight she was now dressed Thirties from top to toe, including a page-boy fringe. He was at last convinced that she and Gertrude had indeed seen a lot of shows together because now that Anthea was working even later than before Gertrude was always calling him up to make a second or fourth in a party to this or that musical. It was gratifying. What was distinctly *not* gratifying was that Jarvis did his sentinel work outside Gertrude's apartment less and less. There were a number of reasons for this, the chief of them Beatty, or perhaps Dr Dormund (here comes the flaming sword). As soon as she got inside his door (she had deliberately missed a week to show her disapproval of his allowing her to fall asleep) he said 'Lie down please' without even looking at her (not even a jocular word about 'Let's hope you don't sleep this time').

She did so. She had lunched with Anthea at the Lyons Tea Shop. For policy reasons she was having to be proud of Anthea and it was useful to tell almost everyone that it had been she who had 'spotted' her. Like all people who work in jobs she was used to doing this but it would have been more happily done for a stranger, not someone she wanted to strangle. False behavior puts the cells into a state of unaccountable irritation and this was her state when she lay down on Dormund's massage couch. But within moments she was not simply feeling serene but entertaining well disposed thoughts about Anthea. It was a miracle! People unlike baby rats find quick changes of feeling a puzzle, almost an insult, especially if the new feeling they get is the opposite of the previous one and the change has occurred in a matter of seconds. After all a feeling establishes its own rightness. There is a kind of legal sanctity about it. For instance, Beatty's dislike of Anthea made Anthea an unlikable person and that was that. And then along comes a quite opposite feeling and, well, denounces the first one. If it was now right to feel OK about Anthea where did that put her unquestionably justified dislike of her? Beatty was plunged, lying on a couch as she was, into moral confusion. She wondered at the doctor's remarkable powers, or his witch craft. All he was doing was talking about light visualization but changes were happening inside her that made his words seem an incantation. 'With your eyes closed,' he said with a slight impatience because hers were still staring at the ceiling, 'I want you to visualize Anthea in a flood of light.' From the other side of the wall there was, this evening, a consecrated silence.

He worked with her for an hour and she was astonished (he even more, though he didn't say so) at the degree to which she could conjure up light in the apparent darkness of her brain, indeed she could explode with a light so brilliant that she seemed to be illumining the universe from inside herself. The doctor, who noted the change in

her face from a lovely forty-year-old harridan to a blonde innocent of seventeen would only go so far as to say, 'You need never have a depressing experience again. Some people just can't get there, or they take a year to get to where you are now. My wife,' he said, 'not a glimmer.'

When they were seated for the last five minutes of the hour he said, 'This is your nervous system's protective device from now on. It is what I promised you at the beginning. You will return tomorrow evening and I will teach you some ways of applying it to life to your advantage.'

She was there on the dot. He only needed to give her half an hour. He put within her grasp (wisely or not is another question) the possibility of spreading her fever far and wide so that the benefit didn't flow exclusively to others. This is what he called an *extended* protection for the nervous system. It worked well in prisons, where a warder might use it to pacify (by unseen means) a prisoner's desire to knock him senseless. Applied to the outside world with its rat-ridden walls and sewers, however, it became a flaming sword with the power to reduce the city to ashes if once in the hands of the whole population. When work ended the following evening she rushed home to resume her sword play. It didn't even require solitude. She could cook for the kids, see them to bed, even watch television. It only required closing the eyes briefly from time to time. Joe said the obvious, 'You seem real beat tonight.' All of a sudden she had discovered what no one, before Dr Dormund, had ever intimated to her---that life was malleable, that fate wasn't at all an *outside* agency. She prayed and prayed that no one else of her acquaintance would get to Dr Dormund. But of course she was safe. His private practice was tiny. And she could hardly believe he would expose his gift to people like Jarvis, especially for no fee.

She was free to work her lethal weapon on whomever she would or could.

There was something strikingly naive about Dr Dormund. Or was there? Did he really expect her to use the technique solely to make herself and others happy? Even then, did she know what happiness was---for herself, let alone for others? Really the technique he'd given her required a certain power of analysis (that is, a passion for other people's fevers), of which she had absolutely none. Perhaps the thing was more safely practiced in a prison after all.

For Beatty the most remarkable thing about Dr Dormund's `exercises' as he called them was the fact that they filled her with a sense of health and made her feel patient and serene, at least for some time after she'd done them. At the office she would snatch a minute here and there to practice them. She worked on Jarvis to bring him closer, on Gertrude to infatuate her with Schwanger and not Jarvis, on both Gertrude and Anthea to destroy their interest in Jarvis. She undertook a thorough repair job. She decided to do a dry run. She `worked' on her worst enemy in the office, a toiletry articles buyer who had blamed her the year before for her failure to promote her to an international buying job she had set her sights on. Beatty visualized the woman as welcoming her into her office and preferring her to most other department heads. That very afternoon the woman called and asked her a special favor concerning the employment of a new assistant. They met and Beatty actually saw the astonishment on the other woman's face when she walked into her office---`I like this lady!' the astonishment said.

What she didn't bargain for was that since it was her mind alone determining what was desirable for other people, and as this mind knew little about the way those others lived, her success in deeper waters was erratic and unpredictable. Perhaps her most successful sword-play was in the case of Jarvis. He began phoning her again and asking for chats with her `like old times'. From his point of view he was doing so in

order to end his new imprisonment outside Gertrude's apartment block but the fact remained that he hadn't called Beatty before. In other words, where Beatty's desire coincided with a spark of the same desire in her victim her `exercises' worked.

Unhappily she was unable to determine what desires were nursed by others. It made her a blind swordswoman.

But Jarvis's midnight vigils did end---he had no idea he had her to thank for it. As far as he was concerned he had simply calculated well---if I get back into Mrs Masumerov's good graces her word in the prison network counts for more than Hank Schwanger's. Poor Jarvis was getting a hangdog, hunched look, his hands were always in his pockets and, hardest to bear, he had no one to talk to except, on those gently pleasurable Wednesday evenings, Maidie. His new-found relationship with Beatty therefore gave him a new status, and he abruptly stopped his sentinel duties.

And every night now Gertrude was abruptly shaking Schwanger's hand on the street with some crass remark like `Well I'm getting right in that sack tonight Hank!' and he was walking away more hugely confused than ever. He didn't want to cry, drink, open his heart to anybody. He was so puzzled he wouldn't have known what to say, or what the subject of his tears was---all he could think of was `Can you beat it? Can you beat that now?'. Thus one can say that the psychic technique Dr Dormund gave Beatty (which he also, naively or diabolically, called a `therapy') certainly had quick and reverberating effects. Better than Schwanger's machinations or Gertrude's nightly escort arrangements or Jarvis's dogged prowls, it moved all three the way she wanted. Yet it was done with closed eyes, as befits unseen fevers, which never require anything as coarse as a real event for their escalations. Seen in the subway Beatty was a neat woman executive resting her eyes. In the office she was thinking something out. Who in the world could have discovered the extent of the invisible empire she was

administering, or divined that it consisted of other people's lives (which only *they*, being simple fevered creatures, considered under their own control)?

Hank Schwanger and Gertrude now met among common friends and maintained a kind of bemused nervously courteous relation. The nightly escorting operation dwindled to nothing---he only suggested it from time to time, and she accepted it, on the principle that you can't let something so momentous die just like that (because it did die just like that).

I won't say that the `mother' event passed to others, on a kind of equal distribution principle, but it nearly happened to Maidie Panipoulos. She didn't, thankfully, report it to the police. Nor, thankfully, was Ricco trailing behind them with his big Philadelphian stick. It happened in her own house. Before she knew what was happening she was on the kitchen floor. She was terrified more by Jarvis's manner than her actual experience, which was over in a jiffy. In fact her clothes suffered more than she did---and her self-esteem. Yet the experience did something for her. While not on the level of a `mother' event, which requires urgent assent from both parties, any desire to `play' as she had done primarily with Ricco and secondarily with Hank Schwanger died at once. Which was a little bit of a demonstration of Jarvis's philosophy. She prepared a gentle speech for Schwanger, and from that time he slept in the spare room with the summer chairs and sun umbrella. His puzzlement deepened to a state of catalepsy.

Jarvis escaped from her house an instant after this (supposedly) first lapse of his parole. Expertly he was off the premises like a sprite of the Long Island night, dissolved into the fields. Hardly had Maidie recovered her wits and a sitting position than the house had the silence of a place wholly unvisited that day. She didn't quite remember what had happened. But her shocked intimate areas did recall a vague state

of disarray enclosing, somewhere---hardly there but grimly steady---a depth-charge of conspiratorial wonder.

She didn't bar Jarvis her house, she didn't suspend his Wednesday evenings. A strange world. She despised him but found this made no difference to the expectation with which she awaited his weekly visit. Of course she had only been raped if she cared to make it public but since she kept it to herself he had simply done something very sudden which in time might have happened anyway. Is the kitchen floor so different from a bed? And what are torn knickers, a ruined blouse and bra? She put the experience away with many others in her rounded, yielding, dreamy archives.

Also the fact that the kitchen-floor incident continued to happen every Wednesday showed emphatically that it was no rape. She soon saw he was no lover. It aroused her sympathy. This fact had escaped Dr Dormund. He had failed to point out to Beatty that Jarvis's droopy speeches about the primal act had nothing to do with the primal act at all, only his own shabby effort to arrive at an approximation of it, in hurried circumstances where the woman's judgement of his prowess was silenced. Dormund also failed to see that most human sex has to do with masturbation, that is the early images chosen, the stage-setting devised by the panting child mind. Rape was simply the bold realization of one such inventive scene, and therefore could no more be dealt with by a prison sentence, or a prison psychiatrist evidently, than Beatty's ignorance of the wonder of the orgasm could. As to Jarvis's philosophy, how could a woman feel comfort from the hot fumbling enactment of *someone else's masturbation*, bringing in its train smelly and sweaty thrusts quite alien to the victim's receptor mood which yielded not the fluid discharges of love but a desiccated antipathy that never died? The fool! To think he thought he'd ever touched a woman! It had been a *masturbation touch*, one that begins and ends in self and therefore is no touch at all

because no transmission takes place, neither a giving nor a receiving.

For Maidie this was easy to see---she detected where the poor creature stood. And, horrible result, it induced a kind of maternity in her (always a dangerous emotion). She not only accepted the Wednesday episode but created the rape conditions he required, not physically (they stayed in the warmth of the kitchen---after all, the beans or the rice might burn) but with an air of disapproval and repression, which acted on his nerves like the passing of a woman on a lonely track. She kept a strict lip. And he, who really had no more *sexual* philosophy than a dead fox hanging by its tail, followed the scent without the smallest awareness of what she was doing.

Now all the various experiences that had been excited by that 'mother' event between Gertrude and Hank passed into the area of what we call absurdity. Jarvis found it absurd---now that he was seeing Beatty regularly again and they were talking important projects---that he had ever stood sentinel outside Gertrude's apartment block.

Schwanger found it absurd that he had ever asked Jarvis to stand there. Gertrude found more absurdity than anybody---she couldn't believe it! Walking along on Schwanger's arm with her eyes skinned for Jarvis at his sentinel duty! And then that rush upstairs---that---! This is what happens when fevers change direction---the new phase looks back at the events of the previous one and goggles at their absurdity but only because a new absurdity is coming up.

Beatty wanted to know from Dr Dormund whether the death-ray therapy he'd given her might help with her 'little problem'. His pause was so long she thought he's forgotten what my little problem is. He seemed tired, in a rambling state, his eyes focussed vaguely on a point above and beyond her. It was actually his sixth-session look, when his client thought he or she was really getting somewhere and he was waiting for the transference to manifest in one of its many ways from verbal abuse to

another 'eyewash encounter' that endeavored to end on his lap.

Then he said what he'd been saving up, 'I always feel that the origin of a condition like this is chronic over-masturbation.'

'It isn't a habit I have,' she said with the kind of hauteur that needed her desk and swivel chair to be really effective.

'I didn't say it was,' he said. 'Whether too much now or earlier is always too much and the result seems to be the replacement of a man by a fantasy as the required love object. Thus an actual physical man *disturbs* love-making because he doesn't do the things a fantasy man does. *Some* physical men get near it---and this is where we say we have had our first orgasm, but this is illusory. Orgasm cannot be had by such means. Just as a child should be born among soft lights and soft voices, so the orgasm requires, for people like yourself, a certain ghostly, almost one might say liturgical setting. Hence such people have often had repressive religious backgrounds or become hysterically religious.'

'Couldn't you add a bit of flagellation just to spice things up?'

'The word religion isn't pejorative for me,' he said. 'I'm a practicing and believing catholic. I was thinking of one or two monks I know. Yes, to answer your question' (as if he was suddenly recollecting it) 'you could by all means concentrate your visualizations on your sexual anatomy. But the problem here, Mrs Masumerov, is that you might get what you want.'

'Why would that be a problem?'

'Do you fantasize being raped by Jarvis?'

'Yes.'

'You see what I mean.'

She sighed. 'So what can I do?'

At this point they brushed past the burning theme of her obsession as he called it without noticing that they had done so. It was precisely here that Dormund could have driven his point home and done her some good (i.e. brought her considerably more pleasure in life). His treatment should have begun in earnest at this point, not petered out. What she said, very quietly, was, 'You see, he's so gentle. I don't remember him saying or doing an abrupt thing. Men were nearly always a disappointment for me because they were too rough and too quick. All they seemed to want was to come as soon as possible.' 'Is that the appeal of Jarvis,' he asked, 'that he seems to promise a different experience?' 'I suppose,' she said. 'How do you explain the contradiction?' he asked. 'Contradiction?' 'Here is a man who grabs what he wants,' he said, 'he reaches climax as soon as he can, without any thought for his victim---certainly not for her enjoyment, which no rapist wants---here is a man who does the very things you say most men do, so how come the fascination?' 'It's because if he's gentle something *might* happen---' She added dreamily, 'The entrance must be soft---' 'I don't understand,' he said. 'Are you speaking of the state of the vagina?' 'I don't know.' There was a long pause, then he said in a hush, 'Don't you see this is fantasy?' 'Yes.' 'Then why don't you keep it as such and devote your time to other things, for instance, your children?' (if he was going to make this awful gaffe he should at least have said 'work'). 'Because,' she said, 'this is the only way I can sort of get rid of the fantasy---' 'But you aren't getting rid of it!' 'Yes,' Beatty said, 'I know.' With his eyes characteristically down he muttered, 'Fantasies are gunpowder kegs.'

It has to be said in his defense that these things are very confusing. At one time---it was a kind of MDs' canard based on male appetites, not analysis---women like Beatty were called 'frigid'. On the contrary, their dreams were all the more ardent and longing, all the more sensually exhausting, because of their dire hunger to achieve the

deliriously joyful prize of the climax which they saw 'normal' women enjoying (in fact a surprisingly low percentage of women---Dormund should at least have known that). So sensual hunger caused the condition, not sensual loss. Since he argued that over-masturbation in youth was the source of her sorrows he should have been the first to see this. But her hunger spoke not to his mind but to *his* hunger.

They sat there for a long time in silence. He said, 'You say your friend Gertrude is receiving visits from Jarvis. Ask her how she manages it. Ask her how did you get him attracted to you?'

'Dare I?'

'You could think of it as part of your volunteer work.'

She couldn't see what on earth this had to do with visualization. There was some malice in it on Dormund's part but chiefly he wanted her to face a *few* facts. What he did wrong was to introduce her to the masturbation theme far too late, after transference had started, whereas it should have been done at the beginning, when she first asked about her 'little problem'. Dr Tensevic who was wiser in these things and better trained knew that the customer is always right. And then Dormund had given way to his passion for Beatty, hitherto not consummated, rather than for her fevers. So he lost the fascination of the chase and ended confused, as did his client. There was no reason why he shouldn't have a passion for Beatty and even consummate it, but that requires a revolutionary therapeutic approach of supreme efficacy which he didn't have, as he had found, much to both their costs, in the case of his wife.

Puzzling as to how on earth her grilling Gertrude about Jarvis would help her Beatty called her next day and they met at her work-out salon where there were catering facilities as well as saunas, weights, masseuses etc for women only.

'I'm afraid the prison psychiatrist knows you've been having Jarvis in your

bedroom at night,' she said, having decided after her sauna that she was going to aim straight for the chin.

Gertrude, who had just been working out on a ski simulator and was still flushed and heaving gazed at her---oddly without alarm---and said, 'Just repeat that will you?'

Beatty did.

'Is your prison psychiatrist OK in the head?'

'Very much so, yes.'

'Well tell him from me to put that in writing and I'll sue his butt off.'

'OK,' Beatty said, feeling a little less sacredly 'right' than a moment before.

'And how did he get the information?' Gertrude asked her. 'Come on, you may as well tell me.'

'I don't know.'

'It wouldn't be Anthea would it?'

'I said I didn't know Gertrude!---she was trying for high indignation but it didn't work with Gertrude who grabbed her jogging pants and repeated, 'Is it Anthea?'

Beatty wasn't going to betray a friend with a reply so she betrayed her with a long silent look. They then had a pleasant health snack and Gertrude told her she was going to get rid of Anthea that very day---'Anyway,' she said, 'she's always got Masterpiece Theatre on when the Washington Redskins are playing'---a laugh, this.

So Anthea got another little note, this time in the evening, awaiting her when she got home. Gertrude was preparing for bed so Anthea 'stormed' into her bedroom, hoping that a show of force would weaken Gertrude's resolve.

'What's this?' she said, waving the note.

'Take a seat,' Gertrude almost whispered. She happened to be feeling low. 'I was with Beatty today, she said you said I'd been screwing Jarvis.'

`That's right.'

`You *did* say it? Then you're a liar aren't you?'

And Gertrude burst into tears like she had before, in the manner of a child, heaving and all but choking but this time Anthea wasn't in a standing position, holding her, she would have had to get up and put her arms round her but she couldn't make it look like a sincere movement. Also she wanted to know about her security of tenure first.

When the tears had spent themselves into little more than a spasmodic shunting motion of the shoulders Anthea explained how it had actually been Schwanger she'd seen run into her bedroom one night and she'd mistaken him for Jarvis probably because she was worried about Gertrude's `thing' about him. Then she'd forgotten to tell Beatty about her mistake. She looked at Gertrude with momentarily meek eyes, `Are you *sorry* it wasn't Jarvis?'

`Hell no,' Gertrude said, `I wouldn't be seen on the street with a rat like that.'

`I've always hated him,' Anthea said, `and I think he's been a cause of a lot of unnecessary trouble in this apartment. I couldn't bear to think of you getting mixed up with him, the whole thing is that stupid Beatty's fault.'

`You're damned right,' Gertrude said---which incidentally was unlucky for Beatty's visualizations of that day which aimed to increase Gertrude's antipathy toward Anthea so that the latter would come running to her (how seldom this running happens in real life) for help. But Beatty felt sure of herself and called Anthea next morning, waiting to hear that the silly creature was roofless, only Anthea said, `I hear you told Gertrude something I'd told you in confidence.'

`She guessed, I didn't tell. And in any case you were mistaken and now your mistake is in the prison psychiatrist's report.'

'I know I was mistaken, I knew it ages ago.'

'So why didn't you tell me?'

Anthea couldn't think of a reply to this one but God was momentarily on her side when she said 'The man going into the bedroom was someone else and I'm not about to discuss other people's affairs.'

'Anyway, you seem to be out of a place to live.'

'Not at all. As a matter of fact Gertrude's given me the small spare room as well. Like a little dressing room.'

'Well, *that's* a relief anyway,' Beatty said, feeling a venom so fearful that her performance of relief was all the more vigorous, such that Anthea thought what a good friend she had in Beatty, really and truly, despite the occasional spat.

That evening Anthea took Hank Schwanger to the Festival play. She wanted to verify that her infatuation for him was quite dead and apart from that he was the only big man she knew who set her off to advantage. They even looked well married together. Compared with them he and Gertrude looked somewhat scarecrowish, a rather brawling, over-heavy couple lurching and weaving about the sidewalk as they kidded and chortled and nudged. He arrived at the theatre on the top floor of Mondelier's still in his cloud of perplexity, but well dressed. These days he couldn't get anything right except his figures, which the calculator did for him anyway. He could hardly feel his feet on the ground. He couldn't believe the food in his mouth. Nothing was substantial for him, least of all Anthea's chatter (little did he know that this feeling was his first step toward being a philosopher, a step Jarvis had taken years before in prison).

The play being performed was Anthea's suggestion---J.B.Priestley's 'Time and the Conways'. The play committee had accepted it partly because it was a solidly

middle-class Thirties piece, which made it good nostalgia, and mostly because it had a psychic theme, which was very much *in* now (though what a psychic theme had to do with Thirties lingerie was anybody's guess). Anthea would have enjoyed the performance thoroughly except that American intonations kept haunting the Brit ones. Also she could *feel* Schwanger thinking about Gertrude. It made tears come to her eyes. She wished the men she knew weren't nearly always thinking of someone else, either the latest discard or a new incumbent. As for the rest, they were always so polite---all this equal rights crud! She yearned for a rude stare and the suggestion that she was just, as the 'Chorus Line' song said, tits and ass.

Gertrude joined them after the show and they had supper together at the Lyons Tea Shop. Instead of the baked beans on toast or tinned spaghetti on toast or boiled haddock or plaice and curly dried-up french fries or Welsh rarebit or a dreadful thing called 'hot pot' they chose salt beef sandwiches or what the waitress called pastrami, shaking her head at the menu. It wasn't that Schwanger and Gertrude talked to each other and left her out. They kept asking each other formal questions which froze all possibility of an intriguing reply, such as 'Doing OK?' and 'Work coming on OK?' and 'See the ball game last night?'. So Anthea buried herself in nostalgia, concentrating on Carroll Gibbons and his Savoy Orpheans as their 'A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square' came over the speakers. She could swear that song was Forties not Thirties but it had the same sad, tender spirit (as befitted the last real people on earth). Schwanger saw them home and when she was alone with Gertrude she asked her, 'What happened between you and Hank then?'. Gertrude was on her way to the bedroom and had it not been for this question they would have spent half an hour over chocolate in the kitchen. As it was Gertrude stopped and turned round and with a faint narrowing of her eyes said, 'I've asked you not to meddle in my business before---I won't stand for

any inquisition, do you hear that?'. She seemed about to walk on but suddenly screamed, 'And why shouldn't I get mixed up with Jarvis? My life's my choice ain't it?'

The bedroom door shut with a bang. Anthea thought of calling her boyfriend Nick but it would have been 5 a.m. his time. She lay thinking about Beatty and how she might buy her a little Thirties present, perhaps one of those art deco table lamps, just to thank her for getting her the job. After all, she'd only done temp work in London, had no qualifications except inborn brightness. She couldn't go back to a switchboard. Yet she missed the fun. And her hips and breasts had enjoyed their proper status on Friday and Saturday nights when she'd gone to the disco, whereas now they felt excommunicated. What about calling Mum tomorrow? They had the same voice and this made them laugh on the phone---'Is that you or is it me?'. Silly but consoling.

Just as she was dozing off she heard the front door open and close. She tiptoed out and saw that Gertrude's bedroom was empty. She called Hank Schwanger, who took some minutes to answer because he was in a dead sleep. The word 'Gertrude' had instant effect. 'I'll get some clothes on right away!' he shouted and the phone was thrown down.

She locked herself in the bedroom. Then she fell asleep. Next morning she found another note on the kitchen table---the sight of it interrupted her yawn but it said 'Thanks for calling Hank. He got me out of a mess, or it might have become one, luck, Gertrude' (a distasteful habit of Gertrude's was to sign off with 'luck' instead of 'love').

At this rate, Anthea thought as she decided to take another huge breakfast at the coffee shop, she'll be giving me the living room too. She called Nick from the counter as her eggs sizzled. He was out. Of course it would be about noon. He'd be at the pub. His visits to the pub started at opening time and escalated until he left work. It

was only a matter of stepping out a few yards. His boss had told him 'Watch it mate'. Luckily the boss knew he only boozed when his girlfriend was away. Which she was quite a lot. Had a job in New York now. He eyed Nick with sympathy for his dislike of work but it was mixed with impatience. One evening Nick got so blind he only just reached his doorstep before he fell asleep. He was nearly pinched---the copper tapped him on the shoulder and said, 'Move on mate or I'll have you towed away' but Nick was quick in emergencies and said, 'I live here. Too much lemonade,' and showed him his key. Anthea knew he was a boozier in her absences but thought it was his way of celebrating his release from her surveillance. But Nick liked his drink because it nullified memories ahead of their arrival---he felt them coming---speechless moments with Anthea---and he made a dive for the pub. Sundays he was there all day.

Twelve

This Long Island date was beginning to needle Jarvis. He resented what he felt was Maidie's silent disapproval because after all *she* was to blame. He almost felt like putting a lawsuit on her for deliberate provocation to be raped. Her positions---turnings and writhings to get a pot from one place to another---brought him to that state of trembling expectancy he had so far experienced only on dark streets, and then her pursed tight expressions tipped the scale further. He continued to go on Wednesdays but the journey was now undertaken in a seething spirit of obligation. From prison to prison, it seemed. Once he showed some brutality. He tore her (man's) shirt right up the back and she said to him quietly, when the episode was over and she was in a sitting position again, 'Cool it, huh?'. He looked away and she thought, wrongly, that his expression was contrite (so sure was she that he was 'responding' to her rehabilitatory work). Ricco congratulated her now that the 'walks' were no longer necessary and she could have the man in her kitchen like he was civilized. Dr Dormund wouldn't have agreed with the idea that this was the way to tame Jarvis, much less that he'd been tamed, and he had a habit of being right in these things. In fact Dormund had been instrumental in extending police surveillance to Long Island and was getting reports on these strangely domestic visits to a nursery-school teacher

whose ex-husband was a gym instructor. Being a soft-fleshed, rounded creature, moving about smoothly and decorously with an air of yielding happily to others, Maidie seemed a perfect target for exploitation. Yet (unknown to the police) she was a watchful and cautious woman too, and attained her ends more easily than others did, her secret being that she never concentrated on her goal.

Beatty was seething somewhat too. She wanted to know from Dr Dormund why the hell he'd put her into a humiliating position with Gertrude.

'I mean,' she told him, 'it got me into a lot of trouble. It made me look a fool.'

He didn't even reply!

'OK,' she said, 'let me explain. She said Jarvis never went near her bedroom.'

'Well, I knew that,' Dormund said.

'You *knew* it! Then why tell me Jarvis was sleeping with her?'

'I didn't.'

'You did, Dr Dormund' (the 'Dr' in order to invoke both the Hippocratic obligation to truth and the threat of a malpractice lawsuit).

'You told *me*,' he said. 'I didn't accept your story but I thought it might be interesting for you to pursue it. Who *was* she receiving in her bedroom by the way?'

'A man called Hank Schwanger. Her boyfriend. So what have I learned?' she asked him sarcastically.

'I don't know.'

'Oh, that's great! The little question I put to Gertrude Tellingas may have lost me a friend, even two---and it hasn't exactly done me good at the office, I mean I got Anthea her job, she should be looking up to me! I can't be seen to be going round with nutty notions in my head!'

'But nutty notions are what you have nevertheless,' he said softly, even

sympathetically.

She could have shaken him.

'I cannot but think,' he said (oh don't be so bloody prissy about it! her brain shouted), 'that you've come out of this much better than Gertrude. What you once called your little problem is a wonderfully protective device, you know. As I said before, chronic masturbation unseats the real physical male and substitutes a fantasy one who does it much better than the real one, or supposedly so, since---' (with a little smile) 'one can't really know. You've *dreamed* and that's about all. But you've had a remarkably stabilizing effect on Jarvis---I can assure you of that, I've seen to it that your work gets recognition from the prison volunteer committee. You haven't got yourself into any scrapes because you've kept it all in a fantasy mode. Your marriage and thus your children are intact, you have your job and your home whereas I would think---this is just a guess---that Gertrude's work has suffered badly and what sort of home does she have if she needs to prowl the streets at night?' (the police had found out at last that Gertrude was in real estate, not prostitution).

She sat waiting for him to speak again, feeling calmer, but the hour was up. With what seemed genuine courtesy he saw her to the door. He touched her arm. 'I think that's why she lets Anthea stay in her apartment. She needs the money,' he said.

'I'm sorry?'

'You can't prowl at all hours of the night and transact real estate deals next day.'

They both knew this was the last session. They had both decided, silently, that the last person they wanted to sleep with was the other. That was the reason for the conclusive handshake.

She returned to her old life and sometimes longed for the weekly sessions that had given her a sense of importance in areas of herself she had always scorned, namely

the intimate ones. The result was that she threw herself into her new-found relation with Jarvis in quite a new way. She had long ago detected academic leanings in him and was determined to exploit them---she saw this would give her permission to be with him a great deal, even to take him to her apartment and present him to Joe and the kids. She did take him to the Brighton Beach house. Her parents-in-law thought him a lot of fun and he joined one of their dancing parties at a local restaurant. The kids were told he'd been in prison and reacted with wonder but no further information was vouchsafed. Joe was socially proud to be around a jailbird. Jarvis wrote a paper on 'Homosexuality in Prisons' which Beatty got a sociology professor at New York university to correct. The sociologist said, 'I'm surprised, given how well the man writes, admittedly in a granny-in-the-sticks style, how much there is to correct.' This didn't refer to grammar only but disoriented sentences into which cogent ones suddenly lurched, like 'There is, if anything, much more sexual play than fulfillment, time and care is taken over dress, comportment, suggestive conversation preliminary to clothes being ripped, why not knives instead of fingers.' Of course this material should have been taken along to Dr Dormund but it wasn't. On the other hand, once these 'stylistic tics' as the sociologist called them had been removed there was nothing to distinguish his thesis from most others. Its argument was that men inwardly devastated by their failure to realize a true primal act of sex in civil life turn to crime as a variant form of primal act and naturally enough continue their researches in prison. It was a bit screwy but what theses aren't? Jarvis saw at once, after being shown into university libraries and given access to some of the theses that had actually been published, how easily you could fake it. At 'discussion' groups he found that all you needed was a sincere expression and the neck to open your mouth when you had something to say. Also not saying it clearly was an asset. However, these were only

his growing pains. Gradually he was learning to be forthright, stern at times. He went from college to college. He was invited to talk at Princeton but it was cancelled. No one seriously thought of giving him a chair (an electric one was suggested by a woman in the psychology faculty at New York) but one-semester residencies were discussed.

He had the delightful sense of being desirable wherever he went. That there weren't campus demonstrations against him at this early stage as there were later was only one of the remarkable things that happened. It even began to appear to him that his prison sentences had been apprenticeships necessary for his present teaching status.

People definitely looked up to him, you could see it in the way they craned round when he entered a room with the principal or department head.

He realized one Wednesday afternoon as he stood on Maidie's doorstep that she was holding him back. And he wasn't going to stand for it. Another thing she was doing, to judge by the smell when he entered, was a delicious Combo Gumbo, to be served with garlic buttermilk biscuits Texan style. They had argued on their previous meeting as to whether the next meal shouldn't be Huachinango Veracruzano, which was red snapper, but he said 'Let's go for the Combo Jumbo, it's unforgettable if good.' He decided he would suggest they be 'just friends' from now on. This would be hard for him as he suspected she was without a man in the world---after all, Schwanger was Gertrude's man (he had a distinctly naive view of 'normal' heterosexual relations, like most people who think of themselves as sexual aberrants).

But half way through the meal there was a knock at the door and Ricco was standing there saying to Maidie, 'There's a police officer been looking for you', and a young patrol man stepped forward---the whirring light from his automobile illuminated the den---and said, 'Excuse me, ma'am, do you have anyone here called Vance Jarvis?'

`That's me,' said Jarvis, walking into the entrance hall still chewing Gumbo.

`Why don't you guys step inside?' Maidie said.

They all stood in the den together.

`Smells like a dish from my childhood,' the police officer said, pronouncing it `chaldhood'. He was blond with eyes forced into a smile by his plump cheeks.

`You from Texas?' Maidie asked.

`Sure am!'

He wanted to know at what hour Jarvis had got to the station, whether he'd come to the house on foot, what route he'd taken. Did he intend staying the night? Did he know he was breaking his parole? Jarvis was a model of politeness and far less intimidated by the police officer's booted and buckled and clinking presence than the other two. He answered precisely and pointed out that he'd asked permission for these Long Island trips and according to what Mrs Masumerov, the volunteer officer, had told him it was OK. Maidie and Ricco were too shy to ask what the trouble was but Jarvis wasn't.

`Why, what's goin' on?' he said.

`A woman was attacked near the station or so she says. The man damaged her clothing a little but nothing much else. She'd been drinking so we're not taking it too seriously.' He gave Jarvis an affable look and said, `Just tell me when you want to get back to the city and I'll be glad to give you a ride to the station, I'll be right here outside.'

After that you couldn't very well have a conversation like the one he'd planned, more especially as Maidie kept glancing at him in a scared fashion and Ricco, on the pretext that he couldn't resist Gumbo, hung about.

He was `escorted' to the train, even seen on to it. No charges. A report went to

Dr Dormund who had an hour with Jarvis of no great value. Jarvis said if he *had* attacked a woman in broad daylight he would have completed the deed. Simply disturbing a woman, especially one who'd been drinking, wasn't his wont.

'Oh,' said Dormund, 'she hadn't been drinking in any dramatic sense---only a few glasses of wine with a friend.'

Jarvis was put on an identification parade and the woman didn't identify any of them. Beatty, like Maidie, was inclined to say that of course the police were going to pin any rape on him that happened within twenty miles of his whereabouts. With Beatty's help he began giving lectures, first in college class rooms, then in halls. What he said was striking. You couldn't just walk past it. He aroused anger. Small groups of women demonstrated outside a hall from time to time. This stimulated interest further. The police took an amiable interest as if one of their charges had demonstrably benefited from their course of education. 'What about the women?' Jarvis asked his audiences. 'It is they who attract rape. Showing asses, legs right up to the crotch, every form of cleavage, tight fitting clothes, holding guns on television, looking hard and mean and abusing everybody---what is this, a round the clock sex fair? You can't even go into an office without seeing it everywhere. What else can all this do but make a man's blood rush to his head? I long ago, ladies and gentlemen, gave up considering myself responsible for the things I did. Show me a quiet woman, a woman who doesn't dress *only* to catch the male eye (then she hates him for looking at her), a woman who looks forward to bearing children and being faithful to one man as she expects him to be faithful to her for better or for worse until death do them part, ladies and gentlemen, show me that woman and multiply her a million times and there will be no rape.' This kind of thing *should* have been easy to shrug aside but the words stuck---anyway, interest in him rocketed. It even threatened, as the media began covering his

movements, to become nation wide. Media interest started, as it usually does, with a feature in a newspaper, rather vilifying and high-toned, then came radio interviews---a housewife audience---and a first brief television appearance in a news flash, and this the whole nation eventually saw. It created a vast amount of activity for Beatty, not to say an excitement that kept her awake at night. Once or twice it was necessary to go out of town with Jarvis, even take plane journeys. In Washington the two of them were standing talking in her hotel bedroom, preparing the schedule for the following day, when (she might have known from the veil of sweat on his upper lip) he threw her to the ground and repeated the kitchen episode on Long island with little variation, ripping her skirt and underclothes but not damaging her person. He left the room like a fugitive and she lay on the floor for half an hour trying to remember what had happened, and she couldn't. She knew of course that *it* had happened (not many weeks after Dormund had described her as protected in this respect) but the terms of it, the taste and sound and touch of it---of these things she had no recollection at all. They met at breakfast next morning and she felt flattered if anything, also somewhat disgusted that he should have touched her, but the disgust was diminished to a mental idea by the fact that her body was unable to recall the experience. The schedule was respected. And gradually, over the next few days, when it became clear that he didn't intend to repeat the episode, relations between them returned to their former formality.

Also he was learning a public manner and began to expect a certain dignity from himself. He found that he could follow and therefore manipulate an audience's mood. He had long since abandoned, on Beatty's advice, sneakers and sweaters, and dressed either in high-quality casual clothes or suits. Something in his face expanded, it may have been the expression in his eyes. Performing gratifies nearly everybody if it comes off.

But he began to receive serious attention only after coming out of a hotel breakfast into the sunshine one morning and experiencing an extraordinary moment of joy. He just stood there and let it suffuse his body. All at once he discarded his own lectures as he'd so far been giving them. He took the moment of joy as a message and inwardly asked for guidance as to how this should alter the content and style of what he told the public. His addresses became less lectures than speeches. He said, 'I stand here in shame. But the shame gives me strength to speak. My small humble hope is that God will shine in me *because* I'm nothing and I see Him from this place of dirt where I stand. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings and criminals too!' After that television cameras began appearing in his lecture halls. 'Yes,' he said, 'I am a criminal. Why are you listening to what I say? Because you have to wonder, ladies and gentlemen, how come a man who has done what this man has done can stand before us and talk about God? It's *because* of what I've done, ladies and gentlemen!'

It was a fact his audiences disliked him. But this kept them coming, and increasing. They watched him closely, thinking bad thoughts. They looked at his hands as those of a rapist, at his lips with their weak and fleetingly cruel droop and speculated how many terrified women they had soiled. But this only made his words stick harder. The fact that he was a criminal irked and fascinated them. He said, 'When a man rapes a woman the fire of Almighty God passes through him!'. Of course it created a stir and Beatty warned him to cool it because Dr Dormund phoned her and advised caution. The remark was repeated endlessly in newspapers and chat shows. He was asked to elaborate on his remark and he said he couldn't, 'I'm telling you what it feels like,' he said. 'What does the fire of Almighty God feel like?' 'A fire that transports you out of life,' Jarvis said. 'And also out of compassion, out of conscience, out of any concern for your victim?' the interviewer asked. 'Isn't that the devil's fire,

the flames of hell?' Finally Jarvis said he wasn't referring to the actual experience of raping ('which is always a let down') but to something rape implied, some experience everybody should have but didn't. 'You can say I cause distress and pain,' Jarvis said, 'but the woman is starved of the primal act, she starves herself, only in the kind of shock I give her does she experience it.' It was the center of his philosophy but he got himself mixed up when expounding it. Asked had he checked up with the women concerned as to how *they* felt he said, 'I think the primal experience happens to women when you choose them properly.' 'You choose your victims?' 'Yes.' 'You sound as if you're still game for future choices.' 'Not at all,' he said weakly, 'I'm saying things have got so bad only rape---I mean it comes out of urgent desire and what ordinary sex act does?' The anger against him grew, the result being that he became even more of a public figure. He had to have police escorts to his lectures, though in some places the sheriff refused this. His fan mail was huge, mostly from teenagers---slightly more girls than boys. It had to be handled by a special secretary whom Beatty employed for him.

Beatty too appeared on television. It was unwise of her. She was asked more than once, 'Is your intention to advertise the benefits of rape through this man?' Her replies weren't good. Then she learned to compose herself under the hot lights, how not to lose her cool. She began saying things like, 'This whole matter needs honest public debate, we have to take the lid off these terrible desires and show what's underneath' (she didn't suggest taking the lid off *her* desires). She found that as long as you said *something* it was OK. But it made her sweat with guilt and remorse. Joe was worried that she was getting into it too deep. Desperately she looked round for an escape and hit on the idea of asking Hank Schwanger to 'look after' Jarvis as a kind of manager, travel with him and so forth, work permitting. He talked to Gertrude about it and she said with what sounded to him inexplicably like joy, 'Go for it kid!'. So he did. He

and Jarvis had more speakeasy meetings but now they were conducted over a mountain of lecture invitations, threatening letters, offered contracts. Schwanger went to almost every meeting and interview with him and did wonders conciliating people with his wrist-sprainer and his see-me-as-a-law-enforcement-officer look. Gertrude came sometimes too. To his astonishment Schwanger found that the 'mother' event took place again, he couldn't understand it. It didn't happen regular but sometimes was enough, and she seemed to favor hotels where all three of them were staying the night. Beatty sighed with relief at being out of that tiny corner of the public eye which, small as it was, terrified her. She loved her job even more now.

'Women have abandoned the primal act,' Jarvis said. 'They want to play, try all the positions, they want a lifetime of what they call free experiences to replace what they call their previous servitude but I am telling you, ladies and gentlemen, as a criminal, I am telling you as a criminal that fidelity is no servitude, it produced generations of happy children and these women today are producing a world of abandoned and tortured and homeless ones. Yes, as a criminal I am telling you all this.

You point to me and say, look, a criminal is trying to tell us how to live, a rapist wants to show us how to have sex, but I tell you, ladies and gentlemen' (Schwanger was trying to get him to cut out all his I am telling you's), 'I am telling you that what I did and what my fellow prisoners done' (he had astonishing grammatical lapses of this kind which the most dogged reminders were powerless to excise) 'is nothing to what all of you are doing with your sexual organs and are continuing to do and no doubt, until the fire of Almighty God goes through you and changes you, will go on doing. Yes, I have the impudence to stand here and talk to you about the fruits of fidelity and loving and obeying and adoring one man and one woman---I who have never experienced these fruits but have yearned for them in my starvation, I who have yearned to be normal but

can I call your conduct normal?---I who stand condemned by you all can see that *my* criminality is the sort that gets punished, while *yours* is the sort that will end the world!

Had he heard this Dr Dormund would have recognized his own influence. As it was he hid his head in his hands whenever he saw a Jarvis quote and said to himself, 'Oh my God! What's going to happen next?'

Thirteen

Anthea found herself on the street after all because Gertrude and Schwanger decided to get married and Gertrude's apartment would be their home. 'We seem to be flung together whatever we do,' Gertrude said, 'so we may as well make us a team!'

Apparently she proposed to him when they were 'on the road' with Jarvis.

'Do you love him?' Anthea asked.

'Schwanger? Are you kidding? We're good buddies, that's all!'

Gertrude also needed a period of financial support, as Dr Dormund had predicted. Hank was now attending her Open Houses regularly and they'd begun to feel they were reviving a youthful part of themselves. His look of puzzlement increased to one of stupor when he got Gertrude's note proposing. She put it under his door at the hotel. He wrote back saying yes and wished things had been like in the old films when bell boys delivered notes on salvers. She got the note when they were all three at lunch and opened it and said, 'Oh great!'. Schwanger felt OK about it because he'd dreamed about, recreated, set to music the 'mother' event to such a degree that he would do anything just to procure her company on a permanent basis. She was the last person he wanted to marry but this made him feel more certain that he should do so. The thought of her naked gave him the creeps (yet he had many times observed her

perfection of physical form at the beach and the swimming pool) but he realized that these conditions of distaste were what made 'mother' events possible and he hoped for a life-time of them. He found all close contact nauseous, a kiss on the mouth (such as he had thankfully never exchanged with Gertrude) meant mainly the risk of a bad taste for him, and surely that suited Gertrude's book too?

Anthea returned to the Village to share Myra's flat where the bath was in the kitchen. Since she looked forward to an even better job when the Festival was over she vowed to get herself a decent apartment, say in the 60s, East side, once the work permit was renewed. She called Nick and told him she was staying on and he said, 'Oh well' and promptly put the phone down and went to the pub, not in annoyance so much as because he couldn't find words to express his state of grief. She got it from her mother, who got it from a girl she knew in the perfumes and face-care department at Harrods, that he would lose his job if he didn't 'buck up', so Anthea phoned him again and said why didn't he come to New York, not really meaning it. His answer was 'What a joke!' but he didn't put the phone down. Later she sat down and thought about his coming to New York, she couldn't imagine his massive arms and silences here, not amid all these goings on. He was a man of the obvious---the just-shut-up-and-enjoy-your-breakfast type, which she found comforting. His lack of conversation often made conversers, not him, look fools. Would she be ashamed of him here? She discussed it with Myra, who worked at a patisserie round the corner, and Myra told her to get her boyfriend over because she hadn't found a man in New York yet and Nick would be a start---'A boyfriend you don't really want often puts you on the trail of one that you do.' 'I know the man I belong to's *somewhere* on the earth,' Anthea said, to which Myra said, 'You could brush up against him in the subway and not even see him and there would be the man of your life, you'd walk out at the next stop and not even know, isn't that

something?'

Ironically she and Beatty were the chosen witnesses at the Gertrude-Hank wedding at Reno. They flew down together at Hank's expense and spent hours at the slot machines both at the airport and in the hotel foyer. The week-end passed in a vertigo of simulated laughter and ruinous jokes as between people who didn't want to be together. Actually this brought Anthea and Beatty closer than they'd ever been. Back in New York they went to see 'Time and the Conways'---Anthea's fifth visit. Beatty found no pleasure in telling her that there was no job for her after all. 'I did my best,' she said, surprised that lies didn't even distort one's smile (it did hers and Anthea noticed). Anthea said flatly, 'Well, thanks.' Since this promised a rupture, which Beatty didn't want because she was feeling low in friends after the Jarvis drama, she said, 'Listen, Anthea, you got me into a certain amount of embarrassment over the Festival budget, it wasn't right of you to go over my head to the Festival chief, and more than once.' 'What on earth are you talking about?' Anthea said. 'You run Personnel and had nothing to do with the Festival, you even said so yourself!' 'My salespersons worked at the Festival---' to which Anthea said smartly, 'They would have worked at the Festival anyway, that didn't give you the right to tell the Festival chief what he could spend and what he couldn't!'. 'I *didn't* tell him what he could spend!'. 'Oh yes you did,' Anthea said, 'he told me you did, and you said Budgets had turned the new estimate down, and he found out afterwards it wasn't true, just wait for him to get even with you because he means to!'. Beatty looked trapped and found herself weighing up the Festival chief's firing power.

'So I'm out of a job and on the street,' Anthea said dramatically.

'There *is* a job,' Beatty told her, 'but it isn't for you.'

'Oh that's good news!'

'It's at Mondelier's and it would do for Nick. In the warehouse. Can he get references?'

Anthea tried to look at her with a shocked expression but actually she thought it was a good idea. 'Where does he get a work permit?' she asked.

Beatty shrugged, meaning not indifference but 'look how many Hispanics haven't got work permits.' So Anthea called Nick in the late afternoon and it was settled.

He came to New York and found a hotel room near Myra's place. But there was another woman with him. She was a Utah girl he'd met on the plane. He had already spent three days with her in another part of New York (having made an 'I'll call you when I get to New York' arrangement with Anthea). In those three days they'd gotten married. He told Anthea he'd been blind drunk but the girl, whose name was Brid ('What?' said Anthea, 'Brid,' he said, 'short for Bridget') hadn't noticed it. Brid worked in men's wear---distribution. Anthea met her, holding back her stupor. She asked her, 'Don't you think it was a bit sudden?' to which the girl, who had a massive amount of yellow hair and a pale face that seemed tiny and anxious in its frame, said, 'I've learned to distrust anything slow,' and when Anthea asked her what had attracted her to Nick she said, 'Mostly his conversation.' 'Does she drink a lot too?' Anthea asked Nick later. And he shrugged!

He also pleaded with Anthea to stay with him. 'How the hell do I do that if she's sharing a hotel room with you and you're her husband?' (why she wasn't crying she couldn't understand). 'No, stick around,' Nick said, looking flushed and about to explode with his inability to verbalize. He wasn't a bit attracted to Brid (this took an hour to extract). 'But you fell in love with her,' Anthea said. 'On the *plane*,' he said. 'What do you mean?' Anthea asked him. 'Well, on a plane it's different isn't it? I mean

what you feel on a plane doesn't last does it?'. An hour later he was saying that Brid's body was the most beautiful he'd seen. 'Including mine?' she said. He nodded, his mind fixed on the comparison, not her feelings. 'What does she make love like?' Anthea asked him. 'Oh, *that* part's all right,' he said.

She suddenly needed her mother, who said 'You come on home mate'. So she was going to stay in Watford until she'd got her life straight again. She advised Nick, 'Stay married, it'll get you residence and a work permit.' As it happened he followed her back to London within a month. Brid's husband had turned up in New York and after threatening to kill him said to his wife irritably, 'You're always doing this kind of thing, now come home!'. Which is what she did. But by now Anthea had 'gone beyond' Nick (so had Harrod's).

One morning on the way out of her mother's home to a temp job Anthea found a letter from Jarvis. Gertrude had sent it on. She had a funny feeling, almost of excitement, because he was now if not famous a known face. It was as follows: 'You must try to forgive me writing to you, I perceive you dislike me---I knew before Mrs Masumerov told me but dislike is a quaint emotion, it includes some regard or attention which other people might not have, you will understand that you three ladies are the only ones I have ever in all my life known as more than passing acquaintances, I feel the other two are on somewhat of an ego trip, they listen when I talk, they make me think of the phrase 'hang on his lips' but you *hear* me and your dislike is a gesture of much deeper import than their kind of attention, they are hearing themselves, not me, whereas you hear and resent and detest every word I say, so you have my respect, many times I went to Monduler's to the Lions tea shop and saw you and lacked the courage to face the humiliation I might receive if I went up to you, I wanted to ask you whether I could accompany you to a performance of Time and the Con Men which I

understand was awfully well done, you will I know not believe me or find my appreciation of you of any interest but I very much think that you and you alone made it possible for me to do my night prauling without mishap, Mrs Masumerov may have told you that I did therapeutic night prauling and slowly learned to pass strange women in the street and in the dark without inconvenient impulses, it is because I see you before me in my mind as I praul and I would deeply appreciate it if we could deepen our friendship, you will say we have none but I would respectfully ask you to consider even blindly the effect you have on me for the good and to pluck me from the streets if I may use the expression, I wasn't courageous enough to approach you in person at Lions perhaps because I knew I wouldn't be able to make you like me in the brief moment of shaking your hand, it would need time and this is what I am asking for and I deeply most earnestly trust my dear Miss Anthea that you will respond favorably to my offer, all I would ask is an hour or two now and then, in a public place, perhaps you could accompany me on some of my prauls, I should never have addressed you as Anthea except that this was how Mrs Masumerov always spoke of you and I didn't know your surname, Mrs Masumerov thinks I used to praul alone but Miss Gertrude was always with me or nearly always for a time anyway except one night her boyfriend now my manager Hank came and she started walking and we followed and after a bit she couldn't stand it and turned round and screamed abuse at him, I thought who's supposed to be the fruit cake round here, I don't know what the kicks were for her but believe me her presence was only made bearable to me because I thought about you all the time and sometimes five hours non stop and as cold as a mother-in-law's kiss but I tell you ma'am I had to end that state of affairs and I did, I went to her boyfriend Hank and told him she's prauling the streets alone, she's in danger, and after that I never saw her come in except she was hanging on his arm and my streets were unclouded again if

you want to put it that way, I could easily have walked other streets but anything you three ladies required of me I felt I had to do which only goes to show that basically I am like similar sufferers a victim of mother worship and we get like what we can't get we grab and that ends in not being given and this introduces a sad subservience Miss Anthea please do something about it, Jarvis.' (The sociology professor who corrected his thesis had said 'This man's writing is shy on periods'). Anthea meant to do something about it but didn't. She was going to send a copy to Beatty but time passed and, well, it became history. Jarvis was picked up on a fine spring night in Central Park. A woman stepped out of her car because it stalled. She couldn't have been in the open air more than twenty seconds. He had a knife on him. He tore whole raiments off her in one swift action. But two other cars pulled up, one of them a police car, and he hadn't time to touch her. This was fortunate as he had Aids. But lest we should think that this was a case of the criminal class infecting the professional class with a lethal virus I ought to say that Beatty's husband was found to be HIV positive too. In both Jarvis's and Joe Masumerov's case the virus was caught at an early stage, which gave greater hope of survival for Beatty, her future children, Maidie, Hank Schwanger and of course Gertrude. But doctors weren't among the hopefuls. Ironically, Schwanger was the bridge of infection to Gertrude. Had Maidie Panipoulos confined him to the lumber room in any complete sense all would have been well for him but she didn't. They had 'lapses' from time to time (in the lumber room). As for the fevers that discomposed Beatty's blood on account of Jarvis, we have seen how little they brought her---until a sudden episode on a hotel bedroom floor which she couldn't recall. Her husband wasn't her infector since they hadn't slept together for at least one year, not two months as she had once told Dr Dormund. Talking of Dormund, he should have seen that Beatty was all the more vulnerable for her fevers, not 'protected'

by them as he once said. Anthea was the really protected one. Her fevers rarely involved other humans, unless they were dead. She lived in Thirties England after all, where one policeman was thought to be all the security a village needed and the sound of his whistle struck alarm in the heart. Anthea would have been an ideal balm and solace for her suffering friends but she never knew what happened to them. She did get a letter from Myra Tate who by some unbelievable chance which she didn't specify had heard that Anthea's 'prison volunteer friend' was awaiting a baby but there was some 'problem' about it, she didn't know what.