MAIOLO, JOSEPH CRUMPLER. Two Stories of Man and Woman. (1974)
Directed by: Professor Fred Chappell. Pp. 39

The two stories that comprise this thesis are entitled "The Legend of the Happy Swimming Pool" and "Gloria's Day in the Pasture." They are stories that focus on the topic of the relations between man and woman.

The first story, "The Legend of the Happy Swimming Pool," is indebted for its title to the poet James Dickey, who, in a documentary film showing a conversation between him and the poet Robert Lowell, first used the phrase. He goes on in the conversation to explain what he means by the phrase that issues out of a recurring dream he has had. Part of that explanation is used in a segment of the story, and it was the explanation that was the genn of an idea that brought the story into being. It is a relatively small part.

The story concerns the return of Gabriel Rimini to his home town, Arno, where the movie made from his novel, *Before We're Old*, is having its first showing. Rimini reads from the novel on the stage of the old theater that was largely responsible for his adolescent imaginings. Within the story the reading concerns the return of a man to *his* home town, where he meets his old girlfriend at a class reunion. The man and woman in the novel fall in love again. But when Rimini's reading is over, he meets the daughter of *his* old girlfriend and has to come to grips with his conception of illusion and reality. The technical consideration of point of view played an important part in the creation of the story.

"Gloria's Day in the Pasture" concerns a woman who has come to a farm to negotiate for its purchase. She confronts the old couple who own

and work the dairy farm, along with their daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter. The confrontation, so-called, is more like an observation for Gloria. She has been allowed into the home and able to witness first-hand the conflicts between four generations of women.

In a final scene that is meant to be surrealistic, at least symbolic, Gloria is trapped by a bull in his pasture, and she must make a stand against the animal, mustering all of her physical resources to save her life. After Gloria's impression of the farmer, a main source of conflict to the women in his family, the bull is real, immediate danger and at the same time representative of the continual struggle between the sexes.

TWO STORIES OF MAN AND WOMAN

by

Joseph Maiolo
III

A Thesis Submitted to
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Approved by

Fred Chappell
Thesis Adviser

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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I wish to thank the Northern Virginia Community College for granting me sabbatical leave and thereby helping to make it possible for me to complete my degree, of which this thesis is a part. I acknowledge the title "The Legend of the Happy Swimming Pool" as a phrase uttered by James Dickey, along with his brief explanation of its significance to him, and I wish to thank him for his verbal permission for me to use it in a story. Finally, and above all, I wish to thank Professor Fred Chappell for his invaluable assistance, his faith in me as a writer, his encouragement, and his inspiration.

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THE LEGEND OF THE HAPPY SWIMMING POOL

from J.D.

His world was once young and joyous, was all he could ever have hoped it to be. He had carried his memories of it in just that way for a good many years. It had lived in his boyish dreams as the one great truth--the world itself--something to be known, though never completely, something to be endured, though never with malice. His thoughts of that world (he had finally come to call it that "other" world, the one that had ceased to be, just as, after a click, clear and real, a motor would cease to whir, a light would cease to shine)--his thoughts had somehow gotten buried in the muddle of daily chores as student and teacher, as father and husband, as body and spirit.

But those other thoughts had run in his fancy long before the click, longer than the time that had passed since the click. And since, he had spent a great deal of time wondering, figuring, just when the click had come.

So he had divided his life in his mind--not cunningly--into the pre-click and post-click eras. The one he had equated with a kind of unwished-for adulthood with all of its responsibilities, its joys (different from those of the other world), its defeats; the other, he had equated with boyhood and young manhood. Lately, it seemed, the defeats had dominated in the post-click era. Their dominance was no result of any

particular failures on his part (not that he had not failed at times). They simply were not that kind.

They were the little ones. The ones that come to one born into the world of romance, nurtured on the spells and dreams of another time, jolted by the stop-whir reality of the click. The little ones that shut out the special shaft of light that he had seen only seldom *then*, now not at all. The ones that change the smells of the other world into vile and gaseously vitriolic, strange aromas. Gone were the whiffs of wondrous things even more scintillating by the sounds of their names than by the inhalations of their sweetness: the barley, the rye, the thyme and rosemary, alfalfa and sassafras, sorghum and simple hay. And where were the other *sounds* now? (It seemed that everything of the other world, the other time, was becoming "the other.") The hollow clop of an occasional horse down the little main street, between the cars, where drivers gave way as if obeying, from respect--even a kind of homage--, an unwritten first rule of the road for car and horse as for ship and sail. A rail car coupling with a bump that could be heard throughout the five blocks of his town. The amateurish band that practiced more than it ever hoped to play, but which had the gall to do both (the single old tuba player swaying and rocking as if he were blowing the swing of Dorsey rather than "The Thunderer" of Sousa). Silenced now was the popping machine (the real click might have done it in) that popped out silos of corn for boys hungry for anything but healthy food.

Oh, how many times he had thought of these things, or things like them. It was as if everything worth hearing, seeing, and smelling belonged to the other time and that no amount of wishing could bring it back. Because, even if one were able to find an item or two that worked the spell (an occasional whittling knife from boyhood, a handful of cat's-eye marbles), the item could never exist whole because it could never again be surrounded by its true element. What did one whittle? There was wood to be had, sure, but living in an apartment complex did one not have to purchase it, and then buy at least a board-foot or two? Wooded areas around Tara Rental Homes were so clean there was nothing to be found of any use. And he could just see himself going to The World's Most Unusual Lumber Store and asking for a scrap piece of cedar. But even, even if the wood problem did not exist, *where* did one whittle? He imagined himself at times sitting on the metal bench (couldn't even carve on that) in the tot-lot of Tara Rental Homes, or else in the recreation area, while the mothers watched the kids and the fathers played basketball, he whittling away, going at it, while his messy shavings piled up below him. Or off in some corner at an evening party by the pool, with a quid of Brown Mule in his jaw, honing his Robeson on a small emery stone, waiting deliciously to sink it into an old piece of white cedar he had uncovered on a trip back home and brought back like a treasure from the Far East. Like the cat's-eyes he had returned with, like jewels.

For one thing, his wife would never brook such useless indulgence in public. For another, *he* could never permit *himself* such indulgence because he--like the things out of their element--would be as archaic as an old grizzled knight come riding up on his steed one day at the Tara Shopping Center. Why, they'd stone him, mock him out of his mail and armor. And if they did him no physical harm, they would do worse: ignore him. Nothing, nothing could be sadder than for a quixote to go unnoticed.

So, yes, it was all vanity, all *time* and vanity, to be precise, that had worked their rust into his armor. And he had been so careful to groom himself against such a possibility. Had watched long and hard as a boy the great romantic figures, from afar and at close range. Sometimes the distance was so great, he had not actually observed; had, rather, gotten them into his bones through scattered snatches of talk he had heard and overheard, through tapestry-covered radio speakers filled with static, through old movies, through scratchy recording discs. All the shabby, tinseled ghosts of sport and screen, of song and sight. Who were they? And did they really matter all that much now, in the "real world," as the current phrase would have it? Mostly, they were names, personalities, voices, batting stances, dancing styles, numbers on jerseys; they were classy clothes, pretty faces, overstuffed chairs and antimacassars, shined shoes and graceful strides; they were razzmatazz, dixieland, soft shoe, black face and minstrel, stage shows, coaches, and titles. They were, in short, the other.

These and other voices and shapes had worked their ways upon him, into him, so that room, office, car, home, mind--they all haunted and were haunting, came back at odd times, those spectral personages--flesh, stone, cloth, image--that would not let him be.

Nor would she. She alone the queen of all the shades who ruled the graveyard in his head.

Now, as if some treacherous, delicious irony had worked itself for twenty years, he has been brought back to the town of specters, to the movie theater of ghosts, in the town where the haunts were born. Somehow he has managed to "make it," as they say when somebody writes a novel that gets noticed. One book, and here he is in the wings of the most haunting building of his life. Strange, after all the remarkable ones. Not one mossy hall of college has remained vivid. Not one "Fine Arts" structure of his teaching career. Not a hotel or motel where garish or sanctified love was found or made. Nor a commercial behemoth, nor a conference hall, nor a *true* theater, in the British tradition. None. Just this old wreck of a movie house called simply the show. Where ghosts and all were born. Where his imagination was conceived, gestated, and hatched--that persistent, stalking old friendly enemy of his that would not let go nor, now, die.

Some aggressive PR man has had the notion--and courage--to do the booking, to hold the "world premiere" of the movie made from his book. (It has all come upon him so fast and kept

him so busy that he hasn't had the time to use some of the first money to get out of Tara.) On the marquee outside the boy who has unwittingly succeeded the author standing now in the wings of his own imagination has botched with even more pitiful maroon plastic letters (could they be the same ones?) of twenty years ago the billing

ARNO'S OWN

GABE REMINI IN PERSON

BEFORE THIER OL●

Everything has been arranged by the PR staffs of the publishing company and the filming studio. A top magazine will cover. A near-local and--it is hoped--a national television spot. Radio (certainly Country Jim will do it on his show, as a favor to Gabe). A newspaper columnist has promised to be on hand. Everything, it seems to him, but *Field and Stream*, though they are not, of course, all on hand, what with the intricacies of electronic syndication and the art of guessing.

It is the biggest thing the other world has ever seen, except perhaps for the time when Francis Lane, All-American and now professional, exhibited his trophies at The Jewel Box.

He waits, in the wings, with book in hand, where twenty years before he lurked as usher guarding the rear exit door (and let in more boys than the number of paid customers already in their seats); where he as assistant manager at thirteen stood with Lash Larue and his whip just before The Lash was to go on stage and crack cigarettes out of the hands of volunteer

kids from the front row; where, after the show, he and his brother and the boys who had slipped in shot craps with the janitor, projectionist, and other ushers and lost a week's pay of eight dollars. And the time he had waited all morning in the back alley by the exit door (before he was assistant manager) just to *see* Don "Red" Barry before his stage appearance. And the time he had his picture taken with Sunset Carson, holding one of Sunset's guns. Ed Taylor and his horse Bob White. The dancing Hawaiian girls. Chet Davis with his dirty jokes (hardly a knight, but run out of town on the third joke). The minstrel shows put on by the Lions and the Kiwanians. When he had emceed the Sunmaid bread contest where thirty or so young girls had competed to see who looked most like the five-year-old on the package, and then the judges had given the five-dollar gift certificate and six-months' supply of bread to the only thirteen-year-old on stage (and the bread given all in one lump award). His pantomime imitation of Johnny Ray doing "Cry." And of (was it Bob Eberly's?) "Easter Parade." But, most of all, the time he had imitated Al Jolson at the height of the Jazz Singer's resurgence after *The Jolson Story*--had mimed him in black face and oversized bow-tie, and had won first place in the amateur contest, the other contestant coming in a close second--billed that time as Gabie "Jolson" Rimini. (He had seen someone just today, on the street, who had been in that audience and who said that she *still* thought he had actually *sung* that song.)

Now, he hears his name announced by someone who has stridden past him, who has gone to stage center behind the drawn tattered maroon curtain that used to run by motor from a switch in the projection booth *click* and has parted it and walked through. Now he hears the full house in half-applause, and he wonders fleetingly if the PR man has paid admissions to fill it.

He walks past the screen and has a flash of memory more vivid than even the others. He goes to the lower right corner behind the curtain and places his fingers into the holes he remembers from the time Peg Leg Collins got loose and shot up the theater when Ed Taylor was on his horse Bob White showing the kids how rearing was done. That accounted for two of them (Peg's other shot-holes were never found). The others were made later by Puny Honeycutt, who had been in the audience the day of Peg's coming out, and who had decided to go one better by shooting up the place during a love picture.

Yes, they're all there.

He steps through the crack in the dusty curtain, taking over from the one who has done the introduction. He faces the people squarely. Hardly a Nobel audience, and he hardly the laureate. For all the cowboys, dancers, acrobats, horses--and all that they left on this stage--never a person to *read*. But just a preliminary to the picture. Just a token appearance.

Only it all comes rushing back at him in the rusty pool of light that floods him from the portable spot off stage left in the aisle. The spot confuses him momentarily. Used to be a regular one up there that came from out of one of the holes above the balcony where the blacks sat. *click*

Then, when the other lights from the camera crews find him, he becomes unsettled even more. Such brightness seems out of place here. Virtually the entire theater bursts into light, so that the pitiful little spot becomes redundant. A PR man has had the foresight to bring a Madison Avenue podium, a slender stand that allows him a place to rest his book without concealing him completely from the audience. He sets the book on the support and walks out of the immediate glare to extreme upper left. He squints toward the wall by the lower right seats. The audience wonder, stiff in their seats. Only eyes and necks turn. He walks back to the podium, smiles furtively, as if

he is not going to share the secret.

But he does. "I just wanted to see if the tobacco juice stains were still on the wall."

They like it. It shows that he remembers, knows, that things between them are not so different. They roar approval.

"WELL, ARE THEY GABE?" one yells.

"And *then* some," he says.

They like this even more.

There is a settling down period. Squirming and fixing. Arranging. They've *now* come to hear what he has to say.

"Hello, friends," he begins, and with fear of sounding pompous or political--or both--he rushes on, "Now-I-didn't-come-here-to-give-you-a-speech-so-rest-easy."

To which they do. He sees through the glare an old man in a suit too tight for him, the collar of his choking white shirt curling at the ends. The man looks at the woman next to him and smiles with great pleasure. His big hands are crossed on his belly, and he wriggles back slightly to attention. Then he takes a handful of popcorn from the woman who is herself testing it kernel by kernel, her gaze at the podium.

"I've just come to introduce the film--uh--the show to you and to read a little passage from the book I've written."

They have no popcorn for the third showing of The Mummy *this Saturday so his brother goes scrounging. Loads up two empty boxes with scatterings here and there and comes back like a Magus with a bag of myrrh. They feast for another showing, jump up again at the serial, and go crawling under seats for more before Nyoka has to deal with getting herself out of the quicksand from last week. He has found a nice fat one when his brother kicks him on*

the foot, tells him he has some fresh popped, begged the money from a guy smoking in the lobby. Bummed a fag, too.

"What I'm going to read doesn't appear in the fi—, in the movie you're going to see in a few minutes which, by the way, is called, the same as the book, *Before We're Old.* Maybe the marquee boy ran out of W's, but I can understand that. We only had one when I was setting marquee. I might suggest, if you're out there in the audience, that you try an M upside down if you get stuck again. The hooks won't fit right, but there used to be some black plumber's tape in the right-hand drawer of Buddy's desk." *click*

As before, they're delighted, and he can't help thinking how much more lively it is to speak to simple folks than to write for book people whose reactions to his words he'll never know, and that, while he has managed a small hand in the screenplay, to try to save it, it has been a butcher's job.

When they laid out of school to go to the show, they'd have to crawl under the right-hand seats by the wall after being let in the rear iron exit door behind the stage by another friendly usher. Because every day at one o'clock their grandmother would go, sometimes with an aunt, mostly alone. Coming through the iron door, they'd crouch to the floor, for effect and for actual stealth, then come crawling through to the theater floor where, first off, they'd look for the faint glint of two eyeglass lenses that sat just to their left of dead center. The other guys already there would have to move over to make room for them by the wall, and more than once the tobacco stream had reached such torrential heights that there was just no fording it. And more than once she got wise, began listening for his brother's deeper voice, even on days when the gang of boys had already seen the show and weren't there. But that didn't stop her, just having seen it already. Said later, when she told him about it all, that she went as much to get out of the house as to

see a picture show. But that then, when television. . . click *More than once she jerked them up by the scruff and ran them out. More often, though, she just let them be, even when she knew, and that was clear because you didn't get by with much from her. And even on one occasion, after the other guys had heard her coming, had already scattered (had scattered or hit the floor, stream and all), leaving only him frozen in his seat, she surprised the lot of them with a number ten poke of home popped corn and a mayonnaise jar full of RC. But you never could tell. You couldn't push it too far. She was sly. Dropping hints about the current Frankenstein show, to goad you into a talk with her about it, then ramshaking you for knowing the answers.* click

"I'm going to read a passage from the book that appears in the f—, in the movie as only a smile on the face of the main character. It's when he—his name's Dominick in the book, changed to Sonny in the movie—when he has met his old girlfriend at a high school reunion and hasn't seen her for twenty years. I just call the passage The Legend of the Happy Swimming Pool, and I want to acknowledge here and now that I owe a debt of thanks to the man I've dedicated the book to for the title and for a few words about what it means, as Dominick explains it in the story. I'll take up from the place where they're alone after the class picnic.

" ' "How have you been?" asked Donna, brushing at her face, which had certainly aged, as his own had, but which housed still the same lips, the same mouth, from which came the same voice unheard for twenty years.

" ' "Oh, I've managed. Not too well, I suppose, but I've etched out a life or two."

" ' "Sonny, let's not kid one another. We're too old for that."

" ' "O.K. Let's *not* kid one another," and he thought to soften his

tone. "Let's start out with calling things the way they are. My name for instance. Donna, my name is Dominick. Some of the guys around here used to call me Nick or Dom and other variations, but you would never call me anything but Sonny." He turned away briefly because, still, after the years, it was hard for him to speak directly to her. This was the best he had managed, ever, though her spell over him was not broken by any means.

" ' "Well, I. . ."

" ' "No. Let me finish. Please. I used to like the name you gave me, just because it came from you. It was something at least. And I used to think it was your own special name for me, something between only us. Because you're the only one who ever called me that. But don't you see? It's the very symbol of the thing that kept us apart. I was Catholic, you were Protestant. I was Italian-American, you were English-American--I guess. The same old shibboleths that have kept the world apart since the beginning—and especially the ones that keep people apart in *this* country, just because there are so many different *kinds* here--they kept *us* apart, too. And now, *you've* been through a marriage, and *I've* made a career out of getting myself engaged, and you're still calling me Sonny. If there's any hope for us now, you must look at me and call me by my name, my God-given name, even if you don't *like* it."

" ' "Oh, but I *do*, I do like it. I always have. It wasn't me who sent you away from the house that day after we'd decided to get engaged. It was Mother. If. . ."

" ' "Let's stop right there. Mother. You're a mother now yourself, Donna. You're a mature woman. I think I've loved you ever since before I met you, and I don't even know if I ever told you so, even after we'd decided to get engaged."

" ' "Hush," she said. And she smiled the old way that brought back most of the years, made them live again as if they had been something other than wasted. Then she kissed him as she was whispering something he could not make out. It was a simple kiss, an almost friendly kiss, a kiss without heat or compassion in it that made him want to weep with relief.

" 'As he drew her gently back from him, letting his eyes tell her what his soul already knew, he said, "Yes. Yes. But you *still* haven't said it."

" ' "Dominick. Dominick" She let the word linger in the air between them. "Maybe," she said, "I thought your name sounded too much like mine," and she laughed up at the trees.

" 'Later, as they sat on the bridge at River Road, after his mind had raced ahead, making plans, testing himself against the time when he would have to try, not just to live again the life he had missed, but to live again with a major alteration to his ego, he looked wistfully up the creek.

" ' "What is it?" she said. "Happy?"

" ' "Oh, I was just thinking about this dream I've had a number of times. It's the kind of happy dream that is worse than any nightmare."

" ' "What do you mean? How can it be a nightmare if it's *happy*?"

" ' "Because it's a *dream*."

" ' "I don't understand."

" ' "Well, every time, I've just come home after having been away a long time. I'm a complete stranger, even in my own old home. There's nobody there who knows me. Nobody on the streets. I always end up walking through the entire town, every street, every alley, every nook and cranny that has ever haunted me. I'm dressed in a suit that I shouldn't be dressed in, because I'm not the man who has been away, but the boy who seems in

the dream never to have left. I'm just walking, going to houses of old friends who are not at home, dropping in at pool rooms, the theater, restaurants, service stations, drug stores. And what I'm looking for is always clear to me, though in the dream--it's hard to explain--in the dream I know it as a *dreamer* but not as the boy walking and looking. What I'm looking for is a friend, a person who knew me as I was before I left. And it isn't you. Sorry. It is *sometimes* you, but mostly it's just a friend I'm looking for. And by the time I've run out of places to search, I hear--again, as a dreamer, not as the wanderer--I hear voices, sounds from a group of people talking and laughing, shouting and playing, and I'm going through the gate of the swimming pool. The sound reaches me--that is, finally as the boy in the dream--after I'm inside the gate. And when I *get* inside, you're all there, all the friends I've ever known as a boy. You're there, too, but--again, sorry--it's not *just* you I'm glad to see, not at first anyway. All of you are tanned and happy, running and splashing. When I get to the side of the pool, I have on trunks like the rest of you. Then someone waves from the top of the old stone bathhouse, waves and laughs clear as clean water, then calls out above the other voices like a booming god from heaven, 'WHERE YOU BEEN? WE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.' That's when I wake up."

" 'She rubbed his arm gently. "But that's a *happy* dream," she said, putting her head on his shoulder. "How could that ever be a nightmare?"

" ' "Up until now it was a nightmare because it could never come true, in any way, not with you especially. The actual nightmare I could live with--and did--for a long time. But the happy dream--no, that's worse than any bad dream. Waking up and finding it was only a dream--that's what's unbearable."

" ' "But now you've come home, haven't you, Sonny?" And she laughed

an oddly resounding echo of a laugh up the creek.' "

The audience does not know the reading is finished. Not until he drops his head in a slight bow, almost dramatically, and flicks his hands resting on either side of the podium—a gesture of finality, almost catharsis. Then led (as he suspects briefly) by the PR men, they applaud and he has the feeling that they are doing so without full understanding but rather from some sense of obligation to be polite to the "good old boy" who is--at least has been--one of them.

There is an awkward moment following the applause when the spot has to be removed audibly, when Gabriel is asked by the promoter to hand down the podium. Several pictures are taken, and footage of film is rolled. Some newsmen and their equipment merely remain where they are until after Gabriel walks back through the wing and appears through the door by the right front seats. As he comes through, he has the urge to hit the floor on all fours, to search out the twin glints up the aisle.

There is a light or two on him, several more flashes, and as he walks alone up the aisle he shakes a hand or two and sees a face here and there that he nods to without recognizing its name. It is a long walk, for he feels the same as he has felt in the classroom after having given what he has considered to be a particularly stimulating lecture, just to find out that most of the class hadn't read the story. But there is goodness here in this building. He can feel it. He senses it in the aisle and hopes they will enjoy the film that has been all but pushed upon them as an act of patriotism.

In the lobby he smiles, nods at the old woman taking up tickets who used to be the young girl who served beer at the tavern on the outskirts of town. He talks to a few PR men who offer congratulations and tell him it

was a smashing success. Then he sees the manager, who comes at him with his hand outstretched for shaking.

"Gabe! Hot damn! Enjoyed it. You done real good. Great for business. Come on up to the office, or are you going to watch the show? If you ain't, let's go up to the office and have a little snort."

"No, I don't think I'll see it again." He has had so much of lurking behind sets, trying to get his bid in for a change here and there, so much of watching the cutting room scuffles, and the rushes and the criticism and the comments from guests and old actors and consulting directors and producers that, now, he is full of it, wishes almost that it was all just still in his head. "Yeah, I'll take a snort, Buddy."

The manager smiles, puts his arm around Gabriel's shoulder, and leads him up the frayed carpet of the stairs. But midway, they are interrupted by the sound of a voice, a feminine voice, that stops Gabriel cold. "Mr. Reemin-eye. Mr. Reemin-eye. Could I get your autograph?"

As he turns, the girl is already behind him, and he knows before he looks that there is something special in the voice. It isn't just the sound of the mountains, the pronunciation of the name. It is the intake of breath just before the "Could," the almost--there is no other word for it--cute sound of the voice as if it came from an actress trained to effect eternal youth. "You go on up, Buddy. I'll be there after a while."

He finishes his turn and stares down at the face that is now one step below, down to twenty years back. "Ellie! My God!" he half screams, and his hands go involuntarily over the book he has been carrying as if he means to wipe out the thing he has created.

The girl's smiling anticipation dwindles to near fear. Then it changes to recognition. "No. Ellie's daughter. *Janie*," she says, looking

directly into his eyes.

But he still stares, still clutches at his creation. Then, his fixation subsides. He becomes self-conscious. "Please come up stairs," he says, and uses the moment to steer her around him without looking again at her face. He walks behind her while he collects himself, settles his blood with a deliberate sigh that must sound to the girl like hot air let out of a balloon.

The legs before him are those he knew, tanned, taut, slim. The dress is much shorter, and with pain and pleasure he allows himself the revelation of what he knows already is there: the almost swayed back that accentuates the hips that swell almost horizontally backward but do not flare to the sides. She bounces up before him, oblivious, this young girl seeking his name.

In the upper hallway she proffers a piece of paper, and as he looks at it dumbly she says, "Your autograph, please."

"Oh, yes. That." He opens the book to the title page and scrawls something "to Janie" and hands it over.

"For *me*? Well, thanks."

"Have you read it? Do you know the story?"

"Just what you said about it tonight." But she looks more knowledgeable than she is letting on, he thinks. "I pieced together a lot of the story from what you said, and from what I'd heard about you from other people." Then, without changing expression, "You know my mother. You called me by her name." It is not a question; it is a challenge. She wants to talk about it, to hear about it, but she does not want to ask about it.

Just then there is a man's voice at the top of the stairs. "Janie. Janie. Come on now. Your mother's waiting in the car. You were supposed

to meet us outside."

"Oh, Daddy, this is Mr. Reemin-eye, the man who wrote *Before They're Old*."

As he shakes the rough hand and says without knowing it that he is pleased to meet him, he does not correct the error. It is too well established here. And as the girl smiles with what seems to be pleasure at the confrontation, he does not even scrutinize this unknown and apparently unknowing "rival."

"Your mother says that if you're going to the lake tomorrow you'd better get on home with us now and get your things ready. She'll be fuming in the car."

But that does not seem to ruffle her. She stands between the two men with something akin to pleasure and mischief. "Well, I just *had* to see him. He's only going to be here tonight, aren't you, Mr. Reemin-eye? Did you and Mother win at bridge? Thanks for the book, Mr. Reemin-eye. I'll try to read it real soon."

The man nods to Gabriel, and he and the girl go off down the stairs. Gabriel stands looking after them, long after they have vanished. Then he slips into the manager's office like somebody who has just been dismissed and is looking for a drinking buddy. But before he speaks a word to Buddy he goes to the window to catch sight of a woman's hand setting itself on the car door where the window is rolled down, just as the hand drives off.

The theater is closed. He stands in the outside lobby, two blocks from his old home, and thinks how little he has moved, in terms of distance, in twenty years. Buddy has staggered up the street to the one hotel. No cars are left on the roads except for those of boys making late rounds.

He has drunk a lot, but he is not drunk. Just heightened, tensed, ready for talk and thought--good talk and deep thought--but even the people who can't give them are gone.

He walks under the marquee, stations himself precisely for the dramatic turn. Then, slowly, he pivots to face the pitiful letters, the D having finally dropped.

ARNO'S OWN

GABE REMINI IN PERSON

BEFORE THIER OL

No better nor any worse than others had done to his name, he thinks. And the THIER, spelling and usage aside, a nice little error. They. Yes, THEY. Not WE. Not he. And he had come back to find it out.

The diesel engine at the rail yard is warming up, begins to move slowly across town. And where will *it* go? he thinks. He, too, has a trip to make, tomorrow. A plane to catch.

He looks back to the marquee. Arno, he thinks. What it wants is a subdued mediocrity, a mediocrity so subdued that even its attempts to subdue it are mediocre. It wants some cheap little thrills which have been discarded, perhaps, in another time. A little bastion of vulgarity ready to squash anything that is not vulgar, machine-made, suitable to the crowd. *Discarded in another time?* And isn't that what he has thought he wanted?

And yet. . .yet. . .he loves it still. Without Arno there wouldn't be even the question. And as for the legends--the legends be hanged. They are best when their truths remain unknown. *click*

He picks up the cracked D and starts the two blocks to his bed for the night. But it will be only a bed. His own true resting place is now miles away, where he will be tomorrow.

He hurries now, out of his element, wondering what Sara and the kids will think when they see the news. He is running now, a slow, lazy lope, parallel to the more sluggish diesel across town which seems to be getting nowhere and doing a good job of it. He sails the D far out across the road and loses sight of it in the darkness. It will be good to get home to his own people.

GLORIA'S DAY IN THE PASTURE

Her back rested tightly against the bucket seat of her foreign car as she turned off the last real road into the driveway of the farmhouse and its sprawling grounds, her face contorting slightly from the pain that started somewhere at the base of her spine and rose to the back of her neck. As she drove past the fence of the nearest pasture, she saw but was not, evidently, seen by the man on his tractor-mower in the farthest corner of the field-sized yard. She heard a little toot from the machine, then several more, as she drove on, parked, and got out with some pain from her back. As she walked the stepping-stone path to the porch, she realized that the toots were signals to the young boy to run to the front of the mower and pick up a branch or a rock, to clear the way for the man who sat astride the tractor with obvious pride, his boots showing clearly where his work pants were hiked up by his posture.

The boy, on command of the horn, ran automatically to do his bidding. He placed the debris in a small pile near the front of the yard, running each time with a twig or a bona fide branch, stopping to look at the woman in wide-eyed wonder and what seemed like shame, hearing the toot automatically, and running back to the front of the machine.

She kept her eyes on man and machine, anticipating his recognizing her as a visitor, perhaps even a greeting. But the man was bent to his job. If he had seen her at some time on her drive up the road, he was not interested, or else just not letting on that a stranger had approached.

She knocked at the screen door, which rattled just enough to give an

echo to her rap, and she looked across the neatly-fenced land to the cows at pasture, to the tidy sheds and barns, to a curious-looking structure that looked like a gazebo where it stood in a distant empty pasture. It was good to be here, she thought, a nice respite from the traffic and business of the city.

She feld a bit awkward standing there in the outfit she had chosen for the trip. There had been a brief moment when she had thought of wearing dungarees and sneakers and borrowing an older American car, but at last she had decided to be herself as she had become and as her friends knew her. So she had chosen her red bell-bottom pant suit and her red cape-like overgarment clasped around her throat by a gold chain. She had only recently switched from platform shoes to earth shoes, but she had liked the new ones so much that she felt naked without them. As she waited now, she brushed at her short, dark hair and removed her sunglasses. Her purse clasp made a good solid sound as she put the glasses in and closed it. Almost automatically she had started to reach into the compartment of the purse where she had kept her cigarettes for so long, but she realized with satisfaction that she had not smoked now for several weeks.

The old woman had been sitting in the kitchen for almost an hour now. She would have tried to lie down or to watch a little television in the living room, but the sound of the motor so near was irksome, too distracting for her to do more than sit up straight and think in her kitchen, the room where she felt most at peace, when she didn't actually have to be using it. The quick blasts from the horn were irritating. She could escape them only if she succeeded in thinking hard enough to become involved in her mind's activities. And that she could seldom do.

She looked at her hands a great deal, sitting there with them crossed silently on the table. The hands that seemed, at a time like this, to be so out of place at stillness and rest. Well worn hands that might have been born to their owner already calloused and veined. The nails clipped and worn square like her man's. The knuckles bulged so that the simple gold band around the left ring finger could never be removed, except by surgery to flesh or metal.

They had begun their rigors early, in her mother's garden, picking snap beans and tomatoes, husking corn and shelling peas, placing onion sets and pulling weeds. They had progressed, as if twin daughters of the mother of the owner, as if separate appendages which took their inescapable destiny from the twins of that mother who had in turn taken the lead from another. . . .They had scrabbled and mucked in barns and pens and coops of one sort and another, preparing food for men and animals, scattering feeds, carrying slop, shoveling coal, paring apples, knitting, sewing, darning, mending, then attempting refinement at the spinet, at needlepoint and crewel, at crochet and tapestry. Had searched out eggs from under weary hens. Had milked and were still milking those favorite cows of hers too spoiled to take the suction cups. Had prodded and punched poles at unwilling pigs. Emptied unholy, sordid pots into a hole in a curious little unpainted building where they dealt as well with the private and personal hygiene of their owner in whatever way they could, when hoary rime lay like alabaster on the grass, their nails so chilled that one slip in opening the treacherous door to vileness could snap them like beans.

They had cradled babies of people she could not remember. Had patted and rubbed the folds and creases of her own. Had anointed and soothed, had

soiled themselves in various acts of love.

She was just remembering how she had kept Maisie's fingerprints on the windowpanes when Maisie was a little thing, because she couldn't bear to wipe away the traces of such innocence--when the hands jumped involuntarily with the faintly echoed rappings at the door.

From her porch Maisie could see the dust clouds on the road to her mother's house. She had not actually been looking that way this time with any notion of trying to find out who it was. There were so many comings and goings on her mother's dairy farm, with the milk pick-ups and the tractors and plows and other machines and trucks always roaring around there. She was certainly thankful that Tyler had finally decided against trying to work their meager acres. He was happier at the Cooperative anyway. And she was happier being able to go about her house without having him underfoot for three meals, even if he had been in the field most of the day. My goodness! The thought of *her* having to put up with what Momma had gone through with Daddy was more than she could have tolerated.

It was the orange color of the little car that had caught her attention as it went by, gearing down at the turn so that she just knew it would be turning into Momma's drive down the road. There was no real explanation. Only intuition could account for her getting up from her favorite prize show on television and going to the window. But when she caught sight of the enviously beautiful woman dressed in red behind the wheel, she ran to the bathroom and fluffed at her hair, called out the back door, "Beth! Elizabeth Ann! Come on. We're going over to see Mammaw."

The little girl had been sliding down the slide of her swing set head first when she heard her name the first time. Before the second calling

reached her she had turned around in mid-slide and rolled to her back so that she hit the ground running. She was rather gangly for a four-year-old and stepped squarely on the stomach of a rubber doll lying legs askew in the yard. It almost tripped her up, but she lunged ahead, through a part of the flower garden, and pushed her way in the back door. "Come on, Granny. Let's go, she said, not stopping, walking directly through the house without pause, out the front door, and straight to the passenger side of the Ford station wagon that was already dirty with mud again.

Just like Mandy, Maisie thought, as she got in behind the wheel.

Amanda had gotten off the Greyhound at Nettle Junction, and as she walked to the intersection past the bus that was starting up again the dirty old man who had been sitting across the aisle from her had given her a lewd and hate-filled smile and mouthed through the window in pantomime "Go to hell." She had started to raise her finger to him but was too tired to bother. Besides, she wanted a joint. Her nerves were shot. She was apprehensive about going back to her mother's, about seeing her kid, about having to face Grandma Tracy, but especially about having to endure Granddaddy Judd.

So here she was, walking down 801 again, same as when she had lit out two years ago. She lit up the joint and thought she would like to walk the three or four miles if she just wasn't so tired. She knew what raising a thumb on *this* road could get you. Raising a *skirt* though. That was different. Some redneck bastard might stop for a sure thing. But let him get a load of your jeans and hair and the smell of a little grass and you were in for The Lecture. Holy hell, right up until the time he made his move. Give him a smile, toss your minute-before filthy hair, and all of a sudden the

dude's a freak. Starts talking groove-boob crap. Throwing around every goddam thing he can think of, taking up for youth-and-kids and what all they're Trying To Do. Bullshit.

He stopped. She got in, put her bag between them, and looked straight ahead.

"Well, young lady. . ."

Oh, god*dam*.

"Where yuh goin'?"

"Down the road. Tyler place."

"Don't know it. Point it out when we get there."

Silence. Golden.

"What grade yuh in?"

*Gol*den question.

"*No* grade."

"Oh. Finished, huh?"

"No. *Fin*ished."

"Dropped out, huh?"

"Yeah. I left the teacher a shiny apple, then I split."

"Listen, young lady. . ."

Let's see. Let's just *see*. She turns to face him, letting her taut shirt, unharnessed underneath, do the job.

"I'm listening."

The smile. Ah, *there* it is.

"Well?"

"Well. . .I don't give ten damns in hell if you dropped out or ever started at all. . ."

"I didn't think you really did."

"Right. What're yuh into now? Say! That grass?"

"Why? You going to turn me in?"

"*Me*. You kiddin'? Shoot, when I was in Nam, I was. . .

Gloria turned from the door and walked a few steps to the far side of the porch. She was looking at the boy, and he at her, just ready to yell above the motor when the door opened. She turned to the woman's face that protruded through, then lurked behind the opening.

The voice was saying something through the hole, but the motor. . . Gloria turned almost angrily to catch the man looking at her, then away, back to his mowing. "Miz Tracy. MIZ TRACY?" The old woman retreated, swinging the door wide with her. Which Gloria took as an invitation and marched through, away from the rude motor, with the screen door slam not made, just a silent puff of soundless impact. "MAY WE CLOSE THE DOOR, PLEASE?" Seemed he was mowing the porch now.

She closed it, as if commanded but unwilling and powerless to refuse. That made it better, but still they had to retreat into the kitchen before they could hear each other. And she was saying, "I'm Gloria Brubeck. Dan Crowder sent me out. He said you wouldn't mind if he didn't come this time."

The old woman put her hands to her once-flowered apron, began twisting it into her lap. "Yes. Well, you're welcome to look. Go right ahead."

Her crimson bounced around in the tidy country kitchen, ricocheted from the enameled walls and polished glass. "Would you mind showing me around?"

"Would you like something cool to drink first? There's fresh milk just out of the cooler."

"No. No, thank you, Miz Tracy."

The old woman was uncomfortable in her presence, slightly ill-at-ease and at a loss for the correct vocabulary. Yet, she wanted to talk, wanted to listen, wanted to hear from this new woman about things she had been reading in magazines and watching on television.

They found a common vocabulary and got on quite well together. Gloria wanted to know more about the place: why they were selling, how much land, technical information Albert had told her to be sure to find out about before she signed anything. He would have come along, but he was busy that week with several cases coming up in court. "Oh, we're just gittin' old, Miz Brubeck," she said. "We've been milkin' cows for forty years now. Want to spend our last years in a little peace. Far as the well and septic and all that goes, Trace can tell you."

"Your husband?"

"Yes. But there ain't nothin' goin' to get him off that blessed mower once he gits on."

"Is the boy yours?" She knew it could not be, and she tried to leave the question open-ended.

"No. No. Grandson. Little Orlon likes to come over to help his granddaddy out.

There was a silence of words hard to break. The refrigerator motor whirred, giving the faint semblance of an echo of the motor outside.

"Tell me, Miz Brubeck, where you from? Tell me something about the city. You part of that woman's liberation business? Lord, it's been mighty lonesome out here all these years."

"Well. . ."

The mower stopped, followed by a moment of the refrigerator's whir; then it, too, stopped, and the sudden and complete silence obtruded the

conversation. It was as if the noise from outside had served as a shield that, now removed, made talk more strained, and so the two women stopped altogether. It was like being at home alone at night, Gloria thought. With the television or the stereo playing, there was less fear of house noises. As soon as all was quiet, fear showed itself because then the burglar could be heard if he were there, or better imagined.

The mower started up again, and the front door opened and closed. Beth ran to the kitchen past Gloria, yelling, "Mammaw! Mammaw!" The old woman bent to the little girl, then stood to greet her daughter. Awkward introductions were made.

"I didn't know you had company, Momma," Maisie said as she nodded shyly toward Gloria.

"That's a *pretty* car!" Beth said, looking up at Gloria, dazzling in her bright suit to the little girl.

Gloria was slightly embarrassed at having her automobile the subject of any talk. "How old are you?" she asked.

"Four. I'll be five tomorrow."

"Tomorrow's next July," Maisie said.

"Yeah! And my momma's coming home for *my* birthday!"

Gloria did not understand. She thought the girl might be this woman's daughter. But when the two women smiled almost wanly, Gloria took up with the real estate questions again while Maisie and Beth looked on. She walked to the kitchen window, looked out to the pastures and the black-and-white grazing animals. For some reason she thought of George Orwell's exhortation against the "not un-" syndrome in speakers and writers: *A not unblack dog was chasing a not unsmall rabbit across a not ungreen field.* Mrs. Tracy was saying, "It's not unusual for us to get a hurricane ever so many years around

here. Seems that ever since they started tamperin' with the moon the weather's changed."

"Yeah. I bet those landin's've knocked a *lot* of things off cycle, haha." Maisiewas doing her best to join the conversation. Her own idea of her parents' last few years was that they should sign everything legally over to her and Tyler, then apply for welfare, get their social security payments, and live as dependents on her and Tyler, maybe even doing the same work and living the same kind of life in the same place where they had always lived and worked. She'd even compromised by telling them that they could sell the cows. The point of her plan was that, at least, her folks would be getting paid decently for their work. And the money was *there*. Why not have people who deserved it collect?

"What kind of neighbors live around here?" Gloria asked. "What's the neighborhood like?"

"Well, there's no neighborhood to speak of when you're livin' on a fifty-acre farm" Maisie said. "You *do* plan to live on it if you buy it, don't you?" She looked at Gloria, who did not answer. "But there's a town down the road. General store and feed mill."

This time the mower continued to run as the front door opened. The three women in the kitchen were standing in such a way that they could not see the girl walk through the living room toward them. The little girl ran from the room, calling out, "Mommy! Mommy!"

"What *is* that man doing out there with Orlon? Momma, you ought to keep him away from Granddaddy if he's going to treat him like a *slave*."

"Ahhh, work never hurt nobody, Mandy. Don't start nothin' now. Orlon likes to work with Poppa."

"Pappaw sure likes to beep that horn, don't he?"

"He'd toot it once too often with *me*."

"Now, I cain't tolerate that kind of talk in Trace's house, so watch your tongue, Amanda."

"*His* house? It's yours, too. You've milked *more* than half of those dammed cows."

"Ah, come on now, honey. If you're goin' to talk that way in Momma's house, we'd better go on home. Your daddy'll be there any minute anyway. "He'll be glad to see you, honey."

"Granddaddy's got a new rider mower, *too*, Mammy."

"Momma's house or Trace's house? Which is it?"

"Listen, honey, where you been? What brings you home just now?"

"Can I see more of the place, Miz Tracy?"

"Why doncha show her the *barn*? *Brutus's* in the barn!"

"Elizabeth Ann, you be quiet."

"Momma, don't *tell* her to be quiet. She's *my* daughter, and I *want* her to speak her mind. If more of us did around here. . ."

"Amanda, don't talk to your mother that way."

"Let her alone, Momma. She's only just come home."

"Miz Tracy, I made a special trip to see your place, and I hate to. . ."

"Listen, Mandy, now I've taken about enough. *I* got feelin's, too. Sure she's your daughter if it means that you carried her. But that's about all. . .Ah, listen, Mandy, don't make me get ugly here in front of this lady. You just came home and. . ."

"No. Go ahead. I want to hear it."

The mower stopped. The females in the kitchen noted the silence briefly. The old woman seemed apprehensive.

"I don't guess I *have* to hear the words, though. You've said enough. You've said plenty. Come on, Beth, I'm taking you with me."

"And where will you go?"

"Oh, *boy*! Where we going, Mommy?"

"Listen, Mandy, let's go on over to the house. Soon as Tyler gets home we'll talk about it."

"Miz Tracy. . ."

"We'd better all be quiet now. Trace'll be comin' in to eat any minute."

"Big deal."

"I'm hungry, Mammaw."

"Come on. Let's go now."

"I really have to get back, Miz Tracy."

"We'll talk about it soon as they go. Whyn't you go on now, Maisie."

"I'm hungry, Granny,"

"Come on now, honey."

"Well. . .but we're going to get some things settled this time."

"I'm hungry, Mommy."

"Do you think Mr. Tracy will be able to show me around?"

"Now, Momma, you let me see anything before you sign. I still wish you and Poppa'd talk things over with Tyler and I."

"I'm hungry, Lady."

"Hush up now, Elizabeth Ann! We're going home."

The sound of heavy boots clumped up the few wooden steps to the porch. By the time the sound reached the door, the echo of lighter footsteps could be heard hurrying up the steps. The females in the kitchen stopped all talk.

The little girl stood between her mother and her grandmother and looked at a spot between her great-grandmother and the new lady dressed in a pretty color. Amanda's face was losing its contortion of anger. The front door opened. The screen door slammed with a full sound. Maisie Tracy Tyler began to turn to look to her left as her father came through the living room. Mrs. Tracy started to turn to the refrigerator. Gloria stood near the sink, her back aching slightly again as she tried to rest it against the counter top. She faced the man directly.

He stepped into the doorway, Orlon's left leg barely visible behind him. He planted himself at the threshold of the room, his heavy boots seeming to anchor in concrete. Removing his hat and looking only at the older woman, he said, "Jeddie, your heifer's 'bout to calve. Better git on out there."

There was no talk as he led her to a small barn. He asked her in and walked to a stall enclosed by the back and side walls. Across the side walls, about half way up, were laid almost edge to edge rough-hewn four-by-four timbers. Their ends were secured through holes in the side walls. It seemed like a maximum-security prison. As the man began shoving the timbers through the left wall's openings to allow whatever it was in there to get out, Gloria tried to see. She could only hear the rustling of straw. When the man had all but one log free, she peered around the right of him and she saw the bull in the corner. He seemed to be cowering.

"Now, look out, Miss. I'm going in to get him."

Gloria walked outside.

In a short time she saw bull and man emerge, the animal docile as a steer fixed for future tender beef. The man had a rope with a hook attached to the end and the hook fastened to a brass ring clipped neatly inside the

bull's dripping nostrils. She was not afraid. One tug at the rope would bring him to his knees.

The man walked the bull through a series of gates as she watched and, when the bull was let go in what was apparently his special pasture, he lumbered over to the far side and became indistinguishable from all the other animals in the adjoining fields.

The man came back and the two of them walked to the opening of the cow barn. "How's she doin' in there."

"Better come on in. There's gonna be trouble."

Inside the stall the white-faced heifer lowed in pain and what might be considered anger. Gloria walked into the barn and stood by the open stall.

"You're gonna have to help me take it," the old woman said, and Gloria thought at first that it was she who was being addressed. But then Mr. Tracy made a move to assist and Gloria drew back in relief.

"Jeddie, she's quietened down now. I think she's gonna wait a spell."

"*She* might, but I ain't. She's gone too long *now*." The lowing subsided to subdued, regular moans, like hoarse weeping.

Gloria wondered at the strength of this woman, at the pain of the cow, at the ceramic character of the man. She swung her red cape back with both hands so that it would not restrict her arms, and she stepped forward. "Can I help?"

"Watch out now," the man said.

The heifer gave forth then, became a cow in what was to Gloria a startlingly short time, and, before she could get away from the side of the stall where she had been forced in the excitement of the moment, the cow, free now of her burden, scuffled around with the relief of liberation and

brushed her backside against Gloria so that the gore of birth dampened her cape and plastered her blouse to her unharnessed breasts. She walked out of the barn without wrath, hearing behind her the quick whispers of people at work.

The man caught up with her outside the door, calling back over his shoulder, "Jeddie, you go ahead and clean up. If you need me, I'll be inside hollerin' distance." Gloria had walked toward her car. "Lady, Jeddie said I'd better help you clean up. Let's go on over to the milk shed there." He motioned with his head, saying the words softly, apologetically, and he took her firmly by the arm and steered her inside the milk room.

Neither spoke inside. The milk cooler, spotlessly clean, humming from inside its stainless steel encasement, stirred the lacteal fluid and cooled it until it could be drawn off into cans, picked up by trucks, and taken to the processing plant. Gloria looked calmly at the white liquid and thought of the irony of so many mammalian mammary glands working overtime to feed the babies of the world, pink dugs pulled at by suction cups and these calloused hands that now brushed with a damp cloth around her own.

"Thank you." She looked at him almost gently, with an almost understanding, almost tender gaze. "I'm all right now. But I'm not giving up on this place if you're still willing to sell. If I decide to make an offer, I'll send it through Mr. Crowder."

"Well, now, you do that, Miss. We'll take a look at it. I'll see to it Jeddie and Maisie and Tyler give it a real good look. You just go on now and get outa them wet clothes soon as you can."

He looked at his hands, rubbed at them in the country way, scratched at some old injury, perhaps, that would not go away. He looked past the car to the pastures, almost pitifully evoking a man about to be evicted.

"If you *do* end up with this place," he said, "I hope you ain't aimin' to cut down all the trees and turn it into one of them sterile developments."

He closed the door of the car easily as she settled her soreness into the perfect contour of the driver's seat. Solidly behind the wheel, she started the big motor and raced her engine for a quick warm-up, then asked before she drove off, "What is that little building down in that field--a gazebo or what?"

"Ah, it used to be a spoonin' place for sweethearts. I just use it as a restin' place from tractor drivin'. Saves a long trip back to the house. And a good bit of time, too."

"Do you mind if I look at it on my way out?"

"*I* don't mind, but Brutus is pasturin' in there just now."

"Is he dangerous?" she asked, almost wryly.

He seemed to be thinking it over. He ain't *dan*gerous--"

"Trace! Come on in here. I need you now."

"--I've never known him to do a thing yet I ain't been proud of. Leastways the heifers don't think so. He's what turns 'em into cows. Herd's almost doubled since I got 'im."

They had seemed to meet, these two opposites, in the moment of compassion and tenderness in the milk room, and now for no discernible reason to the male Gloria was curt. "I'll go on to the gazebo now if you don't mind."

He heard the sound of the machine long before he lifted his head to see what it was in his domain. In the meantime he munched at the green things that grew before him and swished his tail without effort or knowledge at the black buzzing things that sought him out for all his life. Occasionally

he rubbed his muzzle at the ground and was tickled by the green and brown things that grew, and hurt by the man-thing that put another hole in his nose and stayed there forever, like the dark buzzing things, as a constant little pest he could not drive from him. His power relaxed, his head down to the earth in a posture of humility he would never accept but could not alter, he viewed the members of his harem from between the two bottom rails of the bright fence--they over there in their place, he in his--while he munched almost complacently, but not quite, since his strength was a thing to him constantly threatening even those he was made to love. The openings in the head saw at a cock-eyed angle over the blades of growing things with ticklers on them. They saw and were scarcely aware.

Until the strange new she-thing got out of the machine and quit the noise for him, then crawled, as he could not crawl, over the bright boards of his prison, the she-thing that was built up and down to the pasture while he was across it, he built for movement and speed and the other thing coming to the built-thing he was used to, and now changing from shape to color as it had changed before from sound to shape. The color was now to him made brighter by its contrast to the shining brilliance of the built-thing, as the new one--the one that moved--walked around, then in, then out again, and gave him, now, another change as well, to smell.

The smell of a piece of him, of one of his yet unmade sons as far as he knew. There were so many, so many. He could not know which of those of his kind he saw above the growing things were his own and which were those to love. But this new one was both, this strange one with the smell of himself about it, this one that had no right to his smell.

He squared off, to face the intruder that was both and neither but still somehow mixed in his tiny brain that should be larger for his mass.

He extended himself involuntarily, almost touching ground, and drilled a hole directly below him with his water. Set his no-neck and squat shoulders as if from some instinct handed down to him through a long line of tragic forebears--those who would laugh, if they could, at the foolish, shiny ring in his nose--ancestors from other places whose one great deed was to be killed without ever knowing the love he knew and was bored with, so that, now, he must reverse that, must enter the arena, not because he was born to it, but because he was forced to it.

Long before she heard the rumble, even before his blood compelled him to it, she stepped into an oversized pile of him with her earth shoe and sank to her ankle. She shrieked, not typically for her, the name of the stuff that kept her shoe. It was then the telltale ache from her back came again. She cursed in frustration, not fear, pulled her foot from the filth, and kicked the other shoe as well from her clean foot. By the time the thunder reached her she was free, and it was as if with surrendered recognition that she made for the fence, but then measured the two distances and knew she must make her stand. The building was no good. It would be no more than a trap.

When he made his first pass she stood her ground till the last moment, offering her full body all the way, then pulling back with a feint that worked this time but would not last. She knew she could gain no distance--the setting was not in her favor. She must stand and fight. Then it came to her that it was the bright red of the suit that was causing it, and as he ran past--too far past, for he had not participated before--as he ran to find himself again, having brushed her and his son and him and, now, a new change, a strange new smell, one that he could not know, she saw a chance to jump into the building and get out of the slacks, and she did it fast enough to

be back out so that he could not block her or enter either.

But that did not do it. He came again. And now she had the cape off the pretty gold chain from around her neck, and as he charged the scarlet of the cape and blouse and all the smells of procreation, lust, and carnage, she managed to rip the blouse from her and throw it at him at the last instant, so that he went blind in the moment and almost stumbled in his confusion.

She picked up the cape to help her with what she saw would be the last rush and, as she did so, standing her ground still, trying to maneuver the brute so that he would crash through the cape and into the hardness of the building, she tried to recall what she had read in books about dazzling tricks with the cape.