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A Perfect Day for Bananafish

There were ninety-seven New York advertising men in the hotel, and, the way they were monopolizing the long-distance lines, the girl in 507 had to wait from noon till almost two-thirty to get her call through. She used the time, though. She read an article in a women's pocket-size magazine, called "Sex Is Fun—or Hell." She washed her comb and brush. She took the spot out of the skirt of her beige suit. She moved the button on her Saks blouse. She tweezed out two freshly surfaced hairs in her mole. When the operator finally rang her room, she was sitting on the window seat and had almost finished putting lacquer on the nails of her left hand.

She was a girl who for a ringing phone dropped exactly nothing. She looked as if her phone had been ringing continually ever since she had reached puberty.

With her little lacquer brush, while the phone was ringing, she went over the nail of her little finger, accentuating the line of the moon. She then replaced the cap on the bottle of lacquer and, standing up, passed her left—the wet—hand back and forth through the air. With her dry hand, she picked up a congested ashtrey from the window seat and carried it with her over to the night table, on which the phone stood. She sat down on one of the made-up twin beds and—it was the fifth or sixth ring—picked up the phone.

"Hello," she said, keeping the fingers of her left hand outstretched and away from her white silk dressing gown, which was all that she was wearing, except mules—her rings were in the bathroom.

"I have your call to New York now, Mrs. Glass," the operator said.

"Thank you," said the girl, and made room on the night table for the ashtrey.

A woman's voice came through. "Muriel? Is that you?"

The girl turned the receiver slightly away from her ear.

"Yes, Mother. How are you?" she said.
“I’ve been worried to death about you. Why haven’t you phoned? Are you all right?”
“I tried to get you last night and the night before. The phone here’s been—”
“Are you all right, Muriel?”
The girl increased the angle between the receiver and her ear. “I’m fine. I’m hot. This is the hottest day they’ve had in Florida in—”
“Why haven’t you called me? I’ve been worried to—”
“Mother, darling, don’t yell at me. I can hear you beautifully,” said the girl. “I called you twice last night. Once just after—”
“I told your father you’d probably call last night. But, no, he had to—Are you all right, Muriel? Tell me the truth.”
“I’m fine. Stop asking me that, please.”
“When did you get there?”
“I don’t know. Wednesday morning, early.”
“Who drove?”
“He did,” said the girl. “And don’t get excited. He drove very nicely. I was amazed.”
“He drove? Muriel, you gave me your word of—”
“Mother,” the girl interrupted, “I just told you. He drove very nicely. Under fifty the whole way, as a matter of fact.”
“Did he try any of that funny business with the trees?”
“I said he drove very nicely, Mother. Now, please. I asked him to stay close to the white line, and all, and he knew what I meant, and he did. He was even trying not to look at the trees—you could tell. Did Daddy get the car fixed, incidentally?”
“Not yet. They want four hundred dollars, just to—”
“Mother, Seymour told Daddy that he’d pay for it. There’s no reason for—”
“Well, we’ll see. How did he behave—in the car and all?”
“All right,” said the girl.
“Did he keep calling you that awful—”
“No. He has something new now.”
“What?”
“Oh, what’s the difference, Mother?”
“Muriel, I want to know. Your father—”
“All right, all right. He calls me Miss Spiritual Tramp of 1948,” the girl said, and giggled.
“It isn’t funny, Muriel. It isn’t funny at all. It’s horrible. It’s sad, actually. When I think how—”
“Mother,” the girl interrupted, “listen to me. You remem-
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you. Your father wanted to wire you last night to come home, as a matter of fact—"
"I'm not coming home right now, Mother. So relax."
"Muriel. My word of honor. Dr. Sivetski said Seymour may completely lose control—"
"I just got here, Mother. This is the first vacation I've had in years, and I'm not going to just pack everything and come home," said the girl. "I couldn't travel now anyway. I'm so sunburned I can hardly move."
"You're badly sunburned? Didn't you use that jar of Bronze I put in your bag? I put it right—"
"I used it. I'm burned anyway."
"That's terrible. Where are you burned?"
"All over, dear, all over."
"That's terrible."
"I'll live."
"Tell me, did you talk to this psychiatrist?"
"Well, sort of," said the girl.
"What'd he say? Where was Seymour when you talked to him?"
"In the Ocean Room, playing the piano. He's played the piano both nights we've been here."
"Well, what'd he say?"
"Oh, nothing much. He spoke to me first. I was sitting next to him at Bingo last night, and he asked me if that wasn't my husband playing the piano in the other room. I said yes, it was, and he asked me if Seymour's been sick or something. So I said—"
"Why'd he ask that?"
"I don't know, Mother. I guess because he's so pale and all," said the girl. "Anyway, after Bingo he and his wife asked me if I wouldn't like to join them for a drink. So I did. His wife was horrible. You remember that awful dinner dress we saw in Bonwit's window? The one you said you'd have to have a tiny, tiny—"
"The green?"
"She had it on. And all hips. She kept asking me if Seymour's related to that Suzanne Glass that has that place on Madison Avenue—the millinery."
"What'd he say, though? The doctor."
"Oh. Well, nothing much, really. I mean we were in the bar and all. It was terribly noisy."
"Yes, but did—did you tell him what he tried to do with Granny's chair?"

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"No, Mother. I didn't go into details very much," said the girl. "I'll probably get a chance to talk to him again. He's in the bar all day long."
"Did he say he thought there was a chance he might get—you know—funny or anything? Do something to you?"
"Not exactly," said the girl. "He had to have more facts, Mother. They have to know about your childhood—all that stuff. I told you, we could hardly talk, it was so noisy in there."
"Well, how's your blue coat?"
"All right. I had some of the padding taken out."
"How are the clothes this year?"
"Terrible. But out of this world. You see sequins—everything," said the girl.
"How's your room?"
"All right. Just all right, though. We couldn't get the room we had before the war," said the girl. "The people are awful this year. You should see what sits next to us in the dining room. At the next table. They look as if they drove down in a truck."
"Well, it's that way all over. How's your ballerina?"
"It's too long. I told you it was too long."
"Muriel, I'm only going to ask you once more—are you really all right?"
"Yes, Mother," said the girl. "For the ninetieth time."
"And you don't want to come home?"
"No, Mother."
"Your father said last night that he'd be more than willing to pay for it if you'd go away someplace by yourself and think things over. You could take a lovely cruise. We both thought—"
"No, thanks," said the girl, and uncrossed her legs. "Mother, this call is costing a fortune."
"When I think of how you waited for that boy all through the war—I mean when you think of all those crazy little wives who—"
"Mother," said the girl, "we'd better hang up. Seymour may come in any minute."
"Where is he?"
"On the beach."
"On the beach? By himself? Does he behave himself on the beach?"
"Mother," said the girl, "you talk about him as though he were a raving manic—"
"I said nothing of the kind, Muriel."
"Well, you sound that way. I mean all he does is lie there. He won't take his bathrobe off."
"He won't take his bathrobe off? Why not?"
"I don't know. I guess because he's so pale."
"My goodness, he needs the sun. Can't you make him?"
"You know Seymour," said the girl, and crossed her legs again. "He says he doesn't want a lot of fools looking at his tattoo."
"He doesn't have any tattoo! Did he get one in the Army?"
"No, Mother. No dear," said the girl, and stood up.
"Listen, I'll call you tomorrow, maybe."
"Muriel. Now, listen to me."
"Yes, Mother," said the girl, putting her weight on her right leg.
"Call me the instant he does, or says, anything at all funny—you know what I mean. Do you hear me?"
"Mother, I'm not afraid of Seymour."
"Muriel, I want you to promise me."
"All right, I promise. Goodbye, Mother," said the girl. "My love to Daddy." She hung up.

"See more glass," said Sybil Carpenter, who was staying at the hotel with her mother. "Did you see more glass?"
"Pussycat, stop saying that. It's driving Mommy absolutely crazy. Hold still, please."

Mrs. Carpenter was putting sun-tan oil on Sybil's shoulders, spreading it down over the delicate, winglike blades of her back. Sybil was sitting insecurely on a huge, inflated beach ball, facing the ocean. She was wearing a canary-yellow two-piece bathing suit, one piece of which she would not actually be needing for another nine or ten years.

"It was really just an ordinary silk handkerchief—you could see when you got up close," said the woman in the beach chair beside Mrs. Carpenter's. "I wish I knew how she tied it. It was really darling."
"It sounds darling," Mrs. Carpenter agreed. "Sybil, hold still, pussy."

"Did you see more glass?" said Sybil.

Mrs. Carpenter sighed. "All right," she said. She replaced the cap on the sun-tan oil bottle. "Now run and play, pussy.

Mommy's going up to the hotel and have a Martini with Mrs. Hubbel. I'll bring you the olive."

Set loose, Sybil immediately ran down to the flat part of the beach and began to walk in the direction of Fisherman's Pavilion. Stopping only to sink a foot in a soggy, collapsed castle, she was soon out of the area reserved for guests of the hotel. She walked for about a quarter of a mile and then suddenly broke into an oblique run up the soft part of the beach. She stopped short when she reached the place where a young man was lying on his back.

"Are you going in the water, see more glass?" she said.

The young man started, his right hand going to the lapels of his terry-cloth robe. He turned over on his stomach, letting a sausaged towel fall away from his eyes, and squinted up at Sybil.

"Hey. Hello, Sybil."

"Are you going in the water?"

"I was waiting for you," said the young man. "What's new?"

"What?" said Sybil.

"What's new? What's on the program?"

"My daddy's coming tomorrow on a nairiplane," Sybil said, kicking sand.

"Not in my face, baby," the young man said, putting his hand on Sybil's ankle. "Well, it's about time he got here, your daddy. I've been expecting him hourly. Hourly."

"Where's the lady?" Sybil said.

"The lady?" The young man brushed some sand out of his thin hair. "That's hard to say, Sybil. She may be in any one of a thousand places. At the hairdresser's. Having her hair dyed mink. Or making dolls for poor children, in her room." Lying prone now, he made two fists, set one on top of the other, and rested his chin on the top one. "Ask me something else, Sybil," he said. "That's a fine bathing suit you have on. If there's one thing I like, it's a blue bathing suit."

Sybil stared at him, then looked down at her protruding stomach. "This is a yellow," she said. "This is a yellow."

"It is? Come a little closer."

Sybil took a step forward.

"You're absolutely right. What a fool I am."

"Are you going in the water?" Sybil said.
“I'm seriously considering it. I'm giving it plenty of thought, Sybil, you'll be glad to know.”

Sybil prodded the rubber float that the young man sometimes used as a head-rest. “It needs air,” she said.

“You're right. It needs more air than I'm willing to admit.” He took away his fists and let his chin rest on the sand. “Sybil,” he said, “you're looking fine. It's good to see you. Tell me about yourself.” He reached in front of him and took both of Sybil's ankles in his hands. “I'm Capricorn,” he said. “What are you?”

“Sharon Lipschutz says you let her sit on the piano seat with you,” Sybil said.

“Sharon Lipschutz said that?”

Sybil nodded vigorously.

He let go of her ankles, drew in his hands, and laid the side of his face on his right forearm. “Well,” he said, “you know how those things happen, Sybil. I was sitting there, playing. And you were nowhere in sight. And Sharon Lipschutz came over and sat down next to me. I couldn't push her off, could I?”

“Yeah.”

“Oh, no. No, I couldn't do that,” said the young man. “I'll tell you what I did do, though.”

“What?”

“I pretended she was you.”

Sybil immediately stopped and began to dig in the sand.

“Let's go in the water,” she said.

“All right,” said the young man. “I think I can work it in.”

“Next time, push her off,” Sybil said.

“Push who off?”

“Sharon Lipschutz.”

“Ah, Sharon Lipschutz,” said the young man. “How that name comes up. Mixing memory and desire.” He suddenly got to his feet. He looked at the ocean. “Sybil,” he said, “I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll see if we can catch a banana fish.”

“A what?”

“A banana fish,” he said, and undid the belt of his robe.

He took off the robe. His shoulders were white and narrow, and his trunks were royal blue. He folded the robe, first lengthwise, then in thirds. He unrolled the towel he had used over his eyes, spread it out on the sand, and then laid the folded robe on top of it. He bent over, picked up the towel, and secured it under his right arm. Then, with his left hand, he took Sybil's hand.

“Sharon said you'd never stop. I never saw so many tigers.”

“Only six,” Sybil said.

“Only six!” said the young man. “Do you call that only?”

“Do you like wax?” Sybil asked.

“Do I like what?” asked the young man.

“Wax.”

“Very much. Don't you?”

Sybil nodded. “Do you like olives?” she asked.


“Do you like Sharon Lipschutz?” Sybil asked.

“Yes. Yes, I do,” said the young man. “What I like particularly about her is that she never does anything mean to little dogs in the lobby of the hotel. That little toy bull that belongs to that lady from Canada, for instance. You
water soaked Sybil’s blond hair, but her scream was full of pleasure.

With her hand, when the float was level again, she wiped away a flat, wet band of hair from her eyes, and reported, “I just saw one.”

“Saw what, my love?”

“A bananafish.”

“My God, no!” said the young man. “Did he have any bananas in his mouth?”

“Yes,” said Sybil. “Six.”

The young man suddenly picked up one of Sybil’s wet feet, which were drooping over the end of the float, and kissed the arch.

“Hey!” said the owner of the foot, turning around.

“Hey, yourself! We’re going in now. You had enough?”

“No!”

“Sorry,” he said, and pushed the float toward shore until Sybil got off it. He carried it the rest of the way.

“Goodbye,” said Sybil, and ran without regret in the direction of the hotel.

The young man put on his robe, closed the lapels tight, and jammed his towel into his pocket. He picked up the slimy wet, cumbersome float and put it under his arm. He plodded alone through the soft, hot sand toward the hotel.

On the sub-main floor of the hotel, which the management directed bathers to use, a woman with zinc salve on her nose got into the elevator with the young man.

“I see you’re looking at my feet,” he said to her when the car was in motion.

“I beg your pardon?” said the woman.

“I said I see you’re looking at my feet.”

“I beg your pardon. I happened to be looking at the floor,” said the woman, and faced the doors of the car.

“If you want to look at my feet, say so,” said the young man. “But don’t be a God-damned sneak about it.”

“Let me out of here, please,” the woman said quickly to the girl operating the car.

The car doors opened and the woman got out without looking back.

“I have two normal feet and I can’t see the slightest God-damned reason why anybody should stare at them,” said the
young man. "Five, please." He took his room key out of his robe pocket.

He got off at the fifth floor, walked down the hall, and let himself into 507. The room smelled of new calf skin luggage and nail-lacquer remover.

He glanced at the girl lying asleep on one of the twin beds. Then he went over to one of the pieces of luggage, opened it, and from under a pile of shorts and undershirts he took out an Ortgies calibre 7.65 automatic. He released the magazine, looked at it, then reinserted it. He cocked the piece. Then he went over and sat down on the unoccupied twin bed, looked at the girl, aimed the pistol, and fired a bullet through his right temple.

**Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut**

**It was almost three o'clock** when Mary Jane finally found Eloise's house. She explained to Eloise, who had come out to the driveway to meet her, that everything had been absolutely perfect, that she had remembered the way exactly, until she had turned off the Merrick Parkway. Eloise said, "Merrick Parkway, baby," and reminded Mary Jane that she had found the house twice before, but Mary Jane just wailed something ambiguous, something about her box of Kleenex, and rushed back to her convertible. Eloise turned up the collar of her camel's-hair coat, put her back to the wind, and waited. Mary Jane was back in a minute using a leaf of Kleenex and still looking upset, even fouled. Eloise said cheerfully that the whole damn lunch was burned—sweetbreads, everything—but Mary Jane said she'd eaten anyway, on the road. As the two walked toward the house, Eloise asked Mary Jane how it happened she had the day off. Mary Jane said she didn't have the whole day off; it was just that Mr. Weynburg had a hernia and was home in Larchmont, and she had to bring him his mail and take a couple of letters every afternoon. She asked Eloise, "Just exactly what is a hernia, anyway?" Eloise, dropping her cigarette on the soiled snow underfoot, said she didn't actually know but that

Mary Jane didn't have to worry much about getting one. Mary Jane said, "Oh," and the girls entered the house. Twenty minutes later, they were finishing their first highball in the living room and were talking in the manner peculiar, probably limited, to former college roommates. They had an even stronger bond between them; neither of them had graduated. Eloise had left college in the middle of her sophomore year, in 1942, a week after she had been caught with a soldier in a closed elevator on the third floor of her residence hall. Mary Jane had left—same year, same class, almost the same month—to marry an aviation cadet stationed in Jacksonville, Florida, a lean, air-minded boy from Dill, Mississippi, who had spent two of the three months Mary Jane had been married to him in jail for stabbing an M.P.

"No," Eloise was saying. "It was actually red." She was stretched out on the couch, her thin but very pretty legs crossed at the ankles.

"I heard it was blond," Mary Jane repeated. She was seated in the blue straight chair. "Wuddayacallit wore up and down it was blond."

"Uh-uh. Definitely." Eloise yawned. "I was almost in the room with her when she dyed it. What's the matter? Aren't there any cigarettes in there?"

"It's all right. I have a whole pack," Mary Jane said. "Somewhere." She searched through her handbag.

"That dopey maid," Eloise said without moving from the couch. "I dropped two brand-new cartons in front of her nose about an hour ago. She'll be in, any minute, to ask me what to do with them. Where the hell was I?"

"Thieringer," Mary Jane prompted, lighting one of her own cigarettes.

"Oh, yeah. I remember exactly. She dyed it the night before she married that Frank Henke. You remember him at all?"

"Just sort of. Little ole private? Terribly unattractive?"

"Unattractive. God! He looked like an unwashed Bela Lugosi."

Mary Jane threw back her head and roared. "Marvellous," she said, coming back into drinking position.

"Gimme your glass," Eloise said, swinging her stockinged feet to the floor and standing up. "Honestly, that dope. I did everything but get Lew to make love to her to get her
to come out here with us. Now I'm sorry I—Where'd you
get that thing?"
"This," said Mary Jane, touching a cameo brooch at her
throat. "I had it at school, for goodness sake. It was Moth-
er's."
"God," Eloise said, with the empty glasses in her hands.
"I don't have one damn thing holy to wear. If Lew's mother
ever dies—ha, ha—she'll probably leave me some old mono-
grammed icepick or something."
"How're you getting along with her these days, anyway?"
"Don't be funny," Eloise said on her way to the kitchen.
"This is positively the last one for me!" Mary Jane called
after her.
"Like hell it is. Who called who? And who came two hours
late? You're gonna stick around till I'm sick of you. The
hell with your lousy career."
Mary Jane threw back her head and roared again, but
Eloise had already gone into the kitchen.
With little or no wherewithal for being left alone in a room,
Mary Jane stood up and walked over to the window. She
drew aside the curtain and leaned her wrist on one of the
crosspieces between panes, but, feeling grit, she removed it,
rubbed it clean with her other hand, and stood up more
erectly. Outside, the filthy slush was visibly turning to ice.
Mary Jane let go the curtain and wandered back to the blue
chair, passing two heavily stocked bookcases without glanc-
ing at any of the titles. Seated, she opened her handbag and
used the mirror to look at her teeth. She closed her lips and
ran her tongue hard over her upper front teeth, then took
another look.
"It's getting so icy out," she said, turning, "God, that was
quick. Didn't you put any soda in them?"
Eloise, with a fresh drink in each hand, stopped short. She
extended both index fingers, gun-muzzle style, and said,
"Don't nobody move. I got the whole damn place sur-
rounded."
Mary Jane laughed and put away her mirror.
Eloise came forward with the drinks. She placed Mary
Jane's insecurely in its coaster but kept her own in hand.
She stretched out on the couch again. "Wuddaya think she's
doing out there?" she said. "She's sitting on her big, black
butt reading 'The Robe.' I dropped the ice trays taking them
tout. She actually looked up annoyed."
"This is my last. And I mean it," Mary Jane said, picking
up her drink. "Oh, listen! You know who I saw last week?
On the main floor of Lord & Taylor's?"
"Mm-hm," said Eloise, adjusting a pillow under her head.
"Akim Tamiroff."
"Who?" said Mary Jane. "Who's he?"
"Akim Tamiroff. He's in the movies. He always says, 'You
make beeg jokes—hah? I love him.' . . . There isn't one
damn pillow in this house that I can stand. Who'd you see?"
"Jackson. She was—"
"Which one?"
"I don't know. The one that was in our Psych class, that
always—"
"Both of them were in our Psych class."
"Well. The one with the terrific—"
"Marcia Louise. I ran into her once, too. She talk your
ear off?"
"God, yes. But you know what she told me, though? Dr.
Whiting's dead. She said she had a letter from Barbara Hill
saying Whiting got cancer last summer and died and all.
She only weighed sixty-two pounds. When she died. Isn't that
terrible?"
"No."
"Eloise, you're getting hard as nails."
"Mm. What else'd she say?"
"Oh, she just got back from Europe. Her husband was
stationed in Germany or something, and she was with him.
They had a forty-seven-room house, she said, just with one
other couple, and about ten servants. Her own horse, and
the groom they had, used to be Hitler's own private riding
master or something. Oh, and she started to tell me how she
almost got raped by a colored soldier. Right on the main floor
of Lord & Taylor's she started to tell me—you know Jack-
son. She said he was her husband's chauffeur, and he was
driving her to market or something one morning. She said
she was so scared she didn't even—"
"Wait just a second." Eloise raised her head and her voice.
"Is that you, Ramona?"
"Yes," a small child's voice answered.
"Close the front door after you, please," Eloise called.
"Is that Ramona? Oh, I'm dying to see her. Do you realize
I haven't seen her since she had her—"
"Ramona," Eloise shouted, with her eyes shut, "go out in
the kitchen and let Grace take your galoshes off."
"All right," said Ramona. "C'mon, Jimmy."
Oh, I'm dying to see her," Mary Jane said. "Oh, God! Look what I did. I'm terribly sorry, El."
"Leave it. Leave it," said Eloise. "I hate this damn rug anyway. I'll get you another."
"No, look. I have more than half left!" Mary Jane held up her glass.
"Sure?" said Eloise. "Give me a cigarette."
Eloise struck a light. "Akh Tamiroff."
Mary Jane extended her pack of cigarettes, saying, "Oh, I'm dying to see her. Who does she look like now?"
"No, seriously."
"Lew. She looks like Lew. When his mother comes over, the three of them look like triplets." Without sitting up, Eloise reached for a stack of ashtrays on the far side of the cigarette table. She successfully lifted off the top one and set it down on her stomach. "What I need is a cocker spaniel or something," she said. "Somebody that looks like me."
"How're her eyes now?" Mary Jane asked. "I mean, they're not any worse or anything, are they?"
"God! Not that I know of."
"Can she see at all without her glasses? I mean if she gets up in the night to go to the john or something?"
"She won't tell anybody. She's lousy with secrets."
Mary Jane turned around in her chair. "Well, hello, Ramona," she said. "Oh, what a pretty dress!" She set down her drink. "I'll bet you don't even remember me, Ramona."
"Certainly she does. Who's the lad, Ramona?"
"Mary Jane," said Ramona, and scratched herself. "Marvellous!" said Mary Jane. "Ramona, will you give me a little kiss?"
"Stop that," Eloise said to Ramona.
Ramona stopped scratching herself.
"Will you give me a little kiss, Ramona?" Mary Jane asked again.
"I don't like to kiss people," Eloise snorted, and asked, "Where's Jimmy?"
"He's here."
"Who's Jimmy?" Mary Jane asked Eloise.
"Oh, God! Her beau. Goes where she goes. Does what she does. All very hoopla."
"Really?" said Mary Jane enthusiastically. She leaned forward. "Do you have a beau, Ramona?"
Ramona's eyes, behind thick, counter-myopia lenses, did not reflect even the smallest part of Mary Jane's enthusiasm.

Mary Jane asked you a question, Ramona," Eloise said. Ramona inserted a finger into her small, broad nose. "Stop that," Eloise said. "Mary Jane asked you if you have a beau."
"Yes," said Ramona, busy with her nose. 
"Well, I think that's just wonderful," Mary Jane said.
"What's his name? Will you tell me his name, Ramona? Or is it a big secret?"
"Jimmy," Ramona said.
"Jimmy? Oh, I love the name Jimmy! Jimmy what, Ramona?"
"Jimmy Jimmereeno," said Ramona.
"Stand still," said Eloise.
"Well! That's quite a name. Where is Jimmy? Will you tell me, Ramona?"
"Here," said Ramona.
Mary Jane looked around, then looked back at Ramona, smiling as provocatively as possible. "Here where, honey?"
"Here," said Ramona. "I'm holding his hand."
"I don't get it," Mary Jane said to Eloise, who was finishing her drink.
"Don't look at me," said Eloise.
"He won't talk to you," said Eloise. "Ramona, tell Mary Jane about Jimmy."
"Tell her what?"
"Stand up, please. . . Tell Mary Jane how Jimmy looks."
"He has green eyes and black hair."
"What else?"
"No mommy and no daddy."
"What else?"
"No freckles."
"What else?"
"A sword."
"What else?"
"I don't know," said Ramona, and began to scratch herself again.
Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut

"He sounds beautiful," Mary Jane said, and leaned even farther forward in her chair. "Ramona. Tell me. Did Jimmy take off his galoshes, too, when you came in?"
"He has boots," Ramona said.
"Marvellous," Mary Jane said to Eloise.
"You just think so. I get it all day long. Jimmy eats with her. Takes a bath with her. Sleeps with her. She sleeps way over to one side of the bed, so's not to roll over and hurt him."
Looking absorbed and delighted with this information, Mary Jane took in her lower lip, then released it to ask, "Where'd he get that name, though?"
"Jimmy Jimmerino? God knows."
"Probably from some little boy in the neighborhood."
Eloise, yawning, shook her head. "There are no little boys in the neighborhood. No children at all. They call me Fertile Fanny behind my—"
"Mommy," Ramona said, "can I go out and play?"
Eloise looked at her. "You just came in," she said. "Jimmy wants to go out again."
"Why, may I ask?"
"He left his sword outside."
"Can I have this?" Ramona said, taking a burned match out of the ashtray. "May I have this. Yes. Stay out of the street, please."
Eloise lunged suddenly to her feet. "Gimme your glass," she said.
"No, really, El. I'm supposed to be in Larchmont. I mean Mr. Weynburg's so sweet, I hate to—"
"Call up and say you were killed. Let go of that damn glass."
"No, honestly, El. I mean it's getting so terribly icy. I have hardly any anti-freeze in the car. I mean if I don't—"
"Let it freeze. Go phone. Say you're dead," said Eloise. "Gimme that."
"Well . . . Where's the phone?"
"It went," said Eloise, carrying the empty glasses and walking toward the dining room, "—this-a-way." She stopped short on the floor board between the living room and the dining room and executed a grind and a bump. Mary Jane giggled.

"I mean you didn't really know Walt," said Eloise at a quarter of five, lying on her back on the floor, a drink balanced upright on her small-breasted chest. "He was the only boy I ever knew that could make me laugh. I mean really laugh. She looked over at Mary Jane. "You remember that night—our last year—when that crazy Louise Herman-son busted in the room wearing that black brassiere she bought in Chicago?"
Mary Jane giggled. She was lying on her stomach on the couch, her chin on the armrest, facing Eloise. Her drink was on the floor, within reach.
"Well, he could make me laugh that way," Eloise said.
"He could do it when he talked to me. He could do it over the phone. He could even do it in a letter. And the best thing about it was that he didn't even try to be funny—he just was funny." She turned her head slightly toward Mary Jane.
"Hey, how 'bout throwing me a cigarette?"
"I can't reach 'em," Mary Jane said.
"Nuts to you," Eloise looked up at the ceiling again. "Once," she said, "I fell down. I used to wait for him at the bus stop, right outside the PX, and he showed up late one, just as the bus was pulling out. We started to run for it, and I fell and twisted my ankle. He said, 'Poor Uncle Wiggly.' He meant my ankle. Poor old Uncle Wiggly, he called it. . . . God, he was nice."
"Doesn't Lew have a sense of humor?" Mary Jane said.
"What?"
"Doesn't Lew have a sense of humor?"
"Oh, God! Who knows? Yes. I guess so. He laughs at cartoons and stuff." Eloise raised her head, lifted her drink from her chest, and drank from it.
"Well," Mary Jane said. "That isn't everything. I mean that isn't everything."
"What isn't?"
"Oh . . . you know. Laughing and stuff."
"Who says it isn't?" Eloise said. "Listen, if you're not gonna be a nun or something, you might as well laugh."
Mary Jane giggled. "You're terrible," she said.
"Ah, God, he was nice," Eloise said. "He was either funny or sweet. Not that damn little-boy sweet, either. It was a special kind of sweet. You know what he did once?"
"Uh-uh," Mary Jane said.
"We were on the train going from Trenton to New York—it was just right after he was drafted. It was cold in the
car and I had my coat sort of over us. I remember I had Joyce Morrow's cardigan underneath—you remember that darling blue cardigan she had?"

Mary Jane nodded, but Eloise didn't look over to get the nod.

"Well, he sort of had his hand on my stomach. You know. Anyway, all of a sudden he said my stomach was so beautiful he wished some officer would come up and order him to stick his other hand through the window. He said he wanted to do what was fair. Then he took his hand away and told the conductor to throw his shoulders back. He told him if there was one thing he couldn't stand it was a man who didn't look proud of his uniform. The conductor just told him to go back to sleep." Eloise reflected a moment, then said, "It wasn't always what he said, but how he said it. You know?"

"Have you ever told Lew about him—I mean at all?"

"Oh," Eloise said, "I started to, once. But the first thing he asked me was what his rank was."

"What was his rank?"

"Ha!" said Eloise.

"No, I just meant—"

Eloise laughed suddenly, from her diaphragm. "You know what he said once? He said he felt he was advancing in the Army, but in a different direction from everybody else. He said that when he'd get his first promotion, instead of getting stripes he'd have his sleeves taken away from him. He said when he'd get to be a general, he'd be stark naked. All he'd be wearing would be a little infantry button on his navel."

Eloise looked over at Mary Jane, who wasn't laughing. "Don't you think that's funny?"

"Yes. Only, why don't you tell Lew about him sometime, though?

"Why? Because he's too damn unintelligent, that's why," Eloise said. "Besides. Listen to me, career girl. If you ever get married again, don't tell your husband anything. Do you hear me?"

"Why?" said Mary Jane.

"Because I say so, that's why," said Eloise. "They wanna think you spent your whole life vomiting every time a boy came near you. I'm not kidding, either. Oh, you can tell them stuff. But never honestly. I mean never honestly. If you tell 'em you once knew a handsome boy, you gotta say in the same breath that he was too handsome. And if you tell 'em you knew a witty boy, you gotta tell 'em he was kind of a smart aleck, though, or a wise guy. If you don't, they hit you over the head with the poor boy every time you get a chance." Eloise paused to drink from her glass and to think. "'Oh,' she said, 'they'll listen very maturely and all that. They'll even look intelligent as hell. But don't let it fool you. Believe me. You'll go through hell if you ever give 'em any credit for intelligence. Take my word.'"

Mary Jane, looking depressed, raised her chin from the armrest of the couch. For a change, she supported her chin on her forearm. She thought over Eloise's advice. "You can't call Lew not intelligent," she said aloud.

"Who can?"

"I mean isn't he intelligent?" Mary Jane said innocently.

"Oh," said Eloise, "what's the use of talking? Let's drop it. I'll just depress you. Shut me up."

"Well, wudga marry him for, then?" Mary Jane said.

"Oh, God! I don't know. He told me he loved Jane Austen. He told me her books meant a great deal to him. That's exactly what he said. I found out after we were married that he hadn't even read one of her books. You know who his favorite author is?"

Mary Jane shook her head.

"L. Manning Vines. Ever hear of him?"

"Uh-uh."

"Neither did I. Neither did anybody else. He wrote a book about four men that starved to death in Alaska. Lew doesn't remember the name of it, but it's the most beautifully written book he's ever read. Christ! He isn't even honest enough to come right out and say he liked it because it was about four guys that starved to death in an igloo or something. He has to say it was beautifully written."

"You're too critical," Mary Jane said. "I mean you're too critical. Maybe it was a good—"

"Take my word for it, it couldn't've been," Eloise said.

She thought for a moment, then added, "At least, you have a job. I mean at least you—"

"But listen, though," said Mary Jane. "Do you think you'll ever tell him Walt was killed, even? I mean he wouldn't be jealous, would he, if he knew Walt was—you know. Killed and everything."

"Oh, lover! You poor, innocent little career girl," said Eloise. "He'd be worse. He'd be a ghoul. Listen. All he knows is that I went around with somebody named Walt—some
Wisecracking G.I. The last thing I'd do would be to tell him he was killed. But the last thing. And if I did—which I wouldn't—but if I did, I'd tell him he was killed in action.

Mary Jane pushed her chin farther forward over the edge of her forearm.

"El ..." she said.

"Uh?"

"Why won't you tell me how he was killed? I swear I won't tell anybody. Honestly. Please."

"No."

"Please. Honestly. I won't tell anybody."

Eloise finished her drink and replaced the empty glass upright on her chest. "You'd tell Akim Tamiroff," she said.

"No, I wouldn't! I mean I wouldn't tell any—"

"Oh," said Eloise, "his regiment was resting someplace. It was between battles or something, this friend of his said that wrote me. Walt and some other boy were putting this little Japanese stove in a package. Some colonel wanted to send it home. Or they were taking it out of the package to rewrap it—I don't know exactly. Anyway, it was all full of gasoline and junk and it exploded in their faces. The other boy just lost an eye." Eloise began to cry. She put her hand around the empty glass on her chest to steady it.

Mary Jane slid off the couch and, on her knees, took three steps over to Eloise and began to stroke her forehead. "Don't cry, El. Don't cry."

"Who's crying?" Eloise said.

"I know, but don't. I mean it isn't worth it or anything."

The front door opened.

"That's Ramona back," Eloise said nasally. "Do me a favor. Go out in the kitchen and tell whosis to give her dinner early. Willya?"

"All right, if you promise not to cry, though."

"I promise. Go on. I don't feel like going out to that damn kitchen right this minute."

Mary Jane stood up, losing and recovering her balance, and left the room.

She was back in less than two minutes, with Ramona running ahead of her. Ramona ran as flat-footed as possible, trying to get the maximum noise out of her open galoshes.

"She wouldn't let me take her galoshes off," Mary Jane said.

Eloise, still lying on her back on the floor, was using her handkerchief. She spoke into it, addressing Ramona. "Go out and tell Grace to take your galoshes off. You know you're not supposed to come into the—"

"She's in the lavatory," Ramona said.

Eloise put away her handkerchief and hoisted herself to a sitting position. "Gimme your foot," she said. "Sit down, first, please. ... Not there—here. God!

On her knees, looking under the table for her cigarettes, Mary Jane said, "Hey. Guess what happened to Jimmy."

"No idea. Other foot. Other foot."

"He got runned over," said Mary Jane. "Isn't that tragic?"

"I saw Skipper with a bone," Ramona told Eloise.

"What happened to Jimmy?" Eloise said to her.

"He got runned over and killed. I saw Skipper with a bone, and he wouldn't—"

"Gimme your forehead a second," Eloise said. She reached out and felt Ramona's forehead. "You feel a little feverish. Go tell Grace you're to have your dinner upstairs. Then you're to go straight to bed. I'll be up later. Go on, now, please. Take these with you."

Ramona slowly giant-stepped her way out of the room.

"I threw me one," Eloise said to Mary Jane. "Let's have another drink."

Mary Jane carried a cigarette over to Eloise. "Isn't that something? About Jimmy? What an imagination!"

"Mm. You go get the drinks, huh? And bring the bottle ... I don't wanna go out there. The whole damn place smells like orange juice."

At five minutes past seven, the phone rang. Eloise got up from the window seat and felt in the dark for her shoes. She couldn't find them. In her stocking feet, she walked steadily, almost languidly, toward the phone. The ringing didn't disturb Mary Jane, who was asleep on the couch, face down.

"Hello," Eloise said into the phone, without having turned the overhead light on. "Look, I can't meet you. Mary Jane's here. She's got her car parked right in front of me and she can't find the key. I can't get out. We spent about twenty minutes looking for it in the wuddayacallit—the snow and stuff. Maybe you can get a lift with Dick and Mildred." She listened. "Oh. Well, that's tough, kid. Why don't you boys
form a platoon and march home? You can say that but-hope-hoop-hoop business. You can be the big shot." She listened again. "I'm not funny," she said. "Really, I'm not. It's just my face." She hung up.

She walked, less steadily, back into the living room. At the window seat, she poured what was left in the bottle of Scotch into her glass. It made about a finger. She drank it off, shivered, and sat down.

When Grace turned on the light in the dining room, Eloise jumped. Without getting up, she called in to Grace, "You better not serve until eight, Grace. Mr. Wengler'll be a little late."

Grace appeared in the dining-room light but didn't come forward. "The lady go?" she said.

"She's resting."

"Oh," said Grace. "Miz Wengler, I wondered if it'd be all right if my husband passed the evenin' here. I got plenty room in my room, and he don't have to be back in New York till tomorrow mornin', and it's so bad out."

"Your husband? Where is he?"

"Well, right now," Grace said, "he's in the kitchen."

"Well, I'm afraid he can't spend the night here, Grace."

"Ma'am?"

"I say I'm afraid he can't spend the night here. I'm not running a hotel."

Grace stood for a moment, then said, "Yes, Ma'am," and went out to the kitchen.

Eloise left the dining room and climbed the stairs, which were lighted very faintly by the overglow from the dining room. One of Ramona's galoshes was lying on the landing. Eloise picked it up and threw it, with as much force as possible, over the side of the banister; it struck the foyer floor with a violent thump.

She snapped on the light in Ramona's room and held onto the switch, as if for support. She stood still for a moment looking at Ramona. Then she let go of the light switch and went quickly over to the bed.

"Ramona. Wake up. Wake up."

Ramona was sleeping far over on one side of the bed, her right buttock off the edge. Her glasses were on a little Donald Duck night table, folded neatly and laid stems down.

"Ramona!"

The child awoke with a sharp intake of breath. Her eyes opened wide, but she narrowed them almost at once. "Mommymommy?"

"I thought you told me Jimmy Jimmereeno was run over and killed."

"What?"

"You heard me," Eloise said. "Why are you sleeping way over here?"

"Because," said Ramona.

"Because why? Ramona, I don't feel like—"

"Because I don't want to hurt Mickey."

"Who?"

"Mickey," said Ramona, rubbing her nose. "Mickey Mickleooloo." Eloise raised her voice to a shriek. "You get in the center of that bed. Go on."

Ramona, extremely frightened, just looked up at Eloise. "All right," Eloise grabbed Ramona's ankles and half lifted and half pulled her over to the middle of the bed. Ramona neither struggled nor cried; she let herself be moved without actually submitting to it.

"Now go to sleep," Eloise said, breathing heavily. "Close your eyes. . . . You heard me, close them."

Ramona closed her eyes.

Eloise went over to the light switch and flicked it off. But she stood for a long time in the doorway. Then, suddenly, she rushed, in the dark, over to the night table, banging her knee against the foot of the bed, but too full of purpose to feel pain. She picked up Ramona's glasses and, holding them in both hands, pressed them against her cheek. Tears rolled down her face, wetting the lenses. "Poor Uncle Wiggly," she said over and over again. Finally, she put the glasses back on the night table, lenses down.

She stooped over, losing her balance, and began to touch in the blankets of Ramona's bed. Ramona was awake. She was crying and had been crying. Eloise kissed her wetly on the mouth and wiped the hair out of her eyes and then left the room.

She went downstairs, staggering now very badly, and wakened Mary Jane.

"Wussat? Who? Huh?" said Mary Jane, sitting bolt upright on the couch.

"Mary Jane. Listen. Please," Eloise said, sobbing. "You remember our freshman year, and I had that brown-and-
yellow dress I bought in Boise, and Miriam Ball told me nobody wore those kind of dresses in New York, and I cried all night?" Eloise shook Mary Jane's arm. "I was a nice girl," she pleaded, "wasn't I?"

**Just Before the War with the Eskimos**

FIVE STRAIGHT SATURDAY MORNINGS, Ginnie Mannox had played tennis at the East Side Courts with Selena Graff, a classmate at Miss Basheboar's. Ginnie openly considered Selena the biggest drip at Miss Basheboar's—a school ostensibly abounding with fair-sized dries—but at the same time she had never known anyone like Selena for bringing fresh cans of tennis balls. Selena's father made them or something. (At dinner one night, for the edification of the entire Mannox family, Ginnie had conjured up a vision of dinner over at the Graffs; it involved a perfect servant coming around to everyone's left with, instead of a glass of tomato juice, a can of tennis balls.) But this business of dropping Selena off at her house after tennis and then getting stuck—every single time—for the whole cab fare was getting on Ginnie's nerves. After all, taking the taxi home from the courts instead of the bus had been Selena's idea. On the fifth Saturday, however, as the cab started north in York Avenue, Ginnie suddenly spoke up.

"Hey, Selena . . ."

"What?" asked Selena, who was busy feeling the floor of the cab with her hand. "I can't find the cover to my racket!" she moaned.

Despite the warm May weather, both girls were wearing topcoats over their shorts.

"You put it in your pocket," Ginnie said. "Hey, listen—"

"Oh, God! You've saved my life!"

"Listen," said Ginnie, who wanted no part of Selena's gratitude.

"What?"

Ginnie decided to come right out with it. The cab was nearly at Selena's street. "I don't feel like getting stuck for the whole cab fare again today," she said. "I'm no millionaire, ya know."

Selena looked first amazed, then hurt. "Don't I always pay half?" she asked innocently.

"No," said Ginnie flatly. "You paid half the first Saturday. Way in the beginning of last month. And since then not even once. I don't wanna be ratty, but I'm actually existing on four-fifty a week. And out of that I have to—"

"I always bring the tennis balls, don't I?" Selena asked unpleasantly.

Sometimes Ginnie felt like killing Selena. "Your father makes them or something," she said. "They don't cost you anything. I have to pay for every single little—"

"All right, all right," Selena said loudly and with finality enough to give herself the upper hand. Looking bored, she went through the pockets of her coat. "I only have thirty-five cents," she said coldly. "Is that enough?"

"No. I'm sorry, but you owe me a dollar sixty-five. I've been keeping track of every—"

"I'll have to go upstairs and get it from my mother. Can't it wait till Monday? I could bring it to gym with me if it'd make you happy."

Selena's attitude defied clemency.

"No," Ginnie said. "I have to go to the movies tonight. I need it."

In hostile silence, the girls stared out of opposite windows until the cab pulled up in front of Selena's apartment house. Then Selena, who was seated nearest the curb, let herself out. Just barely leaving the cab door open, she walked briskly and oblivious, like visiting Hollywood royalty, into the building. Ginnie, her face burning, paid the fare. She then collected her tennis things—racket, hand towel, and sun hat—and followed Selena. At fifteen, Ginnie was about five feet nine in her 9-B tennis shoes, and as she entered the lobby, her self-conscious, rubber-soled awkwardness lent her a dangerous amateur quality. It made Selena prefer to watch the indicator dial over the elevator.

"That makes a dollar ninety you owe me," Ginnie said, striding up to the elevator.

Selena turned. "It may just interest you to know," she said, "that my mother is very ill."

"What's the matter with her?"

"She virtually has pneumonia, and if you think I'm going
Teddy

I'll exquisite day you, buddy, if you don't get down off that bag this minute. And I mean it," Mr. McArdle said. He was speaking from the inside twin bed—the bed farther way from the porthole. Viciously, with more of a whimper than a sigh, he foot-pushed his top sheet clear of his ankles, so though any kind of coverlet was suddenly too much for his sunburned, debilitated-looking body to bear. He was lying supine, in just the trousers of his pajamas, a lighted cigarette in his right hand. His head was propped up just enough to rest uncomfortably, almost masochistically, against the very base of the headboard. His pillow and ashtray were both on the floor, between his and Mrs. McArdle's bed. Without raising his body, he reached out a nude, inflamed skin, right arm and flicked his ashes in the general direction of the night table. "October, for God's sake," he said. "If this is October weather, gimmie August." He turned his head to the right again, toward Teddy, looking for trouble. C'mon," he said, "What the hell do you think I'm talking about? My health? Get down off there, please." Teddy was standing on the broadside of a new-looking white Gladstone, the better to see out of his parents' open porthole. He was wearing extremely dirty, white ankle-sneakers, no socks, seersucker shorts that were both too long for him and at least a size too large in the seat, an overly undered T-shit that had a hole the size of a dime in the right shoulder, and an incongruously handsome, black alligator belt. He needed a haircut—especially at the nape of his neck—the worst way, as only a small boy with an almost ill-grown head and a reedlike neck can need one. "Teddy, did you hear me?"

Teddy was not leaning out of the porthole quite so far or precariously as small boys are apt to lean out of open portholes—both his feet, in fact, were flat on the surface of the Gladstone—but neither was he just conservatively well-mannered; his face was considerably more outside than inside the cabin. Nonetheless, he was well within hearing of his father's voice—his father's voice, that is, most singularly. Mr. McArdle played leading roles on no fewer than three daytime radio serials when he was in New York, and he had that might be called a third-class leading man's speaking voice: narcissistically deep and resonant, functionally prepared at a moment's notice to out-male anyone in the same room with it, if necessary even a small boy. When it was on vacation from its professional chores, it fell, as a rule, alarmingly in love with sheer volume and theatrical brand of quietness-steadiness. Right now, volume was in order.

"Teddy. God damn it—did you hear me?"

Teddy turned around at the waist, without changing the vigilant position of his feet on the Gladstone, and gave his father a look of inquiry, whole and pure. His eyes, which were pale brown in color, and not at all large, were slightly crossed—the left eye more than the right. They were not crossed enough to be disfiguring, or even to be necessarily noticeable at first glance. They were crossed just enough to be mentioned, and only in context with the fact that one might have thought long and seriously before wishing them straighter, or deeper or browner, or wider set. His face, just as it was, carried the impact, however oblique and slowtraveling, of real beauty.

"I want you to get down off that bag, now. How many times do you want me to tell you?" Mr. McArdle said.

"Stay exactly where you are, darling," said Mrs. McArdle, who evidently had a little trouble with her sinuses early in the morning. Her eyes were open, but only just. "Don't move the tiniest part of an inch." She was lying on her right side, her face, on the pillow, turned left, toward Teddy and the porthole, her back to her husband. Her second sheet was drawn tight over her very probably nude body, encasing her, arms and all, up to the chin. "Jump up and down," she said, and closed her eyes. "Crush Daddy's bag."

"That's a Jesus-brilliant thing to say," Mr. McArdle said quietly-steadily, addressing the back of his wife's head. "I pay twenty-two pounds for a bag, and I ask the boy civilly not to stand on it, and you tell him to jump up and down on it. What's that supposed to be? Funny?"

"If that bag can't support a ten-year-old boy, who's thirteen pounds underweight for his age, I don't want it in my cabin," Mrs. McArdle said, without opening her eyes.

"You know what I'd like to do?" Mr. McArdle said. "I'd like to kick your goddamn head open."

"Why don't you?"

Mr. McArdle abruptly propped himself up on one elbow and squashed out his cigarette stub on the glass top of the night table. "One of these days—" he began grimly.
“One of these days, you’re going to have a tragic, tragic heart attack,” Mrs. McArdle said, with a minimum of energy. Without bringing her arms into the open, she drew her top sheet more tightly around and under her body. “There’ll be a small, tasteful funeral, and everybody’s going to ask who that attractive woman in the red dress is, sitting there in the first row, flirting with the organist and making a holy—”
“You’re so goddam funny it isn’t even funny,” Mr. McArdle said, lying inertly on his back again.

During this little exchange, Teddy had faced around and resumed looking out of the porthole. “We passed the Queen Mary at three-thirty-two this morning, going the other way, if anybody’s interested,” he said slowly. “Which I doubt.” His voice was oddly and beautifully rough cut, as some small boys’ voices are. Each of his parings was rather like a little ancient island, inundated by a miniature sea of whiskey. “That deck steward Booper despises had it on his blackboard.”

“I’ll Queen Mary you, buddy, if you don’t get off that bag this minute,” his father said. He turned his head toward Teddy. “Get down from there, now. Go get yourself a haircut or something.” He looked at the back of his wife’s head again. “He looks precious, for God’s sake.”

“I haven’t any money,” Teddy said. He placed his hands more securely on the sill of the porthole, and lowered his chin onto the backs of his fingers. “Mother, you know that man who sits right next to us in the dining room? Not the very thin one. The other one, at the same table. Right next to where our waiter puts his tray down.”

“Mmm—we,” Mrs. McArdle said. “Teddy. Darling. Let Mother sleep just five minutes more, like a sweet boy.”

“Wait just a second. This is quite interesting,” Teddy said, without raising his chin from its resting place and without taking his eyes off the ocean. “He was in the gym a little while ago, while Sven was weighing me. He came up and started talking to me. He heard that last tape I made. Not the one in April. The one in May. He was at a party in Boston just before he went to Europe, and somebody at the party knew somebody in the Leidekker examining group—he didn’t say who—and they borrowed that last tape I made and played it at the party. He seems interested in it. He’s a friend of Professor Babcock’s. Apparently he’s a teacher himself. He said he was at Trinity College in Dublin, all summer.”

“Oh?” said Mrs. McArdle. “At a party they played it?” She lay gazing sleepily at the backs of Teddy’s legs.

“I guess so,” Teddy said. “He told Sven quite a bit about me, right while I was standing there. It was rather embarrassing.”

“Why should it be embarrassing?” Teddy hesitated. “I said ‘rather’ embarrassing. I qualified it.”

“I’ll qualify you, buddy, if you don’t get the hell off that bag,” Mr. McArdle said. He had just lit a fresh cigarette. “I’m going to count three. One, God damn it . . . Two . . .”

“What time is it?” Mrs. McArdle suddenly asked the back of Teddy’s legs. “Don’t you and Booper have a swimming lesson at ten-thirty?”

“We have time,” Teddy said. “—Vloom!” He suddenly thrust his whole head out of the porthole, kept it there a few seconds, then brought it in just long enough to report, “Someone just dumped a whole garbage can of orange peels out the window.”

“Out the window. Out the window,” Mr. McArdle said sarcastically, flicking his ashes. “Out the porthole, buddy, out the porthole.” He glanced over at his wife. “Call Boston. Quick. Get the Leidekker examining group on the phone.”

“Oh, you’re such a brilliant wit,” Mrs. McArdle said. “Why do you try?”

Teddy took in most of his head. “They float very nicely,” he said without turning around. “That’s interesting.”

“Teddy. For the last time. I’m going to count three, and then I’m—”

“I don’t mean it’s interesting that they float,” Teddy said. “It’s interesting that I know about them being there. If I hadn’t seen them, then I wouldn’t know they were there, and if I didn’t know they were there, I wouldn’t be able to say that they even exist. That’s a very nice, perfect example of the way—”

“Teddy,” Mrs. McArdle interrupted, without visibly stirring under her top sheet. “Go find Booper for me. Where is she? I don’t want her lolling around in that sun again today, with that burn.”

“She’s adequately covered. I made her wear her dungarees,” Teddy said. “Some of them are starting to sink now. In a few minutes, the only place they’ll still be floating will
placed the ashtray on the glass top, with a world of care, as if he believed an ashtray should be dead-centered on the surface of a night table or not placed at all. At that point, his father, who had been watching him, abruptly gave up watching him. "Don't you want your pillow?" Teddy asked him.

"I want that camera, young man."

"You can't be very comfortable in that position. It isn't possible," Teddy said. "I'll leave it right here." He placed the pillow on the foot of the bed, clear of his father's feet. He started out of the cabin.

"Teddy," his mother said, without turning over. "Tell Booper I want to see her before her swimming lesson."

"Why don't you leave the kid alone?" Mr. Mc Ardle asked. "You seem to resent her having a few lousy minutes' freedom. You know how you treat her? I'll tell you exactly how you treat her. You treat her like a bloomin' criminal."

"Bloomin'! Oh, that's cute! You're getting so English, lover."

Teddy lingered for a moment at the door, reflectively experimenting with the door handle, turning it slowly left and right. "After I go out this door, I may only exist in the minds of all my acquaintances," he said. "I may be an orange peel."

"What, darling?" Mrs. Mc Ardle asked from across the cabin, still lying on her right side.

"Let's get on the ball, buddy. Let's get that Leica down here."

"Come give Mother a kiss. A nice, big one."

"Not right now," Teddy said absently. "I'm tired." He closed the door behind him.

The ship's daily newspaper lay just outside the doorsill. It was a single sheet of glossy paper, with printing on just one side. Teddy picked it up and began to read it as he started slowly aft down the long passageway. From the opposite end, a huge, blond woman in a starched white uniform was coming toward him, carrying a vase of long-stemmed, red roses. As she passed Teddy, she put out her left hand and grazed the top of his head with it, saying, "Somebody needs a haircut!" Teddy passively looked up from his newspaper, but the woman had passed, and he didn't look back. He went on reading. At the end of the
massageway, before an enormous mural of Saint George
and the Dragon over the staircase landing, he folded the
hip's newspaper into quarters and put it into his left hip
ocket. He then climbed the broad, shallow, carpeted steps
up to Main Deck, one flight up. He took two steps at a
time, but slowly, holding onto the banister, putting his whole
ody into it, as if the act of climbing a flight of stairs was
or him, as it is for many children, a moderately pleasur-
ble end in itself. At the Main Deck landing, he went di-
ectly over to the Purser's desk, where a good-looking girl
in a naval uniform was presiding at the moment. She was
lapping some mimeographed sheets of paper together.

"Can you tell me what time that game starts today,
slave?" Teddy asked her.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Can you tell me what time that game starts today?"

The girl gave him a 'lipsticky smile. "What game, honey?"
s he asked.

"You know. That word game they had yesterday and the
before, where you're supposed to supply the missing
ords. It's mostly that you have to put everything in con-
xt."

The girl held off fitting three sheets of paper between the
anes of her stapler. "Oh," she said. "Not till late after-
on, I believe. I believe it's around four o'clock. Isn't that
llet over your head, dear?"

"No, it isn't . . . Thank you," Teddy said, and started
ave.

"Wait a minute, honey! What's your name?"

Theodore McArdele," Teddy said. "What's yours?"

"My name?" said the girl, smiling. "My name's Ens
Mathewson."

Teddy watched her press down on her stapler. "I knew
ere an ensign," he said. "I'm not sure, but I believe
somebody asks your name you're supposed to say
whole name. Jane Mathewson, or Phyllis Mathewson,
whatever the case may be."

"Oh, really?"

"As I say, I think so," Teddy said. "I'm not sure, though,
may be different if you're in uniform. Anyway, thank you
: the information. Goodbye!" He turned and took the stairs
to the Promenade Deck, again two at a time, but this
e as if in rather a hurry.

He found Booper, after some extensive looking, high up

on the Sports Deck. She was in a sunny clearing—a glade,
almost—between two deck-tennis courts that were not in use.
In a squattting position, with the sun at her back and a light
 breeze, riffling her silky, blond hair, she was busily piling
twelve or fourteen shuffleboard discs into two tangent stacks,
one for the black discs, one for the red. A very small boy,
in a cotton sun suit, was standing close by, on her right,
ply in an observer's capacity. "Look!" Booper said com-
mmandingly to her brother as he approached. She sprawled
oward and surrounded the two stacks of shuffleboard discs
with her arms to show off her accomplishment, to isolate it
from whatever else was aboard ship. "Myron," she said
hostily, addressing her companion, "you're making it all
owdy, so my brother can't see. Move your carcass." She
ushed her eyes and waited, with a crossbearing grimace, till
Myron moved.

Teddy stood over the two stacks of discs and looked down
appraisingly at them. "That's very nice," he said. "Very sym-
metrical."

"This guy," Booper said, indicating Myron, "never even
heard of backgammon. They don't even have one."

Teddy glanced briefly, objectively, at Myron. "Listen," he
said to Booper. "Where's the camera? Daddy wants it
ight away."

"He doesn't even live in New York," Booper informed
Teddy. "And his father's dead. He was killed in Korea."
She turned to Myron. "Wasn't he?" she demanded, but
without waiting for a response. "Now if his mother dies,
he'll be an orphan. He didn't even know that." She looked
at Myron. "Did you?"

Myron, non-committal, folded his arms.

"You're the stupidest person I ever met," Booper said to
him. "You're the stupidest person in this ocean. Did you
know that?"

"He is not," Teddy said. "You are not, Myron." He ad-
dressed his sister: "Give me your attention a second.
Where's the camera? I have to have it immediately. Where
is it?"

"Over there," Booper said, indicating no direction at all.
She drew her two stacks of shuffleboard discs in closer to
her. "All I need now is two giants," she said. "They could
play backgammon till they got all tired and then they could
climb up on that smokestack and throw these at everybody
and kill them." She looked at Myron. "They could kill your
"Parents," she said to him knowledgeably. "And if that didn't kill them, you know what you could do? You could put some poison on some marshmallows and make them eat it."

The Leica was about ten feet away, next to the white railing that surrounded the Sports Deck. It lay in the drain grizzly, on its side. Teddy went over and picked it up by its strap and hung it around his neck. Then, immediately, he took it off. He took it over to Booper. "Booper, do me a favor. You take it down, please," he said. "It's ten o'clock. I have to write in my diary."

"I'm busy."

"Mother wants you to see right away, anyway," Teddy said.

"You're a liar."

"I'm not a liar. She does," Teddy said. "So please take his down with you when you go... C'mon, Booper."

"What's she want to see me for?" Booper demanded. "I don't want to see her!" She suddenly struck Myron's hand, which was in the act of picking off the top shuffleboard disc from the red stack. "Hands off," she said.

Teddy hung the strap attached to the Leica around her neck. "I'm serious, now. Take this down to Daddy right away, and then I'll see you at the pool later on," he said. "I'll meet you right at the pool at ten-thirty. Or right outside that place where you change your clothes. Be on time, now. It's way down on E Deck, don't forget, so leave yourself plenty of time." He turned, and left.

"I hate you! I hate everybody in this ocean!" Booper called after him.

Below the Sports Deck, on the broad, after end of the Sun Deck, uncompromisingly alfresco, were some seventy-five or more deck chairs, set up and aligned seven or eight rows deep, with aisles just wide enough for the deck steward to use without unavoidably tripping over the sunning passengers' paraphernalia—knitting bags, dust-jacketed novels, bottles of suntan lotion, cameras. The area was crowded when Teddy arrived. He started at the rearmost row and moved methodically, from row to row, stopping at each chair, whether or not it was occupied, to read the name placard on its arm. Only one or two of the reclining passengers spoke to him—that is, made any of the commonplace pleasantries adults are sometimes prone to make to a ten-year-old boy who is single-mindedly looking for the chair that belongs to him. His youngness and single-mindedness were obvious enough, but perhaps his general demeanor altogether lacked, or had too little of, that sort of cute solemnity that many adults readily speak up, or down, to. His clothes may have had something to do with it, too. The hole in the shoulder of his T-shirt was not a cute hole. The excess material in the seat of his seersucker shorts, the excess length of the shorts themselves, were not cute excesses.

The Mc Ardles' four deck chairs, cushioned and ready for occupancy, were situated in the middle of the second row from the front. Teddy sat down in one of them so that—whether or not it was his intention—no one was sitting directly on either side of him. He stretched out his bare, unsunned legs, feet together, on the leg rest, and, almost simultaneously, took a small, ten-cent notebook out of his right hip pocket. Then, with instantly one-pointed concentration, as if only he and the notebook existed—no sunshine, no fellow passengers, no ship—he began to turn the pages.

With the exception of a very few pencil notations, the entries in the notebook had apparently all been made with a ball-point pen. The handwriting itself was manuscript style, such as is currently being taught in American schools, instead of the old, Palmer method. It was legible without being pretty-pretty. The flow was what was remarkable about the handwriting. In no sense—no mechanical sense, at any rate—did the words and sentences look as though they had been written by a child.

Teddy gave considerable reading time to what looked like his most recent entry. It covered a little more than three pages:

*Diary for October 27, 1952*
*Property of Theodore Mc Ardle*
*412 A Deck*

*Appropriate and pleasant reward if finder promptly returns to Theodore Mc Ardle.*

*See if you can find daddy's army dog tags and wear them whenever possible. It won't kill you and he will like it.*

*Answer Professor Mandell's letter when you get a chance and the patience. Ask him not to send me any more poetry books. I already have enough for 1 year anyway. I am quite sick of it anyway. A man walks along the beach and unfortunately gets hit in the head by a coconut. His head unfortunately cracks open in two halves. Then his wife comes along the beach singing a song and sees the 2 halves*
and recognizes them and picks them up. She gets very sad
of course and cries heart breakingly. That is exactly where
I am tired of poetry. Supposing the lady just picks up the
2 halves and shouts into them very angrily "Stop that!
Do not mention this when you answer his letter, however.
It is quite controversial and Mrs. Mandell is a poet be-
sides.
Get Sven's address in Elizabeth, New Jersey. It would be
interesting to meet his wife, also his dog Lindy. However, I
would not like to own a dog myself.
Write condolence letter to Dr. Wokawara about his nephri-
tis. Get his new address from mother.
Try the sports deck for meditation tomorrow morning
before breakfast but do not lose consciousness. Also do
not lose consciousness in the dining room if that waiter
drops that big spoon again. Daddy was quite furious.
Words and expressions to look up in library tomorrow
when you return the books—
nephritis
myriad
gift horse
cunning
triumvirate

Be nicer to librarian. Discuss some general things with him
when he gets kittenish.

Teddy abruptly took out a small, bullet-shaped, ball-
point pen from the side pocket of his shorts, uncapped it,
and began to write. He used his right thigh as a deck, in-
stead of the chair arm.
Diary for October 28, 1952
Same address and reward as written on October 26 and
27, 1952.
I wrote letters to the following persons after meditation
this morning.

Dr. Wokawara
Professor Mandell
Professor Pest
Burgess Hake, Jr.
Roberta Hake
Sanford Hake
Grandma Hake
Mr. Graham
Professor Walton

Teddy

I could have asked mother where daddy's dog tags are but
she would probably say I don't have to wear them. I know
he has them with him because I saw him pack them.
Life is a gift horse in my opinion.
I think it is very tasteless of Professor Walton to criticize
my parents. He wants people to be a certain way.
It will either happen today or February 14, 1958 when I
am sixteen. It is ridiculous to mention even.

After making this last entry, Teddy continued to keep his
attention on the page and his ball-point pen poised, as though
there were more to come.

He apparently was unaware that he had a lone interested
observer. About fifteen feet forward-sharp from the first row
of deck chairs, and eighteen or twenty rather sun-blinding
feet overhead, a young man was steadily watching him
from the Sports Deck railing. This had been going on for
some ten minutes. It was evident that the young man was
now reaching some sort of decision, for he abruptly took his
foot down from the railing. He stood for a moment, still
looking in Teddy's direction, then walked away, out of sight.
Not a minute later, though, he turned up, obtrusely vertical,
among the deck-chair ranks. He was about thirty or younger.
He directly started to make his way down-aisle toward
Teddy's chair, casting distracting little shadows over the
pages of people's novels and stepping rather uninhibitedly
(considering that his was the only standing, moving figure
in sight) over knitting hats and other personal effects.
Teddy seemed oblivious of the fact that someone was
standing at the foot of his chair—or, for that matter, casting
a shadow over his notebook. A few people in the row or two
behind him, however, were more distractible. They looked
up at the young man as, perhaps, only people in deck chairs
can look up at someone. The young man had a kind of poise
about him, though, that looked as though it might hold up
indefinitely, with the very small proviso that he keep at
least one hand in one pocket. "Hello, there!" he said to
Teddy.
Teddy looked up. "Hello," he said. He partly closed his
notebook, partly let it close by itself.
"Mind if I sit down a minute?" the young man asked,
with what seemed to be unlimited cordiality. "This anybody's
chair?"
“Well, these four chairs belong to my family,” Teddy said. But my parents aren’t up yet.”

“Not up? On a day like this,” the young man said. He had already lowered himself into the chair at Teddy’s right. The chairs were placed so close together that the arms touched. “That’s sacrilege,” he said. “Absolute sacrilege.” He stretched out his legs, which were unusually heavy at the thighs, almost like human bodies in themselves. He was repressed, for the most part, in Eastern seaboard regimentals: turft haircut on top, run-down brogues on the bottom, with somewhat mixed-uniform in between—buff-colored woolen socks, charcoal-gray trousers, a button-down-collar shirt, a necktie, and a herringbone jacket that looked as though it had been properly aged in some of the more popular postgraduate seminars at Yale, or Harvard, or Princeton. “Oh, odd, what a divine day,” he said appreciatively, squinting up at the sun. “I’m an absolute pawn when it comes to the weather.” He crossed his heavy legs, at the ankles. “As a matter of fact, I’ve been known to take a perfectly normal rainy day as a personal insult. So this is absolute manna to me.” Though his speaking voice was, in the usual connotation, well bred, carried considerably more than adequately, as though he had some sort of understanding with himself that anything he said would sound pretty much all right—intelligent, literate, even amusing or stimulating—either from Teddy’s vantage point or from that of the people in the row behind, if they were listening. He looked obliquely down at Teddy, and smiled. “How are you and the weather?” he asked. His smile was not unpersonable, but it was social, conversational, and related back, however indirectly, to his own ego. “The weather ever bother you out of all sensible proportion?” he asked, smiling.

“I don’t take it too personal, if that’s what you mean,” Teddy said.

The young man laughed, letting his head go back. “Wondrous,” he said. “My name, incidentally, is Bob Nicholson. Don’t know if we quite got around to that in the gym. I bow your name, of course.”

Teddy shifted his weight over to one hip and stashed his notebook in the side pocket of his shorts.

“I was watching you write—from way up there,” Nicholson said, narratively, pointing. “Good Lord. You were working away like a little Trojan.”

Teddy looked at him. “I was writing something in my notebook.”

Nicholson nodded, smiling. “How was Europe?” he asked conversationally. “Did you enjoy it?”

“Yes, very much, thank you.”

“Where all did you go?”

Teddy suddenly reached forward and scratched the calf of his leg. “Well, it would take me too much time to name all the places, because we took our car and drove fairly great distances. He sat back. “My mother and I were mostly in Edinburgh, Scotland, and Oxford, England, though. I think I told you in the gym I had to be interviewed at both those places. Mostly the University of Edinburgh.”

“No, I don’t believe you did,” Nicholson said. “I was wondering if you’d done anything like that. How’d it go? They grill you?”

“I beg your pardon?” Teddy said.

“How’d it go? Was it interesting?”

“At times, yes. At times, no,” Teddy said. “We stayed a little bit too long. My father wanted to get back to New York a little sooner than this ship. But some people were coming over from Stockholm, Sweden, and Innsbruck, Austria to meet me, and we had to wait around.”

“It’s always that way.”

Teddy looked at him directly for the first time. “Are you a poet?” he asked.


“I don’t know. Poets are always taking the weather so personally. They’re always thinking their emotions in things that have no emotions.”

Nicholson, smiling, reached into his jacket pocket and took out cigarettes and matches. “I rather thought that was their stock in trade,” he said. “Aren’t emotions what poets are primarily concerned with?”

Teddy apparently didn’t hear him, or wasn’t listening. He was looking abstractedly toward, or over, the twin smokestacks up on the Sports Deck.

Nicholson got his cigarette lit, with some difficulty, for there was a light breeze blowing from the north. He sat back, and said, “I understand you left a pretty disturbed bunch—”

“Nothing in the voice of the cicada intimates how soon it will die,” Teddy said suddenly. “Along this road goes no one, this autumn eve.”
“What was that?” Nicholson asked, smilingly. “Say that again.”

“Those are two Japanese poems. They’re not full of a lot of emotional stuff,” Teddy said. He sat forward abruptly, tilted his head to the right, and gave his right ear a light clap with his hand. “I still have some water in my ear from my swimming lesson yesterday,” he said. He gave his ear another couple of claps, then sat back, putting his arms up on both armrests. It was, of course, a normal, adult-size deck chair, and he looked distinctly small in it, but at the same time, he looked perfectly relaxed, even serene.

“I understand you left a pretty disturbed bunch of pedals at Boston,” Nicholson said, watching him. “After that last little set-to. The whole Leidekker examining group, more or less, the way I understand it. I believe I told you I had a rather long chat with Al Babcock last June. Same night, as a matter of fact, I heard your tape played off.”

“Yes, you did. You told me.”

“I understand they were a pretty disturbed bunch,” Nicholson pressed. “From what Al told me, you all had quite a little lethal bull session late one night—the same night you said that tape, I believe.” He took a drag on his cigarette. From what I gather, you made some little predictions that the boys no end. Is that right?”

“I wish I knew why people think it’s so important to be notional,” Teddy said. “My mother and father don’t think person’s human unless he thinks a lot of things are very sad, very annoying or very—very unjust, sort of. My father is very emotional even when he reads the newspaper. He says I’m inhuman.”

Nicholson flicked his cigarette ash off to one side. “Take you have no emotions?” he said.

Teddy reflected before answering. “If I do, I don’t remember when I ever used them,” he said. “I don’t see what they’re good for.”

“You love God, don’t you?” Nicholson asked, with a little excess quietness. “Isn’t that your forte, so to speak? What I heard on that tape and from Al Babcock.”

“Yes, sure, I love Him. But I don’t love Him sentimentally. He never said anybody had to love Him sentimentally,” Teddy said. “If I were God, I certainly wouldn’t want people love me sentimentally. It’s too unreliable.”

“You love your parents, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do—very much,” Teddy said, “but you want to make me use that word to mean what you want it to mean—I can tell.”

“All right. In what sense do you want to use it?”

Teddy thought it over. “You know what the word ‘affinity’ means?” he asked, turning to Nicholson.

“I have a rough idea,” Nicholson said dryly.

“I have a very strong affinity for them. They’re my parents, I mean, and we’re all part of each other’s harmony and everything,” Teddy said. “I want them to have a nice time while they’re alive, because they like having a nice time . . . But they don’t love me and Booper—that’s my sister—that way. I mean they don’t seem able to love us just the way we are. They don’t seem able to love us unless they can keep changing us a little bit. They love their reasons for loving us almost as much as they love us, and most of the time more. It’s not so good, that way.” He turned toward Nicholson again, sitting slightly forward. “Do you have the time, please?” he asked. “I have a swimming lesson at ten-thirty.”

“You have time,” Nicholson said without first looking at his wrist watch. He pushed back his cuff. “It’s just ten after ten,” he said.

“Thank you,” Teddy said, and sat back. “We can enjoy our conversation for about ten more minutes.”

Nicholson let one leg drop over the side of deck chair, leaned forward, and stepped on his cigarette end. “As I understand it,” he said, sitting back, “you hold pretty firmly to the Vedantic theory of reincarnation.”

“It isn’t a theory, it’s as much a part—”

“All right,” Nicholson said quickly. He smiled, and gently raised the flats of his hands, in a sort of ironic benediction. “We won’t argue that point, for the moment. Let me finish.” He crossed his heavy, outstretched legs again. “From what I gather, you’ve acquired certain information, through meditation, that’s given you some conviction that in your last incarnation you were a holy man in India, but more or less fell from Grace—”

“I wasn’t a holy man,” Teddy said. “I was just a person making very nice spiritual advancement.”

“All right—whatever it was,” Nicholson said. “But the point is you feel that in your last incarnation you more or less fell from Grace before final Illumination. Is that right, or am I—”
"That’s right,” Teddy said. “I met a lady, and I sort of stopped meditating.” He took his arms down from the armrests and tucked his hands, as if to keep them warm, under his thighs. “I would have to take another body and come back to earth again anyway—I mean I wasn’t so spiritually advanced that I could have died, if I hadn’t met that lady, and then gone straight to Brahma and never again have to come back to earth. But I wouldn’t have had to get incarnated in an American body if I hadn’t met that lady. I mean it’s very hard to meditate and live a spiritual life in America. People think you’re a freak if you try to. My father thinks I’m a freak, in a way. And my mother—well, she doesn’t think it’s good for me to think about God all the time. She thinks it’s bad for my health.”

Nicholson was looking at him, studying him. “I believe you said on that last tape that you were six when you first had a mystical experience. Is that right?”

“I was six when I saw that everything was God, and my hair stood up, and all that,” Teddy said. “It was on Sunday, I remember. My sister was only a tiny child then, and she was drinking her milk, and all of a sudden I saw that she was God and the milk was God. I mean, all she was doing was pouring God into God, if you know what I mean.”

Nicholson didn’t say anything.

“But I could get out of the finite dimensions fairly often when I was four,” Teddy said, as an afterthought. “Not continuously or anything, but fairly often.”

Nicholson nodded. “You did?” he said. “You could?”

“Yes,” Teddy said. “That was on the tape . . . Or maybe it was on the one I made last April. I’m not sure.”

Nicholson took out his cigarettes again, but without taking his eyes off Teddy. “How does one get out of the finite dimensions?” he asked, and gave a short laugh. “I mean, to begin very basically, a block of wood is a block of wood, for example. It has length, width—”

“It isn’t. That’s where you’re wrong,” Teddy said. “Everybody just thinks things keep stopping off somewhere. They don’t. That’s what I was trying to tell Professor Peet.”

He shifted in his seat and took out an eyepiece of a handkerchief—a gray, wadded entity—and blew his nose. “The reason things seem to stop off somewhere is because that’s the only way most people know how to look at things,” he said.

“But that doesn’t mean they do.” He put away his handkerchief, and looked at Nicholson. “Would you hold up your arm a second, please?” he asked.

“Your arm? Why?”

“Just do it. Just do it a second.”

Nicholson raised his forearm an inch or two above the level of the armrest. “This one?” he asked.

Teddy nodded. “What do you call that?” he asked.

“What do you mean? It’s my arm. It’s an arm.”

“How do you know it is?” Teddy asked. “You know it’s called an arm, but how do you know it is one? Do you have any proof that it’s an arm?”

Nicholson took a cigarette out of his pack, and lit it. “I think that smacks of the worst kind of sophistry, frankly,” he said, exhaling smoke. “It’s an arm, for heaven’s sake, because it’s an arm. In the first place, it has to have a name to distinguish it from other objects. I mean you can’t simply—”

“You’re just being logical,” Teddy said to him impassively. “I’m just being what?” Nicholson asked, with a little excess of politeness.

“Logical. You’re just giving me a regular, intelligent answer,” Teddy said. “I was trying to help you. You asked me how I get out of the finite dimensions when I feel like it. I certainly don’t use logic when I do it. Logic’s the first thing you have to get rid of.”

Nicholson removed a flake of tobacco from his tongue with his fingers.

“You know Adam?” Teddy asked him.

“Do I know who?”

“Adam. In the Bible.”


“I’m not angry with you, for heaven’s sake.”

“Okay,” Teddy said. He was sitting back in his chair, but his head was turned toward Nicholson. “You know that apple Adam ate in the Garden of Eden, referred to in the Bible?” he asked. “You know what was in that apple? Logic and intellectual stuff. That was all that was in it. So—this is my point—what you have to do is vomit it up if you want to see things as they really are. I mean if you vomit it up, then you won’t have any more trouble with blocks of wood and stuff. You won’t see everything stopping off all the time. And you’ll know what your arm really is, if you’re
interested. Do you know what I mean? Do you follow me?"

"I follow you," Nicholson said, rather shortly.

"The trouble is," Teddy said, "most people don't want to. They don't even want to stop singing and dying all the time. They just want now and then. This is the only way they lay it off, instead of stopping and staying with it, where it's really nice." He reflected. "I never saw such a bunch of apple-eaters," he said. He shook his head.

At that moment, a white-coated deck steward, who was asking his rounds within the area, stopped in front of Teddy and Nicholson and asked them if they would care to have a serving of broth. Nicholson didn't respond to the question. Teddy said, "No, thank you," and the deck steward went on his way.

"If you'd rather not discuss this, you don't have to," Nicholson said abruptly, and rather brusquely. He flicked a cigarette ash. "But is it true, or isn't it, that you informed the whole Leidaker examining board—Walton, Peet, Larsen, Samuels, and that bunch—when and where and how they would eventually die? Is that true, or isn't it? You don't have to discuss it. But the way the second-class passengers used to do it. But I didn't say anything like that. I didn't say anything was inevitable, that way." He took out his handkerchief again and used it. Nicholson sited, watching him. "And I didn't tell Professor Peet anything like that at all. Firstly, he wasn't one of the ones who were kidding around and asking me a bunch of questions. I mean, all I told Professor Peet was that he shouldn't speak to the professor any more after January—that's all I told him." Teddy, sitting back, was silent a moment. "All those other professors, they practically forced me to tell them stuff. It is after we were all finished with the interview and making tape, and it was quite late, and they all kept sitting around smoking cigarettes and getting very kittenish."

"But you didn't tell Walton, or Larsen, for example, when where or how death would eventually come?" Nicholson asked.

"No. I did not," Teddy said firmly. "I wouldn't have told him any of that stuff, but they kept talking about it. Pro-

fessor Walton sort of started it. He said he really wished he knew when he was going to die, because then he'd know what work he should do and what work he shouldn't do, and how to use his time to his best advantage, and all like that. And then they all said that... So I told them a little bit."

Nicholson didn't say anything.

"I didn't tell them that they were actually going to die, though. That's a very false rumor," Teddy said. "I could have, but I knew that in their hearts they really didn't want to know. I mean I knew that even though they teach Religion and Philosophy and all, they're still pretty afraid to die."

Teddy sat, or reclined, in silence for a minute. "It's so silly," he said. "All you do is get the heck out of your body when you die. My gosh, everybody's done it thousands and thousands of times. Just because they don't remember it doesn't mean they haven't done it. It's so silly."

"That may be. That may be," Nicholson said. "But the logical fact remains that no matter how intelligently—"

"It's so silly," Teddy said again. "For example, I have a swimming lesson in about five minutes. I could go downstairs to the pool, and there might not be any water in it. This might be the day they change the water or something. What might happen, though, I might walk up to the edge of it, and just have a look at the bottom, for instance, and my sister might come up and sort of touch me in. I could fracture my skull and die instantaneously." Teddy looked at Nicholson. "That could happen," he said. "My sister's only six, and she hasn't been a human being for very many lives, and she doesn't like me very much. That could happen, all right. What would be so tragic about it, though? What's there to be afraid of, I mean? I'd just be doing what I was supposed to do, that's all, wouldn't I?"

Nicholson snorted mildly. "It might not be a tragedy from your point of view, but it would certainly be a sad event for your mother and dad," he said. "Ever consider that?"

"Yes, of course, I have," Teddy said. "But that's only because they have names and emotions for everything that happens." He had been keeping his hands tucked under his legs again. He took them out now, put his hands up on the arm rests, and looked at Nicholson. "You know Sven? The man that takes care of the gym?" he asked. He waited till he got a nod from Nicholson. "Well, if Sven dreamed tonight his dog died, he'd have a very, very bad night's sleep, because he's very fond of that dog. But when he woke up
Teddy was now only a dream."

"What's the point, exactly?"

"The point is if his dog really died, it would be exactly the same thing. Only, he wouldn't know it. I mean he couldn't wake up till he died himself."

Nicholson, looking detached, was using his right hand to re himself a slow, sensuous massage at the back of the neck. His left hand, motionless on the armrest, with a fresh, lighted cigarette between the fingers, looked oddly white d inorganic in the brilliant sunlight.

Teddy suddenly got up. "I really have to go now, I'm afraid," he said. He sat down, tentatively, on the extended attachment of his chair, facing Nicholson, and tucked in his T-shirt. "I have about one and a half minutes, I guess, to get to my swimming lesson," he said. "It's all the way on E Deck."

"May I ask why you told Professor Peet he should stop trash talking after the first of the year?" Nicholson asked, rather intently. "I know Bob Peet. That's why I asked."

Teddy tightened his alligator belt. "Only because he's in spiritual, and he's teaching a lot of stuff right now. It's not very good for him if he wants to make any real iritualisation. It stimulates him too much. It's as if he were to take everything out of his head, instead of filling more stuff in. He could get rid of a lot of apple in it this one life if he wanted to. He's very good at meditation."

"I better go now. I don't want to be late."

Nicholson looked up at him, and sustained the look—taming him. "What would you do if you could change an educational system?" he asked ambiguously. "Ever think of that at all?"

"I really have to go," Teddy said.


"Well... I'm not too sure what I'd do," Teddy said. "I'm pretty sure I wouldn't start with the things schools usually start with." He folded his arms, and recited briefly. "I think first just assemble all the children together and show them how to meditate. I'd try to show them how to find out who they are, not just what their names are and things like that... I guess, even before that, I'd get them to empty out everything their parents and everybody ever told them. I mean even if their parents just told them an elephant's big, I'd make them empty that out. An elephant's only big when it's next to something else—a dog or a lady, for example." Teddy thought another moment. "I wouldn't even tell them an elephant has a trunk. I might show them an elephant, if I had one handy, but I'd let them just walk up to the elephant not knowing anything more about it than the elephant knew about them. The same thing with grass, and other things. I wouldn't even tell them grass is green. Colors are only names. I mean if you tell them the grass is green, it makes them start expecting the grass to look a certain way—your way—instead of some other way that may be just as good, and maybe much better..."

"I don't know. I'd just make them vomit up every bit of the apple their parents and everybody made them take a bite out of."

"There's no risk you'd be raising a little generation of ignoramuses?"

"Why? They wouldn't any more be ignoramuses than an elephant is. Or a bird is. Or a tree is," Teddy said. "Just because something is a certain way, instead of just behaving a certain way, doesn't mean it's an ignoramus."

"No?"

"Not?" Teddy said. "Besides, if they wanted to learn all that other stuff—names and colors and things—they could do it, if they felt like it, later on when they were older. But I'd want them to begin with all the real ways of looking at things not just the way all the other apple-eaters look at things—that's what I mean." He came closer to Nicholson, and extended his hand down to him. "I have to go now. Honestly, I've enjoyed—"

"Just one second—sit down a minute," Nicholson said. "Ever think you might like to do something in research when you grow up? Medical research, or something of that kind? It seems to me, with your mind, you might eventually..."

Teddy answered, but without sitting down. "I thought about that once, a couple of years ago," he said. "I've talked to quite a few doctors. He shook his head. "That wouldn't interest me very much. Doctors stay too right on the surface. They're always talking about cells and things."

"Oh? You don't attach any importance to cell structure?"

"Yes, sure, I do. But doctors talk about cells as if they
uch unlimited importance all by themselves. As if they
t really belong to the person that has them.” Teddy
ned back his hair from his forehead with one hand. “I
my own body,” he said. “Nobody else did it for me.
I grew it, I must have known how to grow it. Uncon-
ly, at least. I may have lost the conscious knowl-
ged to grow it sometime in the last few hundred thousand
but the knowledge is still there, because—obviously
used it. . . . It would take quite a lot of meditation
npting out to get the whole thing back—I mean the
ous knowledge—but you could do it if you wanted to.
oned up wide enough.” He suddenly reached down
cked up Nicholson’s right hand from the armrest. He
ut just once, cordially, and said, “Goodbye. I have to
And this time, Nicholson wasn’t able to detain him,
ted so quickly to make his way through the aisle.
holson sat motionless for some few minutes after he
his hands on the armrests of the chair, his unlighted
ite still between the fingers of his left hand. Finally,
ed his right hand and used it as if to check whether
lar was still open. Then he lit his cigarette, and sat
still again.
smoked the cigarette down to its end, then abruptly
ed over the side of the chair, stepped on the cig-
got to his feet, and made his way, rather quickly, out
isle.
ag the forwardship stairway, he descended fairly
 to the Promenade Deck. Without stopping there, he
ed on down, still quite rapidly, to Main Deck. Then
Deck. Then to B Deck. Then to C Deck. Then to D

D Deck the forwardship stairway ended, and Nicho-
hood for a moment, apparently at some loss for direc-
However, he spotted someone who looked able to guide
Halfway down the passageway, a stewardess was sit-
an a chair outside a galleyway, reading a magazine and
ig a cigarette. Nicholson went down to her, consulted
ely, thanked her, then took a few additional steps
dship and opened a heavy metal door that read: 70
. It opened onto a narrow, uncorked staircase.
was little more than halfway down the staircase when
rd an all-piercing, sustained scream—clearly coming
small, female child. It was highly acoustical, as though
 reverberating within four tiled walls.