

**Justice
Is a
Woman**

**Helen
Haberman**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JUSTICE IS A
WOMAN ***

*Justice
Is a
Woman*

Also by Helen Haberman

How About Tomorrow Morning?

*Justice
Is a
Woman*

Helen Haberman

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New York

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**To
Gorham Munson**

**The characters in this novel are fictional and imaginary.
Resemblance to any actual person, living or dead, is
coincidental.**

PART I

Chapter 1

The two men who stepped out of the elevator ahead of Larry dropped their voices and talked in a whisper as if they were in the safe-deposit vault of a bank. Larry recognized the reaction because he had often experienced it himself on the tower floor of 40 Wall Street where Arthur H. Bemrose had his offices. The cold ribbon of gray marble floor and walls did it—the neat gold arrow painted on the outside hallway and the carefully designed block lettering which pointed to the law firm of HAYNES and BEMROSE. The two men walked on past the door of Arthur’s office, and Larry, standing in front of the clouded glass, his hand on the doorknob, took on their respectful mood. It usually made him feel as if he had an extra thousand dollars in his pocket just to walk into these offices. During his time at law school Judge Haynes had been God, Jesus Christ himself, to almost every student. Larry had grown up in the fall-on-your-face-and-worship-Haynes tradition. Now Judge Haynes was dead, and Arthur H. Bemrose, from Larry’s own class at law school, was carrying on the practice. Larry could still feel the Judge somewhere around as he entered the reception room. He could picture him in dark robes which overwhelmed his spare frame and could recall his low, precise voice, even though it was more than six years since the Old Man had died.

Without looking to see if there were any clients of the firm waiting, Larry gave his name to the boy at the reception room window. Mr. Bemrose would be tied up a while, the boy explained, inviting him to sit down. Larry pinched a wilting carnation in the buttonhole of his overcoat, and shook the melted snow off his hat. He stopped for a moment at the antique table in the center of the room. The Judge had found the table in Italy one summer. Twenty years of accumulated dust clung to its elaborate carving, and Arthur Bemrose, probably out of respect to the Judge’s memory, had left it just as it was when the Old Man died, unpolished, impassive, and dead-centered in the room.

Larry picked up a law journal to read while he was waiting for Arthur, and deposited his overcoat on a chair that wobbled, probably another museum piece that had belonged to Judge Haynes. The chair steadied itself, and

Larry sat down with care on the next one, resigned to a long wait. He had no sooner opened this week's issue of the advance sheets, which reported court decisions before the bound volumes came out, than the Judge's old clerk, Tim Hoxter, called to him from where he must have been sitting all the time across the room.

As he rushed over to shake hands with Hoxter, a Haynes fixture in the old days, a faithful adjunct in an alpaca coat who had trailed the Old Man with legal papers for twenty-five years, Larry couldn't take his eyes off the girl sitting next to Hoxter, wondering if she could be his daughter, and how, if she were, Tim had managed to keep her quiet all these years. She was the last person Larry expected to find among the relics of Judge Haynes in the tradition-ridden reception room of HAYNES and BEMROSE, an improbable client to be waiting for Arthur H. Bemrose, who specialized in corporate work, and incongruously young to be connected with old Tim.

"Will he be tied up much longer?" Tim complained. "She can't wait. She's on her lunch hour." He nodded to the girl and introduced them. "Miss McVail. Her grandmother was an old friend of mine from out in Iowa," he explained. "Lucy, this is Mr. Frank."

Larry watched to see if the girl's handsome gray eyes would go on, but they looked up at him coldly unlit, as if he might be to blame because she had to wait for Arthur H. Bemrose. Larry noted gratefully that Miss McVail did not fidget while she waited. Her spine conformed placidly to the rungs of her chair, and she remained calm except for the eyes, which stubbornly refused to show any emotion, and with their lack of expression somehow managed to reproach him. It was as if she said, "I'm beautiful when I'm turned on, but if this lawyer I'm waiting to see is your friend, I'm not going to make any effort for you."

"How long have you been waiting, Tim?" Larry asked.

The old man leaned forward confidentially. "She's having trouble with a no-good brother about some money the grandmother left her. I figure that Arthur——"

The old man was getting deaf. He must be close to eighty.

"Busy at your office, are you?" Tim strained toward him.

Larry brought his mouth close to Hoxter's ear. "Not enough to give the income tax people any serious trouble, but doing all right. I can't kick."

"They tell me that Arthur has hung on to most of the old practice." Tim straightened proudly. "It sure would have tickled the Judge. I've been telling Lucy the store he set by Arthur."

"He's done a lot better than hang on," Larry shouted, looking around to make sure no one else had walked in. "If you can believe the newspapers, he's picked up a few clients of his own."

The old man smiled. Apparently he did read the newspapers. "I hear he's in pretty thick down there," he admitted. "I hear that Tom Newton's always sending for him——"

"He has to go down to Washington about three times a week." Larry held up three fingers by way of clarification and moved his lips slowly so that Tim had time to read them.

"Manages to handle both, does he?"

Good for the old man. His mind wasn't hard of hearing. He was sharp enough to realize that it took some doing for Arthur H. Bemrose to be in solid down in Washington and to pal around with Tom Newton, the Attorney-General, while with the left hand he managed to swing a Wall Street practice.

"Weren't you two fellows in the same class at law school?"

Larry nodded and sat down next to Tim, thinking about the night many years ago that Arthur Bemrose had first received a message from Judge Haynes to come and see him.

It was toward the end of their last year in law school, and the rest of them had been playing poker in Cy O'Malley's room. Bemrose showed up late that evening and made it in about two strides from the door to the card table, his pants flopping around his ankles like excited pigeons.

"Just talked to Judge Haynes in Albany," Arthur had reported briskly. "He phoned to find out if I'll be his law secretary next year."

The game broke up temporarily. Cy rushed over and pumped Arthur's hand, and Tremont Friendly, dropping his usual punctilious manner, jumped up to pummel Arthur's back. There was an envious buzz around him.

"Nice going, boy."

"Gee, fellow, that's great."

"Imagine the luck of some guys!"

Larry remembered standing in a kind of daze by himself until Arthur broke away from the others and came over to him. "What's the matter, Larry? Don't you think it's a good offer?"

Even in those days Arthur used to talk things over with him, not always taking his advice, of course, but using him to discover how his ideas sounded out loud. He was still doing it today, in spite of the difference in their incomes.

Back there in Cy's room almost twenty years ago, Larry had said, "It's a great offer, kid. You'd better grab it."

That wasn't the moment to tell Arthur that he'd often had the notion they might hang out a joint shingle someday, BEMROSE and FRANK. Arthur would supply the brilliant big ideas, and he would look after the details. Already in those days, at twenty-three, Larry had sensed his own limitations. He was cut out to be an office lawyer. He didn't have what it took for big trial work. With Bemrose the front man, going to court, they'd make out all right. He sensed that Arthur functioned better when he was around, felt easier when Larry was on hand and he could talk things out with him.

"I don't think Judge Haynes will pay me much," Arthur pointed out practically. "He didn't mention money over the phone. I have to go up there next Thursday. He said he would discuss the details when he saw me."

"I wouldn't worry about the money," Larry advised. "It will mean a lot to your future. How many fellows have a chance——"

That's what he said out loud to Arthur Bemrose, but all the time he was thinking about how much better it would be for him, Larry Frank, if they had offices on either side of the same glass partition and could go to lunch

together, or talk over a cross-examination when Arthur came back in the late afternoon from court. Back to the offices of BEMROSE and FRANK.

Arthur stood at the poker table strained and flushed, and Larry urged him to sit down and take a hand. He finally did let them deal him into the game, but his attention wandered from the cards. "Are you sure I can swing it, Larry?" he asked while he was waiting for Tremont to call the hand. "You know his reputation. He's supposed to be hell on secretaries."

Bemrose laid down a pair of nines, and Tremont reached for the pot. While someone dealt, Arthur said quietly so that the others couldn't hear, "Suppose I take it, Larry, and the Judge finds out I'm not good enough."

"You'll be good enough, kid," Larry assured him, discarding then and there the pipe dream about BEMROSE and FRANK. If he didn't find another congenial fellow with whom he could share an office, he'd start in practice for himself. It would be slower without Bemrose maybe, but he'd make out, and after all, no one was depending on him for a living. His older brother took care of the folks, and Larry had no one to think about supporting but himself.

Larry lost interest in the poker game that evening and quit early. For the rest of the week, whenever he thought of Bemrose going up to Albany to see Judge Haynes, he felt that maybe he ought to try and talk Arthur out of taking the job. But he never did. It would have been putting his own interests ahead of Bemrose's, and that wasn't the way Larry Frank liked to operate.

Aloud to Tim Hoxter in the law offices of HAYNES and BEMROSE, Larry said, "At school the fellows always figured that someone like Justice Brandeis would make him an offer if the Old Man didn't. They were always looking for *Law Review* men, and Bemrose was the editor of *Law Review* in our time."

Tim Hoxter nodded. "The Judge and his wife took him right in and started treating him like a son. That must be why he stayed with the Old Man after he left the bench. The Old Man was afraid he wouldn't stay, you know."

Tim paused. “He figured that Arthur might be restless and want to start in practice for himself. It would have killed the Judge to see him go. He was all wrapped up in that young fellow. I never could figure it out. He and Mrs. Haynes kept everybody else at arm’s length. They weren’t the kind to ever want a son.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Larry said.

“How’s that?” Tim sat up straighter.

“Don’t you remember? Mrs. Haynes liked cats,” Larry shouted.

Tim shook his head. “Cats or no cats, she was the cold type. I think it was the Judge. The Judge made her take him in to live with them. The Judge was always telling everybody that Bemrose was good—” The hand on Tim’s knee was a relief map of heavy blue veins. “What makes him good, Larry? Ever figure it out?”

“I guess you’ve never watched him handle a jury. He has it all over Dunninger. When Bemrose finishes with a witness, there isn’t a thought in the fellow’s head that hasn’t been undressed, waiting for Bemrose to pluck it in the nude.” Larry looked to see if Miss McVail responded, but she was assiduously tending a cuticle. Not a pale eyelash flickered in the blonde fringe around her extraordinary gray eyes.

“My niece’s boy went to court the other day and heard him.” Tim Hoxter’s voice cracked. “He’s a fine boy. Studying law at N.Y.U. He puts Arthur in a class with John W. Davis. Maybe that’s going too far. But he must be good. For the young ones.”

Larry smiled, recalling an old saw from law school. Under forty-five a lawyer is a bright young man. At sixty he shows promise, and by seventy he’s a respected member of the bar.

Tim leaned back in his chair fretfully and nodded at Miss McVail who industriously continued to ply the cuticle of one finger with the thumbnail of the other hand. “Better ask at the window again, Larry. Tell that young fellow she’s on her lunch hour.”

“Maybe we should leave and phone him tomorrow.” Miss McVail studied an old-fashioned gold watch suspended by a ribbon from her coat lapel. Her

voice was a toneless gray as she looked past Larry. “Oh, there’s someone _____”

Larry recognized Arthur’s secretary, motioning to Tim and the girl to come inside. As Miss McVail disappeared through a door in the direction of Arthur’s office, Larry took note of the snugly made hips, shapely and small like her neatly indented waist, and wondered how much of the set-up Arthur H. Bemrose would inventory, or whether, with him, it was always strictly business. It probably was, or he wouldn’t be rattling around alone in that three-story house the Judge had left him. In six years he should have located something female and decorative to brighten up the mausoleum. Let’s see. Arthur was going on forty-three now. He might begin to think about settling down. Whatever his bond with the Old Man which put the law first and women second while Haynes was alive, it should have ended with the Judge’s funeral. But from hearing Bemrose talk about women Larry always had the idea that Arthur thought he was doing *them* a favor to spend time with them, and that, given his choice, he’d rather devote the same number of hours to practicing law. He apparently never picked a woman who had a chance of being able to compete in interest with his practice. His taste ran to flashy, dark divorcées who patronized the local bridge clubs. They lasted with him three months, six months, sometimes almost a year. Until they brought up the subject of marriage, was Larry’s guess. He had a hunch that Arthur H. Bemrose concentrated on the purely social type because he wanted to prove something to himself. He probably insisted on being convinced that a woman was good for bed or a wasted evening and not much else. As long as he specialized in women who had similar views about men, he could hang on to the theory. Larry thought that when the Judge died, Arthur might look around for someone who at least was a good listener, someone to fill the hours he used to spend talking to the Judge. She wouldn’t have to be a great brain for that. All she’d have to do was listen. Larry thought of the McVail girl in there with him. She didn’t look as if she’d talk a man to death. Not if the way she acted in the reception room was a sample. Well, what the hell was it to him what Bemrose did about his sex life? Larry thought of himself and Bessie. There was no use trying to sell marriage to Arthur H. Bemrose because he and Bessie were more than reasonably contented, or because Bemrose had inherited a big, empty house. There were plenty of fouled up marriages, and

living alone in an empty house wasn't the worst thing that could happen to him.

The boy at the reception window called out to say that Mr. Bemrose would only be tied up a few more minutes. Larry leafed through the advance sheets, but none of his own cases were reported, and he seldom enjoyed reading law for the sake of reading law. It was his father, not Larry, who had decided he ought to be a lawyer. His father had acted in the tradition of many men who had emigrated to this country and thought the eldest son should be a business man and provide for the family while the other sons concentrated on surrounding the family name with the prestige of the professions. In legal circles the name, Frank, still wasn't surrounded by an aura, but Larry's father never lived to find that out, and it suited Larry fine to earn a modest living at the law. Without straining. His friend, Arthur H. Bemrose, strained enough for two of them, and produced results when he strained.

Restlessly Larry got up to have a look at the famous Haynes letters in the lighted breakfront cabinet, occupying an entire wall of the reception room, where Arthur had them embalmed. These were the more noteworthy originals of the Haynes-Didier letters, published in three volumes a year ago for fifteen dollars a boxed set. Larry bought them at the time but couldn't wade through the first volume. The old duffers, Judge Haynes and his French colleague, Didier, had liked to toss Greek and Latin quotations across the ocean, probably with posterity in mind, and Larry hadn't gone in for a Latin declension since high school.

The cabinet reminded Larry of a mental Kremlin where the Old Man's brains were on public view. He squinted at one of the yellowed sheets dated April 10, 1881 and tried to decipher the fading characters of the text, recalling, as he read, that once before he had been puzzled by this particular letter. His entire generation at the bar had grown up in the belief that Haynes was a great labor judge, a man who recognized the right of labor to organize when his contemporaries had used the word, labor, from the bench in about the tone reserved today for the word, fascist.

But in spite of his reputation as a great labor judge, Haynes had written in confidence to his friend, Didier: *"Your friend, the common man, is a*

fumbling pleasure-loving dolt. He delights in the sloth of his overstuffed ignorance.”

If he really felt that way and still turned himself inside out to give labor a break in his court, you had to hand it to the Old Man, Larry reflected. Back in those days it couldn't have been profitable, politically, to hold pro-labor views. He must have done it for something rooted inside, some prodigal instinct for fairness that had flourished in spite of the snobbish New England background. The interesting fact was that a man who had privately tagged millions of his fellow citizens as “fumbling pleasure-loving dolts” lived out his years publicly as champion of the dolt, as a leading friend and patron of doltism. Known to the world as “labor’s friend,” the chances were that Judge Haynes had never gotten around to shaking the hand of a man in overalls, Larry reflected.

The thought amused him. He couldn't help but contrast the Old Man's views with those of Arthur H. Bemrose, truck driver's son, born enough of a common man to want to forget it. For keeps. No bending over backwards by Bemrose to understand the common man. He knew all he wanted to know at first hand. Consequently, Arthur H. Bemrose specialized in the *uncommon* man, the no-dolt, especially when he practiced law. Counsellor to the uncommon man. That was the firm's reputation today. Bemrose doesn't take every case. He handpicks his clients. How often Larry had heard other lawyers discuss this enviable prerogative of a successful lawyer.

Shifting uneasily away from the cabinet of letters, Larry returned to his chair along the wall, wondering how Miss McVail was making out inside with Bemrose. She was probably impressed as hell with the ballroom-sized office, but not letting on, hiding behind the say-nothing gray eyes and giving him the impression that she spent every other lunch hour with Wall Street lawyers. A self-possessed one, Miss McVail. Bemrose ought to make something of it.

The thought was interrupted by Bemrose's secretary who came out to tell him that his brief was typed, the brief for the Court of Appeals, which Bemrose was helping him polish. The secretary invited him to come into Mr. Bemrose's office and take a look at the revisions.

“He's just finishing with a client. He'll be free to work with you in a few minutes, Mr. Frank. Meanwhile you can go over the brief and study the

changes he's suggested."

Outside the door of Arthur H. Bemrose's private office, Larry paused a moment before knocking. The low Bemrose voice, familiar to blue ribbon juries, was pitched even lower than usual out of consideration for Tim, whose deafness shut out high sound frequencies. Larry had often noticed that Bemrose used his voice with a studied cadence which gave time for important points to come through.

He must have just been making such a point to Miss McVail. Larry heard her complain, "You don't know my brother, Mr. Bemrose. He'll leave town, and then we'll never be able to——"

"Why don't you write the letter for her, Arthur?" Tim Hoxter suggested. "You can let her send it, but you draft it for her."

The extra heavy cream in Bemrose's voice rose to the top. "A fine idea, Tim. I'll try to put it tactfully," he promised Miss McVail. "Let's have one more try, and see if we can't phrase it so that he'll want to answer this time."

"You don't know my brother," the girl insisted. "When we were young, he'd do things for me, but now——"

"I take it you need the money," Bemrose said briskly, cutting through her objections.

The girl must have nodded.

"Then why not let Tim and me advise you on the best way to handle it?"

Tim and me. Larry smiled. Winning her confidence through Tim whom she already trusted. A good Bemrose tactic.

Larry scratched at the half-opened door and apologized for breaking in on them. Instantly Bemrose was on his feet and had his arm around him. This special quality of warmth was almost unique with Arthur H. Bemrose. In a busy, cynical world, he was one of the few persons around who had the power to convince Larry that he was genuinely glad to see him, that his greeting was more than a formality, and when he said, "How are you?" he really gave a damn about the answer. This warmth of Arthur's, Larry reflected, was one of the sure things in his life, like the greenness of trees, or the thirst-quenching property of fresh water.

Bemrose introduced him to Miss McVail, gave him a chance to greet Tim again, and handed Larry a sheaf of typewritten pages from his table. They constituted the new draft of the brief. Quickly Bemrose pointed out the major revisions he had suggested and settled Larry in a small adjoining office where he could go over them undisturbed.

“Don’t just accept my changes,” he cautioned. “Make sure they’re what *you* want. I dictated the revision in a hurry and may have slipped up on something you specially wanted to stress.”

Larry smiled. It was Arthur’s gracious way of giving him an out in case he didn’t check with his suggestions.

He settled down and started to read the brief, but in a few moments his attention wandered through the door which Bemrose had thoughtfully left open. Bemrose was taking a phone call, and Miss McVail had moved her chair away from his desk a little as though she were swimming for shallow water. Maybe Bemrose *was* too much for a girl from—where was it?—Iowa?

Larry overheard enough of the phone conversation to know that Tom Newton, the Attorney-General, was calling Bemrose from Washington. There was some subtle sparring while Newton apparently tried to persuade him to stay over on his next trip and take the sleeper back to New York. It had to do with meeting some Senator down there, a friend of Newton’s. Bemrose pretended to be in no sweat about obliging his pal, the Attorney-General. It wasn’t going to be easy to change his plans. He made that clear. Before he got through, Newton must have been begging him.

Arthur put down the phone and came in to bum a cigarette from Larry. “That was Tom, looking for some free legal advice,” he said with an easy, self-contented smile.

Larry looked up and gave him a light. “Well, Tom’s not a bad lawyer. Someday you may want to ask *him* for some legal advice.”

Through the open door he had a good view of Arthur H. Bemrose’s enormous room—the heavy walnut desk with carved rope edge and

morocco top, the lawn of billiard green carpet, the stained oak walls, woodburning fireplace and gold draperies. The Old Man's room had been shabby by comparison, filled with black leather and horsehair. This Fifth Avenue decorator's job might alarm some of the firm's older clients but it must go down easy with the Washington boys. Larry tried to concentrate on his brief, soothed by the quiet answers Miss McVail gave Bemrose as he probed for details about her family that might be pertinent to settling the grandmother's estate. Her quiet ought to appeal to him, Larry mused. With his hectic practice, he should be able to use a little peace and quiet at home.

The phone rang again, and this time Larry gathered that it was Jim Carson of the *Evening Star*. Larry had read a story of his only last week with a Moscow dateline. He must have just returned to this country. He had read Carson ever since he had met him once at Bemrose's office, a slightly built man with deep scars in one cheek and missing front teeth so that every time he talked he made static. From what Bemrose was saying, Larry gathered that Carson wanted to change his will. Arthur invited him for dinner at the University Club and made Carson's legal work incidental to hearing about Russia. He put himself out to cultivate good newspapermen, and they didn't come any better than Jim Carson.

Before Bemrose hung up Larry heard him say, "If she's a friend of yours, I'll talk to her, Jim. I'm writing it down. Baldwin, Janice Baldwin. What did you say she writes for? Okay, I have it. Don't worry. I won't let her put me out."

Larry shoved aside the pages of his brief, deciding that he might as well try to concentrate at the information desk in Grand Central. How could a fellow keep up the clip at which Bemrose lived and not show it? The same way a tennis champ could cover the court and look as if he hadn't moved, Larry figured. It was a trick of easiness they all had, the good ones, whether on a tennis court, a putting green, in the ring, or in a law office. To look at Arthur H. Bemrose in the tweed suit that he bought extra big in order to have three inches leeway in the vest, anyone would take him for a gentleman farmer who had nothing but show dogs or a greenhouse on his mind. It wasn't only the easy way he handled himself. It was the way he looked. At law school Arthur H. Bemrose had started a small, uneven mustache which had refused to thicken in twenty years. Its untidiness went with his flappy, oversized ears. His frame ambled and his arms hung loosely. With Bemrose for his

lawyer, a client could be in hot water and still feel at ease. Larry wondered about Miss McVail, whether she had begun to let go a little.

He returned to reading his brief, this time from back to front, the way he sometimes read a magazine or a newspaper when he had trouble concentrating. One of the new point headings stopped him: *Mr. Alonzo Iturbi alias Newcomb*. A Bemrose literary touch. Arthur H. was making it sound like a murder mystery. It didn't seem to Larry like the kind of language that would win an appeal in a higher court, but judges were human and probably liked to be entertained as much as other people. There was this to be said for Bemrose's instinct in such matters. He had used it to advantage in Albany more than once, while this case was only the third Larry had ever taken to the Court of Appeals. He wanted to be sure his brief was a good one, as sure as a lawyer could ever be. It was damned nice of Bemrose to look it over and take the trouble to re-dictate the brief.

Larry saw Miss McVail edge forward in her chair as Arthur's secretary broke in on them, apologizing because Mr. Carson's friend, the magazine writer, was on the phone and sounded as if she had to talk to Mr. Bemrose. Urgently. The carefully schooled secretary explained, especially for Miss McVail's benefit, that she knew Mr. Bemrose didn't wish to be interrupted when he was with a client, and she had tried to take his calls for him, all those which seemed as if they could wait, but this woman was persistent and——

Half-heartedly Miss McVail offered to wait. Bemrose rewarded her by sounding almost peevish with Miss Baldwin, the writer. Larry caught most of what Arthur was saying. He was insisting to the girl that there *couldn't* be much public interest in another story about the Supreme Court. The readers of her magazine wouldn't care if their average age were twenty-five and they all crooned like Bing Crosby, they must be sick of those same nine men. Larry gathered from Arthur's end of the conversation that Janice Baldwin wanted to quote him on what Judge Haynes would have thought of the present day court if he were alive. Curtly Arthur told her that he wasn't Conan Doyle and hadn't any short wave set tuned into the hereafter. He couldn't presume to speak for the dead. Besides, Judge Haynes had been his friend.

Finally she must have probed him about the current vacancy on the court, the real reason for her call, Larry figured. Bemrose was close enough to the top in Washington to furnish a pretty good dope story. Her editor would be smart enough to know that. But the subtlety of her approach had apparently been wasted on Bemrose. He told her that F.D.R. hadn't taken him into his confidence, and if she wanted to find out about the next incumbent, she'd better try the White House herself.

Then, unexpectedly, he laughed, and Larry guessed that Miss Baldwin had gotten through to him. "Sure I'll mind, and so will Newton. Only call us anyway."

Miss McVail dandled her watch at him and suggested, when he had hung up, that they finish another time.

"She's on her lunch hour," Tim reminded him in a shaky treble.

"She's been more than considerate about the interruptions," Arthur told Tim. "I think we have enough facts to get started, and maybe if you both can arrange to drop in one day next week— This office tries to do right by any friend of Tim's, you know," he told her gently.

When Larry went in to say goodbye to Hoxter, he saw that Arthur had her by the hand and was letting it gush. The persuasive Bemrose charm that trapped juries was turned on full. Trying to resist it was like damming up Niagara, and Miss McVail was no engineer. She smiled, and a light spread over her pale, amber skin. It was like one of those breathtaking effects in a Fifth Avenue window, the kind display men use to convey an atmosphere of quality. Inside Larry whistled, pleased with himself for having waited out Miss McVail the past hour. He knew when he saw her in the reception room that she had something. Something beside trouble with her brother. His hunch had been right, and he felt as if the market had gone up two points the day after he bought a block of stock.

When Tim and the girl had gone, Arthur H. Bemrose, lost in looking at the carpet, marked off the room's length pigeon-toed, linking heel with toe. "What do you know about Janice Baldwin?" he asked suddenly.

"She writes feature stories for *Everett's*," Larry offered. "I heard you talk to Carson."

Bemrose slid into an easy chair opposite Larry, and bore down on the backs of his heels which were extended in front of him.

“Why do you want to know? Did she sound good looking?” Larry asked.

“I wouldn’t say good looking. She sounded smart.” Arthur laughed. “Could you figure out what she wanted from what you heard? She wanted me, as the only authentic living spokesman for Judge Haynes, that’s how she put it, to give her a story on what the Old Man would have thought of the Supreme Court. I should have told her that what the Old Man would have had in mind wouldn’t fit the print.”

“Tim Hoxter wants you to take it up with the President,” Larry said. “He thinks you ought to give him hell for packing the Court. You ought to tell him it’s unconstitutional. He was giving me an earful out there in the reception room about how Judge Haynes wouldn’t have approved——”

“He’s a sweet old guy.”

“He has a sweet ward. If that’s what she is to him.”

“Miss McVail?” Arthur asked.

“I forgot. You go for brunettes.”

“What’s Miss McVail? A blonde?”

“Oh, my God.” Larry covered his ears.

“All right. Next time I’ll look,” Arthur promised.

“No, you won’t. You’ll never look.”

“The trouble with giving Miss Baldwin her story about the Court is that it’s strictly law journal stuff,” Bemrose said. “I’ve often thought about writing it, and someday I’ll get around to it, but when I do it will be what *I* think, Bemrose trying to stand on his own two brains, and not what the Old Man — Have you stopped to think, Larry, how easy it is to grow up a spokesman when you’ve lived around a great personality? Forty-two ought to be a good age to *stop* being a spokesman, even if there’s publicity in it.”

“I haven’t heard a word. I don’t listen to anyone who is too busy to notice women like Miss McVail. I figure a fellow like that has a blind spot, and eventually it’ll show in his work.” Larry pretended to be busy with his brief.

“You forgot the date.” Laboriously he printed J A N U A R Y 1 5 , 1 9 4 1 across the cover page. “That writer, the Baldwin woman, really called up to buzz you about the C.J., didn’t she? She didn’t give a damn about the old stuff on a packed Court. She probably wanted to find out how much you know, and figured that if you hadn’t heard anything from the hill, then nobody——”

“Yep.”

Larry sensed his mood. If Arthur H. Bemrose had been told by the President or by Tom Newton who would succeed Justice Hughes as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, he wasn’t picking any confidants.

“Does it read all right?” Arthur pointed to the brief.

“You’ve cut the hell out of it,” Larry complained. “I thought this stuff on page twenty was a pretty good argument——”

“Irrelevant. They’re interested in the law. There’s a big difference between presenting it to the Appellate Division and to the Court of Appeals.” He expounded on the jurisdiction of the Albany court.

“I’ll take the brief home and read it. You have your own work to finish,” Larry offered.

“Stick around.”

Arthur let the phone clatter a few times before picking it up. He swung a long, loose leg across his knee, and directed the operator to give him the call. “Yes, Davis, did you receive the opinion?”

It must be Bemrose’s client, Davis Shore, president of Eastern Power and Light. Bemrose had pulled the utility out of a jam, salvaged its franchise by bearing down on his Washington connections. Without Bemrose they probably still would have been cooling their heels in Washington, waiting for someone with authority to talk to them.

“Skip it. What the hell, Davis. You have enough business to take up at this meeting,” Arthur said.

“It isn’t stalling,” he insisted. “I’ll get around to it one of these days. Anyway, we won, didn’t we? Your credit’s good.”

He hung up and turned to Larry. “That was Davis Shore trying to get me to name a fee. They have a board meeting this afternoon.”

“Their stock’s selling at fifty-one,” Larry offered. “This sounds like a damned good time to send him a bill.”

“I don’t think I’m going to charge him a fee,” Arthur said.

The talk downtown was that Bemrose had received one hundred grand for a retainer before he even touched the case.

“You’re kidding,” Larry said. “You mean that your retainer covered the fee.”

“I didn’t ask for a retainer. I never take one from a friend.”

“Then you’ll have to charge him a fee.”

“I don’t think so,” Arthur protested. “I’ve collected a couple of fees this year. I’d be giving most of this one back in taxes.”

“I don’t get it. I just don’t get it,” Larry said. “Why did you take the case? To pass the time?”

“Hell, no. It was a swell fight.”

“And you had so much fun you decided to throw away a hundred grand. You know it was worth that to them. Every cent of it. Who do you charge if you don’t charge Eastern Power and Light? Jesus Christ, I don’t get it.”

“You have to give eighty percent of it back today,” Bemrose pointed out. “I’ll wait to charge them until I can hang on to the money. Right now I’m more interested in being good. Once you get the reputation for being good — Look at the Old Man.”

“You do all right now.”

“When I’m really good they’ll know about me. They’ll want me around, and not just for business. When I really get to be good enough.”

“*Get* to be, huh.” Larry shrugged. “I thought you were. I thought I was. I thought it was all down in black and white in the Declaration of Independence.”

Arthur knew what he was driving at. They had been trying to shell it out for twenty years, ever since they were kids, that concept of men being free and

equal, but it wasn't the kind of thing that was ever settled with talk.

"You know it. I know it. The trouble is *they* don't know about us being free and equal," Arthur said. "Can you be anyone's pal? *Can* you?" He leaned over and tapped the desk irritably.

"Why not?" Larry said. "I'm *your* pal——"

"And I'm Thomas Jefferson. I think Larry Frank is every bit as good as the next guy."

"Thanks." Larry grinned and watched Arthur H. Bemrose get red in the ears.

"I didn't mean——" Arthur apologized.

"Go on, I was riding you."

"When you're getting started at the law, you have to do something big for them to notice you. You can't just plug along turning in a decent job. You have to produce something brilliant. You have to pick your chances." He rocked a pencil between his fingers. "Once you're good enough——"

"I want to get it straight." Larry's narrow forehead pleated. "Who doesn't get a bill? Just Eastern Power and other million dollar corporations, or that McVail girl that our friend, Tim, brought in? What do you do about her?"

"I look after her all right," Arthur assured him.

"Thanks, I feel better. I just wanted to make sure."

Larry clipped together the pages of his brief. "I saw some pictures in *Life* this week of Shore's Oyster Bay place. It looks like quite a dump."

"He asked me down for next weekend. I think I might try to get there." Bemrose walked to the window. It looked like snow again, and a haze blotted out the River. The leaden water and sky blended with Jersey factory smoke into a flat gray screen.

Larry picked up his papers and said goodbye.

Bemrose followed him into the reception room. "What has the organization decided to do about you? Have they named you for the job?" he questioned sharply.

“Named me? A lousy district leader? Of course not,” Larry said. “The Hall’s going to stage a comeback.”

Arthur kicked through the pile of the carpet, unconvinced. “And if it does _____”

“Well, I won’t be taking trips to Washington and I won’t be pals with Tom Newton, that’s a cinch. I’ll still be a two-bit politician.”

The minute Larry said it he was sorry.

Arthur H. Bemrose frowned and hesitated. “They could nominate you when there’s a vacancy on the bench and they need someone from your district. They don’t have to hold out on you because you’re honest. This was one time they should have given you a break. If they keep passing over the honest men— The lousy bastards don’t deserve to come back.”

Larry shrugged. “I better run along.”

“Why don’t you let me introduce you to Swanson?” Arthur insisted. “You’ll stand a better chance with the labor crowd. Tammany isn’t coming back. Look, it’s seven years that they’ve been out of office, ever since the Seabury investigation ousted Jimmy Walker. What makes you think——”

“I like it around Second Avenue, that’s why,” Larry said. “I have a nice, colorful district where there’s very little discrimination.”

“Except against an honest man.”

“You never come down. You don’t know how it operates. Let me show you around sometime.”

“Go on, get out,” Arthur said good-naturedly.

“Not until you tell me what I owe you for revising my brief.” Larry shook a red paper envelope with strings that dangled, the professional badge of the New York lawyer.

“Get out.”

“What do I owe you? Remember, I’m not your friend, Shore, and what I pay isn’t going to make trouble for you with the internal revenue department.”

“I’ll win it from you in poker,” Bemrose offered. “When is the gang going to play?”

“The usual. Two weeks from Thursday. We’ll look for you.”

“I’ll be there. With poison.”

Larry shook the envelope. “Better change your mind and charge me. A man can go broke working for nothing. Especially a lawyer can go broke.”

Arthur H. Bemrose waved him out, laughing. “When I charge fees again, I’ll pick someone else to start with.”

The marble hall outside the offices of HAYNES and BEMROSE seemed less formidable than a couple of hours ago. As Larry waited for the elevator he couldn’t help thinking of all the suckers who still worked, or kidded themselves into believing that they worked to make money. Arthur H. Bemrose had other motives, different from making money, or at least he thought he did. Maybe Bemrose had arrived at something. With taxes what they were, maybe a man had to find some better reasons. Maybe if he didn’t think of his work in other terms and do it for the kind of tax-free currency that was around in January, 1941, he would wake up someday and find out that he’d been taken. Larry figured that as far as Arthur H. Bemrose was concerned it didn’t matter. Whatever motives Bemrose might have, wherever he was headed, he, Larry Frank, would stick around and observe.

Chapter 2

Larry had known all evening that Arthur was bothered about something. The poker crowd must have felt it, too, because right after the game broke up in Danny's second floor dining room, they cleared out and left Larry alone with him. He steered Bemrose to a quiet booth in the bar, and Danny shuffled over to take their order.

"What is it tonight—Shelley or the Elizabethan poets?" Larry asked Danny.

The bartender marked his place with his finger in a paper-backed mystery story. "A guy's gotta pass the time in this racket or he'll go nuts."

"Any of the special left?" Larry asked.

"I showed him how to vote," he boasted, when Danny had gone up to round up the bottle of fifteen-year-old bourbon he put aside for him.

"I know. You placed his fingers on the levers and let him push," Arthur said.

"What if I did? He had never been near the polls."

"And sometimes you wake up nights in a cold sweat."

"Danny's all right. He's a literary character. One of the best boys in the district."

"I suppose he's the reason you want us to keep the poker game down here."

"What would we get any better uptown? I like to see us give Danny the business."

The booth was dark, and Arthur Bemrose slumped against the partition. Good, he was letting go. Larry felt useful. Bemrose would be talking it out pretty soon, getting rid of whatever was eating him. One drink, and he'd loosen up. Larry had been through it with him before.

Danny put down the bottle and some glasses. He read his book as he uncorked the bourbon. "Three murders so far, and they ain't started."

From an ostentatiously flickering juke box came the voices of the Andrews Sisters. Larry had put in a nickel for the record, hoping the low, sedative

tones would help numb the troubles of Arthur H. Bemrose. But Arthur's chest was scooped with fatigue, and his mustache straggled sulkily.

"I saw that writer friend of Carson's last night," Larry said. "I saw her and I heard her."

"Janice Baldwin?"

Larry nodded.

"Where did you run into her? She was tied up at a dinner last night." Arthur stiffened.

"I was one of the fifteen hundred suckers who took tickets for the dinner. British War Relief. Bessie works for them, and she dragged me."

"And Bessie didn't tell you she was going to be on the program?" Arthur cross-examined him.

"If she'd told me, I wouldn't have kicked about going out in the storm. I stopped complaining when we got there and the Baldwin girl stood up in a dress—" Larry described it with his hands, "It was a blue number." He drew a V from his shoulder to the third button of his vest.

"So you think she's okay." Arthur's fingers whitened under the nail from working his glass.

"At my age I don't know any more, but I doubt if a fellow would have to be urged. Don't you?" Larry patted his wavy hair. "I forgot. You don't notice them."

"Maybe I can fix you up," Arthur offered. "She owes me something. I've just done her a favor."

"Go ahead. Bessie won't mind. Bessie thinks she's wonderful."

"She wouldn't if she knew her," Bemrose said sullenly.

"What's the matter? Did the Baldwin girl do anything to you?"

Bemrose shrugged.

"What is it? The story about the Court?"

"I guess that's it," Bemrose said. "Women with brains set me on edge. This one has too many. She did what I guess she'd call 'research' on Judge

Haynes, and you'd think she had known the Old Man all his life. It's uncanny the way she brought him to life in her article. I don't think she had ever met him. I don't even think she was in his courtroom while he was alive."

"But she caught him?"

"She captured that quality of his that was always difficult for laymen to understand and made lawyers memorize every sentence of his decisions. That instinct he had of what the law was. Not the immediate political climate, or how public opinion might react at the moment, but his long-term sense of what was written in the law and would still be the law, for fundamental reasons of fairness and justice, long after the political climate changed."

"She must have managed to put the Old Man in her article after all. I know you were going to try and talk her out of doing it."

Bemrose nodded. "The article was finished when she showed it to me. She plunged right in and tackled the soft coal case, a real hot potato. By quoting that old decision of the Judge's in *Wallingford vs. Stevens* she showed pretty clearly what he would have thought about the government fixing the price on coal when it had just finished prosecuting the oil companies for fixing prices on oil. She used his language to make her point that what is wrong for individual oil men is wrong for the government, that same argument Higgins used in his appeal."

"I didn't read the decision. I never get around to them."

"That's what the Old Man probably *would* have thought," Arthur admitted. "He wouldn't care who got mad at him for thinking so, either. What I can't figure out is how a woman who isn't a lawyer and who never knew the Old Man— This stuff is involved and fairly subtle. I don't see how——"

"You never like to admit that some women can use their heads like men, do you? I've often wondered if you were ever burned."

"My senior year at college there was a girl," Bemrose said. "We were engaged, and she was the last intelligent woman I trusted. She didn't like the idea of waiting three years until I finished law school and another two or three years while I was getting established. That lovely, crisp intellect of hers let her fall in love with a man who could marry her right away. He

happened to be fifteen years older, and not too scintillating, with a yen for nursemaids on the side, but he had the price of a respectable house in Scarsdale. Since then I've tried to pick them without too many brains but more sensibility. Either that, or the kind with no sensibility who are frankly out for business and don't confuse it with talk about aesthetics."

Larry nodded sympathetically. "Did you okay the Baldwin girl's article?"

"Yes."

"And now you wish you hadn't?"

Bemrose bore down on his palms which he had flattened on the table. "When the Administration finds out that I okayed it—and she won't hesitate to let it be known that I was her authority—they'll think I'm sniping at the Court."

"What if they do? Will it hurt you in Washington?"

"I don't give a damn about that, but the Court's okay. The mossbacks obliged and died. The President got what he wanted. He didn't have to pack the Court or torture the Constitution. Anyway it isn't the Constitution that was tortured. It's the economic ideas of a lot of people who still haven't caught up with the times and probably never will."

"Why don't you ask her to show you the final proofs of her article? Tell her you've thought of some last minute changes. If she's going to quote you as the authority for her article, she'll want to keep you happy. She needs you worse than you need her."

A tic worked behind Arthur's mustache and pulled his lip out of shape. "A few changes won't help. There's something oblique about the reasoning, and quoting the Judge doesn't save it. All the facts are correct, and intellectually she grasps the argument, but she doesn't really understand it. Inside she's suffering from a kind of legal indigestion. All except the part where she writes about the Old Man as a human being. I wish to hell Carson had tackled the piece. He *might* have gotten away with it, although it's still a complicated argument for a mass audience." Bemrose frowned. "I'm not at all sure you can boil down the case for an independent judiciary to single syllables. Maybe a man could—a good experienced writer like Carson—but not a woman writer."

“How about a drink?” Larry stood up and signaled the bartender.

“I should have talked her out of it,” Arthur rubbed his forehead. “It’s keeping me up nights. Her readers are going to get the wrong idea when she quotes decisions of the Judge as if they were current and he had written them yesterday. It isn’t fair. She could use *four*-syllable words and it wouldn’t be accurate.”

“Didn’t she offer to let you have another look at the article?” Larry sympathized, knowing that blurred thoughts and ideas that were slightly off true gave Bemrose stomach pain.

“She promises—every time I see her.” Bemrose’s outsized ears darkened. “I bumped into her at the Storeys’ at his fiftieth birthday party, and I’ve been seeing a good deal of her. In fact all there is to see——”

When he did a jigsaw puzzle, Larry started with the important pieces, the roof of a house or a tree trunk, and later filled in the foliage and the sky. He picked out the border pieces and tried to frame the puzzle. Then he scrambled to match the fuzzy, nondescript color inside.

At Danny’s Bar-Grill on Second Avenue that night, Arthur Bemrose supplied the roof and the tree trunk. A few weeks later Janice Baldwin pointed out the border pieces. Larry improvised the foliage, the sky, and the fuzzy in-between. When he finished, he had a completed landscape. This skill at putting human fragments together gave Larry the kind of satisfaction that other men found in games or sports. The piecing together of other lives until they made a picture was an avocation that suited Larry Frank down to the ground.

From what Arthur had told him about Professor Storey and the parties he gave in his old-fashioned apartment on Morningside Drive, Larry often wondered why the Professor bothered to entertain. A man with Storey’s reputation didn’t have to put himself out entertaining. He could have lived like a semi-recluse and seen only a few special friends. Without bothering to keep up the social amenities among his colleagues on the faculty and their wives, Professor Storey could have sailed along nicely on the strength

of that physics medal he had won last year. His work contributed clippings regularly to the University pressbook, and he never would have been fired, or even questioned. Not if he had snubbed the President of the University. But Professor Storey and his wife gave their parties, spent more on entertaining than a limited college salary would seem to allow, for only one reason apparently. They liked people. They didn't have to bother about extending their long and impressive list of friends, but they enjoyed bothering, and their parties showed it.

"It's the most civilized house in New York," Arthur had often commented. "I'd rather go there than to any sold-out show on Broadway. You meet more shirts that aren't stuffed in one evening at the Storeys' than almost anywhere else in a lifetime. And when they get people up there, they know how to let them alone so they can have a good time. There are so many people around who are special that no one ever seems like anyone in particular." Bemrose told Larry that anyone was likely to show up at the Storeys', anyone from the Ethiopian Emperor to some obscure physics professor from an unknown college in one of the smaller South American countries.

It appeared that the Storeys had an unwritten rule for parties which they acted out, and which initiated guests took pains not to violate. No serious talk. That was the rule. Laugh about anything, but when adrenalin was loosed in the room, keep quiet. Occasionally a newcomer who still fumbled English and hadn't quite caught the lighter mood of these gatherings would frame a halting question about politics, labor, Negroes, or science. While he waited solemnly for the answer, Professor Storey would pose one of his favorite conundrums—he collected conundrums the way poets sometimes memorized limericks—and by the time the guest had solved the problem, or the Professor told him the answer, the ice was broken, and everyone in the room forgot that Storey, the physicist, practically ate breakfast with a spectroscope.

With women guests, the Professor's practice seemed fairly standard. He'd sit on the swollen arm of an easy chair which created a fortress around the guest, and he'd talk about the beauty of an elongated neck. The Professor's favorite women seemed to be swans.

Bemrose was an old timer at the Professor's parties. He had been attending them since law school and knew the pattern by heart, and it upset him a little to think that Janice Baldwin could turn things upside down. Apparently it only upset Arthur H. Bemrose. As far as Larry could tell, none of the other guests seemed to mind.

"Einstein was there once. Another time I ran into old Nicholas Miraculous himself. No one paid any special attention to either of them, but when this Baldwin girl turned up—" Arthur reported.

"President Butler never wore an evening dress cut down to the navel," Larry reminded him soothingly. "I'll bet she was set up. Last night at the Astor, when she moved around behind that loud speaker—" Larry recalled her bloody fingernails and the brightly cut eyes, shiny as onyx, and figured that Janice Baldwin must have been an agreeable contrast to the unmade-up faculty wives at the Storeys'.

As Bemrose described the evening, she had taken over the one big sofa in the room, and the other guests hung over her, sat on the floor at her feet and listened, or leaned against nearby tables. All the traffic seemed to be going one way. People left the dining room where the rug had been rolled for dancing and came over to her. Mrs. Storey's famous hot appetizers were left to cool on the piano.

Bemrose seemed the only one there who wanted to do anything else. The rest of them were more than willing to listen to Janice. Last night at the Astor, Larry's own peas had turned to rubber while he listened to her; so he understood it. She told heart-warming stories about the English people, among the first stories of their kind to reach the United States first hand. Janice Baldwin had seen it all on the spot. She had stood with her British friends in the rubble. She had helped them dig out their tea cozies and bedpans. She knew what it meant to be frozen solid inside with fright and act as if the greengrocer had forgotten to deliver a bunch of parsley.

Many weeks later, after Larry had come to know Janice Baldwin, he accused her of turning the Storeys' undignified sofa into a lecture platform, and she denied it. She insisted that the others made her talk about the War, and she kept tossing them the ball. But by then Larry had memorized her quick, grasping hands and decided that the ball would never wander very far from her. She wanted to keep the talk light, even the talk about the War,

Janice told Larry. She only related anecdotes, the amusing things that had happened during the blitz. It was some of the others who insisted on being serious and wanted her opinion on how long it would take before we'd be in it. She was sick of talk about it. She'd had a bellyful in England, all the war she could take at the moment. She was back in New York for a breather, and she wanted to try and forget it for a little while. That's why she had bothered to put on a long dress and come to the Storeys' party. She wanted to dance.

Bemrose must have had the same idea. He used his long legs to bridge the floor sitters and pulled her out of it before the question period had progressed very far. "You're wearing her out," he told the others, noticing all the time that she was stimulated and alive with their flattery. But they took the hint and went back to the neglected appetizers. In a few minutes it was like any other party at the Storeys'.

Except for Bemrose it was. He was no Arthur Murray graduate but he danced all evening with Janice Baldwin when he wasn't getting her a drink. It seems they had quite a few of both. They must have spent hours circling the uneven dining room floor to a rusty phonograph which creaked out of tune, and each time the needle dragged sourly at the end of a record, they held on, her head mused against his dinner coat. By one-thirty, after the birthday cake had been cut, most of the guests cleared out, and only a few old friends were left. The Professor concentrated on Janice Baldwin, maybe to find out how Arthur H. Bemrose would take it, or maybe to prove that he was still good at fifty. He danced waltzes with her and whirled past Bemrose who was sulking against the wall, taking meticulous pains not to bump him. They were still waltzing an hour later. By that time the Professor had told her the original versions of most of the stories he cleaned up for his class. It was Mrs. Storey who broke up the evening by coming in to fold the extra bridge chairs. When Janice left with Bemrose, the Professor accompanied them to the door and kissed her moistly on the cheek.

Whatever set off Bemrose's fear of "a brainy woman" must have occurred in the next thirty minutes, Larry figured. He hadn't much confidence in Bemrose's explanation of being scared of a woman because she had brains. He realized that Arthur's fear came from something buried inside of him that he probably wasn't aware of, not even vaguely.

It was hard to guess what happened between them on the way home, but Janice Baldwin was no chase-me-I'll-chase-you woman, and if she were crazy for Bemrose, she probably said so, Larry surmised. That would have scared the hell out of him. Bemrose made a living out of his natural suspicion. He held postgraduate degrees in it. If she seemed to be crowding him, or let on that she had thought he might be at the Storeys' that night and that's why she had come, he would have shied off. Then and there. For all her directness, she must have been smart enough to sense the kind of special personality this was. There was something about the core of him, something that made up his individuality, which had to be kept immaculate, and she knew enough not to trespass. He had come back for more, a test of her understanding. Any mistakes she made hadn't been too serious. He told Larry that he had been seeing her pretty regularly the past three weeks, almost every night that she wasn't signed up to speak at a public dinner.

"What do you do? Go up to her apartment?" Larry asked.

"Yes, we stay there alone, or she has people in."

"Anyone you know? Or strangers who make you uncomfortable?"

"I know most of them." Bemrose's mustache twitched.

"How come that you've never met her before if you know so many of the same people?"

"I guess my luck held for years. If Carson hadn't put the evil sign on me and told her to call about that damned article——"

"I don't get it. I don't get it at all. When you said you were seeing her, I was beginning to feel better. I don't mind telling you that I was worried the other day when you passed up the one Tim Hoxter brought in. It's time you got in trouble with a woman. Serious trouble," Larry said. "I'd have been happy to see you make a date with that Miss McVail. Maybe she hasn't much upstairs but she has looks. When someone like Janice Baldwin comes along with both——" Larry dusted his coat sleeve, wondering whether maybe he had gone too far.

"I lived enough years around a woman with brains. Or don't you remember Mrs. Haynes?"

Larry realized that Bemrose had somehow niched Janice Baldwin with that austere old lady who twisted her straight hair into a punishing knot at the nape of her neck.

“It never seemed to cramp the Judge’s style,” Larry said. “They could be twenty or sixty. He always did all right with women. You’ve told me stories yourself——”

“That was fun. That wasn’t serious.”

“Well, what’s this? Miss Baldwin hasn’t asked you to marry her, has she?” Larry leaned diagonally against the corner of the booth, and his knee bumped against the table leg.

“After three weeks?” Bemrose laughed. “When she does, I’ll tell her that she’ll have to get your approval. How would you like to meet her?”

“I’d like to. But not for the reasons you think. I would really like to know whether she thinks we’ll have to get in the War,” Larry said. “Go over there and fight, I mean.”

“Goddammit, we ought to be in it!” Bemrose exploded with sudden violence. “We’ve become a goddam nation of fence sitters. Do you realize we’ve been in every other major war since the eighteenth century? Well, we have. I looked it up the other day. And here’s the biggest, most important war in history, and we do nothing. Supposing England loses this one. Supposing she goes under——”

“Wait until we start throwing in everything we’ve got.”

“When do we start? You tell me!”

But Larry couldn’t help thinking about the danger to Arthur H. Bemrose, not to England. That’s one reason he would never be a success like Bemrose. He couldn’t get stirred up about the major social and political considerations of the time. When they broke up tonight, he’d spend his time thinking about whether Bemrose was ever going to find the right woman, and the War would be forgotten.

“I don’t see the harm in going up to her place,” Larry said, wondering if it might have been the competition Janice Baldwin offered Bemrose, people sitting around at her apartment firing questions at her about the War, the way they did at the Storeys’, and Arthur in the background keeping quiet. It

was a new experience for him, Larry knew. He wasn't used to playing unless he could be front and center.

Bemrose tilted his glass, trying to locate a last drop.

"I'll order you another," Larry offered, realizing that whatever it was, Janice Baldwin had him offside. He didn't believe that theory about brainy women which Arthur had advanced, in spite of the college sweetheart and Mrs. Haynes. Something dark and hidden must be gnawing at Bemrose, something that made him fearful. That's how Larry Frank figured it.

"Another thing that worries me is that Newton gave me a job to do, and I can't make a dent in it. He wants it in a rush, day after tomorrow. Last night I stayed down to work, but I couldn't make any headway. I felt like hell."

Larry lifted two drinks from Danny's tray. "Sure, I know. That's how the real thing feels sometime."

"Well, you should know more about it than I do. Here's to Bessie. Long may she wave!" Bemrose raised his glass. "From now on I better stick to what *I* know—I better go back to the office tonight and get that job done for Tom."

"Some sleep will do you more good. Go on home, it's almost two o'clock. Tomorrow let me come down and help you at the office while you knock out Newton's work. You'll be able to do it with your left hand when you're rested."

Bemrose was delighted with the offer. "It will take a big load off me if you wind up the McVail case," he said. "I can't let Tim down, and it's been a headache. We finally have an agreement worked out with the brother. He's a terrible guy, that brother. But someone ought to explain the papers to her. I don't want her to sign anything until she understands what she's signing. If there's ever a kickback—Tim might not be here to help her the next time."

"I'll see if she's free tomorrow night. I'll take the papers up to her house if she is," Larry offered.

"I'll try to make it up to you sometime," Bemrose promised. "That case has been a ridiculous worry to me."

When Larry helped him on with his coat, he noticed that the tension had eased. Bemrose's arms moved freely through the wide cuffs, and his

eccentric lip lay quiet.

“Remember, hit the hay when you get home,” Larry cautioned, putting him into a taxi and giving the driver Bemrose’s home address.

As Larry walked along Second Avenue, the handwritten signs on the store windows shouted to an empty house. Larry liked the wide street at night when, in contrast with the chattering crowds that spilled over sidewalks and thoroughfare during the day, it was toned down by the dark and quiet. He stepped along carefully to avoid some bumpy strips of ice on the pavement, and while he was walking, he went to work on the inside pieces of the puzzle.

He thought of Janice Baldwin as he had seen her centered at the speakers’ table the night before, a chunky amethyst bracelet hung on her wrist and lustrous purple stones to match the bracelet in a collar around her neck. He thought of the black fur wrap she must have handed Arthur as they were leaving the Storeys’, an extension of her dark hair and brilliantly black eyes. She would have stepped into Bemrose’s car talking and laughing, the Professor’s kiss still damp on her cheek. After that evening with Storey and his friends she would have no doubt of being admired and wanted. Bemrose would sense it and drive around the block looking for a place to park. When he found a spot, he would use his emergency brake, but carefully keep the motor running. He would kiss her methodically at first, taking pains to hit her straight, generous mouth head on, and thoughtfully he would stay there until the first, fine heat had gone from her. Then he might move away to the left of the wheel, leaving her alone for a few minutes, and begin to think of how she might fit into his life, and that meant figuring whether she would be good for his law practice.

If Larry had guessed right about Janice Baldwin, she wouldn’t stop to consider whether or not Bemrose would benefit her future. She would operate from the heart, and if what she felt about Bemrose was the real thing, she’d hope that some of her sparks would catch on and warm him.

That’s how Larry Frank doped it out in his amateur way, reflecting on the phenomenon that made him content to live a large piece of his life through

others. It was perhaps a strange characteristic, although he had seen the same trait in other men, a willingness to exist vicariously through someone else, as if a man's own qualities could never satisfy him and he could fulfill himself only through another's achievements. It was as if Larry had been born knowing that his existence would move on an uneventful plane and his excitement and adventure must come through Bemrose. Arthur Bemrose acted as his filter, intensifying the color of his life. Arthur Bemrose, who was along the lines of what Larry's father would have liked of his son, made it possible for him to live recklessly and imaginatively without taking the risks, Larry wasn't particularly ashamed of this quality in himself. Some men were made to do and others to watch. He had no urge to prove to the world that he was capable of action. It satisfied something in him just to sit back, observe, and piece together his conclusions. It was a pastime of which he never tired.

As for feeling any guilt because he was a disappointment to his late father, Larry knew that Ephraim Frank had come to this country for the chance to live his life in his own way. If the manner chosen by his son was to live at second hand, through others, to look at the rat race but stay out of it, what was wrong with such a decision? Nothing as far as Larry could see.

Chapter 3

A sleety wind from the Drive blew Larry across West End Avenue at Ninety-first Street. The doorman of the apartment house where Lucy McVail lived with her uncle and aunt reached from under the canopy to cover him with a tattered umbrella. Guided by its bamboo handle, Larry stamped into the vestibule and smoothed his upturned overcoat collar to prevent the layers of wet snow from sliding down his neck. He looked around the steamy entrance hall. A soggy red carpet matched a worn plush bench with pewlike back. Larry mounted three ill-covered stairs to the elevator, and when he saw the stucco walls freshly painted a poisonous green, he thought of a restaurant chain which had recently failed.

Upstairs the elevator man pointed to a shabby door at the end of a third-floor corridor where gas fixtures, no longer in use, remained bracketed to the wall.

Lucy, her skin a clear amber, her pale eyes only faintly tinged with color, answered his ring. Larry saw that with a hat off her blonde hair, light enough to be mistaken for gray, fluffed softly around her face. A white Persian kitten, done up in a blue satin bow, curled at her heel. They were two homebody females, and they made him feel warm with contentment.

She led Larry through a narrow hall where a long expanse of wall space was conscientiously covered by flower prints in cheap frames. In the living room her Uncle Ed, a can of English shoe wax in one hand, a soiled cloth in the other, sat polishing an end table. He had on a kitchen apron.

She introduced them, and Ed Daugherty tried to wipe off the brown stains before he put out his hand. "Things get gritty," he apologized. "Pleased to make your acquaintance. What did you say the name was—Frank?"

The inexpensive furniture in the room had profited by his energy. Tables, chairs, and walnut secretary shone like new shoes. A mohair sofa and matching chair from an installment-plan establishment made Larry grateful for Bessie's decorator friend, Elizabeth Brett, who had given them a more tasteful living room at home.

There was old and old—richly designed old such as Judge Haynes had left; shabby, comfortable old, the kind the Storeys probably lived with; run-down old like the entrance downstairs; and shined-up, immaculate old, neither particularly gracious nor comfortable. This.

Larry remembered the steep walk from the Albany station to a narrow alley where, in an apartment above the local hardware store, he had spent Christmas vacation with Arthur Bemrose one year. It was an oppressively shabby house, and Arthur must have been glad to forget it these past few years.

“When my aunt finishes the dishes, I’d like you to meet her,” Lucy said, and Larry came back from his thoughts of Albany where he recalled that the Bemroses owned a blue mohair sofa like this one.

A figured pink lamp shade dipped in fussy fringes, and Ed Daugherty tackled the green wooden base with his polishing wax. He had a stock of the paste in all colors, and chose a neutral shade for the lamp.

“For heaven’s sake, stop fussing. You’ll rub off the finish,” said a plump red-faced woman. She giggled in an uncontrolled staccato. “He’s always at things,” she apologized, shaking hands with Larry. “Mighty nice of you, Mr. Frank, to help our niece with her case. Isn’t this a nasty night? Would you like a cup of tea, or something stronger? Put the water on for tea, Ed,” she decided quickly.

Mr. Daugherty undid his apron and turned toward the kitchen. A polishing, not a talking man, Larry thought, until he later found it was Daugherty’s wife who often canceled out his conversation.

Larry turned with relief to Lucy McVail. After the meticulous uncle and the gushing aunt, it was like looking into a cool, still well. Listening might easily be Lucy’s most useful quality, Larry reflected, remembering that he had mentioned this trait of hers to Bemrose. It wasn’t easy to tell how much she understood, but she listened. He unzipped his briefcase and spread some legal papers for her to examine. Precisely he took up each point in the settlement that Bemrose had worked out with her brother.

When the farm in Iowa was sold, they would divide the proceeds equally, she and her brother. The bonds at the bank, however, belonged solely to her, and they constituted the larger part of the estate. Mr. Bemrose thought she

might consider cashing the bonds since he had checked on their current market price and found it was favorable. She might invest the money in an insurance annuity if she wanted to provide for her future.

Miss McVail probably knew, Larry explained, that her brother had capitulated after Mr. Bemrose's second letter, the blunt one, in which he reminded Mr. McVail of three bonds he had wheedled out of his grandmother the week she died. Mr. Bemrose threatened suit for undue influence, and her brother apparently had reason to keep out of court. Larry noted that Lucy McVail winced. Not that it mattered *why* he had finally agreed, Larry hastened to explain. Here was his signature. Now if she would just sign— The farm might bring fifteen hundred dollars. Adding the bonds, she would be able to realize around six thousand in cash. It wasn't bad. Mr. Bemrose thought she had done all right.

While Lucy McVail read the papers, the Daughertys fussed with teapot, cups and saucers. She read the documents as slowly as she had listened to him, Larry decided. Quietly she studied the long legal sheets, tracing each line with a square-ended finger. Cool and slender. Quiet and slender. Gray-blond and slender. Larry noted and enjoyed her pale, attenuated beauty.

"Where shall I sign?" she asked at last.

"You're sure that you haven't any questions? Mr. Bemrose wanted you to understand all the details."

"As long as you and Mr. Bemrose think it's all right—" She nodded. "I trust you."

Larry handed her a fountain pen, and she wrote her name in thin, tall letters that were squared off in a heavy line at the bottom.

She handed the agreement back to him.

"That's your copy. Keep it," he said. "Now sign this one to send to your brother."

She repeated her signature, obedient as a fourth-grader.

"We didn't discuss the fee. Do you think Mr. Bemrose—" A shadow crossed the pale eyes. "Well, you know what I mean. He has such important clients."

“Not you. He’ll be easy on you,” Larry reassured her. “It’s a peculiarity of his, but very often even with his rich clients, he keeps down the fee. I’ve heard him refuse to take a cent from men who would pay anything he asked.” Larry tapped his thigh sharply with a pack of cigarettes and shook one out.

“He must be well off, turning down fees from people who can afford to pay —” Marge Daugherty said. She dribbled a spoonful of tea into her full cup, cooling it. “He’s young to be so rich, isn’t he? Or did he come into the money? Tim Hoxter told us——”

Larry laughed. “All he ever inherited was a sister with t.b. He has a brother who never held a job in his life and a father in Albany who drives a truck when he can find some work. The mother keeps house for all of them on what Mr. Bemrose sends her.”

Larry got up and walked to the table where Ed Daugherty had gone back to the lamp. “That’s a nice job you’re doing,” he remarked.

Daugherty ran his fingers over the glowing wood, warming himself.

“I went home with him to Albany one Christmas vacation and met the family,” Larry explained to Mrs. Daugherty. “Bemrose has been supporting them since he was sixteen. He worked his way through college and law school besides. I don’t know how he ever did it. I couldn’t, but I have a brother who did just about the same—took care of my folks, sent me through school. Some people seem to have the capacity.”

“If he had such a struggle, I don’t see how he can turn down fees.” Marge Daugherty clamped her lips.

“He’s not married, Marge,” Lucy said, so quietly that even a preposterous suggestion would have sounded reasonable, coming from her. “A man who isn’t married——”

“I guess it’s fun for him to work on big cases,” Larry speculated. “Fun for almost any lawyer,” he added. “The money doesn’t matter too much. He has a taste for hobnobbing with big shots. He lived around them for years when he made his home with Judge Haynes. They hire him for their lawyer, and first thing you know he’s their pal. He hangs out with half the people in Washington who count.”

“That’s the trouble with the New Deal crowd,” Ed Daugherty snapped.

Larry looked up startled, as though a clump of quiet woodland fern had suddenly acquired powers of speech.

Ed pulled a pipe out of his back pocket and reamed it. “Maybe your friend Bemrose is after power, like all the rest of them.”

“No, he just likes to help people, like he helped Miss McVail.”

She blushed. “He certainly has been nice to me.” The moving gray-blond lashes shadowed her cheeks. “The day I went to his office the phone hardly stopped ringing, but he found time for my case just the same.”

“When he helps people and they put their confidence in him, he feels good. That’s all there is to it. The money is secondary with him,” Larry explained, conscious of going into needless detail, yet wanting to clarify it for himself. “With taxes what they are, money isn’t as important as it used to be. A man has to find other reasons for working, and Bemrose enjoys feeling useful. He’s like a lot of other people that way, only he knows better than most how to make himself useful.”

“But if his clients *have* the money and want to pay him, I still don’t see why —” Marge Daugherty laughed, eyeing Larry shrewdly.

“Oh, Marge, what difference does it make? That’s Mr. Bemrose’s business,” Lucy said. She got up and walked to the hall. “Phil said yesterday he would pick me up at eight-thirty. I wonder if he forgot about our date.”

“It’s all right with *me*.” Marge Daugherty brought her forefinger sharply against her bosom. “As long as he doesn’t charge *you* a big fee.”

“He won’t,” Lucy whispered. “Didn’t you hear what Mr. Frank said?” Her eyes apologized to Larry.

He signaled for her not to worry, relieved that she knew when to stand up to them and wasn’t always a good little girl.

He made himself comfortable in a chair next to Ed. “I suppose you voted for Willkie,” he said, wondering about the Phil who was calling for her and still thinking that Bemrose might have tried inviting her to dinner. She had a nice simplicity that was lacking in so many of the hard, lacquered women Bemrose took out. The difference might appeal to him if he gave her a

chance. Larry wondered if Bemrose had ever known a thoroughly nice, unselfish woman.

“Yes sir, Willkie should have won,” Ed said. “Now they’ve got him wasting his time going over there to see Churchill. If we don’t watch out, first thing you know——”

“Do you mean you’re against Lend-Lease?”

“Well, I don’t know. We’re supposed to be neutral.” Ed obstinately bit at his pipe.

“If England goes under, we’ll have a real fight on our hands. My friend, Bemrose, thinks there’s a chance she might.”

“There’s three thousand miles of ocean for the Nazis to cross, and we’ve got a big navy, haven’t we?” Ed asked.

“The Czechs thought they were okay, nothing could touch them, and so did the Poles. I’m not saying we should get into the War, but I’d like to see Congress stop stalling and pass Lend-Lease.”

“Hugh Johnson has the right idea. He calls this free handout lollipopping all over the world, and that’s what it is,” Ed maintained.

“Ed’s pretty conservative,” Marge observed.

“Is that the bell, Lucy?” Marge picked up the cat and slipped it behind the kitchen door. “You answer it, dear.”

But Lucy had already disappeared down the long, floral hall.

While she was out of the room, her aunt explained that Lucy McVail had studied nursing in Des Moines but left early in her training to take care of her grandmother who broke her hip and was alone on the farm. When her grandmother died after months and months in bed, the Daughertys wrote Lucy to come to New York. They couldn’t afford to send her through nursing school, but they paid for her course at a business college, and she found a job in a few weeks.

“She’s a nice girl, not like girls in New York, but a sweet disposition,” her aunt volunteered. “Ed and I never had children, and it’s a change for us to have someone young around. I get a kick out of her boy friends.”

Ed pursed his lips, and his wife added hastily, "Oh, she's a good girl."

"I think she should be a nurse, now she has the money for it," Ed interjected. "Those stenographers where she works are a hard-boiled, Broadway bunch. She should be in a more refined atmosphere. She don't know how to act sophisticated. She don't know how to talk fast. Have you noticed how she takes her time with every word? It's all right on a farm where there's no hurry, but in a big office——"

"When they have a figure like that, they don't waste it in a hospital emptying bedpans, do they, Mr. Frank?" Mrs. Daugherty winked suggestively. "At least in business she has a chance to meet someone. The fellow who's taking her out is a salesman from her office. How come that friend of yours never married? Mr. Bemrose. He can't be any youngster."

"Marge!" Her husband sh-shed her.

Lucy McVail was following a sleekly combed man into the room, her blonde head showing above his. He was around thirty, and Larry was surprised to see that he had a small black mustache which could have been plagiarized from Arthur H. Bemrose except that it was a neater, better barbered edition.

"Mr. Kenyon, Mr. Frank," Lucy introduced them.

Phillip Kenyon's wide, warm grin was a handshake. "We better push along, Lucy," he said. "They say the line goes around the block."

"What are you seeing?" Marge wrinkled her nostrils inquisitively.

"*Philadelphia Story*. At the Music Hall."

"Oh, I hear it's swell." Marge reproached her husband with a sigh. "You two better run along."

"I'll walk to the subway with you," Larry offered.

"Don't rush." Ed folded his polishing rag: "I'm finished with this job. In a little while we can listen to the news."

"Thanks, but I think I'd better go."

Lucy brought Larry his coat, and Phil Kenyon held hers as if it were sable instead of tweed, looking compliments in five figures. Crossing Ninety-first

Street, they drew away from Larry into an invisible circle. She clung to Phil's arm, letting him screen her from the storm, and he tucked her hand inside the wool lining of his glove.

"I looked for you tonight at five," he said.

"I know." She sounded regretful. "Mr. Anderson started to dictate, and I didn't get away until six-thirty. I tried your extension——"

"Mr. Kenyon works at the Green Network, too," she explained to Larry.

They had things to talk about.

Larry decided abruptly that he needed cigarettes from the stand next to the subway. A masculine wind and Phil Kenyon swept her down the stairs, and she turned and fluttered a mitten at him.

Larry felt as if he had seen a clean family movie. It seemed right, sharply right, for those two. Happily ever after. He wished Arthur Bemrose had something as good. He wished Bemrose knew just one wholesome, unshaming woman who would be more interested in making a home for him than what she would get out of it in security or social position.

Arriving winded on the subway platform from a senseless habit of always running down the steps, Larry waited to make sure that Lucy McVail and her friend were on the train ahead.

Chapter 4

Larry shifted on the stiff sofa outside the dining room of the Downtown Law Club, and shivering, slipped his hands under his pocket flaps. He hated this morgue and remembered that Bemrose had joined because Judge Haynes used to like the codfish cakes they served on Friday.

A burdened coat rack which crowded the small entrance hall hung over Larry. He walked to the window, watching the wet March snow take on the gray of the skyscrapers as it flurried ineffectually and blew to the ground. The tail end of March, and time for Arthur Bemrose to terminate his winter's hibernation. Larry knew that he couldn't have been solidly busy for two months, but he was too busy to see anyone. Always just leaving when Larry offered to drop around at the office. Too busy to play poker with the gang. Over the phone he had grown sharper, shorter. Before Larry could invite him to lunch the other day, Bemrose snapped him off. If that's how it was, if he thought he could get away from whatever was bothering him by isolating himself— It didn't make sense. When a man was miserable and had a friend he could talk to——

Larry paced the hall to the gilded iron door of the elevator. The old car crept inch by inch up the shaft as though conquering an Alp. Watching it, Larry wondered why Bemrose had phoned him this morning after all the weeks of silence. "Have lunch with me at the Downtown Club, I'm bringing a girl." That's all he had said.

Larry never could stand waiting. Especially here. Not just because many of the lawyers who belonged to the club had more clients than he did. It was the stuffiness. He took a breath, but didn't get any air in his lungs. It must feel like that in a submarine.

The elevator door creaked open, and Janice Baldwin stepped out with Bemrose. Her sharply tailored suit of gray wool, the gray cap that hugged her head and hemmed her straight hair, produced a trimness Larry wouldn't have associated with the rounded evening Janice. Only the generous mouth linked daytime and evening editions, the widely spread mouth and shiny black chips of eyes. They brightened the dim hall.

Shifting a bulky pouch bag to the other arm, she thrust her hand toward him. It was a sharp, compact weapon. "You must be Larry Frank."

Arthur grunted a greeting and handed his coat to the check girl. Larry asked Miss Baldwin if she would like to leave her overshoes, and as she bent down to tug at the zippers, she seemed suspicious of his solicitude.

Bemrose's tweedy heft preceded them to the dining room, and Larry began to be glad he was along, deciding her trim five feet three inches needed support if Bemrose began to throw his weight around.

At the table Larry waited for him to help Miss Baldwin out of her coat, but he searched the menu and let her struggle alone. Self-consciously Larry picked up his napkin and examined the dingy silver. At last he leaned over and helped her free the sleeves of her suitcoat from her snug woolen blouse.

"Your public," Bemrose said irritably.

"Nice public." She grinned at Larry and rattled the shiny amethyst links on her arm. The pert head, angled in his direction, excluded Bemrose.

Shifting his chair slightly, Larry disengaged her attention. He looked beyond the row of tables that hugged the wall. The snow, now turned to sleet, slapped peevishly against the glass. March was laughing up its sleeve in a last spurt of vengeance before the soft arrival of spring. Larry looked at Janice Baldwin, and her sense of being superlatively, glowingly alive retrieved him from the dirty dullness outdoors.

When Bemrose shoved the menu toward her, she passed it on to Larry. "You order for me," she said sweetly.

Uneasily he turned to Bemrose. "You know what's good here on Friday," he said. "Scallops? Bluefish? How about some codfish cakes?"

Janice Baldwin was a study of contrived blankness, and Arthur said gruffly, "I'm having the fishcakes."

"Is that all right with you?" Larry realized that she had succeeded in making him responsible for her. The two of them against Bemrose. That seemed to be the way she wanted them teamed up.

"Does he always decide what people should eat?" she wanted to know.

"Now——"

“He’s your friend. Ask him what I’ve done,” she said. “He nearly bit my head off when I met him downstairs a few minutes ago. And I didn’t keep him waiting, I was there right on time.”

The garrulous ears darkened. “It’s not your fault,” Bemrose admitted. “I should know better than to make a lunch date. All morning I’ve been in a jam, the usual jam. This time it’s the bill I drafted for Newton. The House Committee doesn’t seem to want it, and Newton insists that I come down to Washington and meet with them. I know they’re making a mistake. They should let it go to the Senate as is, then make their changes when it comes back to them, but they’re not going to listen to me. People only listen when it costs them more than they can afford.”

The statement contradicted Bemrose’s recent policy of not charging his clients, but Larry let it ride. He turned to Miss Baldwin. “Arthur likes things to go right the first time. Usually he doesn’t need more than one try.”

“And he sulks when they don’t go right.”

“Do you remember in our second year at school you got mad because the *Law Review* turned down an article you wrote?” Larry asked Bemrose. “I can still remember the subject. It was ‘Decisions.’ You were so put out when the article was returned that you quit studying for about two weeks. For you, that was like going on a hunger strike. We went to the movies every night. We saw about fourteen B pictures.” Larry’s chuckle came out easily from the bottom of his vest.

“Twenty-eight, you mean. Every show was a double feature.”

“That was when you almost decided to give up the law, wasn’t it?” Larry asked.

Bemrose bungled a smile. “Too bad I didn’t before my emotions were involved. Sometimes I envy the fellows who hate their jobs, the clock watchers. They don’t care whether things go right or wrong. They go home and forget about it, and they never get ulcers.”

“Like me. I’ll never have ulcers, or any of the other tension diseases people get from worrying,” Larry said. He turned to Miss Baldwin. “I like what you’ve been writing about England. I get a lot out of the way you say it. Over here, people like me still have no idea——”

Her hair fell forward, screening her face. She stroked the cabochons of her bracelet and talked down at the tablecloth. "I feel it. All my friends over there have been bombed out. It's the only thing I seem to want to write about. I'd like to make everyone feel it. We're sitting on dynamite over here, but we don't know enough to get off. If there were only some way, short of bombing, that would make us feel the urgency— If a writer had the power and could show us that it's close to our last chance——"

"You'll be going back, I suppose," Larry said. It was inconceivable that Janice Baldwin would sit out the War comfortably in New York.

"The British Consulate has promised to arrange transportation for me in a month. They phoned yesterday." Without turning her head, the eyes moved sideways toward Bemrose.

His knife dropped and hit the table. "I thought you told me——"

"I said *if* I could do it without upsetting *Everett's* schedule. You know I promised Pat. You were right there."

"Naturally she wants you to go. That's how an agent collects ten percent. Miss Baldwin is always letting her agent railroad her into jobs she doesn't want," Bemrose complained to Larry.

"If you wanted me to stay here, you should have said so the other night." Janice's eyes were bright and bitter, like a quinine-loaded wine.

"I heard you tell Pat there wasn't any new material over there. You had already covered the story, and five hundred other reporters were hanging around the British Isles for a news break. I thought you asked her to get you out of it," Bemrose said.

"The other night I may have felt that way."

"You'd think she would be satisfied to stay in this country and pay attention to her job. She's always going places," he grumbled.

"But it *is* my job," Janice Baldwin objected. "He doesn't understand that I'd like to sit home and do it, but I have to look at what's going on, not just read about it. That's my particular gix. It's the only way I can work, being there on the spot and seeing things happen." She appealed to Larry. "Maybe other people can absorb it from the newspapers, but I have to be on hand

and see it myself. I was trained that way. I'm an old time reporter. I always will be——”

“On the fly, going somewhere every minute. I don't see how she accomplishes anything. A person ought to have a base.” Bemrose's mustache jerked in a light staccato.

“For a man who thinks he's anchored, you seem to spend most of your time on trains,” she said crossly.

“I wanted to get back in time to go with you Wednesday night. At the last minute Newton asked me to meet him on the hill. That's practically a command. I had every intention——”

They had been over it before. Her pat on his hand said skip it.

She left Bemrose alone with the back of her head and turned toward Larry. “Tell me more about him at law school.” In a voice that dripped apple blossoms.

Larry tried to warn her. This was no time. Not when Bemrose was strung up like a radio aerial.

The waiter arrived with their order, and the thick dishes clattering on his aluminum tray drowned out Janice Baldwin. They settled down to the fishcakes, Arthur jabbing his angrily.

“At law school did you all know he would be good?” she asked after a few minutes.

Larry tucked his left hand into his trouser pocket while he ate with the right. “Sure. We tried to tell him so, but he kept on working. The way he worked, you'd think he was going to flunk out. Night after night he'd grind, except the one time he got upset about the *Law Review* turning down his article.”

“What did you think he should be doing?”

“Playing poker with us. What do you think?” Larry laughed. “You see law school wasn't enough. Not for Arthur. He got himself a job after class clerking in a law office downtown.”

Silently Bemrose remashed his potatoes.

“Didn’t you try to talk him out of working like that? It couldn’t have been good for him.”

Larry put both hands in his pockets and moved his chair back from the table. “We were scared of him. He was better than we were, and we all knew it. I guess we resented him, but we didn’t dare interfere. It would have been like trying to stop a tornado. You know it’s going to change the shape of almost everything that is in its path, but the force is too great. You don’t dare try and stop it.”

She nodded, letting her food turn cold.

Her tense listening acted like caffeine. Not that Larry needed any special stimulant to talk about Arthur H. Bemrose. What he was saying seemed to make sense, although it had taken time and perspective to understand. It was strange lately—Tim Hoxter, the Daughertys, other people pumping him about Bemrose—a sign, maybe, that Arthur was becoming famous.

“So he scared you and the rest of the boys. You didn’t know what he was about, but you respected it. Or is respect the word?” She searched Larry’s face. “You were afraid of it. It was stronger than you. You didn’t know whether it was good or destructive, but you felt its strength.”

“Why not hold it until the morning they print my obituary? Then you can do a real job,” Bemrose interrupted. “Let’s order some dessert and get out of here.”

Larry turned to Janice Baldwin. “All I can tell you is that we would have given a right eye to be as smart as Bemrose.”

“What’s so goddam wonderful about being able to use your head? You were all exposed to an education, and an expensive education. If any of you had *wanted* to work—” Bemrose threw the words bitterly at Larry.

Larry had been feeling sorry for Bemrose because he was in a jam with the Baldwin girl, but now anger shot through him like strong whiskey. His neck protruded with it, and sweat stood out on his forehead. He tightened his fists until his finger joints hurt.

Larry pushed back his chair. “I have some time-killing to do for a client uptown,” he said, rising. “Nice to have met you, Miss Baldwin. I’ve admired your work. I wanted to ask you about the War.”

“Hold on, you haven’t had your coffee or dessert.” Bemrose violently motioned to a waiter.

“I’ve had dessert,” Larry said. “Don’t bother.”

“Please.” Janice Baldwin put her hand on his sleeve. “It was my fault. I was upset because he spoiled our plans the other night, and he was just getting even.” Her eyes turned spaniel-soft toward his. “Stay, Larry.”

It warmed him to hear her call him Larry. It warmed him to look at her cheeks which were the red of a pomegranate, and to see her moist black eyes directed toward him.

“Another time,” he said. “They’re expecting me back at the office.”

“Please—” Her intensity told him that she understood how deep the cut went.

Larry felt sorry for her. A woman who, in a few minutes, had managed to mess up a good, solid thing that had gone on for years between two men. And without intending any harm. Bemrose had maneuvered her into an unpretty position, and she apparently understood the implications, every shading and counter-rhythm.

“All right.” He pulled back the chair as if to change his mind.

“Larry knows what he has to do.” Bemrose held to his fluke advantage, anxious to prove that she was to blame. “I’ll be seeing you, fellow,” he said, motioning to Larry as if it were a little matter they could straighten out in five minutes alone, when there were no women around intent on Creating a situation.

Larry left the table, and she turned on Bemrose. As Larry reached the entrance hall, the high frequencies grew fainter, but he heard her say, “I *didn’t*— A decent, considerate guy. It’s your unspeakable arrogance——”

Larry waited for the check girl to locate his coat, and glancing back to the dining room, saw Bemrose take over. The ears were red all the way across the room, and his upper lip must have had St. Vitus’s dance. Janice Baldwin’s hanging black hair kept time with each arbitrary phrase as he instructed her in how to treat his friends.

A dull pain spanned Larry's forehead as he stepped into the creaky car. He rubbed, but the nagging ache persisted. When would Bemrose be bright enough to find out that wasn't the way to handle a woman? Anyway not Janice Baldwin. When would he learn to care enough for Janice Baldwin or any other woman to want to find out?

Chapter 5

Larry didn't want to buy a paper, but he laid down three cents anyway, attracted by some violets in a vendor's box next to the newsstand. He sighed because there was no one to buy them for at ten-thirty in the morning. Outside the Chanin building he stopped to sniff at spring. The restless April. When he was a kid, it was the season for rubbing holes in his black stockings playing pitch penny, a penny if he won, and a bloody nose if he lost. He lost either way because the cotton stockings cost a dime, and his mother couldn't go on darning the darns forever.

Spring now might mean a girl and the chance to buy her violets, or it might mean going to the zoo and watching the sea lions clown. He liked the sea lions when they arched out of the water in a surprise move which showered the crowd around the pool, then climbed on a granite block and stretched in the sun until their shiny blackness turned the protective gray of the stone.

To be a sea lion. Others could look for spring in the woods, but Central Park was for Larry, and a box on Forty-second Street the place to gather spring violets. The flowers might have a refrigerator smell and be wrapped in tinsel tied with cheap blue ribbon, but they were New York violets.

New York for Larry was the place to spend the restless April; also the motionless August, the bleak November and February when slush clogged the gutters. At any season it was the place, through carbon monoxide mornings, noisy afternoons, and glittery evenings. Monday through Sunday it was the place. When Larry left it to go across the River to Hoboken, he felt as though his right arm had dropped off. When a returning ferry made him whole again, he outwaited corner lights to feel the New York crowd press around him. He would have written an ode to the North River, if he had been Shelley.

This morning he hated to leave the spring down here on the street for his office. The upturned sniffing faces told him, more eloquently than dogwood or tulip tree, that fifty miles from Times Square the brooks were spilling over, and the new leaves spreading their embroidery. The creeping phlox was out, too. He could tell it was out in the country by the number of

topcoats recklessly being carried in town by men who felt two inches taller than when they had opened their eyes that morning.

Without greeting the lawyer in the room next door who shared the receptionist and office rent with him, Larry walked to his chair beside the narrow window. This morning he minded sharing the space with anyone. So far the spring day had belonged to him, and he didn't want to part with even a fractional interest. He looked at some slips the operator handed him on the way in. If he had thought of it, he might have bought the violets for her.

Miss Baldwin, one of the messages read, would drop in around eleven o'clock. She had phoned at nine-thirty, at ten-ten, and at ten-twenty-five. Larry looked at his watch. It was five of eleven now. He felt that spring was on his team. He had an excuse not to work. He phoned a client who had an appointment with him at noon. "I have a fever," he explained. "Spring fever. The doctor says I should stay in with it twenty-four hours after my temperature drops to normal." Larry hung up while his client, a labor union official, grumbled about the clause in a new contract Larry had drawn for him.

Larry didn't have long to wait. At eleven o'clock sharp, Janice knocked on the metal door. He pushed a chair close to his desk for her, and as she sat forward tensely, her woolen skirt riding above her knee, Larry saw that dark sacs outlined her eyes, and her face was thinner. It may have been suffering that had trimmed down her cheeks. They fell away in hollows under cheekbones augmented by the change.

She asked Larry if he knew anyone at the State Department who could help her get a visa. With the War looking worse, she didn't wish to confine her field of operations to England. *Everett's* had signed some affidavits for her the other day declaring that they had commissioned a series of articles on Sweden, but the State Department, typically uncooperative, had put her on a log-jam waiting list which didn't look as if it would ever break. She must clear through Washington immediately. She had to straighten out her papers and get the Swedish visa at once.

Larry rolled back in his chair, the urgency wasted on him. It was spring, and in spite of the blue underpuffs of her eyes, she looked lovely, lovelier because she was tense and whittled down, the ruby-white padding gone, and the core of her showing.

“I’ve phoned Washington every day,” she objected. “My long-distance bill —” She built a week of annoyances into an assault on her dignity. With her sense of drama strained, each wrong number pyramided to a crisis.

“What does Bemrose say?” Larry inquired, thinking of offering to trade violets with her for the visa. “He ought to be able to dig up someone for you through Tom Newton, someone who knows the ropes in the department.”

“I can’t ask him.” The usually straight mouth was pulled down with fatigue.

“What’s the matter, Janice?” He forgot the violets, and leaning over, touched her shoulder.

The mouth worked unhappily. “I don’t know.” Her defeated hands fell forward as she said, “He’s not around any more. I don’t know for how long. Sometimes I have a nightmare and think it’s for good.”

That was when he heard about the evening at the Storeys’ from her. And before that night, she admitted to Larry, from the first time that she had interviewed him at his office, she knew he was different from the others, that here was the man she had never known, the man whose existence she had divined and felt for years, certain that if he had life and shape and form, the chances were against her ever meeting him. She had found him, and by a miracle of coincidence, during a time in his life when he was free to love her; yet something had gone wrong.

She watched while Larry crossed the length of the room and came back to his desk. “If you feel that way about Bemrose, why do you want to go overseas?” he asked. “Why run away? Unless you’re afraid——”

“It might be hard to take when I did find out, but I don’t think I’m afraid,” she said. “I’m going over because it’s my job. I can’t just walk out on it.” She excavated a box of kitchen matches from her bag and struck one. It set up a blaze when it touched her cigarette. “I can’t do it even to rub Arthur Bemrose’s ego the right way.”

“Maybe he would like to believe that you care enough about him to stay home.”

“Would he care enough to quit *his* job?”

“So you think it’s the same, a man’s work and a woman’s,” Larry said.

“Why, yes, don’t you?”

One Saturday when they were kids living in a dowager brick house in Kansas City, Janice Baldwin and her twin brother sat on the disciplined grass next to the family tennis court and planned what they would do with their lives. Instead of going to Harvard, which was what the family had in mind for him, Bob would take a job on a freighter bound for Shanghai. Janice would use the train fare intended to take her to Wellesley, and find a newspaper job in New York. That’s how she would get the experience she needed for their work. In two years, when Bob sent for her, she would go to Shanghai and help him start a weekly newspaper in China, an English language paper. They would take the summers off every year and visit Peiping, Manchuria, and Tahiti. They would be free to go wherever they wanted to go. There would be no husband to tie her down and no wife for Bob. That was a clearly stated condition of the agreement. She stressed it in talking to Larry Frank.

She told Larry about a Saturday afternoon back home when the doubles match in the tennis court had broken up and she and Bob continued to play by themselves.

“Hit it across the Pacific, Jan!” he had coached her. She lunged for an angle shot to her backhand. All through the set she smashed her way through to China, happily indulging her adolescent fantasy. Her mother broke the dream when she neatly stitched across the lawn to say they were driving to the country club for dinner and ought to get ready.

Janice told Larry about another time when she and Bob rummaged in the attic and found Great-grandfather Baldwin’s journal. Her great-grandfather had traveled to Kansas in the late ’50s with other anti-slavers of the New England Emigrant Aid Company. Great-grandfather, the abolitionist, helped his friend, Charles Robinson, in the Wakarusa war against the pro-slavery crowd from Missouri. He gave Robinson free legal service and had a hand in framing the Wyandotte Constitution, a document which finally admitted Kansas to the Union.

Up and down the Kaw River they referred to Ezra Baldwin as “Robinson’s brains” and they rode from the Cimarron and the Neosho valleys to have Great-grandfather draw their wills. A crop of Ezras, named after him, sprouted like wild grass across the plains and constituted his legal fees.

Back East his friend, Lloyd Garrison, had written some verses which Great-grandfather copied into his journal:

Though woman never can be man,
By change of sex and a’ that....
In all that makes a living soul
She matches man, for a’ that.

Over and over again, at sixteen, the believing age, she repeated the verse to herself, Janice confessed to Larry. Bob assured her she was a match for man already. He was touched with Great-grandfather’s golden fluency, and she believed him. Janice wanted to believe that she was as good as Bob thought she was.

Her father died when they were seventeen, and Bob, abandoning the dream of the East, pitched in to learn the family tanning business. She came back from Wellesley the summer of her sophomore year, and he introduced her to Mary Ellen—empty little Mary Ellen with shallow eyes and skin you could see through. The following June Bob married her, and the next summer, as Janice boarded the *S.S. Champlain* on a college cruise to Europe, a cable from Bob announced the birth of Mary Ellen II.

More than a year after graduation, when Janice was rounding out her first six months in Washington as a reporter on the morning *Gazette*, Ezra Baldwin III was born to Bob and Mary Ellen, followed the year after by twins. Janice heard about the twins in Shanghai where she had wangled a job with Global News Service.

Bob still lived in the brick house at home and rolled the tennis court on Saturday. She often wondered if he minded settling in Kansas City. Once he wrote: “I think of how we planned to see it together. Have fun for both of us, Jan!” The first year or so she sent him carbons of her best stories, or cabled to him when she was abroad. After that she didn’t bother. Now and then she would visit them in Kansas City, but surrounded by the domestic

clutter of Mary Ellen and the children, she felt more remote from Bob than in letters. It worked better when he came to Washington alone for a visit. Even then too many years and miles had gone by. He had forgotten that they had ever planned a life or a work together.

“Your brother has his home and family, but you’re still without roots,” Larry said. “You can’t go on acting out some dream you had when you were sixteen. You can’t keep on crossing oceans the rest of your life, expecting to see something new on the other side. There are a few basic things, and they concern what goes on inside of you. Once you’ve learned them—” Larry shrugged. “The rest is repetition and geography, but it doesn’t add anything fundamental to what you know.”

“I don’t do it any more to live up to Bob’s ambitions for me. That nonsense stopped when I got good at my job. At least I hope I’m free of any adolescent hangovers. It’s hard to tell, isn’t it, how much of the pattern clings when you think you’re grown-up? Of course I can’t be sure, but I don’t think that I’m tied up with Bob.”

“So you’re good at your job,” he kidded.

“War is no time to be modest. I should be working at what I do best. So should you, and so should Bemrose. Anything else is a waste, and all materials are on the critical list, including brains and skill. No one will remember when it’s over what the critical commodities were, or who supplied them. Only a few of us will even want to remember, but that doesn’t matter. That’s not what we do it for. I can’t quit what I do best because Bemrose is self-centered, or bruises easy, and isn’t happy in wartime, or any other time, unless people do what he wants.”

She unlocked the amethyst that caught the center fullness of her high-necked black blouse. “I can’t chuck everything I know how to do,” she insisted. “It would be throwing away the best in me. When millions are being ground under Nazi tanks and children’s blood is being spilled, I can’t say it’s none of my business and sit home drinking Martinis to forget. My great-grandfather walked to Kansas to get into a fight that was peanuts compared with this one.” Her bracelet rattled angrily. “You don’t outgrow that in three generations.”

“But if what you want is here, and you may not have another chance—” Larry said.

“I still can’t!”

Larry sat back and studied a paperweight on his desk. It was in the form of a wooden monkey, and the comic figure writhed with anguish as it struggled to crush a coconut. “There’s one thing a woman can try when she wants a man,” Larry said.

She took out a cigarette and slammed the case. She let the cigarette drop to her lap. “If only he weren’t so stubborn!”

“For years they’ve been telling him he’s good,” Larry warned her. “You can’t expect him to get used to the idea that there’s any woman around who is as good as he is. Not all at once you can’t.”

“I’m not asking him for anything. I want to try and make him happy.” She threw back her head, thrusting forward the durable chin. “It’s a childish concept—happiness. There is no such thing, of course. There is relief from misery for brief moments.”

“I wonder if he would know how to accept that kind of gift from you. From anyone for that matter,” Larry said. “Happiness, or what passes for happiness today. Being less miserable, if that’s the way you like to put it. In the twenty years I’ve known him, Arthur has been on the giving end. I don’t think he’d know how to receive anything you might be able to give him. He’d have to learn——”

“What difference can it make who gives how much to whom?” She doused her cigarette and grabbed the arm of her chair. “It’s not a contest, Larry. I’m not competing with him.”

They had tried things out, and it had been all right for Janice but not for Bemrose. The competition he felt around her had carried over into bed, and he couldn’t allow her to make him happy. It would have been an admission that he was like any other man, and he couldn’t acknowledge as much without sacrificing some of his masculinity. He had to withhold that triumph from her. He had to assert his superiority as a lover who was able to smother her desire for any other man, but who found her somewhat wanting, something less of a success with him than at anything she had ever attempted. A compulsion as crude and uncontrolled as fire sweeping

through a forest kept Bemrose aloof from her, his needs independent of her ability to satisfy them. Larry pieced this together from what she told him, and what he knew about Bemrose.

Her eyebrows formed puzzled triangles. “Do you think it’s Judge Haynes? Does he think it would be disloyal to Judge Haynes?”

Larry shook his head. “If the Judge were around, he would try to give Arthur the confidence he needs. I think he’s afraid of you, afraid of you and your success. Not sure enough of himself to compete with you. The Judge would convince him that he has every right to be certain. He’d spot the trouble in no time and straighten Bemrose out. You and the Judge would have gotten along.”

Janice listened. “I thought maybe because he and Mrs. Haynes lived an abnormally secluded life——”

“That was *Mrs.* Haynes. She did feel strange with people and stayed at home pretty much, but it wasn’t the Old Man’s notion of how to live. He went out without her. They say he used to tell her about the other women he met at dinner parties. From anything I ever heard, the Judge had a good, healthy respect for women. I don’t think Bemrose got any of his ideas from him.”

“Then what *is* it?” The straight hair waved sharply. “I have to know. I have to find out why.”

“If he’s afraid of you, maybe a few drinks——”

The black eyes flooded with misery. “He’s not afraid of me.”

“Are you sure you’d know about that?” Larry questioned her. “I doubt if he would know it himself. There were plenty of conditions of his childhood which might explain why he’s afraid. Insecurity over money, insecurity with his parents. Give him time to get used to you.”

“He doesn’t want time,” she insisted.

Larry picked up her hand and tried to stroke comfort into the fingers. She would find lovers who were easier to live with. Bemrose might be too much to handle, even for a woman as experienced as she was.

When the phone rang, Larry picked it up with the left hand so that he could hold on to Janice's. It was his client, the union man, asking if he couldn't break up his fever with some aspirin and come to the company meeting at two o'clock.

"It's not that kind of fever," he patiently explained and promised to call his client back.

"I'll clear out," she offered, breaking loose from him. "I really didn't expect you to do anything, but I had to talk it out, and you're——"

"His oldest and best friend." Larry finished it for her, and they laughed.

"I'm a helluva friend. He doesn't come near me with his trouble, but sometimes all on my own I find things out."

She sat down again, balanced uneasily on the edge of the chair.

"I saw him on Fifth Avenue last night. He didn't see me, but I watched him stop and look in Tiffany's window," Larry volunteered.

Her lips shook slightly like dry leaves. "He wasn't alone?"

"He was with a client of his."

"A woman."

"She never seemed to interest him. I used to think——"

"Last night when they were looking in Tiffany's, did he interest her?"

"He always would. She takes a man on faith, especially a man like Bemrose who has more brains in his little finger than anyone Miss McVail ever knew."

"With this girl, there would be no competition?" Janice asked.

"He could be perfectly at ease, perfectly comfortable."

"Then what am I upset about? She sounds all right for him."

"Do you really want to go to Sweden?" Larry asked abruptly. He pulled a phone book out of the bottom desk drawer and turned to the Ds.

"Don't you think——" She sounded high and tentative, and her hand shook slightly as she fumbled with the catch on her bloated handbag.

But he had handed out enough advice for morning. Without a fee, like Arthur H. Bemrose. The rest was up to Janice. She'd have to decide whether to stay and try for him.

“Go to see this fellow, Diamond.” He pointed to a name at the top of the page. “I think he can fix you up with your visa. I'll phone him this afternoon.”

“Who is he? I've had such rotten luck.” She fished a red notebook out of her bag and wrote down the address.

“He's pals with that Mrs. What's-her-name in the State Department,” Larry said. “I think Bemrose would do better for you but——”

Janice nodded and sealed the notebook with a pencil that slipped into a loop at the side.

“Larry, I don't know how to——”

They got up together, and she put out her hand. Changing her mind, she kissed him.

“Sometimes he gives me reason to be grateful.” Larry blotted her lipstick off his cheek with the show handkerchief he wore in his breast pocket.

“You better call your client and tell him aspirin did the trick,” she suggested.

“I don't bother with clients on a day like this. It's against my principles. Wait, I'll go down with you.”

They threaded the crowded lobby and stepped onto the sidewalk. She touched his sleeve. “Aren't you going to need your coat?”

“Come on,” he said gruffly, taking her elbow.

The hurriers wore their winter faces but Larry steered her to the violets, and tossed a coin into the vendor's box. “I've been wanting to buy these all morning.” He handed her the corsage. “Have you a pin for the lady?” he asked the old woman.

Like a parent buttoning a child's snowsuit, he fastened the violets to Janice's coat. “Let me know if Diamond turns you down.”

The royal color against her face darkened her hair and made her skin dazzling pale. “Maybe I’ll *have* to stick around,” she said. “Maybe the Swedes won’t have me either.”

He cradled her hands in both of his. Whatever happened, she could count on him.

As she backed away, and the crowd came between them, the misery washed out of her face. She smiled, and Larry saw that her eyes sparkled happily with tears.

Chapter 6

Usually Larry felt lost when he came home and didn't find Bessie, but tonight he was glad there was a meeting of her first aid course at the Red Cross so that he could be alone.

On the way home from the office he had stopped at Rabinowitz's restaurant on Second Avenue for a plate of borsch. It wasn't the finest borsch he had ever tasted, but after a day at the Magistrates' Court, he was glad to eat dinner at Rabinowitz's. The discord of moving china, scraping chairs and wisecracking waiters seemed almost restful compared with the uproar of the courtroom.

If only there were some way to practice law and stay out of the Magistrates' Courts. He was tired of the sordid bickering between client and lawyer, lawyer and judge, and lawyer vs. lawyer. Larry was afraid that he might acquire their look of stinking cigars and suits that appeared rusty even when they were new. Professional scum—that was a fair description of what practiced in the lower courts. It usually took as much work for a lawyer to represent a small client as a large corporation, and it almost always meant twice the responsibility. Every claim counted so much more to the client who started with nothing, and whose entire financial status might depend on the outcome of his law suit. A smart lawyer steered around the little cases with their whopping headaches. But Larry had always boasted that he would try *any* case in any court as a matter of professional pride. Lawyers should feel as great a responsibility as doctors in helping people. That had always been Larry's belief, but after today he wasn't as sure of his ground.

The City had slapped a violation on the bakery belonging to his client. A new Building Commissioner at City Hall was plastering a rash of violations on little properties all over town, although they often represented an owner's sole income and might force the proprietors into bankruptcy. Like Larry's client.

Poor sucker, he would almost certainly have to let his building go now. When Larry first heard of the case, he thought of turning it down, knowing someone high up in the administration was crusading, and anything he tried

to do would be a waste of his time. His hunch had been right. In court this morning, he faced not only the Judge, but six unsolicited reporters and a battery of photographers. The minute Larry opened his mouth, the Magistrate bawled him out, and good-citizenship lecture number forty-one was delivered. What did Larry's client mean, letting innocent men work in a death trap? Didn't he know there might be a fire, and people might be killed? Did he want their lives on his conscience? The reporters took it down, every word, and Larry yelled back at the Judge to be certain and make it a good story. In these courts a lawyer practiced with his lungs rather than his brains. The lawyer who could outshout the bench usually won his cases.

But apparently today Larry hadn't been in good enough voice, or it took more than vocal power. His client was fined one hundred dollars and given a six day jail sentence. The fine was bad enough—Larry knew it meant his client would go into debt—but the jail sentence was a disgrace that would torture his conscience for years.

When the next defendants drew identical penalties, Larry began to smell a rodent. Later, in the corridor, a friendly lawyer from the Corporation Counsel's office hinted that the Magistrate had acted "on orders." It was the sort of thing he used to hear about Tammany, Larry cynically recalled, but didn't expect in an enlightened "reform" administration.

Larry hung around until court recessed and he could corner the Magistrate in his chambers. He had known him for fifteen years, and the Judge, a crude, bloated murderer of the language, always called him "Cons'ler."

The Magistrate confessed quite frankly that his hands were tied by politics. Just before he had come to court, his instructions were telephoned to him. The Judge's lumpy shoulders framed a question. With all the reporters hanging around, what could he do? Cons'ler could see for himself. Okay, he'd reduce the sentence. Three days. It was the best he could offer. And if Cons'ler kept his mouth shut about changing the sentence, he'd appreciate the favor.

It left a bad taste in the mouth, like day-old garlic. Larry decided he should have done as Bemrose suggested and put up a fight for the judicial appointment in his district. He would have made a better judge than some

of those lousy punks on the bench. Bemrose had hit it on the thumb. He should have raised hell for being passed over by the organization.

Supposing they did give him the appointment, though. He would be tied down to the Magistrates' Courts for years. He ought to stay away and try to develop a higher type of practice. It was a nice idea, if he knew where to start. Not with some of the clients who came to *him* for advice.

He reached across his study table for a recent biography of Woodrow Wilson, but decided he couldn't tackle anything serious. On the way to the kitchen to fix himself a drink, he picked up a current issue of *Time* and put it on the arm of his easy chair, planning to look through it later.

It wasn't only the day in that scruffy court which depressed him, Larry decided, sipping his highball. He felt blue because Janice had sailed yesterday. She called him early in the week to say that Larry's friend, Mr. Diamond, didn't hold out much hope of getting her a visa. He had been turned down in a similar case by his friend at the State Department. Anyway, she had been thinking over her talk with Larry and felt that maybe she had better stick around and attempt to straighten things out with Bemrose. She had tried to reach him, but his office said he was in Washington. As soon as he came back——

For a day or so Larry speculated optimistically on how a marriage with Janice might round out Bemrose's rather Spartan professional existence and also give her a reason for taking root in the United States. The day before yesterday, when he had convinced himself that everything would work out with them, she called to say that *Everett's* had received clearance for her passport and papers and booked passage for her to sail the same night. There was no possible out. She had tried but hadn't been able to reach Bemrose. However, Larry better not tell him so. It might only upset him. When she returned, provided he weren't tied up with any female clients, they might be able to straighten things out.

With reluctance Larry agreed not to say anything, although it was a damnfool promise on the face of it. When he heard from Bemrose, he knew how stupid it was to let her talk him into it. Bemrose was put out because Janice had sailed, and suspicious because she had talked to Larry, not to him. Hadn't she left a message for him or her address?

Larry lied down the line, handing out the death sentence. The pinched, off-key voice at the other end told him Bemrose was suffering. Larry would have shaken Janice, if she were there, for causing him unnecessary pain. She could have reached him long distance if she had really been interested. Maybe she was just piqued, and that whole performance at his office had been an act.

Lousy. The situation seemed tied in a package marked nonreturnable. Bemrose's routine must have been to wait until Janice came around. When she hadn't turned up all these weeks, he apparently had decided to forget his injuries and go to her. Now that she had refused to wait and gone ahead with her own plans, it might make him angry enough to——

All Larry hoped was that Bemrose wouldn't try to get even on the rebound. He tried to explain to him that Janice's orders had come suddenly, without *Everett's* even bothering to warn her. In the rush of departure, she had probably forgotten to leave a message when she called and found that Arthur was out of town.

What made Larry think she *had* phoned him, Bemrose wanted to know, pouncing on this information.

Larry eased his way out by saying it was only natural that she should call, no matter whether or not they had been seeing each other. She wouldn't leave without saying goodbye, he lied, angrier and angrier with Janice as he tried to cover up for her.

It was a dangerous trip and it was wartime, he explained to Bemrose. She wouldn't just leave. She would try to reach him and say that she was going overseas.

Her safety must have worried Bemrose, too, Larry figured, because he was quick to pooh-pooh her danger. The authorities wouldn't allow her to travel unless it were safe, he contended. But Larry knew that Bemrose realized no one could be safe in a combat zone.

It was going to be difficult for Bemrose to live with himself for the next few weeks. If he were in love with Janice and had been waiting for her to come round, he must detest himself now because he had waited too long and she was out of reach. He must realize, Larry knew, that a letter, a cable, or a transatlantic phone call could hardly be expected to change the situation.

There was too much to explain. Janice Baldwin had let him bluff the hand. While Bemrose held the chips, he had lost.

As Larry considered what must be Bemrose's mood of hating-himself-and-the-world, he slumped deeper in his chair and the copy of *Time* fell to the study floor. A man in Bemrose's situation might turn around and do some damnfool thing to get even. There was nothing new about a man, driven by jealousy, acting irrationally against his own interests.

Larry stood up, contracted his shoulder blades until they almost touched, and shut the window. He felt chilly in spite of the warm May night. He might be catching a spring cold. Whether it was that, or his day downtown, or the pigheadedness of Janice and Bemrose, his spirits were clammy.

On his way to the bathroom for an aspirin he stooped to pick up the magazine. The hollow rooms further depressed his spirits. He began to wish that Bessie's class were over and she would come home.

Bed looked good to him as he walked through the bedroom and saw the turned-down sheets. He undressed, built his pillows into a wall so that he could read in bed, and made up his mind to turn out the light as soon as his eyes felt heavy. Skimming the foreign news, he turned to *Time's* section on national affairs and saw Bemrose's picture. The story, captioned "Transatlantic Braintruster," credited him with the basic plan for Lend-Lease. His clear mental blueprint had enabled a government lawyer to draft the Lend-Lease bill in an hour and forty minutes, the story said.

Bemrose, 43, whose recreation is poker, has an agile, trained mind (Columbia Law and Columbia) which makes him a favorite of New York utilitymen and statesofficials.

Tweedy, mustached, no socialite but an Albany truck driver's son, he wears easily the mantle of his erudite fosterfather and former law partner, Judge Winthrop Haynes.

Bemrose made a softspoken, backdoor entrance to diplomacy through his intimate, Attorney-General Newton. His suave handling of British bigwigs will result in future liaison assignments, it is said.

Larry let the magazine slide off the bed. So that's what had kept Bemrose too busy to see him these past weeks and too preoccupied to straighten

things out with Janice. They had called him pigheaded while he was figuring ways to keep the British on their feet.

Larry dialed Arthur's number, jubilant at the news and anxious to congratulate him right away. The old closed-mouth. He'd like to punch him for becoming an international figure and keeping it quiet, for doing his heavy thinking solo, and pretending to hand Janice an option on the war. The so-and-so.

A Negro houseman who had worked for Judge Haynes answered. "Sorry, sir, Mr. Bemrose is in Washington tonight. He's dining at the White House."

Larry snapped the light and slid under the covers, determined to fall asleep before Bessie came home and asked him what kind of day it had been.

Chapter 7

Two doors west of Third Avenue on Eighty-second Street, Larry turned into the walk leading to Bemrose's house. The muted stone dwellings on this quiet street looked as if they might belong to Boston Symphony subscribers who wore shawl-collared brocade evening wraps to the concerts.

Larry smoothed the flaps of his coat pockets before he rang the bell. He wondered if Bemrose had invited any of the poker crowd to this party, and if it weren't a stag, why he hadn't asked him to bring Bessie along.

The door opened, and the houseman reached for Larry's sun-tanned straw with the paisley band.

"You'll find them in there, sir," he said. "There's *quite* a gathering. Yes *sir*, quite a gathering."

After the tiled hallway, the drawing room felt sultry. Larry nibbled through the outer layers of the crowd and saw Lucy McVail, serene in gray chiffon, before the rococo hearth, her skirt fluttering free of her narrow hips. The scalloped brown fireplace seemed pleased to include her in its composition with the worn brocade wall. She stood alone, part of the room but not of the people, an island of tidiness in a disorganized surf. Her remoteness from the others seemed to bind her to the old house. A fluff of gray-blonde hair had damped down on her cheek, Larry noted, and her pale eyes looked out with the innocent speech of a solo flute.

Bemrose hadn't seen Larry come in. There was time to hang back and enjoy the quiet picture that Lucy made, undisturbed by waves of tension which needled the room. The rest of the guests sounded like an orchestra before a concert, each tuning up on his own without regard for the others.

Above their alcoholic discord Bemrose's voice rose stridently as he discussed the recent Nazi landing on Crete. "You'll see. Those bastards will use it as a base. Next thing you know we'll have air attacks on Egypt——."

Larry moved into the vacancy around Lucy McVail. He judged by her eyes which shifted slightly, like scraps of cloud gently moving, that she was

pleased to see him. He told her that she looked cool in spite of the humid heat, and her pale eyes deepened in tone. A film as ephemeral as her gray gown kept slipping between them, and made it difficult to talk to her at first, but he was soon able to discuss her case and had launched on some theories of his about inheritance law when Bemrose elbowed in, accompanied by a man on the borderline of portliness who looked as though he financed a health club to restrain an opinionated waistline. The man's rounded face, tomato pink, was crowned by a cap of babyfine white hair, parted at the side and brushed across the forehead like a small boy's. Bemrose presented him. It was Davis Shore, the utility man, recipient of Bemrose's recent free-legal-services. Larry backed away before there was a chance to introduce them while Shore, with a false try at democracy, was saying to Lucy as he left, "I used to run into a chap named McVail at the Knickerbocker Club. Any of your people?"

Bemrose called after Larry to get a drink, but he pretended not to hear. He watched Bemrose thread his way back to the door and welcome Judd Harrison, a Washington attorney who had often pooled his Washington influence with Bemrose's in cases for anti-Administration clients. These clients constituted the profitable Wall Street side of Arthur's practice. They were the business and financial men who, without his help or Harrison's, might not have been able to set up appointments with the government agencies that had become vital to the running of their companies.

Judd Harrison was about four feet ten, and Bemrose had to stoop to shake hands with him. He joined Harrison in a champagne cocktail and proposed a toast. Guiding Harrison to a serving table across the room, he said in his low, easy voice, "Come over here and get one of your cigars. I stocked up on them last night. Then I'll take you over and introduce you to the unlucky girl."

The significance of Arthur's remark did not reach Larry immediately. He thought of the newspaper pictures he had seen of Harrison and the oversized cigar with which he was always photographed. He thought of the compensatory device used by undersized men who smoked oversized cigars and chuckled to himself. A second later he realized what Bemrose had said, "the unlucky girl," and why Shore, Harrison, and the other good client-friends, had been invited to a party on a hot night when the season for entertaining was about over. Larry figured that he had better look around

and locate Lucy McVail's uncle and aunt. They must be here, and if they were, they couldn't be feeling any too much at home. From a corner near the bookshelves he heard Marge Daugherty's uncontrolled titter.

Marge had had a few drinks and was animated, intent, and looking up at Ed Daugherty as if she could make him Charles Boyer just by looking at him that way. Ed tried to unlock her glance by directing his eyes everywhere except at her. He smiled with relief when he saw Larry walk toward them.

Larry took Marge's glass. "This needs attention." He had it filled with straight Scotch and asked the waiter for another like it. "Now." He toasted her and finished his whiskey at a gulp. "Tell me how it happened. I'm trying to catch up. Things move fast around here."

Marge shifted unsteadily to the other foot, and her husband shoved a chair under her. She rolled her eyes at Larry. "Don't have to tell. You knew all the time."

"No, I didn't. Tell me. How long has it been going on?"

"A few weeks. He's collecting the fee." Her giggle became an incessant staccato.

"Marge!" Daugherty said. "You've had too much to drink."

"Let her have fun. This doesn't happen in the family every day. Come on, have another drink with me. How about you?" Larry asked Ed.

"I guess I could use another," Ed admitted with excessive dignity.

Marge's giggle had become permanent by the third refill, and Bemrose came over to tend to it. "What's funny?" he asked, looking critically from Marge to Ed to Larry.

But before Larry had a chance to congratulate him, Judd Harrison had joined the group, bringing with him an argument that must have developed among some guests across the room. "Talk to those guys and try to shut them up before they leave here," he cautioned Bemrose. "I swear they're working for Vichy."

Marge giggled, and Harrison looked at her curiously.

"Mr. and Mrs. Daugherty, my fiancée's uncle and aunt." Arthur frowned as he introduced them.

“Drink, Mrs. Daugherty?” Harrison asked. “That’s a beautiful niece you have. I understand they grow them like that in Iowa. Well, take care of her. This fellow will never do her any good. I’ve known him—how many years is it?”

Bemrose steered him away, quiet, competent again, and in command. “Show me who was doing the talking,” he said to Harrison. “I want to keep them away from Charlie Worden. Charlie’s with the State Department, and he’s right over there waiting to be misinformed.”

Bemrose turned and explained to Larry, “We don’t want any pro-Vichy talk to reach him. Charlie has a distasteful infirmity. He lets other people make up his mind, and when he’s had a few drinks——”

“What’s eating that fellow and Arthur?” Ed shrugged.

“They aren’t having fun like us,” Marge said. “We’re having fun, aren’t we?”

But Larry decided he had had enough. He must follow Bemrose and try to talk to him. He must tell him it was wonderful that he was getting married. Uncertainly Larry looked around, careful to avoid the fireplace and Lucy.

“Where the hell did you get that?” A lanky man of around forty with untonicked hair, a yellow tweed suit, and a bright knitted tie, lifted the highball Larry had in his hand. “Just what I need,” he said, putting out a bunch of red knuckles. “Steve Holmes, Kansas.”

“The artist?” Larry asked, standing up tall to him.

“Same.”

“Bemrose has one of yours at his office—wheat fields.”

“That’s it.” Holmes smiled.

A waiter passed a tray, and Holmes lifted off three drinks at a time, handing one to Larry.

“Come along,” Larry said. “I want to hear Bemrose give some fellows a piece of his mind.”

Holmes’ paw clamped Larry in place. “That pretty boy over there got hold of me when I came in.” He nodded toward a bald blond who talked with his

hands. “Damned sterile atmosphere. Stick around,” Holmes urged.

Larry realized that except for Lucy McVail and her aunt, the party was a stag. If Bemrose had invited Mrs. Shore— Larry supposed there was one— she hadn’t accepted. Nor Mrs. Harrison. Nor any other wives. That made it all right about Bessie not being here.

“Where did he find the girl?” Holmes asked bluntly.

“In his office. She’s a client.”

Holmes whistled. “She looks as if she can use some warming up.”

“Come on, I’ll introduce you.”

“No, you tell me.” He kept Larry’s arm immobilized with one hand and tilted his glass with the other. “Does she talk?”

Larry shrugged. “I think so. She listens.”

“Jeezuschris’, why would a guy like Bemrose want to sew himself up——”

Larry smiled at Holmes and blurted out, “There was a swell girl—from Kansas.”

Holmes swooped on Larry, questioning.

“She’s a writer. She doesn’t live in Kansas now. Janice——”

Holmes was doubled up, grabbing his knee. “Don’t tell me he could have had Jan Baldwin,” he moaned.

“Do you know her?” Larry asked, figuring that it wasn’t likely. Bemrose would never have invited a friend of hers.

“Know her?” Holmes bent over. “I’ve been crazy in love with her since I was three years old.”

It was a senseless coincidence, Janice following Bemrose around, managing to get in tonight with this fellow, Holmes. But the party was a disorganized, thrown together affair. Anything could happen.

The man that Holmes had tried to avoid walked toward them, swaying in the artist’s direction. “Oh, hello.” He laughed self-consciously. “From the back I thought you were Stokowski. Did you ever hear about the time Stokie conducted in Los Angeles?”

He was telling his story with the polished enthusiasm of an anecdotist, but this room somehow didn't seem the setting for anecdotes. It buzzed with the confusing Big Questions that were being asked without any real hope of finding the answers. This fellow was off key with his anecdotes, putting too much of himself into too little, Larry decided.

He hurried Steve Holmes toward the fireplace, and the overplump womanish voice called after them. "You must ring me up for lunch, you really must."

Davis Shore had remained with Lucy McVail, and they hadn't progressed beyond the weather, from what Larry could overhear. Shore saw them coming over and sidled away, nodding a thank you.

Larry watched Steve Holmes take Lucy on. Holmes stabbed at her with a few phrases that seemed to hurt him as they came out. Lucy countered with her remote smile. Apparently discouraged, the artist threw a bony shoulder forward and rested uneasily on one foot, his wordless way of saying "Yes, ma'am."

It might have been the fog of Scotch whiskey that made him overly critical of Lucy, but Larry began to lose patience with her remoteness. She wore the Victorian house becomingly, he decided, because it represented her era. If someone like Professor or Mrs. Storey had been around, they would have spotted the anachronism. Bemrose wouldn't want them around at this time. He wouldn't want to defend his choice of Miss McVail. Not that there weren't many reasons for it. Larry could see that much himself. Bemrose could always feel secure with Lucy McVail and depend on her to be worshipful of him, gentle and selfless and undemanding. Their marriage would be no competitive jockeying for superiority, as with Janice Baldwin. She was a woman with whom to settle down, with whom to be comfortable. Nevertheless these excellent reasons were bound to sound like rationalization, Larry knew, to a man like Professor Storey or to anyone else who could spot a real motive from a secondhand one.

Bemrose was bringing the anecdotist over to meet Lucy, and Steve Holmes pulled out hastily. Larry followed Steve as soon as he had grabbed a drink off a passing tray, and in a stupor of heat, noise, and alcohol, they circled the smoky room, inhaling wisps of talk.

“They’re still picketing the White House ... goddamn saboteurs.”

“Hard-boiled Harold should be good in the oil business.”

“How can a fellow tell, the way they have priorities screwed up?”

“... Lady in the Dark, fifth row.”

“A swell job. We wouldn’t have Lend-Lease if not for”

“Grew says it’s putting off an operation for cancer, and he’s one man who ought to know about Japs.”

The bits of talk stuck to Larry like sweat. He listened and he kept on drinking. The last two glasses were brandy, and his thinking blurred. He wondered about Marge Daugherty stranded in the next room with Ed, and he listened for her grating giggle. He shuddered when it reached him, proclaiming that Marge was tied down permanently. Larry looked around for Bemrose. He found him with the Vichyites, arguing in a voice that was pitched too high, his lips tight as a trap, and realized that it couldn’t be Vichy alone which had Bemrose worked up.

“Sonafabitch Darlan. If we don’t watch out, the French Navy—” Bemrose was saying. “To hell with the pussyfooting. We’ll never be able to play ball with them anyway.”

Steve Holmes pulled Larry out of the group around Arthur.

“Some other guy ought to lay her first,” Steve said. “Some guy ought to heat up that hunk of marble for him. He needs a woman who can wring him out. Look. One of these days he’s going to blow himself up.”

From the fireplace, Lucy nodded to them and smiled.

“Someone ought to heat her up,” Steve repeated. “She isn’t ready to take on Bemrose.”

Larry told Steve to stick around before he rushed upstairs. As he made it to the washbowl, Larry remembered that a skimpy lunch was the last solid food he had eaten, and that in the past hour he had mixed champagne, whiskey, and brandy. He couldn’t tell whether he was upset at the heart or at the stomach, but he thought of Janice Baldwin and wondered what she was doing. He thought of her huddled in an air raid shelter, or queuing up for a canned news handout.

None of it made him feel better. Larry wet a cloth and put it to his head, figuring that tomorrow it might be Janice's turn to feel not so good. He'd cable her about Bemrose. She was a reporter, and would want to know the news when it was hot.

A couple of hours later Larry walked down Fifth Avenue with Steve Holmes. They stopped for a light at Seventy-sixth Street, across the street from the rough stone synagogue with the steep steps.

"I can't get it," Steve said for the seventh time since they had left Bemrose's. "After all these years without being sewed up, I don't see why ___"

"She'll take care of his house," Larry said.

Steve's sandy head twisted sideways in a question.

"The way he wants it," Larry explained. "He'll tell her and she'll listen. That's the way he likes it. No competition."

"Who else does he tell?"

"The clients. The client-friends. You know that business about not charging them a fee if they're his friends."

From across the street he smelled the dank summer green of Central Park. A breeze from the west carried broken dance tunes through the darkness from the Mall.

Steve stopped. "Come to think of it, he never sent *me* a bill. The last time I got even. I shipped him a picture."

Larry nodded. "Would you do *him* a favor if he asked you to?"

"Ye-e-es," Holmes drawled, uncertainly.

"The chances are he doesn't want anything from us, but Davis Shore who was there tonight— Bemrose doesn't take any money from him either."

Steve whistled.

"A fellow like Shore could do him favors," Larry speculated.

“Shore was the one talking to her when we came up?” Holmes asked.

“With the pink face.”

“He looked a little dry in the mouth trying to find something to say,” Holmes observed. “Maybe he’s not making the client-friends happy, getting hitched to her.” His head dropped forward, and he lengthened his stride.

Larry puffed to keep up with him. Only a fool would have let himself get drunk on a night like this. In spite of his tropical weight suit, the back of his shirt was a washrag. “She’ll let him run the show, she’ll be easy to live with. He’ll give her money—she’s never had much. She’ll enjoy the social stuff.”

“Sounds like a business deal,” Steve said.

“What’s wrong with buying that, if the price is right? Maybe it’s as good a reason as any. I wouldn’t know for sure.” Larry swallowed to get rid of the bitter taste. “Did you have supper?” he asked abruptly.

Steve swung around. “Say, you don’t look good,” he said. “What the hell are *you* upset about? It’s not your funeral.”

“I had too much to drink,” Larry apologized.

“A couple of Scotch-and-sodas never made anyone look like you look,” Steve insisted.

Larry knew it was no use. The artist had third and fourth sight. Already in one evening Larry had told him more than he had confided to Bessie in a month. Steve Holmes took x-rays. He didn’t waste time with questions.

“Okay, so I like the guy.” Larry’s clammy fingers rubbed the moisture from his palms. “He’s a great guy,” he went on, talking to himself in the dark. “He’s what I always wanted to be, only it’s no use if you’re not built for it. I know his faults, and I think he’s a great guy.”

Silently they walked along. They had this side of the street to themselves. The green coaches lumbered by like middle-aged ladies with diabetes, and on a bench near a bus stop across the avenue, two sailors were draped around a couple of high school kids in purple sister dresses.

Holmes made sympathetic noises. “I know what you mean. I’d believe him if he told me the world was coming to an end next Friday night at seven

fifty-nine and a quarter.”

“Every man has to have his guy,” Larry broke in. “Arthur’s been mine. For years. Since we were kids. I know every goddam one of his faults and——”

Steve Holmes gripped Larry’s arm above the wrist. “Take it easy, boy,” he said. “You’re okay. Where would you like to stop for a bite?”

Larry quickened his step, but his short legs were no match for Steve’s.

“You say he fell for Jan?” Holmes wanted to know.

“I thought he’d ask her to marry him, but they had a misunderstanding. I think he was waiting for her to come to him.”

“Jesuschris’, how did he get over her?” It came out a wail, from the bottom of Steve. “I’ve been trying, and Jesuschris’— I haven’t seen her for ten years, and she’s still around.”

Still around. Larry smiled.

“She should have married me,” Steve said. “You say she likes Bemrose?”

“When she found out what she thought he was about, she tried not to,” Larry explained. “She tried to talk herself out of him but she didn’t have much luck.”

“He’s a fifteen-story fool,” Steve exploded. “A fool.”

They had reached the scrubby uptown side of Fifty-ninth Street where slit-entranced lunchrooms framed with neon lined the sidewalk. A trolley jangled by, and Larry invited Steve to join him in a cup of coffee across at Reuben’s, but Holmes said he wanted to get back to his hotel.

From behind an oversized table at the restaurant, watching the women in their cool cotton dresses drift in from the theater, Larry thought of Bemrose going upstairs alone, away from the stale air and the dirty highball glasses.

In a few weeks he wouldn’t be able to get away by going upstairs.

PART II

Chapter 8

Larry broke the eggs cleanly on the edge of the glass bowl, looked for an egg beater, and took down paprika, salt, and pepper. Bessie humored him on Sunday mornings and let him scramble the eggs his way, well beaten and cooked over a low fire. Patiently Larry stirred, scooping his fork along the side of the pan. The August sun blazed through the windows. Larry knew that if he wanted the eggs right, they couldn't be rushed.

Larry opened the refrigerator and saw cool slices of honeydew melon on white Wedgwood, and an oval platter of smoked salmon in neat rows. He uncovered a top-of-the-stove oven where six shiny bagel were heating, and sniffed. Bagel were doughnut-like rolls with tough, crisp crusts. He remembered them nostalgically from home.

A container of cream was on the stove to be added at the last moment. The cream splashed, and Larry mixed the eggs again before he spooned them onto heated plates and called Bessie to help carry them in.

They ate in the foyer, where Elizabeth Brett, Bessie's old school chum, was waiting at the table. She sampled the eggs expertly. "They're wonderful. How do you get them so smooth?" she asked.

"He won't even tell me," Bessie pretended to complain.

"I wish he'd tell my cook," Elizabeth's flowers bobbed on her white bouquet of a hat. "Mm-m," she sighed contentedly. "I don't know when I last tasted a bagel."

"You have a standing invitation any Sunday, Liz," Larry said, grinning. He looked through the graceful arch to the living room and felt grateful to Liz, as he often had before. On this shriveling August day the dark emerald walls soaked up the heat, and the bright white fireplace with its oblong of unframed mirror fitted the serene Brett color plan. Chintz for the easy chairs. A lemon-colored sofa and striped woolen draperies. Ivy in white stands. The color was Brett, as though she had stood by, adding white to the paint and weaving it into each clean-looking fabric.

It was her color, but their home. At first Larry had been afraid to tell her about the Soyer painting, the gift last year of a client who owed him a fee. Bessie and he had thought that the somber, grayish picture of a girl with legs askew and knob knees bent might offend Liz, but she felt the power in the picture at once, said the girl in the painting looked like a high school chum in the Bronx who had lost her job during the thirties and tried to commit suicide with a rusty pair of scissors. Her school friend had the Soyer's overlarge hollows for eyes, Liz said thoughtfully, while she searched her handbag for a picture hook to hang the painting.

Liz had made her way from a cold-water flat in the Bronx to the shop on East Fifty-seventh Street. *Elizabeth Brett, Inc., Interiors*. Bessie first met her when she was Lizzie Browarsky and they were freshmen at Hunter. Already Liz was designing her own clothes and painting sets for the dramatic club. In her junior year she quit and went to art school at night, and apprenticed herself during the day to the home furnishings section of a department store. There Liz made friends with an editor of a decorating magazine who introduced her to a society woman who was looking for someone young and energetic as a partner. The woman's husband had gone broke on Wall Street, and she supported herself by decorating for wealthy friends. Liz, who had brains and a fresh color sense, delighted her employer's clients, and Brett jobs began to be talked about and photographed. Friends of friends and total strangers visited the cramped upstairs office. When the business moved a year ago to a spacious street location, Liz bought out her associate, changed the firm name, and hired three assistants to handle the traffic. Liz deserved a lot of credit, Larry admitted. In fifteen years she had put herself at the top. Watching her thick-knuckled fingers on the slippery roll, Larry wondered, as he often did, how coarse-fibered Liz with her mottled strawberry skin, gossipy mouth and emphatic hips managed to get along with the airplane trade. Her own scheme of dressing was the reverse of the rooms she designed. She used too much makeup, loaded herself with gaudy costume jewelry, and on a scorcher like today, she wore a long-sleeved black crepe dress. Her voice was Bourbon, straight, she said "yeh-uh" for "yes," and was the last person anyone would associate with the pure cool beauty of an interior by Brett.

Judged by standards of self-made success, Liz was the counterpart among Bess's college friends of Bemrose among his. Both had come up from a

curbstone. They both served wealthy clients. Only the edges of Arthur H. Bemrose were engine-turned while Liz Brett had hangnails that snagged. Her energy exploded like a hundred firecrackers set off at once while Bemrose's was a steady glow.

They were on a second cup of coffee when Bess said, "Tell him, Liz. What you were telling me before."

"I've been having a little trouble with your pal, Bemrose," Liz said, a cigarette between her lips.

Larry struck a match for her. "Where did you tangle with him?"

"He asked me to do over his old house on Eighty-second Street." The white hat tossed as she inhaled. "I met him at a party of a client of mine. I did a house for this woman on the Cape. He seemed like a nice guy, and I hoped there was a little something between them. When I saw that he had married another girl, I wrote, congratulating him. About a month ago he called to ask me how I'd like to do over his house." She tilted the fragile chair and blew a smoke ring. "I should have been smart enough to know when *he* called instead of Mrs. Bemrose——"

"Tell him about the bedroom paper," Bessie prompted.

Larry looked curiously at his wife. The dark purple lips which usually curved with good nature twisted pouting, insistent, toward Elizabeth. Lightning threatened in her brown eyes which ordinarily were so warm and cloudless that they reminded Larry of a perfect stretch of weather. Thin lines of moisture had collected in the folds of her plump neck. Bess's wavy dark hair which almost always obediently circled her face, accentuating its roundness, jabbed from the temples in straight, stubborn ends. The play of dark lips and blinding white teeth, a study of light-and-shadow which Larry never tired of watching, struck him now as greedy. He thought of a small, furry animal badgering its victim. This wasn't his usual sweet, gentle Bessie.

"What *about* the wallpaper?" he asked.

"Nothing that will make any difference in a hundred years." Elizabeth had caught his amused tone.

"About the stripes," Bessie persisted.

“You know the house,” Elizabeth said. “It’s a mausoleum.”

Larry nodded.

“He won’t let her get rid of the old furniture,” Liz explained. “So Mrs. Bemrose thought that by keeping the walls light and slipcovering some of the heavy pieces, she’d brighten up the place.”

“*Who* thought of that?” Larry laughed.

“I did.”

Bessie motioned to him impatiently. “That’s what she is paid for, Larry. Go on, tell about the stripes.”

“We had agreed to use a pale blue sprig paper for the bedroom to keep it delicate,” Liz continued. “We had already selected a matching carpet and fabrics. Even samples for lamp shades. Her heart was set on that blue.”

“But he wanted stripes,” Bessie interrupted.

“Bottle green and tan stripes,” Elizabeth explained. “An inch wide. They would have been okay for the study, or in a man’s bedroom where the furniture was made to order, but——”

“She lost, I guess,” Larry said.

“She cried all the way through a good dress of mine. Scared to death that she’d never understand him. Children, it isn’t friendly at the Bemroses’. It isn’t friendly.” Elizabeth walked to the mirror and stroked her upswept coiffure with clumsy fingers.

“I guess they’ll sleep with stripes.” Larry shrugged.

“You haven’t heard about the cook,” Bessie protested.

“Let’s skip it,” Elizabeth ran a thumb along a pocket comb.

“No, he ought to hear,” Bess insisted. “To listen to Larry talk about Arthur Bemrose, you’d think he was— Well, sometimes you do make me sick,” she said defensively.

Larry looked more reproachful than he felt. He knew Bessie was jealous of the time he spent with Arthur, but it didn’t bother him. He attributed it to feminine possessiveness and was rather flattered by her jealousy.

“What about the cook?” Larry asked, to humor Bessie. “I might as well know everything.”

“If cooks are good, they’re *usually* a little crazy,” Elizabeth explained. “This one at the Bemroses’ makes like a genius, but he fired her because he claims she came home drunk.” Elizabeth smiled. “If she’d work for me, I’d gladly keep her in Scotch, cases of it. Anyway Mrs. Bemrose says the cook was sick, not drunk, and begged him to hang on to her, but he won, of course. Next day the cook was—” Elizabeth jerked a thumb toward the door. “I tell you, infants, it’s not friendly at the Bemroses’.”

Bessie watched apprehensively for Larry’s reaction, but he stacked the dishes unconcerned.

“Leave those. I’ll do them after Liz is gone,” Bessie said. “Don’t go yet, Liz. Tell him about the draperies.”

“Look, honey, how about letting him alone? He thinks we’re a couple of hellions.”

“Aren’t you?” Larry innocently asked.

“A thing like that shows up a man’s character,” Bess insisted. “Larry ought to know about it. For his own protection,” she added mysteriously.

“And you should get a job running a quiz program,” Liz said.

Larry pinched his nose delightedly. An embarrassed flush, rising on Bessie’s neck, colored her lower jaw.

“The other afternoon about five-thirty I was supervising the hanging of draperies for the upstairs study when Bemrose came in,” Liz continued. “He blurted out something at her and when I turned around, she was trembling. A lawyer named Harrison was waiting for him downstairs, and Bemrose had asked her to have her dinner sent up on a tray so that he and this other lawyer could be alone.

“I invited her to come home with me and look at a bedroom screen I had been trying to describe to her, thinking she might want to order one like it. Bemrose fell over himself thanking me. He can be damned ingratiating when you give him his way—”

“You bet he can. And sometimes even when you don’t give him his way,” Larry said.

“I decided he was getting off too easy, and it would do him good to suffer,” Liz said. “I asked, ‘How about inviting us downstairs for cocktails? I’ve been on my feet all day. I can use a drink.’”

She sat down and shifted her hips on the narrow chair. “Mrs. Bemrose tried to shush me and say they mustn’t be disturbed. She offered to have *our* drink sent up. But I put my foot down and said I wanted to get away from the mess in the sitting room.

“Bemrose finally saw he was licked. He asked us to join them,” Liz continued. “When we got downstairs, he fixed a nice, smooth Martini, and he went out of his way to behave. He kept cutting us into the conversation, and his friend Harrison—he told some good stories.” She smiled speculatively. “I like that little runt.”

“Make a try for him, Liz. He’ll keep you in sables.”

“Thanks. I’ll buy my own,” Liz said. “I think Bemrose would have asked us to dinner if he hadn’t been afraid of reversing himself. Harrison was having a good time. He thought I was the life of the party. What is he? A corporation lawyer?”

Larry nodded.

“Bemrose wouldn’t let on, of course, that he wanted to change his mind,” Liz said. “It’s no *kinderspiel*, living with that guy. It takes quite a woman.”

Elizabeth removed a cylinder of red paste from her bag. She used a fingertip to spot each cheek and worked in the daubs of color. “That poor little thing had better catch on quick or——”

“He has a heart as big as he is,” Larry protested.

“He wants Larry to manage his office,” Bess said. “What do you think, Liz? You’re a judge of character. It’s a big step for Larry, closing his own office. My father says going into business with a man is like marrying him.”

Larry was grateful that Bess never reminded him he had taken her from a home with two servants. She never suggested that they wouldn’t have this apartment if her father, a successful diamond merchant, hadn’t furnished it

for a wedding present. For fifteen years Bess had plugged away with Larry, counting on him to become a Judge, or at least a Magistrate, but keeping the thought in the back of a bottom drawer. Bemrose's offer was the first real professional break he had had since law school. Since he told her about it, Bess had gone around the house absorbed, thoughtful, looking questions instead of asking them. She pretended to resent Arthur and his success, but Larry knew the firm name of HAYNES and BEMROSE was an overbright sun that watered her eyes. In the small veins of her heart, Bessie probably hoped that he would accept the offer.

"Larry's a pretty good judge of character. He doesn't need my advice," Elizabeth said, walking over and affectionately tugging the knot of his tie. "Now children, I really must—" She crushed some long white gauntlets at her wrist. "The eggs were scrumptious. Ask me again!"

Before Larry could say, "I've already turned down his job," Elizabeth was on her way, and the door clicked.

Gratefully Larry took off his tie, unbuttoned his collar, and stretched out on the yellow sofa, placing a newspaper under his shoes. Bessie was busy in the kitchen. He'd have to tell her someday and might just as well line up how he was going to put it. He'd have to go back a month to that stinking evening——

Larry would never forget that night in the middle of July. It was impossible to get a breath of air if a man had a pair of lungs like Dempsey. The gang decided they might as well forget the humidity and play poker because it was better to be out and occupied than to stifle and be bored at home. There was no point in going to an air-cooled movie, either, and come out later to the steaminess of Times Square. They set up the game at Danny's, and griped like hell because Danny had promised every summer to put in air conditioning and hadn't done anything about it.

Although Bemrose was married the end of June, none of the gang had seen him since long before his engagement. The usual stag dinner which the boys would have liked to give him hadn't been discussed. Larry, himself,

hadn't heard from Bemrose since the party at his house five or six weeks ago.

Naturally the boys wondered about Lucy, what she was like, and when Larry dealt, he tried to satisfy their curiosity. He put down the cards to illustrate Mrs. Bemrose's symmetrical distribution when Bemrose unexpectedly walked in, and the evening was finished. The gang attempted to congratulate him, but their good wishes went stale as warm beer. Bemrose looked edgy, miserable. His coat slipped from the back of his chair, and he let it lie in Danny's sawdust.

The first round of the game everyone stayed. There was almost a hundred dollars in the pot. Cy O'Malley raised, Bemrose called, and Cy put down three ten spots. Arthur beat him with four kings and hauled in the chips, a wedding present from the boys. The next hand was deuces wild, and Bemrose drew two deuces. He was four hundred bucks ahead in a half hour, a run of luck that happened once in a year of Saturday nights.

Ordinarily someone would have wisecracked, "What's the matter? Your love life sour?"; tonight the boys were very careful. Very, very careful.

With the third beer, Tremont Friendly, punctilious Terry who answered every letter and remembered every birthday and the only one likely to be hurt because Bemrose hadn't invited the rest of them to the wedding, decided to do the right thing. He cleared his throat, and precisely raised his glass. "A toast to Arthur's wife, boys," he said. "To Mrs. Bemrose's health." Self-consciously he pointed the glass at Arthur.

Bemrose grunted his thanks, put down his beer without drinking, and shuffled the cards for the next round.

Terry looked as though he had been slapped.

This furtiveness of Bemrose's was a little silly, Larry decided, even if he had married late in life and wanted to appear matter-of-fact about it. A man couldn't hide a new wife in his vest pocket, because he felt ill at ease as a husband.

"Give Lucy my love," Larry said easily. "When you came in, I was telling the boys about her. By the way, how is she these days? I know she's beautiful, but otherwise——"

“Not so well.” Bemrose sponged his neck with a paper napkin.

“The hot weather?” Larry asked.

“I don’t know. Not feeling well.” His tone said to forget about it and go on with the game.

A companionable murmur circled the table. “Too bad.” “It’s a helluva summer to be in town.”

Larry could tell that something was cooking with Cy. They called him total-recall O’Malley. He had a deceptive baby roundness—turned-up nose, second chin, football shoulders and talky blue eyes. If he telephoned to ask someone for lunch, Cy sometimes gabbed for an hour, then made the lunch date anyway and gabbed some more.

“Did you hear what happened to Danny?” Cy asked. “A drunk came in the other day with a live lobster and handed it across the bar, told Danny it was a present for him. You know Danny. He’s polite; so he says, ‘Thanks, I’ll take him home to dinner.’ This drunk shakes his head and says, ‘Naw, he’s had dinner, take him to the movies.’”

The joke wasn’t that funny, but it broke the tension, and the small, hot room went up in a roar. Chuck Adams grabbed his ankle, Hagerty delightedly shook hands with himself, and Paul Schmid put a hand on Bemrose’s arm. The releasing laughter, which seemed louder because Bemrose had kept them bottled up, rolled through Danny’s sagging door and down the rickety stairs.

There was a sudden conscious silence while the sound blew out like radio tubes. Bemrose turned on Cy without a word and his look was the closest thing to a right hook that Larry had ever seen.

The game broke up, and Larry left Bemrose waiting at the curb for a taxi. Larry didn’t even bother to offer to hang around and have a drink with him.

He had started down the street in his shirtsleeves, his coat uncomfortably weighing on his arm, when someone called to him, and there was Arthur H. in person.

“Have a heart. It’s no night for a track meet,” Bemrose complained.

They headed for Larry's apartment. Bemrose was puffing and the sweat ran in rivers down his face.

"What have you been doing?" he asked amiably.

"Not a helluva lot," Larry said. "I looked for you at that Red Cross dinner last week, the one at the Starlight Roof. I thought you usually went."

"Shore always invited me," Bemrose explained. "This year I took tickets, but he didn't say anything about sitting with him. I didn't want to go alone if he were there with a big party."

"He must have figured you were on your honeymoon," Larry said. "That's what I figured when I didn't hear from you."

"I would have called and asked you up to the house, but we're redecorating," Arthur apologized. "Tonight is the first time in weeks I've been out. We haven't seen a soul."

"Don't let it worry you," Larry said. "Too hot anyway to see people." He stuffed a damp handkerchief into his back pocket.

They had reached the denuded canopy frame in front of the apartment house where Larry lived. He and Bessie had been trying to get Bemrose down for fifteen years, but this was the first time he made it as far as the door. "Come on up. Bessie's in Woodmere at her father's place," Larry urged.

Bemrose nodded and followed him. Upstairs he inventoried the room. "Nice place," he said, walking around, and pausing in front of the Soyer. "That's a powerful painting you have there."

Larry raised the blinds and opened the front door to get some cross ventilation. He brought two bottles of beer from the kitchen.

"Have you heard anything from Janice Baldwin?" Bemrose asked casually. Too casually.

"Not a word."

"The internal revenue man was in about a tax matter she turned over to me," Bemrose said. "It'll have to wait." He drank the foam off his beer. "I suppose you have her address——"

“No, but *Everett’s* must have it.”

“Split another with me?” Bemrose pointed to the remaining bottle of beer which was on the tray. “Never mind about Janice. She’ll turn up.”

He left the room to wash, and when he came back, picked up a rose quartz ash tray from the table and traced the uneven edge with his finger. “I suppose she’s on her way home,” Bemrose said. “She must have seen everything there is to see in Sweden. It’s been more than two months.”

“Maybe she stopped in England,” Larry suggested. “She might be trying to get to the Continent.”

“Oh, she wouldn’t do that,” Arthur said quickly. “That’s too risky.”

There were risks and risks, Larry couldn’t help thinking. There was the risk of seeing Bemrose again. It might be a chance that Janice didn’t dare take at the moment.

“How would you like to come down to my office and give me a hand?” Bemrose asked. “I mean on a permanent basis.”

He must be having a brainstorm: Larry hadn’t thought seriously of being in an office with Bemrose since college.

“My time is taken with seeing clients and trying cases,” Arthur explained. “The office isn’t run right, I’ve neglected it. How about coming in as office manager?” He turned sharply toward Larry. “The practice is growing—I could offer you something substantial.”

Larry swallowed. “It’s swell of you to think I can do it——”

“It would mean security for you,” Bemrose interrupted. He tapped the table with the end of a fresh cigarette, shaking out the loose tobacco. “The way I see it, some years a fellow with a small practice makes out all right, and some years——” He shrugged. “This would mean a steady income for you. There wouldn’t be any bad years.”

With effort Larry located his voice. “It’s swell of you, but I have to think about my clients.”

“Go ahead and work for them. On the side. I don’t want any cut in your practice.”

And you aren't planning to cut me into any of yours, Larry thought. A few years with Bemrose, and he might end up by not having a practice.

"It's a big step, closing up shop. I'll have to have plenty of time to think it over," Larry said.

Bemrose surveyed the living room with his hand. "What does it cost you and Bessie to live? As high as eight or nine thousand?"

"I'm not sure about going into business," Larry tried to explain. "At your shop I'd be taking care of detail, handling routine matters. I sort of like plugging away at the law and helping people. Office routine doesn't sound like a helluva lot of fun."

"You're the one man who could run the place right. I could make the money interesting—I could do better than nine thousand. As a matter of fact, I could underwrite considerably more."

"Let me think it over," Larry promised. "You'd make a swell boss, but I've been on my own for a long time."

Worry cut into Arthur's forehead, and Larry felt sorry for him.

"Haven't we always gotten along like silk?" Bemrose asked. "In the old days at school we used to talk about practicing together. I don't see why _____"

"A fellow gets used to working for himself. He gets used to doing things his own way. I'll tell you what I'll do. If I decide that it's too late now to come with you, I'll help you find someone else. I'll start looking around for you. There must be someone who'd jump at it."

"How about Bessie? When is she coming home?"

"Day after tomorrow."

"Well, ask Bessie. And don't forget to tell her I'll make the price right. Have a long talk with her."

Larry nodded. "I'd come in a minute if I didn't have things set up for myself. There isn't another office in town I wouldn't quit to work for you, but there's something about practicing for myself—well, you ought to know."

Arthur buttoned the damp collar of his shirt. He stood up and put out his hand. "If you should happen to hear from Janice, I'd appreciate your letting me know."

The next day Larry went swimming with Bessie at the Rockaways. The beach was a honeycomb of flesh that shaded from bright pink to bronze, and every inch of neat, fine sand had been disarranged by the bathers. Next to the narrow oblong that Larry and Bess had marked for themselves, a yowling infant who wouldn't eat the banana it was being offered kept them from talking. By the time Larry finally got around to telling Bess about Bemrose's proposition, his mind was just about made up. The more he thought about it, the more he realized that a junior partnership might have saved face for him and made the deal possible, but it was too great a defeat at this point for him to give up his practice for a straight salary. If Bemrose had thought it through, he would have seen it himself. A junior partnership would have been the thing to offer him, Larry decided.

On this Sunday afternoon at home, Larry went over the pros and cons. He had been arguing them with himself the past few weeks and began to see why Bemrose's offer failed to interest him. He shied away from it, not for the reasons he had suggested to Arthur, that it was a blind alley which cut him off from the active practice of the law. The real reason he wanted to turn it down was *because it came from Bemrose*. It was rather startling to find out that he felt that way. He must be afraid of Bemrose. He must be scared of being pushed around by him. Thinking about it, here on the sofa, he felt the moisture on his forehead turn clammy. Was he also worried that Bemrose would try to high pressure him when he found out he was turning him down? Was he afraid that he might not be able to stand up to Bemrose? It was an uncomfortable thought.

"Feel any cooler?" Bessie flopped on the end of the sofa, and shoved the damp curls off her forehead.

"I think I'm going to turn down that offer," Larry said.

"You're not worried about the stories Liz told, are you?"

“No-o-o. But I’m afraid I wouldn’t be happy taking orders. It’s the queerest thing, Bess. I always thought I wanted to practice with Arthur. For years I’ve dreamed about it, and now when it’s offered to me, I don’t want it. Maybe I never really wanted it. I guess if I really had, I would have wormed an offer out of him long before this. What do you suppose made me stay away from it?”

“Don’t take it if you feel like that, Larry.”

“But it might not be the best thing for *you*, Bess. If I took it, we could afford a place in Westport maybe, for the summer. We wouldn’t have to go to Woodmere, or swelter in town. This is no fun for you.”

“Don’t you worry, Larry. Papa likes to have us come to Woodmere.” She plucked her flowered housecoat to let the air through.

“If I had the money to be independent, I’d cut loose from Tammany, and we’d move out of the district. This furniture would look a lot better in an apartment uptown. We ought to give some thought to that angle, Bess.”

“Don’t take something you don’t want on account of me.” She fanned herself with the sport section of the Sunday paper.

“I might not accept it for your sake, but I’d be *turning it down* for both of us. Say the word, and I’ll—” He took her hand.

“I always thought you didn’t care much about practicing law.” She held on to him and soothingly stroked his arm.

“Most of the time I don’t. Not my type of practice. But every once in a while I have fun. That Brunswick case I handled last week— It takes time to build the right kind of practice, but I’m not in any hurry, am I?”

“You’d rather do it yourself,” she said thoughtfully. “I understand.”

“Arthur H. Bemrose needs me like a hole in the head,” Larry laughed. “Wait and see, when he hears I’m turning him down. He’ll make me think I’m indispensable. Only who is? I know some fellows think there is such a thing, but the country’s too big. It takes more than one man to make any part of it click. Where do you find men that are indispensable? In business? In Washington? Where? No one individual is needed that bad, I don’t care *who* he is. HAYNES and BEMROSE is going to get along fine without me.

You'll see. In a few years—hell, next year at this time—it won't matter a damn whether I work for Bemrose, or he works for me.

“That's the way I feel. If it's all right with you, kid,” he added.

“We have a nice life, Larry. Would you like to go to an air-cooled movie?” Bess asked, with the homely irrelevance he loved. It subtracted the universal from tough situations. It always made big decisions easier for him.

Later on the subway he told her, “Your friend, Liz, is a swell girl, but I'm glad you're you.”

She rested her hand on his knee. “I'm glad you're not Arthur Bemrose. Keep on being a Little Shot, Larry. I like Little Shots. They're nice to live with.”

She sighed. “Warm, isn't it?”

Chapter 9

Bemrose's secretary was on her way to the washroom when Larry stopped her in the corridor. "Keeping you busy?" he asked.

Even for a woman who didn't use makeup, she looked drawn and abnormally white. The fine lines under her eyes seemed to have reproduced by dividing, and heavy purple lined her lower lid. "I'm so glad you're going in to see him, Mr. Frank," she said. "He's not himself lately."

"You look done in yourself."

"That's what *he* says." She nodded toward the office door. "He just gave me money to buy a new hat. He says I need it to pick me up." She shook her head miserably. "It won't keep me from worrying about him. I tell you, he's not himself, Mr. Frank."

Larry flipped his hat against her plain flannel skirt. "Buy yourself that bonnet and cheer up."

"I didn't want to take the money, Mr. Frank. I don't need a hat."

"Take it anyway," Larry advised. "To make *him* feel better."

Plaintively she said, "But, Mr. Frank, I haven't worn a hat in three years."

Larry had been avoiding Bemrose, not wanting to come to grips with him about the office-manager deal, but he couldn't put off seeing him forever. He opened the reception room door tentatively. It was after five, and no one seemed to be around; so he went on through to Arthur's room.

"Hello." Arthur blinked up from some papers. "Thanks for coming over. I'm just finishing up."

"Take your time." Larry walked to the window. Three camouflaged cargo ships, about ten thousand tons each, steamed up the River. They were probably Lend-Lease. We must be sending a whale of a lot of stuff overseas. The poor devils over there certainly needed it—this past month the Heinies had stepped things up. If the newspapers were telling it straight,

half of London slept underground, taking it unmelodramatically on the spine.

The ships seemed to be moving right along. They had passed Forty Wall and were headed for the Empire State building, doing a good seven or eight knots.

The brief Bemrose was reading crinkled as he turned the pages. Otherwise the room was quiet as Sunday at Salem Fields cemetery. Larry felt clammy cold, although it was exceptionally mild for after Labor Day. The sun was setting in geometric orange strips, and black smoke from the Jersey factories turned the sky into a modern, mechanized painting. The quiet was ominous. Larry realized the phone must be shut off and wondered why Bemrose hadn't asked an operator to wait. He kept thinking about the job Arthur had offered him and wondered if pressure would be used on him to accept it. Larry examined his blue suit for lint, locating a few specks on the cuff. He wished Bemrose would say something and break the silence.

"With you in a second." Bemrose made a margin note on the long sheet and took off his glasses. He walked over and stroked Larry's back affectionately. "How are you doing, boy?"

"I have to clean up the work on hand," he apologized. "I don't want to leave the clients high and dry."

"Going somewhere?" Larry asked.

"To war."

Bemrose's left shoulder twitched, a new form of the lip tic. Larry watched the moving tweed of Arthur's coat, so preoccupied with the jumping muscle that he didn't realize what Bemrose had said.

But the sense of it finally came through to him. "So you're saving me the trouble of turning down that job you offered me, huh?"

"That's right! I won't be needing you now." Bemrose grinned.

Along with a sense of relief, Larry felt somewhat let down. He had been fighting round after round with himself and came out winner. Now Bemrose made the victory unimportant. While he had chewed over the offer of the summer, Arthur was three jumps ahead of him. Ahead of him by months. Maybe years. Larry admired the hell out of Bemrose's sixth sense of what

was going to be important, his way of smelling things out ahead and giving them priority. As far back as Larry could remember, Bemrose had done priority thinking, long before the word, priority, had come into general use. In anyone else he would call it vacillation perhaps, but in Bemrose it was something else. Flexibility, foresight.

“Did the Army finally take you?” Larry asked.

“Nobody will promise me anything. I don’t know what they need to get going. The facts were in when the Nazis marched into Poland. If a business man sat around waiting for facts and more facts—” Bemrose threw up his hands. “The facts are in, and they sit around, tied hand and foot. 1941, the year of the great sitting paralysis—that’s how they’re going to write about it someday.” He turned on Larry angrily. “Well, let the rest sit around paralyzed. Let the rest of them enjoy warming their fannies. I’m going to get in. The only question is how.”

“Have you put out any feelers?” Larry asked.

Bemrose nodded absentmindedly. “Listen to this.” He shuffled in his middle desk drawer and pulled out a folded notepaper. “Judge Haynes wrote it in 1918,” he said. “We were one helluva time getting into *that* war, too, and this was an answer to a letter he received from Didier saying the French liked Wilson’s new policy.” Bemrose squinted at the faded writing, tracing the lines until his finger reached the middle of the yellowed paper. ““Every night I thank God that we are in it with you. I pray we have not come in too late. We must prepare for setbacks because we waited long. I sorrow to think of the days, the months, and the years we allowed to slip by.””

He read the words solemnly. His deep, full tone crowded the spacious room.

“It could have been written today,” Larry admitted.

“Whenever I have a question, that’s what I do—look back to the Old Man. Nine times out of ten he had already answered it.”

It was curious, his saying that, when Larry had just been thinking about Bemrose looking forward, not backward. He supposed ideas had to come *from* something, go through a process of change to fit the times, take on the color of a fresh personality, and come out pointing *toward* something different. Bemrose’s came from Judge Haynes but pointed toward a

philosophy of his own. He had a sense of history along with a view of the future.

“I wonder how he’d think I should get in,” Bemrose said wistfully, slipping the Judge’s letter into a corner of his blotter pad.

“What about asking your friend, Tom Newton?” Larry inquired.

“I haven’t seen any of that Washington crowd for months.” Bemrose frowned. “I’ve written Tom twice to get in touch with me when he’s in New York. We wanted to have him up to the house. I can’t figure out why I haven’t heard from him.”

The phone rang, and Bemrose grabbed the receiver as if it were a lifeline. “Don’t give it a thought,” he said. “We’ll make it another time.” His voice sounded tired.

“Professor Storey,” he explained. “They were coming to dinner Friday night, but he’s going out of town.”

Larry watched his shoulder twitch. It was too bad, Bemrose and Lucy in the Brett-decorated house not quite able to organize a dinner party. Larry remembered what Steve Holmes said about Bemrose not making the client-friends happy. Maybe Liz Brett’s stories had made the rounds, and the others were uneasy. A man taking it out on his wife, his wife of three months, was no fun to be around.

“When I get into the War, we’ll close the house,” Bemrose said.

“But you just finished remodeling.”

“Hell, if they *came* to dinner, she would be scared. She’s never been around anyone much except that Aunt and Uncle.”

Larry pulled a shabby piece of yellow copy paper out of his side coat pocket, and shoved it toward Bemrose. The note was from Janice.

While Arthur read, the shoulder quieted down. The large ears stood out when he reached the last paragraph where Janice had casually sent him regards. It was as though he were straining to catch the tone of her voice.

“You could cable her,” Larry suggested. “She knows people in London. There may be something over there with Lend-Lease——”

“I’d rather try for the Army,” Bemrose said. “The Army will be in it longer.” He handed back the letter. “Good to hear from her.”

His face was lonesome between the oversized ears, and his ample frame looked lost in the outsized tweed coat. The sound of him was humble, too. Larry had never seen a man take to marriage harder. He wanted to say, “Look, it’s a business deal. If it’s grinding you up, why not get out of it? Don’t tear yourself to pieces.” But he kept still.

“I’d like you to hear a part of this brief.” Bemrose pulled some papers from under a jade paperweight. “I won’t try to read the whole thing to you, just parts of it. Lucy’s picking me up in twenty minutes.”

Arthur had told him about the case once, and Larry knew that it involved an appeal from an order of the N. Y. Supreme Court, Special Term. The order granted Bemrose’s client, a Times Square hotel, permission to join an insurance company as party defendant in the suit brought by a guest who had lost valuable papers which were stored in the hotel vault. The insurance company claimed that the jury would be prejudiced in the plaintiff’s favor if it knew the hotel were insured. Juries notoriously brought in thumping verdicts against insurance companies. The companies were fighting the court order desperately, Bemrose explained. If a precedent of impleading them as third parties were established, it might result in huge future losses.

Larry could see the point. There was a settled rule in negligence cases that insurance companies could not be brought into court. It practically amounted to an invitation for heavy damages. The companies in this case had ganged up against Arthur’s client, and he was sweating over his reply brief. He had struggled with the case since spring and won his motion in Special Term on a section of the Civil Practice Act which he unearthed, a section no one else had used for years. While Larry didn’t grasp all the subtleties of Arthur’s argument, there was really no need to. In his practice, he’d never come up against a pack of insurance company lawyers. Anyway, he understood enough to know that Bemrose had turned in a job.

Bemrose paced around Larry’s chair. “*Now* the so-and-sos have some unofficially reported English cases. They’re going to claim that if the Judge at Special Term had seen these cases, he’d never have granted the motion. Take a look.” He picked up the appellant’s brief from his desk and handed it to Larry. “The English citations start on page ten.”

Larry concentrated on the text, and saw the cases *were* fairly damaging. “I wouldn’t worry. The Appellate Division won’t reverse it,” he said reassuringly.

“You can never tell with that court. That last English case worries me. It says the real issue should be decided on the merits without supervening and prejudicial circumstances being interposed. The Judge couldn’t say it any plainer. It’s right there.” He pointed to the brief from across the room. “A third party procedure which brings the insurance company before the Court is objectionable.”

Larry turned back to page ten and saw that Bemrose was quoting *verbatim*. In a few minutes he’d be tossing volume, section, and page numbers at him, not only of this case but all the others. Larry had heard of people who memorized railroad timetables. Arthur probably could if he ever had to. If it meant winning a case. His mind was superspeed film which recorded case references infallibly. The boys at law school used to say, “Don’t bother to look it up. Ask Arthur.”

“When the Army finds out about your fantastic memory, you won’t have to worry whether the Idlewild Hotel Corporation impleads an insurance company,” Larry said. “They’ll stick you in a uniform before you can go out and buy mothballs for your other clothes.”

“The insurance company walked out of the case,” Bemrose complained. “We gave them plenty of chance to defend the action, and they wouldn’t touch it. Said they weren’t liable. Now what do they do?” He motioned helplessly. “Raise a howl because we have this order to implead them. Figure it out, Larry. If we have to pay the judgment, then turn around and sue the insurance company before we can collect a red cent——”

Larry glanced at the door.

It was Lucy. Bemrose motioned her to a chair without getting up to greet her. She smiled at Larry and sat down rather stiffly. Larry thought she looked tired, but he couldn’t tell whether it was fatigue, or the weary gray hat and mannish wool overcoat. Some women looked trim in man-tailored clothes, but not Lucy. They didn’t go with her particular beauty which needed fluffs and bows. Arthur may have insisted on the outfit, the way he

handed her stripes for the bedroom, Larry guessed. Whatever had done it, she looked years older than Bemrose's client of a few months ago.

Larry smiled at her. "Arthur tells me you've done a nice job of fixing over your place."

She looked quizzically at Bemrose, her head tilted slightly. "We want you to _____"

Larry waved away her apology. He turned toward Arthur. "I'll go on down with you."

But Bemrose picked up his brief, pretending not to hear. "Tell me what you think of this as a clincher under Point One. It's from *Traylos* versus *Commercial Union of America*, page three hundred fifty-nine." He read distinctly, giving each syllable its full measure. "The purpose of this provision of the Civil Practice Act was to avoid circuitry or multiplicity of actions—' That's exactly our situation. Just what section one hundred ninety-three is supposed to cover. For the life of me I don't see how they can claim—" His voice droned on.

Lucy shifted uneasily in her chair.

"Where's the fire?" Bemrose turned toward her sharply.

"Maybe I'd better phone Marge and tell her we'll be late." She went to the door. "I can dial the number out here," she said.

"Sit down." Bemrose swung sharply toward Larry.

The gray eyes clouded, but she sat down. She wet a finger and rubbed a scratch in the mounting of her black calf handbag.

"What do you make of this nonsense?" Bemrose slapped a page of the brief. "They maintain that the jury will misconstrue the issue. Instead of concentrating on the plaintiff's claim, the jury will try to decide whether we're liable or the Company. You'd think juries never had to decide more than one issue. Why in the *simplest* actions——"

Larry half listened, while he glanced at Lucy. The stiff thread of tension held her erect. Larry felt his own neck warming with embarrassment for Bemrose.

“Have you told Lucy about the case?” he asked. “It’s a question of whether this insurance company that wrote the policies for Arthur’s client can——”

“Is it the case about the hotel?” She let her eyes thank Larry.

“Yes, it’s about the hotel,” Bemrose answered. “It’s the matter that I’ve been working on nights.”

“The decision will raise hell with insurance companies from now on if the Judge’s order sticks in this case,” Larry explained to her. “They’ll be in for a flock of nasty judgments. He’s really creating new law, your old man.” Larry nodded toward Bemrose.

“Arthur, you didn’t tell me that.” Her voice climbed happily, ready to be proud of him.

“Don’t pay any attention to what Larry says,” Bemrose broke in.

“You’ll have more fun paying attention to what *I* say than what he says. Let me buy you both a drink,” Larry offered. “This stuff is way over our heads, isn’t it, Lucy?” He walked over and boosted her elbow.

“I have to phone Marge. Arthur promised we would get there early. She’s planning dinner for six-thirty.”

“What are they running, a radio station?” Bemrose asked. “We don’t always have to show up on time. I’ve told you we don’t. People ought to eat when they’re hungry——”

“It will only take a minute to give her a ring,” Lucy said, stretching her arm across his desk.

He pulled the instrument toward him, out of her reach. “We’ll go with Larry and have a drink.”

They found seats down the street at a bar. Bemrose ordered a Martini, rocking in an unsteady chair manufactured to look roughhewn. The place with its stone floor, dim lights, and fake log cabin furniture had the dreariness of an unaired cellar. It must have been the gloom that fortified Bemrose, his troubles crawling into this smelly hole, its dinginess hiding them. He had three Martinis while Larry finished two and Lucy sipped a lukewarm Coca-Cola. The gin made him noisy. Three lawyers Larry recognized from the County Lawyers’ smiled from the next table, and while

Bemrose loudly rehashed the details of the appeals' brief, Larry saw them stop talking. One of them might work for the insurance company— Larry brushed Arthur's foot, and he subsided.

He threw back his head and aimed the Martini olive down his throat. "Do you think I should write London?" Arthur asked. "I was going down to Bolling Field tomorrow, but if you think I'd do better writing that party ——" When he gets loud, nasal, and starts drinking, he's thinking of Janice. When he's evil to Lucy, he's taking it out on her because of Jan. When he shouts down Little Shots, he's trying to build up his ego in order to square accounts with Janice. He wants her to know what she gave up and regret it, Larry decided.

Maybe he shouldn't have shown Arthur the letter from Jan. But it was hard to know the best thing to do. Bemrose had read it and handed it back without any special reaction. He seemed calm enough then. It took three Martinis and Lucy——

She shoved aside her half-filled glass and sneaked a look at her lap where a lavish new diamond watch, undoubtedly a present from Bemrose, shone on her wrist. It was all right for him to give it to her, but apparently not all right for her to look at it.

"I'll have to run along." Larry waved for the check. "I promised the boys to stop in at the clubhouse on my way uptown, and Bess expects me home tonight for dinner."

He patted the top of Lucy's hand. "Bess is like your Aunt," he explained. "She likes to sit down and eat right on time."

Chapter 10

A month later Marge Daugherty, Lucy's aunt, phoned and invited Larry to dinner, saying that she had always wanted him to come up, ever since he had been so nice about helping Lucy with her case, and that she and Ed didn't see nearly enough of Lucy and Arthur's friends. She made it sound casual. It was going to be just the family. They'd put on an extra plate for him, as easy as that.

Larry accepted, and joined them in a round of drinks when he arrived. Arthur complained about the old-fashioned Ed had mixed. "Still loading them with sugar." He held his squat glass up to the light. "Damned stuff won't even dissolve. It's one way to kill good rye."

"Is it too sweet again?" Marge reached for his glass. "I'll fix you another." She glanced at Ed accusingly on her way to the kitchen. "Just because *you* like them sweet doesn't mean other people want to get diabetes."

"I only put in half the usual," Ed muttered.

Marge picked up a fresh glass, and spooning a tip of sugar from the bowl, sprinkled a few crystals on top of an orange slice while Lucy called to her, "Not *any* in Arthur's."

Bemrose let them wrangle. It was obviously satisfactory to him if they fussed over his cocktail. He sprawled in the armchair, and thanked Marge curtly when she handed him the glass, not bothering to mention the drink she had thrown away on his account.

They sat down to dinner at a table in a corner of the living room, and Marge apologized for the simple meal, assuring Larry that they were treating him just like home folks.

Ed took his place at the head of the table, although it bothered Bemrose to sit alongside. He made a to-do about straddling the table leg, and Larry understood for the first time why protocol was important at state dinners. A man's place at the head of the table gave him authority, as though his

opinions mattered. Ed's seemed to need bolstering, at least when Bemrose was around.

They might not have started on the War as quickly if Marge had been there to appease them with small talk, but after the first course, she left the room to bring in the roast. Lucy wanted to help her, but Marge urged her to stay put, probably to keep Arthur and Ed from ruining each other's digestions.

At that point Larry guessed why he had been invited. Marge probably hoped he would ease what must be the growing tension of these family dinners. She and Lucy together couldn't manage Bemrose and were counting on Larry to give them a hand, or at least to show them how it was done. Larry noticed that Lucy stopped eating whenever Ed began to talk.

He was discussing the recent Nazi drive into Russia, commanded by von Bock. Already the Germans had closed in on Leningrad, although the Russian war was scarcely a hundred days old. The Nazis had about two million men and five thousand tanks in the field. "The paper tonight says they're pretty close to Moscow," Ed observed. "I wonder if the Russians can hold out."

Bemrose shook his head gravely. "I hope to God they can. It's going to take at least until spring for our stuff to get through."

Ed meticulously buttered a roll. "We voted them some more Lend-Lease the other day. That should hold them. About five million dollars worth, wasn't it?" he asked sharply.

"Right now it looks like another Dunkirk."

"The Church would just as soon see them go down," Ed remarked.

"I wouldn't be dogmatic about it," Bemrose pointed out. "Judge Murphy made a statement in Washington, backing up the President on Russia, and he's a prominent Catholic."

"You've got the whole Lindbergh crowd on the other side, too," Ed reminded him. "Lindbergh, Wheeler, General Wood. Did you hear that broadcast from Rome? It said that Lindbergh had better do the talking over here instead of Roosevelt——"

Bemrose hacked viciously at the lamb bone on his plate.

Lucy put her hand on his sleeve, warning him.

“I’m still in favor of sitting tight and not going in until we have to,” Ed declared. “Once we do get in, we ought to be smart and pull out fast. This time we don’t want to feed a bunch of starving Europeans when the war is over.”

“Which would you rather see us do?” Bemrose asked bitterly. “Stay over there and keep order until they get on their feet, or maintain the biggest army in the world from now on? We’ll have to do one or the other.”

“Let the English take care of them. Or Russia. When we finish up, we ought to pull out,” Ed insisted.

Marge giggled nervously. “We aren’t even in the War, and they’re deciding what we should do when it’s over.”

Larry pointed to the lamb on his plate. “Like butter. And tell Bessie someday how you get the au gratin potatoes brown on top——”

“I don’t know what the hell we’re waiting for.” Bemrose’s voice was squeezed and harsh. “Waiting for the British to go under, I guess, so we’ll have to lick Hitler by ourselves.” He sipped his water, had trouble swallowing, and choked.

Lucy thumped his back, but he twisted away from her and bumped his knee against the table leg.

“Have you heard anything from the Army about your commission?” Marge asked him.

Lucy shook her head at Marge, and Arthur continued to cough into his napkin.

“Maybe the Army isn’t sure we’re going to get in it and isn’t handing out anything,” Ed remarked.

“They know what they can do with their commission,” Bemrose said. “I’m going to give them two more weeks. If nothing comes through, I’ll close the office and enlist.”

He will, too, Larry reflected. While a lot of fellows were figuring how they could stay out, Bemrose was going to give up a practice it had taken him almost twenty years to build. Without a second thought he would lock the

office, close his house, and get into it. As a private, if they wouldn't have him any other way. Sure, Larry knew plenty of men who were willing to go—his nephew, Bill, a farmer out in Iowa, Joe Clarke, a college friend who owned timber near Seattle, Eddie Goldbert, the kid who waited on Bessie at the vegetable store in the middle of the block, Larry's own younger brother, Dave, a physician for the Central Chicle Company. A lot of kids just out of school couldn't wait to get in, but he wondered how many older men past forty were willing to chuck their professions, men who could ask for safe jobs in Washington, who had access to the White House and held I.O.U.s from the party that was in, as Bemrose did. He might be an idealist, but he deserved credit for acting on his convictions.

How many in the country besides the President himself had the foresight to see what the defeat of Russia or of England might mean? If Bemrose and Janice hadn't been around and kept pointing it out to him, Larry wondered whether he'd be hep yet, or like Ed, hoping for the best, counting on our luck to get by and let other countries do our fighting. Bemrose was a complex, mixed-up guy. But for all his queer kind of snobbishness and his tactics to indebt those who were powerful and entrenched, for all his drive to reach the top of his profession, to handle the biggest and toughest cases and win them, to be kingpin at home and to keep reminding Lucy of it, Bemrose had a deep-dyed honesty. He was willing to face up to the big questions and to act. He thought the country should be in there fighting this War, and was eager to fight. Personally. Larry might not agree with him, but he admired Bemrose's guts.

He couldn't help but respect a man who put what he believed ahead of what was easy and comfortable, and who was willing to trade in the working investment of a lifetime for a chance to stick by his convictions. Larry could forget his flare-ups of temper, and be damned glad Bemrose was his friend. This crowd here—Larry looked around the table—they could feel good about being related to him.

Lucy mixed small pieces of her lamb with her potatoes, as if by disguising them she would do away with the act of swallowing. She fingered her bread into doughy balls and scattered them on her butter plate. The scratched look came back to her eyes, as though someone had carelessly drawn a fingernail across the eyeball. "You tell him, Larry," she urged. "Tell him there's plenty of time after we get in—" Her voice shook quietly.

“You ought to think of Lucy,” Marge said. “It isn’t going to be easy for her. Not even if you wait. She’s still a bride——”

“She can get used to being an adult,” he said. “I’d hate to think of myself bringing the bride her breakfast in bed while England and Russia went under. How do you take your breakfast coffee? One sugar or two?”

“Oh, lay off,” Ed said.

Marge stopped to soothe Lucy’s shoulder on her way to the kitchen.

During dessert Larry complimented Marge extravagantly on her plum cake.

She puffed up with the flattery. “Do you really like it, Larry?” She giggled and touched his hand suggestively. “You don’t mind if I call you Larry? You’re like one of the family.”

“I never mind what a beautiful woman does,” Larry said, figuring there was no harm in flattering her. If Bemrose would only sweeten her with a compliment now and then— He knew how, and could make it sound convincing. The difference between them was that Arthur had to *like* someone to make an effort. It almost caused him physical pain to pretend with people he didn’t care for. Handing out flattery didn’t make Larry feel like a hypocrite. With Larry it rolled out, and when someone grabbed the hook, he felt nothing but pleasure.

“Have you heard the one about the two cloak-and-suiters who met on Sixth Avenue——”

Bemrose frowned, but Larry went on with the story. Marge laughed so hard that the tears came. Her giggle turned into a shrill cackle. Ed grinned behind the thick spectacles with high school shame at enjoying a dirty story. Lucy’s sad smile seemed to be fulfilling an obligation.

“You never told us he could——” Marge pointed at him and continued to laugh helplessly.

“Where did you pick up the accent?” Ed asked. “You sure have it down pat. Did you ever hear Lou Holtz tell them back in the old days at the Palace?”

But Bemrose didn’t smile.

“Sorry to put you through it again.” Larry turned toward him. “He’s heard me tell that story twenty or thirty times.”

Marge insisted on doing the dishes alone. After Arthur and Ed had pushed the dining table against the wall, they settled down in what became the living room. Larry expected Ed to produce his shoe wax and begin polishing the furniture, noticing him glance uneasily at the wooden leg of a chair to make sure it hadn't been kicked. But Ed quietly fussed with his pipe. He reamed and refilled the bowl, cleaned the stem, replaced an empty match box with a fresh one, and settled back to a smoke.

"Pick up any liquor last week?" he asked Larry. A federal excise had been placed on liquor October first, and buyers had battled in the stores to lay in a tax-free supply. "I managed to get hold of a case of Bourbon."

Larry shrugged. "I always let Bessie do the buying for the house. She said something about putting in a few bottles of Scotch. We don't use much of the stuff——"

Lucy, who hadn't spoken since Bemrose's outburst at dinner, timidly said, "Arthur's dealer on Madison Avenue saved us a case——"

Slouched in his chair and miles away, Bemrose suddenly sat up straight. "Why didn't you tell me so before?"

"I didn't think of it."

"You might have thought of it," he said. "It might have occurred to you that I don't believe in beating the government out of taxes. If we have to levy taxes on liquor to pay for the War, and we consume liquor, then I want to pay the taxes on what we consume."

Larry had heard him sound like that in court.

"Furthermore, I don't want Mr. Valencia on Madison Avenue telling the neighborhood that Arthur H. Bemrose laid in enough Scotch to last him a year. It doesn't sound good, not even if *Mrs.* Bemrose——"

Lucy raised her hand, then let her wrist drop on the arm of the chair. "It's only a case, dear. It won't last more than——"

His ears were stiff and red. "I suppose you told Mr. Valencia that we use a case a *week*."

"Let her alone," Ed interrupted. "Everyone was putting in stuff last week. The liquor stores were jammed. She only thought——"

“She doesn’t. That’s the trouble. I wish once in a while you’d *ask* me——”

“You were in Washington.”

“You mean for a whole day I was in Washington.”

Larry closed his fingers sharply against his palm. “Arthur!”

Bemrose walked to the radio and looked at his watch as he fiddled with the dial. He skimmed through a quiz program where the master of ceremonies was saying, “Two ‘p’s’ and an ‘i.’ That’s *right*, Mrs. Anderson, that is the way you spell Mississippi, and just for that you get four clean, crisp dollar bills, count ’em, one-two-three-*four*.” Some swing music faded in and out. The dial picked up the last sentence of a shoe commercial promising that now *he* can be taller than *she* is, and finally the solid, academic voice of the *New York Times* brought the nine o’clock news. Bemrose, visibly relieved, sat down to hear the headline summary.

Larry turned to Ed. “How about a hand of gin rummy?”

“Never played it,” Ed replied. “I’ll play you regular rummy.”

“You don’t have to be Einstein to learn. I can teach you in ten minutes.” He turned to Lucy and to Arthur. “Want to make it four-handed?”

But before they had a chance to answer, Ed cut in. “Arthur doesn’t play cards.”

Quizzically Larry looked at him. Why? Why didn’t he want to play cards with Ed instead of discussing the War? One of the reasons a man played cards was to while away hours that might seem interminable because he had to spend them with people he couldn’t talk to.

Bemrose flushed. “I haven’t seen tonight’s paper,” he said. “You two go ahead and play.” He went to the hall and brought back a copy of the *New York Post*. “I want to see if the Supreme Court decided anything in that anti-trust case——”

Larry motioned Lucy to watch the game, but Marge had finished the dishes and brought over a tapestry footstool cover for Lucy to work on with her. Ed clicked off the radio announcements of a sale on sunfast cotton pinafores, and except for a sudden intermittent giggle from Marge, the room settled down to an uneasy silence.

Larry saw that Bemrose was clutching the edge of the paper in his fist and sinking his teeth into the newsprint like a starved man reading a free-restaurant ad. His brow was pulled together, and his hair and mustache defied combing.

Larry expected the quiet to explode, but in a half hour nothing happened except that Ed had mastered gin rummy scoring, and Lucy and Marge had filled a corner of their tapestry cloth with even stitches of dark green wool. Larry began to draw an unrationed breath at last.

The phone rang and Marge jumped up to answer it at a table in the hall. Disappointed, she called from the doorway, "It's for you, Larry."

Maybe she thought nostalgically of when Lucy was single and had young men ringing her up. Larry moved toward the phone, sensing the instrument was dangerous and might explode some of the dynamite that was lying around the room. He hesitated before he lifted the receiver. Bessie's happy, excited voice came through.

"Can you get away from there? Miss Baldwin, you know—Janice Baldwin, that friend of yours—is in town on her way to Hollywood. They're making a picture of her book, Larry. She told me all about it. She sounds awfully nice." Bessie chattered on. "She has to see you before she leaves town tomorrow. She wants you to call her right away."

Larry jotted down the exchange and number as Bessie slowly repeated it. "I hope you can get away. Be sure to ask her who's going to play the lead in the picture. I forgot."

Icy sweat dotted Larry's forehead. There was no use trying to fake a call to Janice with Bemrose sitting a few feet away. He walked over to him. "That was Bess," he explained. "Jan Baldwin is back and wants to see me tonight. She's on her way through to the Coast."

Bemrose went on reading his paper.

"I'm going to give her a ring. Anything you'd like me to tell her?"

Bemrose shook his head. While Larry was phoning, he walked past him to Marge and Ed's bedroom.

Five minutes later Larry found him slumped on the edge of Marge's bed, the pink cotton bedspread wrinkled under him, his loose vest bulging.

“She sounded okay,” Larry said.

Bemrose nodded.

“I promised her I’d run over for a few minutes. Do you want me to ask her for you about Lend-Lease?”

Bemrose shook his head.

“You sure you don’t want me to give her a message?”

“What is there to say?”

“She’ll ask about you.” Larry rubbed his palm against the green metal footboard of Marge’s bed, figuring that maybe Bemrose should be seeing her instead.

“You know about me. Tell her,” Bemrose said.

“I’ll have to say goodbye to Lucy and the folks.” Larry hated to leave him in the dim bedroom, lighted only by a pink-fringed table lamp.

“Go ahead and say goodbye. I want to stay here.” Arthur’s mouth was set.

While Larry thanked Marge for the dinner, Ed brought his polishing wax and cloth into the hall, examining the fingermarks Larry had left on the telephone.

At the doorway Larry stood close to Lucy and searched her face. It was clean as a rain-emptied sky, scrubbed of emotion. He felt sorry, damned sorry, for her.

Chapter 11

The next day in a taxi on the way to Bemrose's office, Larry warned Janice not to provoke any arguments.

She withdrew to her corner of the cab and tossed a burned-out match on the rubber mat, taking jerky puffs at her cigarette. The wide rouged mouth made a nice contrast with the gray Persian of her coat and with her Cossack-style fur turban. Janice's long, straight hair, brushed close to her cheek, looked darker next to the gray fur.

"What's worrying him?" she asked. "If he's going to upset easy, maybe we'd better not——"

"Supposing Shore *is* mixed up in this. That would be something for him to worry about."

"I don't see why. What if he is?" she asked perversely, twisting the end of her cigarette on the metal snuffer of an ash tray.

"Anything about Shore is Arthur's business. I thought you agreed last night _____"

"You didn't say he was going to be difficult," she objected. "What's the matter with him?"

Larry began to regret that he had suggested the meeting. Aside from Shore's possible involvement in a suspicious deal that Janice had turned up during her trip—he really did think Bemrose should know that Janice planned to incriminate Shore—Larry had figured it might do him good to see her once and get it out of his system.

"The same old thing is eating him. The War," Larry said.

"I thought surely he'd be in uniform by now." Janice fumbled in her pouch-shaped handbag through a snarl of cigarettes, compact, lipstick, gloves, notebooks, memos, letters and handkerchiefs, and brought out a white card with scribbling on it. "Here, you better hang on to my notes. I went back to the stateroom and jotted down what Richter said. This is the dope."

Larry slipped the card into his wallet. “He’s been breaking his neck to get a commission, but no luck so far. He’s going to enlist soon if they won’t take him. He says that he’s fed up hanging around.”

“It’s ridiculous for him to think of enlisting. Anyone with his connections in Washington.”

“I don’t think he has any connections in the Army, but you’d imagine if Tom Newton spoke to someone in the War Department— Hell, I thought this was what he was saving up for. All the favors he’s done Newton for years——”

“I know a few spots where the State Department could use him if the Army won’t take him,” Janice said. “They’re screaming for trained people at the Embassy in London.” She turned her foot and studied the platform sole of her shoe which made her taller by an inch or so.

“You probably could fix it for him,” Larry said.

“Maybe I could, but it’s like calling the boy scouts when the Empire State building’s on fire. He knows more people who can help him than I do. He ought to be able to produce action faster than I could.”

Larry kicked the small seat in front of him and it fell forward with a thump. “I don’t think he likes to ask. I’m willing to bet he hasn’t said a word to Newton.”

“He’d better stop fooling around. If he doesn’t watch out, they’ll *take* him as a private.”

“Sure they’ll take him.”

“Maybe he’ll feel more patriotic, being a private.”

“You don’t know many fellows his age who are willing to give up what he’d be giving up,” Larry asked.

She looked at him incredulously, and he knew what she meant. The millions of poor devils over there. Not only willing but already sacrificing more than a job.

“All right, who?” Larry asked. “I mean here. Not in England, and not the Poles or the Czechs. I said someone who wasn’t forced to go but who *wanted* to——”

“Don’t make him sound so damned noble.”

“All right, but you’re lucky just the same that he’s willing to see you.”

“Why?”

“You walked out. After you promised me to hang around,” Larry reminded her. “I wouldn’t have blamed him if he refused to see you.”

“I went away because he seemed to need time to think it over. I was only giving him a chance to find out what was in his own heart, what he really felt like doing about us,” Janice argued.

“What were you supposed to be doing while he was thinking it over?” Larry asked.

“Finding out whether I was in love with him.”

“Are you?”

“There was a man in Sweden. He thought so,” Janice said. “After a few weeks he decided I wasn’t even a *prospect* for love. He seemed quite disturbed by it.” Her profile was quiet, and the smoothly arched nose remained rigid.

“That fellow in Sweden ought to get together with Arthur’s wife someday.”

After a minute Larry asked, “Why don’t you talk to him about taking a job in London? He needs to get away.”

“What about his wife? What would she do if he walked out? He can’t just walk out because the going is tough.”

“Jan, let me go to see him and tell him what’s on your mind about Shore,” Larry offered. “He’s been through hell. If you turn up and make cracks about his marriage——”

“What’s the matter with his marriage? Can’t his wife keep him from being upset?”

“He won’t let anyone help him,” Larry reminded her. “He hasn’t changed.”

“He lets you.”

“He talks himself out at me because I don’t see his friends, and I don’t run into his clients,” Larry said. “I’m outside of his life, and when he talks to

me, it's like telling it to this." He thumped the leather seat between them.

The taxi pulled up a few feet west of Forty Wall Street. Larry shoved even change and a quarter tip into the driver's hand. "I'm not asking for miracles," he told her. "Only go easy on him. Remember, he's not in good shape."

"I don't believe it." Her grin had the glitter of winter sunshine. "He'll never be in bad shape while he has you for a friend."

It took Janice only a few minutes to tell Bemrose about Richter. She hurried her story as if she were anxious to have it over and get away. Larry could see that the meeting had turned out to be an ordeal for Janice, too. He could tell by the vertical blue vein which stood out on her forehead, emphatically dividing it.

Outwardly Bemrose was controlled, a little quiet and reserved toward her, but calm. Buttressed by his massive desk, he listened impersonally.

Janice described her meeting with Gerhardt Richter on the ship coming over. Richter was a Fifty-seventh Street art dealer with Berlin connections. Anyone with a name like that might have been suspect in wartime, and when Janice heard him brag to another passenger about the time he had dined with Goering, she drew the obvious conclusion. One afternoon when she was alone at the bar, Richter turned up. He was going to stop for a drink but saw her and changed his mind. Another time he rather pointedly left the sun deck when she sat down two steamer chairs away. The purser tried to introduce them the first day at sea when they were both in line waiting to change some bills, but Richter fumbled in his pocket, muttered something about forgetting his stateroom key, and hastily left the line. Her own stateroom was in the corridor that ran directly past the purser's desk, and on the third day out, she emerged from the passageway just as Richter was handing the officer a wrapped cylinder about six inches in diameter and two feet long. Richter cautioned him that the bulky package must be locked up. The purser said it was too long to fit in the safe, but he might find room in a storage closet that had a safety catch. Richter explained that the package contained valuable art which had been entrusted to him by an important client. Then he saw Janice, who had been standing quietly at the corridor exit, and without leaving the package or finishing his conversation, he

hurried back to his stateroom. The purser shrugged, and swung closed the door of the safe.

That same night after a movie in the recreation hall on B deck, Janice stopped to chat with Richter's confidant, a sun-dried Italian business man of about fifty. He told her that on previous business trips to New York he had visited Richter's Fifty-seventh Street gallery which specialized in old masters. The Italian himself didn't care for old French or Dutch, but Richter had told him on this trip that he was bringing back some Brueghels. Now *there* was a painter. The Italian rubbed the fake buttonhole of his lapel. No one had ever handled crowds like Brueghel. Especially Brueghel the Elder. Crowds, comedy, and color. Brueghel was *one* old master the Italian wouldn't mind collecting himself. He sighed. It was his misfortune not to have the price for art. If this filthy war ever ended— But by that time the Germans or the rich Americans, like Richter's client, would own everything.

Then Richter *had* a client for whom he was buying the Brueghels? While Janice questioned the Italian, another screen of her brain showed the Brueghel painting of a Flemish feast day which she had seen and loved in Vienna. The Italian mentioned the name of Richter's New York client, Signor Way. Way, Way. Janice tried to pin him down, but he admitted that his memory for foreign names was terrible. The name was something that meant a path or a way, he feebly recalled. Richter told him the client had made his money in Wall Street.

Could it be anyone named Signor Shore, Janice had asked.

It was not impossible, the Italian admitted, rubbing the false buttonhole.

Goering. Brueghel. Janice wondered what the Nazis would want of a humorous painter. Rubens and his undulating nudes perhaps, but not a satirist. She made the jumps quickly. Brueghel. Vienna. New York. Wall Street. Davis Shore. The Nazis selling art for cash, Richter the intermediary for an American collector who put up the money. It was a little raw to lift a Brueghel from the wall of a Vienna museum, but Goering or even Hitler himself might have confiscated the painting from a private collection, arranged with Richter to sell it and have the proceeds deposited in Mexico or the Argentine. It sounded fantastic. Self-consciously Janice looked at Bemrose. However, it was no more incredible than some other well-known

Nazi deals, she said defensively. The name of Shore was the wildest kind of guess, of course, except that she had remembered Arthur telling her about a collection of Flemish paintings at Shore's Long Island place. She might be dead wrong about Shore, Janice told him, but she didn't think she was mistaken about Richter. He *had* bragged about visiting Goering, and—Well, one look at him with his bull neck and fishbowl glasses. Besides he had definitely tried to avoid her, and that in itself was suspicious.

She had thought of going straight to the F.B.I. and putting the whole thing in their laps—Janice reached for the card of notes she had given Larry in the taxi, and he handed them to her. Here was the evidence, she explained. She had jotted down exactly what was said by Richter, the purser, and the Italian whose name was Terelli. Naturally she had no idea how Richter had made out with the paintings at customs. He couldn't possibly have smuggled in a cylinder two feet long. Maybe the F.B.I. picked him up at the pier. But if by any chance he got the pictures past customs unopened—That's why she had called Larry for advice. She wasn't sure whether to go to the F.B.I. directly, although her instinct told her to go——

Larry kept an eye on Bemrose. "When she told me Shore might be mixed up in it, I thought she better see you first. I knew you wouldn't want Shore's name to come into it unless we were absolutely sure——"

Bemrose had been taking notes while Janice talked. He reread them and excused himself from the room. Janice, trying to decipher her pencil scrawls, put on green harlequin frame glasses to make out the writing on the dogeared card.

When Arthur returned about five minutes later, he looked relieved. "Nothing to it," he reported. "Shore never heard of Richter. He buys through the Valentine Galleries."

Janice's lips divided her jaw like a track of red metal. "You didn't phone him," she objected. "You didn't go and phone Shore without telling us."

"Why not? That was a serious charge, and I felt I had to ask him. Maybe you don't remember the Lusk committee after the last war, but I do," he reminded her. "Did you ever hear of the wholesale witchhunts under our Attorney-General at that time, Mr. A. Mitchell Palmer?" He frowned. "They blackjacked three hundred men whose only crime was being foreigners.

They broke in and searched homes without a warrant. They made false arrests.” Bemrose slammed his hand against the corner of his desk. “They did away with trials by imposing sentences *before* trial. They took prisoners, and when they had them locked up, they denied them counsel and bail. They kept out reporters and wrote canned press releases. There was a nasty non-liberal stink to the whole business, and if we don’t watch out, we’ll have the same thing over again in this War. That’s what happens in wartime. Everyone becomes suspect. The thing rolls up like a snowball. If people start running to the F.B.I. about everyone who talks with a foreign accent— Or even every German for that matter——”

“Richter isn’t every German,” Janice protested. She stuffed the notes into the fur pocket of her coat and got up. “Forget it. Forget the whole thing. I’ll handle it.”

Larry motioned her to wait. “Tell Arthur something about your trip,” he said. “Tell him what you think about the way the War is going.”

Janice sat down again and described conditions in England when she had left three weeks ago. “Larry says you might want to hook up with Lend-Lease. There are plenty of openings in London. If you want to know whom to see——”

“I have some Army feelers out. Thanks just the same.”

Larry felt a thickening of the tension. “Arthur would rather get a commission,” he explained to her.

“I suppose you’re down in Washington most of the time.”

“Not all the time. Once in a while.”

“I wondered.”

“Why?”

“No one in New York seems to see much of you.”

“He’s been busy fixing over his house,” Larry said.

“What have you done to it?” Janice asked. “I saw the Storeys, and they didn’t mention it being done over.”

“They haven’t been up. I haven’t gotten around to asking them.”

She must have noticed that Bemrose said I, not we. She must have realized that he hadn't as yet accepted fully the idea of his marriage.

"They were wondering why you didn't invite them to that reception you had last summer. They heard about it and naturally they wanted to meet your wife."

"I arranged it at the last minute," Bemrose apologized. "Larry can tell you _____"

"It wasn't a real party, just a few people," Larry said.

"I bumped into Judd Harrison at the airline office the other day when I went to pick up my tickets," Janice said.

"I haven't seen him for months."

"I know. He wondered if you were hibernating."

Bemrose's lip jerked sharply, and the old distracting tic started.

"Judd thought maybe you were afraid to let your wife be seen by eligible wolves. I told him you'd never have to worry about amateur competition." Janice thrust her open cigarette case toward him, laughing with her eyes. "On me."

She settled back, and for the first time since Larry walked in with her this morning, things seemed easy between them.

"When is your friend Churchill going to kick out Franco?" Bemrose taunted her.

"When he gets through using him."

"Using him for what? To keep the German Army supplied?"

She slipped out of her coat and threw it over the rounded back of the armchair. Her upper topography showed to advantage in a plain black dress cut to a low V at the throat. "How do you know what Franco's going to do for him? Maybe England plans to base troops in Spain and use them to clean up Italy."

"You mean he's going to take on *another* war? He hasn't his hands full enough with Hitler?" Bemrose asked.

"Maybe that's his plan for defeating Hitler," Janice said.

“Where did you pick up that idea? In London?” Bemrose sounded skeptical, his training in suspicion coming out.

“Why couldn’t I figure it out for myself? It makes good sense. I don’t have to get all my ideas from other people. Once in a while I figure things out for myself.”

“That’s what I thought when you went to Sweden without calling me,” Bemrose said. “I thought you had things figured out.”

“I did call you. You were out of town.” She swallowed hard.

“You have just an hour to make the airport, Jan,” Larry reminded her. “That isn’t long. We may get caught in traffic.”

“You know as well as I do that the British can’t afford to lose the Mediterranean,” Janice addressed Bemrose. “How are they going to get supplies through the Suez Canal if they lose their southern ports? Have you ever stopped to think that with Greece gone——”

“But it’s playing off one dictator against another, and they’re nasty boys to play with,” Bemrose protested.

“Why is he running down the British?” Janice appealed to Larry. “I thought he was pushing for us to get in and fight with them.”

“We can be allies and not swallow all their policies. I don’t care much for the way they’re handling the situation in India, do you?” Bemrose slammed shut the drawer of his desk, although it was only open a few inches.

“India is quite a subject. Let’s talk about it when I get back from Hollywood,” Janice offered. “I’d like to come up anyway and spend an evening with you. You can show me how you’ve done over your place, and you can introduce me to Mrs. Bemrose.”

She was buttoned into her coat before Larry could reach her. As she extended her hand to Bemrose, Larry remembered what a firm, compact implement it could be.

“I’ll see you dressed in eagles on the next trip,” she predicted.

Bemrose followed them through the reception room to the corridor, but Janice didn’t turn back. She grabbed Larry’s sleeve and raced him along the slippery stone floor to the elevator.

The first cab, a Yellow, turned them down, but a Checker offered to drive them to the airport if they would skip the Queensborough traffic and use the twenty-five-cent Triboro bridge instead. Larry steadied a cigarette between his lips, trying to keep the end dry before offering it to Janice. She refused, flipping open the lid of her compact and looking uncertainly into the mirror.

“First you bring up Shore. Then all that about no one seeing him. I told you it doesn’t take much for him to go off—” Larry said.

“Phoning behind our backs, walking in two minutes later with the answer. That may be the way he wins cases, but thank God I don’t have to sit on the jury and listen to him.” She vengefully stroked the straight, long mouth with purple lipstick.

“He’ll feel better the minute the Army takes him,” Larry said. “Everything’s unsettled with him. He doesn’t know what to do about his practice, whether to close the house, or where to put Lucy. He has no idea where he’ll be sent if they give him a commission——”

“I can’t see him again. It takes too much out of me. For all he cares, I could have stayed in Stockholm. It’s hard on me, Larry, very hard——”

Larry reached for her hand, and the small joints went limp in his fist. “He was covering up, too. It was just as hard for him to see you.”

“I suppose he was right about Shore,” she said contritely.

“Probably.”

“I didn’t expect him to apologize for getting married, but I thought he’d, well, I thought he’d be glad to see me. And he didn’t have to blame me for walking out. I hung around for weeks waiting——”

“That stuff about Shore threw him.” Larry stroked the knuckles of her hand.

“But before I even told him about Shore, when we first walked in—‘Good to see you, my good girl,’ she mimicked. You’d think I was there begging him to keep me out of jail.”

“I bet he didn’t close his eyes last night. Not after he heard you were in town. When he saw you, he was thrown. He forgot to ask you about the tax

matter that came up when you were away,” Larry reminded her. “That’s how much you could have stayed in Stockholm.”

“That’s right. You said last night he had trouble with my taxes.” The black eyes widened. “He didn’t write me, did he?”

“I don’t know. Anyway his mind didn’t seem to be on taxes this morning.” Larry grinned, and he squeezed her narrow shoulders.

“He remembered to cover up for Shore, his mind was clicking where Shore was concerned,” she said bitterly. “I’m not going to drop it. I’m going to turn Richter in.”

“Think it over, Jan,” Larry cautioned. “You’ll have enough on your mind out in Hollywood without turning up spies.”

“And let Richter go on working for the Nazis?”

“I’ll see an F.B.I. man I know here in town. I’ll ask him if they have a record on Richter,” Larry promised.

They swept across the bridge, and traveling high above the East River, looked down at the stadium on Randall’s Island, ahead to Welfare with its city of public hospitals set solidly in the moving water life of tugboats, lighters, and barges. Larry always felt as though he owned it from up here—the River and the streams of cars and drivers. Everything except the bridge. The bridge, for all the delicacy of its steelwork, had its own indestructible character. It owned him. He imagined that even if he were Commissioner Robert Moses and had helped to build the span, its flawless functioning would awe him. Larry wasn’t an atheist, but he hadn’t been inside a house of worship in years. This perfect steel image aroused whatever religious sparks lay dormant. He felt more reverent about it than about an old church like St. Mark’s of the Bouwerie around the corner from where he lived, the place where Peter Stuyvesant was buried.

When he remembered about Janice, she was crying. The tears calmly washed her unrouged cheeks.

“For a smart girl, you’re not being specially smart,” he said, offering her his handkerchief.

The tears stopped, and she looked at him.

“Do you remember what I told you? You don’t run away,” Larry said. “You ran away once, and you’re miserable because you did, but now you’re doing it again, acting as if you’ve signed up for the track team the rest of your life.”

A sob broke loose, and Larry figured from its unwilling harshness that it was a symbol of weakness which had not been shaken from her in years.

“Maybe he’s happy,” she said humbly. “If he is, I haven’t any right——”

“For someone who’s happy, he is easily thrown. I wouldn’t say that he acted happy when you walked in this morning.”

“It’s too late,” Janice said. “He’s all set. He has a wife, a home. What would he want of me now?”

Larry shrugged. “It’s late for us to get into the War, too, but we’re going to get into it just the same.”

“I know one of my troubles,” Janice admitted. “I keep doing second what I really want to do first.”

“Which do you do first, the job?” Larry asked.

Her hair moved solemnly across her cheek. “When I’m like this, it isn’t worth doing. When I’ve just seen him, even the War doesn’t matter. All I want to do is stick around. That’s how I feel. The trouble is I’m trained to work, not to feel.”

“Just once, why don’t you turn things around and let your feelings tell you what to do?” Larry suggested. “It makes more sense than running off carbon copies of a mistake. That man in Sweden knew you weren’t feeling. There will be other men, and they’ll know it when they’re with you. You can’t go on living logically, figuring everything out with your bean, even if it’s a good bean.”

“I’ll get hurt. If I let myself go. I can’t risk it, Larry. I’d go to pieces.” The tears started again.

Larry picked up his handkerchief from where she had left it on the seat and blotted her eyes.

“Why not look at it this way, and then maybe you’ll stop resenting him,” Larry advised. “With Bemrose the War really *is* the thing. That doesn’t

mean that he didn't miss you while you were gone, or that he wasn't tied in a knot when he heard last night that you were back in this country. I was with him and saw his reaction. He damned near went to pieces. Once Arthur is set in a job, maybe he'll be able to handle himself better. He'll know more what to do about you, about his marriage, and whatever else is bothering him. The thing that is knocking him off base is not having it settled and not being in the War."

"The War comes first, and I'm second, or third, or tenth," Janice said.

"Right now the War comes first," Larry agreed. He saw that they were curving off the parkway into a drive that circled the entrance to the airport. "I'd let him know how it is with you. He's going to settle this Army thing any day, and while he's changing his life around, you ought to let him know. He'd want to know. He was probably looking for some signs from you this morning, but you had all the flags down," Larry reminded her.

She reached into her pocket for three baggage checks.

Larry took them. "Now's the time to talk to him, Jan. Don't put it off too long. Things move fast during a war."

"As soon as I get back from the Coast," she promised. "Before some editor decides to send me to China."

Larry helped her gently through the low door of the taxi. "I think he always figured the job came ahead of him. With you, too. He'll be relieved to find out that some of you wants to hang around."

Later when Larry saw her thin, small frame disappear up the ramp into the monstrous silver hulk, he felt better than he had in months about Janice. She might turn out to be more than an affair for Bemrose, if his marriage continued to go sour and he needed an affair. The Janice he had seen this morning had a little the look and sound of the real thing.

Chapter 12

The last of January, a few weeks after Pearl Harbor, Larry walked into a Rogers Peet clothing store on lower Broadway to pin gold leaves on Bemrose's uniform. Arthur sounded like a kid over the phone, kicked up about getting a Major's commission with orders to report for duty in forty-eight hours. Larry had heard somewhere that it was traditional for wives to pin on the insignia for the first time, and wondered why Arthur hadn't invited Lucy to do it. He was flattered to be selected instead of Lucy for the ritual, and happy to hear Bemrose's voice over the phone. It sounded as if he had dropped twenty years since the last time Larry had spoken to him.

As Larry entered the clothing store downtown, Bemrose was turning slowly in front of a triple mirror while a salesman admired the fit of his blouse.

Bemrose pointed to some fullness under the left sleeve. He saw Larry, grinned at him and straightened, looking two inches taller. The loose flabby look he had in tweeds gave way to a tidy compactness, and there was less lawyer's stoop to his shoulders already, his frame broader and squared off.

"Pretty snappy, huh?" the salesman asked. "The Major just walked right into it. He was lucky to find it on such short notice."

"Looks swell," Larry said, not quite as familiar as the salesman with this new Bemrose.

"Don't you think they ought to take it in for me here?" Arthur pointed to the left side.

"You always liked a loose coat."

"But a blouse. A blouse should fit."

He acted as if he had been wearing them all his life.

"Are you going to report for duty in it?" Larry asked.

"I called up Bill Turner. He's a colonel at Governor's Island. Bill asked me how the telegram was addressed, and when I said to Major Bemrose, he said, 'You're in! No if about it. Report in your uniform.' I'm in a helluva

hurry to get this one altered so I can wear it to Maxwell Field tomorrow night.”

“How did you find out about the telegram?” Larry asked, when the salesman had left them to look for a fitter.

“I was at a committee meeting at the University Club, and Miss Thompson got me on the phone. She said, ‘Congratulations, Major Bemrose! I have a telegram for you from Washington.’ I damn near dropped the phone.”

“What did you do? Call Lucy?”

“I grabbed a cab, and rushed down to the office to read the telegram myself. After I called you, I phoned Lucy, Marge, Ed, the Storeys, and Davis Shore. Then I got Newton and Harrison in Washington. I must have gone a little nuts, I guess, and called about twenty people.”

“Are you going to be able to wind up everything in time?” Larry sat down and rotated his hat on his kneecap.

“Miss Thompson will store the furniture and files. When I have a chance, I’ll get the building to do something about the lease.” Bemrose acted as if he were going to accept a Supreme Court appointment, not like someone who was about to turn the key on a six figure income.

“And the house?”

“Lucy will close the place and go to live with Marge and Ed. Unless I get orders near home, like Mitchell Field.”

“Then the Air Force took you?”

“What do you think?” Bemrose leaned down and shook Larry by the shoulders. “Do you think I’m going to try court-martial cases in the Judge Advocate’s office? *It’s the Air Force*. What do you think?”

“It’s great, boy.” What Larry meant was that it was great for Bemrose, great for a guy who always had to be on the ground floor of the big thing. The Air Force was going to draw the cream of the services. The Air Force had been invented for a fellow like Arthur H. Bemrose.

The salesman pointed out the fullness below the armhole to the fitter who got busy with chalk and pins. They promised to rush the job through and give it to Bemrose first thing in the morning.

“But Mr. Frank made a special trip down to pin on my leaves. I can’t ask him to come back again.”

“Then you want to purchase some insignia, Major?” The salesman moistened his lips in anticipation of military sales he would roll up if it were a long war.

“Sell me the works!” Bemrose said. “Only you may have to tell me where they go.” It was the first hint that he hadn’t graduated from West Point.

With stubby, fat fingers, the salesman affixed the U. S. insignia above the notch in both lapels, and pinned the finely wrought wings with central propeller below the notch.

“Now if you’ll just put these here.” The salesman handed Larry two bright gilt leaves and pointed to the cross stitching on the shoulder strap of the blouse.

Larry’s fingers felt stiff.

“Right in the center,” the salesman directed.

“That’s a little too near the collar, isn’t it?” Bemrose asked. “I thought I read in the *Officers’ Guide* that the rank insignia goes on the shoulder one-half inch from the seam of the sleeve.”

“A fellow from the Quartermaster’s was around, and he told us—” the salesman protested in a weak voice.

Larry inserted the pin at the place Bemrose indicated. He matched the second leaf to the position of the first and flipped the safety catch. “All the luck in the world!” He put out his hand.

“Now the missus’ll know where to put them for you,” the salesman said cheerfully.

Outdoors Larry looked sideways at the uniforms in the window and pictured himself in an ill-fitting G.I. version. Fear pinched and shriveled his heart. When he thought of waking-working-sleeping without the warmth of Bessie to give the days meaning, an icy fright cut off his breath. When he considered the return to a little boy’s world of doing-as-you-are-told and no Bessie around to talk things over with at night, his bone marrow solidified.

Larry recalled a summer in the Catskills when he was seven, and a smart-aleck kid had pushed him off a diving board into the lake. With the sudden impact, his eardrum had burst. Larry had mulled over the incident gratefully since Pearl Harbor. No Army doctor would pass him with a defect like that. It was a helluva thing to be happy about, a helluva thing when your best friend had been beating down doors to get in, but when he thought of Bessie, it seemed all right to put a reassuring finger in his left eardrum. If the world was going to blow up anyway, he wanted to spend the little time left with Bessie. Call him a heel. If there weren't going to be Bess or Larry for much longer, he wanted to live the little time left by twos.

Bemrose, he knew, had to put his weight somewhere, make time count, get in on the big thing, perform like a big shot. Be one. And there was nothing phoney about his compulsion to get in. He might dread going home from the office at night and think his marriage was a mistake. He might be sick of his practice and angry at himself for passing up Janice, but he wouldn't use the War as a cheap excuse to walk out. Some fellows might look for bargain ways to be a hero, and exit on a string of situations that had them tied in knots, but the description didn't fit Bemrose.

Some other fellows might join up *from the wrong side of the heart*, but not Arthur H. The War counted with him, counted more than his personal life. His decision was clear-headed and unselfish. No ax-grinder, Bemrose. Axis-grinder. That was bad. Larry wrinkled his nose. Awful.

The bar was crowded; so they sat at a small, unsteady table and ordered double Martinis served in highball glasses. Larry raised his glass. "Now Hitler can start peeing in his pants!"

"How about you coming in?" Bemrose asked. "Maybe when I learn the ropes, I can find out about lining up a commission for you."

So it was going to be a nice friendly war, like a club, with enough friends around to have a poker game on Saturday nights. A war where a fellow who had the rank pulled in his friends and made them second lieutenants. Not for Larry, not even to be a first lieutenant. He had finished the boy-meets-boy stuff at Columbia. He'd have to let the Bemroses fight the Supermen.

"I'll take my chances on the draft board." Larry's finger automatically went to the left ear.

“If they’re going to get you anyway, you might as well be paid for it,” Arthur said.

“I’ll talk it over with Bessie. I think she’d rather have me take my chances on the draft board. I’d better stick around and take care of the women.”

“I wish you’d look up Lucy once in a while,” Bemrose said. “It’s going to be rough on her——”

Larry described a wide arc with his free hand. “I’ll take her out and get her drunk. How about another?”

The waiter saw them and brought refills.

“Janice had something when she said you’d be wearing eagles,” Larry said confidently.

“Not so fast. That isn’t how it works. They handed me this rank for being a specialist, but they won’t keep on promoting me. Not unless I’m in combat.” Arthur fastidiously wiped the rim of his glass with a paper napkin.

The eagles were already pinned on, Larry knew. What Bemrose meant was that it would take him a while, say about a month, to figure out how a man his age could wangle combat duty.

“What the hell are you guys celebrating?” The voice belonged to Tom Flannagan whom Larry hadn’t seen since law school.

Larry smiled up affectionately at Tom. “He just made Major.”

“No kiddin’!” Tom flung his blue serge bulk into an empty chair and pushed a forelock out of his eye. “What branch?”

“What do you think?” Larry asked, maneuvering his hand like an airplane.

“I’ll be glad if they take me as an ensign,” Tom said. “I had my physical and ought to be hearing.” He gulped a Bourbon and reached for the chaser. “Well, give ’em hell! Give those Heinies——” Tom turned to Larry. “The Air Force knows how to pick ’em.” He slapped the table. “Had more on the ball than any guy at law school. Give ’em hell, Major.”

Larry warmed toward Flannagan, as he had years ago at Columbia—soft-talking, blue-eyed Flannagan, all dumb cluck enthusiasm. It felt good to celebrate with a guy like Tom. He ordered another round of drinks.

“Where can I get in touch with you—in case this Navy deal falls through?” Flannagan asked Arthur with a sudden shrewd naïveté. “I may want to ask you to fix me up with a commission.”

“Haven’t you a bunch of kids?” Larry asked.

Flannagan held up his hand and spread his thumb and fingers. “Five reasons for going to war where it’s peaceful.”

“Larry will always know how to reach me,” Bemrose said. “How is your wife fixed if you go in?”

“She’ll have to get a job,” Tom said.

“You don’t want to leave her strapped.” Bemrose muffled his voice. “I’ll be glad to help you out, Tom.”

“You’re a white man.” Flannagan leaned a hand on his shoulder. “You don’t owe me a thing, Bemrose.” There was something wet in the corner of Flannagan’s eye. Larry watched carefully, but it didn’t drop, and decided it must have been the way the light was shining.

“Wait until I tell my wife— She doesn’t want me to go,” Flannagan said. “Wait until I tell her how some other guys feel about the War.”

They toasted Roosevelt. They drank rounds to the annihilation of Hitler, of Goering, and of Goebbels. When Flannagan left them to catch a train for Dobbs Ferry, Larry felt the floor slide under his feet. Bemrose sprawled in the chair, his face bathed in a colossal contentment. He didn’t look like a man who had been squared off in a uniform a few hours before.

Larry thought of Arthur’s offer to loan Flannagan money. One more drink and he’ll offer me some dough to take care of Bessie if I come in with him.

The fool. The crazy, lonesome, patriotic fool. Larry felt sorry for the loneliness of all men, for Arthur’s hankering to have a brother with whom he could go to war, for his own fatal dependence on the warmth of Bessie, for Tom’s loneliness in the child-cluttered house at Dobbs Ferry. It was the loneliness of those who stayed and those who went to war. He knew the ones who went would be lonely in the midst of ten thousand others. Years after it was over they would feel bereft, missing the special loneliness that had bound them to those other lonely thousands.

“I told you she dreamed it out of her head,” Bemrose said irrelevantly. “I followed through on it just to be sure, but I knew all the time——”

Larry read the telegram Bemrose handed him, signed by the F.B.I. in Washington. The message read: RICHTER CASE CLOSED STOP UNABLE TO TURN UP FURTHER EVIDENCE.

“Right out of her head,” Arthur repeated. “Some of them have the damndest imaginations.” He tore up the telegram and scattered the bits in a dirty green ash tray. “I thought she was different. I thought she stuck to the facts.”

“I ran into Steve Holmes,” Larry said. “He told me she’s back from the Coast. Holmes must be seeing a lot of her.”

“Old friend of hers from Kansas,” Bemrose said affably. “Are you going to see her someday?” He seemed slap-happy satisfied to settle for Major, glad to forget about his woman trouble and pretend the War was an answer.

“Holmes mentioned getting together with them——”

Bemrose raised an important finger. “Tell her she dreamed it up. Tell her you read the official telegram.” He let the finger join his hand which dropped loosely beside the chair. “There’s not a thing wrong with that fellow Richter. Not a thing. Female fantasy. Ask the F.B.I. They say it’s fantasy. Remember that word when you see her,” he instructed Larry. “How about a drink on getting into the Air Force? How about celebrating?”

Arthur’s contentment with things as they had become expanded like rising yeast. It was as though Larry could see the fleshy cells of satisfaction multiply. The radius of Arthur’s delight ringed the next table. Quietly he leaned toward a gray-haired man and, rocking on the legs of his chair, toasted him. The stranger, seduced by Bemrose’s show of fellowship, automatically responded. Arthur swung his mellow light back to Larry and let it soften the air between them. “I want to do right by her,” he said proudly.

“By Janice?”

Bemrose nodded. “I always meant to. Mistake, walking off. I should have said why. She’s a good, smart girl. I should have had a talk with her. Meant to the other day at the office. Slipped my mind.”

Larry nodded encouragement while Bemrose mowed through his pockets for change.

“If you really think you bitched things up—I can find out where she is from Holmes. You ought to have a talk. She wants to tell you something about why she went to Sweden. It was a misunderstanding, Arthur. You both went off half cocked.” Larry pointed to a pay telephone on the wall. “Shall I try Holmes?”

“When I come up from Maxwell Field. Not now,” Bemrose said. “When I find out what they’re going to do with me. I’m only going to be around New York another twenty-four hours.”

Larry must have looked unhappy.

“When I come home on leave,” Bemrose promised.

Larry’s fingers followed the ridges in his forehead. “She may be in China by then! If you *want* to talk to her——”

“Let’s pay and get out of here,” Bemrose said soothingly. “When I get back, we’ll have a long, long talk. She’s a smart girl, and she’ll understand when I tell her——” He settled his hat deep over his eyes with the extra caution of a man who had confined himself to double Martinis. “Don’t you worry, Larry.” He soothed him with his voice.

“But she may do something screwball, like marrying Holmes.”

“Not a thing to that.” Arthur took his arm. “Just an old friend from Kansas. Don’t you worry. Someday we’re going to have a good long talk, and then it’ll be all right.”

Larry crowded into a compartment of the revolving door with Bemrose, and they wheeled sideways into the dark rumble of the street.

Chapter 13

For the dinner he arranged with Lucy and Janice, Larry picked the Orangerie at the Astor where the atmosphere would be weighted on Lucy's side. At a more exclusive spot like the Marguery, Janice would hold the aces, and Lucy, who was likely to be self-conscious anyway around Janice, might blur out.

The Astor was a slice of small-and-big town America, the crowded front porch of Broadway. It was the city's cracker barrel on the main stem where all were welcome to gather round. They came by cab, on foot, in trolleys and busses, through the ample doors into a murky plush lobby where they waited. The timid shrank gratefully against camouflaging columns. The bold kept a hawk's eye on the door, alert to select their prey from the damp, moving stream at the entrance.

The fickle March evening had alternated between rain and snow, and Larry called for Lucy. She had been living at the Daughertys' the past six weeks. He hoped on the way over that the weather wouldn't button her into those ugly tweeds Bemrose had selected for her in the fall, and was glad to see that she had the good sense to wear a well-cut black coat instead. It formed a solid pedestal for her gray-blond softness.

Janice was too busy to be called for. He had tried to arrange for the dinner two weeks ago, but Janice was in Washington, and until six o'clock tonight, wasn't sure of being able to make it. *Everett's* had assigned her to do a profile of a Major-General who shifted his headquarters every few days. Yes, she'd love to meet Larry for dinner if she could leave right afterward. If Arthur's wife weren't formal and would understand. If—well, Steve Holmes might join them later and see that she got to the General's. If Larry were sure he didn't mind about Steve. If he understood that her evenings weren't her own, and she had to work. If she could come just as she was without going home to change. If he really thought it was a good idea for her to meet Mrs. Bemrose. If he'd buy her a couple of drinks before dinner because she was going to need them, and if he didn't mind her cough. She had caught it on an air-conditioned train, and her voice sounded awful.

Larry told her he'd like to have her come.

With Lucy beside him he waited a damp twenty minutes in the Astor lobby, bone chilled from a draft that blew through the doorway. Janice arrived at last dripping ten dollars worth of Schiaparelli's *Shocking* and a new mink coat. Her blonde suède gloves were crushed at the forearms. Her hair was fresh from Elizabeth Arden's, and the scratchy throat had evidently been restored by an otolaryngologist. Larry was glad to see her. He forgot the crick in his neck from watching people walk through the door, and patiently auditioned her excuses. Quite a few other people waiting for late dates seemed glad to see her too.

Upstairs in the citrus lighted dining room Larry saw at once it was the wrong tone for Janice's mustard-colored dress but did nice things for Lucy's skin. The Orangerie transformed her from the slender, inconspicuous woman who had followed Janice's minks up the marble stairway to her own soft blonde harmony. When she slipped out of her coat, a simple black dress with draped neckline set off the pallor of her gray eyes.

Janice, evading Lucy at first and hesitating to take a real look at her, chatted to Larry of her troubles with the General's public relations officer and complained about the dullness as a rule of military men. No first-class writer should be assigned to them, she maintained. While Janice pecked her harmless complaints at Larry, a clear, clean light seemed to emanate from Lucy. It was like viewing a morning glory which had just opened.

Janice turned toward her. "How does Arthur like the Army? I've been meaning to write and congratulate him on his commission."

The quiet confidence growing in Lucy sent color to her cheeks. "He's going to Miami Beach to help organize an Air Force Training Center, one of the biggest new schools in the country for officers."

"What do you think of that?" Larry asked with the respect of a civilian for someone who does well in the Army. "He's only been in a few weeks. How did he manage——?"

"He's been promised a promotion so that they can make him director of one of the schools," Lucy added.

The skin tightened across the bridge of Janice's nose, and the dark eyes went cold.

“He says they can’t make him director of the school unless they do promote him,” Lucy explained.

“The T.O. must call for a lieutenant colonel,” Janice said.

“T.O.?” Larry asked.

“Table of organization. It tells an outfit how many officers of each rank it’s entitled to have,” Janice explained. “This officer I have to interview got a second star because his new post calls for a Major-General. If not for that, he would probably still be a one star general.”

“It’s wonderful recognition for Bemrose,” Larry said. “Wonderful.”

“Order me a drink, will you, Larry?” Janice asked.

He called a waiter. “Did Arthur say when he will leave Maxwell Field for Miami?” he asked Lucy.

“Tonight or tomorrow. Before the end of the week.”

“Not a bad spot, Miami. You can count on Arthur to pick the right place.” He looked at Janice. “Sounds all right, doesn’t it?”

“It’s all right,” Janice conceded. “It’s certainly good for the Air Force. They’re getting rid of the brass hats and that’s a good sign. Arthur’s going to be good for the Air Force, all right.” Her fingermarks showed on her water goblet where she had gripped it. “He’ll earn every cent they pay him. He’d earn it if they decided to make him a lieutenant *general* instead of a lieutenant colonel.”

“What’s the matter then? Isn’t it going to be good for *him*?” Larry asked.

Janice looked tentatively at Lucy. “I don’t know. What do you think, Mrs. Bemrose? A lot of men couldn’t take all the success he’s had. Now in six weeks a military success and all kinds of authority—it takes a strong man to stand up to that.” She shrugged. “Maybe Arthur can swing it.”

Lucy meticulously sipped her clear consommé, her eyelids steady.

A party brushed past their table and as Janice watched them cross the room, she recognized someone with a birdlike forty-year-old face under snowy hair. Excusing herself, she followed them. “That’s Ward Oliver of the State Department,” she explained hastily. “He’s just back from China after being

away for years. I missed him in Washington. He's one of my oldest and best friends." A look of affectionate warmth came into her eyes.

Larry sent Janice's soup to the kitchen until she returned, and kept watch at the same time on Lucy. She lifted the dark eyebrows that made her eyes look paler, and a question shadowed them. "Have they known each other long?" she asked.

"Not very long."

"But well."

"She's been around," Larry agreed. "She knows how to hurry through the preliminaries. Have some more soup while we're waiting?"

Lucy shook her head. "Do *you* think this new job—" The gray eyes appealed to Larry.

"Janice always worries about people being able to handle power when they get it," Larry explained. "I don't think she's particularly concerned about Arthur, but—well, she worries. She's scared to death that when this country has pitched in and won the War, we'll come out drunk with power and start throwing our weight around. We won't be satisfied to let other people go back and live their own way. That's the kind of thing she's afraid of."

Lucy listened audibly. It was her gift. "So is Arthur afraid of people misusing power," she said.

"Janice goes way beyond him," Larry explained. "I don't think she would trust any man with power. Not unless he were elected to it, and could have it voted away. She's particularly against personal power, the kind that doesn't show."

"They should have gotten along," Lucy said. "If they think alike——"

"They're both suspicious by nature. I'm not sure Arthur trusted her any more than she would trust him."

"She acted as if there were something wrong about Arthur being promoted. He didn't ask to be promoted."

"Of course not. And he didn't pull strings to get his commission. Anyone else with his record on Lend-Lease— I can't see it hurting him or inflating him too much. If I were you, I'd forget what she said."

Janice slipped back into her chair. “Ward Oliver feels pretty black about the picture out there. He says there’s no hope of saving Java.” Her mouth was rigid. “The Indies are as good as gone, too, and the Australians are scared to death of an invasion. Ward stopped in Melbourne on his way home. There’s not much for us to do right now except take it. We can’t fight Hitler and move an Army out there at the same time. Ward says—” Janice stopped short, and her lips thinned to a knife edge. “Sorry, it may have been confidential—I’d better not repeat it.”

“Everybody’s pushing for us to pitch in,” Larry complained. “Strike here. Strike there. That’s all they know.” He motioned the waiter to serve Janice her dinner.

“Uncle Ed keeps saying we ought to take it easy and feel our way gradually,” Lucy said.

“The only trouble with that is, it won’t win the War,” Janice replied. “Someone high up in the State Department seems to be pushing for an offensive on the Continent right away,” she added. “There’s one group that thinks we’re prepared and could get away with it.”

“People are restless. They want to get into action,” Larry pointed out. “It’s three months since Pearl Harbor, and we still don’t feel like we’re at war. People want to get going. To do something. If they could tighten their belts a notch, they’d feel better.”

“My friend, Oliver, is close to the Generalissimo,” Janice said.

Larry started at the mental jump from one war to another.

“The Generalissimo told him a month ago that he was going to appoint Stilwell.”

“It was only in the paper yesterday,” Lucy said, smoothing a fluff of hair from her cheek. “I miss Arthur. He used to tell me what was going on. I don’t get as much out of the papers when I have to read them alone and he isn’t around to answer questions for me.”

Inscrutably Janice studied her, and the skin seemed to tighten over her cheekbones.

Larry walked with Janice as far as the elevator at the St. Regis and tried to say goodnight. The evening had been somewhat of a strain. During coffee he looked at his watch several times, hoping that Janice would leave for her appointment with the General, or that Steve Holmes would arrive and take over, but instead she phoned the General's aide and found they had put her off again.

Janice and Lucy seemed to bring out the worst in each other. It was like a grainy enlargement of a photograph which magnified every blemish. Larry knew something about photography, and had seen negatives develop grain no matter what developer was used. The scratches, the bits of dust that marred the film showed up worse than they should. The emulsion began to swell and add defects of its own to the picture. A similar chemical reaction seemed to take place between Janice and Lucy. He began to think it was a bad idea to have brought them together. He hoped Bemrose wouldn't mind if Lucy wrote him about the evening. After all, Bemrose had wanted Larry to keep in touch with both of them, and if he had stayed in New York, he would have invited Janice to the house sooner or later. It was just as well for Lucy to meet her casually this way through him instead of through Arthur.

When they reached the lobby of the St. Regis where Janice was staying, she pulled Larry into the gold elevator car with her. They had dropped Lucy uptown.

In her hotel sitting room Janice poured two jiggers of Scotch and downed hers before she took off her hat. "What made him do it? I thought Steve Holmes was exaggerating. For Christ's sake, what made him do it?" Janice plucked at the amethyst brooch that glowed dully against the brighter gold of her dress.

"She never says for Christ's sake." Larry sat down next to a table littered with typewritten pages and reference books on China.

Janice paced the room, her shoulders tilted forward. "You think he wanted someone he could depend on to have nice manners?"

Larry planted his stubby hands on her shoulders. "Take it easy. She's not as bad as all that."

He poured her another drink from the cut glass decanter on her desk. “If you want me to tell you why he married her, I can’t. I’m not smart enough. Besides, I like her.”

“There’s nothing to dislike about her,” Janice agreed.

“I’m not sure Arthur thinks so. Does that make you feel better?”

She slumped in the tapestry wing chair. “He wasn’t happy before he was married. I didn’t make him any happier.”

“Maybe he enjoyed his misery more.”

The tears rolled down her cheeks disconnected from her emotions like water pouring from a mechanical doll.

She pointed to the books about China on the table next to him. “I’m going out there to work. *Everett’s* has an assignment for me.”

Larry didn’t say anything this time about her running away.

“He’s going to Florida. Didn’t you hear his wife say he was?” She moved her shoulders hopelessly.

“Trains run to Miami. It’s not like trying to take a train back from China,” Larry said. “This war is going to be tough enough. I wouldn’t complicate things——”

“They’re simple now, aren’t they?” she asked bitterly. “What will I tell him? That I think he made a mistake?”

“Why not give *him* a chance to do the talking? You’re so used to running the show your way. You don’t give other people a chance.”

“How do I know my agent won’t ring me tomorrow and tell me I’m on my way out there?”

“Grow up, Jan! You’ve overworked that one.”

The steel-like structure of her chin gave way and her lips trembled.

“You’ll feel better after you see him,” Larry promised.

He was standing in front of her, and she took hold of her knees, pressing her head against his legs. “When you have an address, let me know. I’ll manage something,” she promised.

The muffled loneliness of her voice stayed with Larry all night and came back in the muted rhythm of the train that took him to Florida three weeks later.

PART III

Chapter 14

Arthur had been taken ill suddenly in Miami. All that Larry knew about it was what Major Graystone, a reluctant Army doctor, had been willing to tell him by long-distance telephone. The major said that Colonel Bemrose had exhausted himself working long hours and was in the hospital. It sounded like a heart attack to Larry. He decided to go right down to Miami and promised to wire Lucy as soon as he learned the details.

Larry settled back against the dusty plush of the Pullman seat and closed his eyes. The call from Lucy had reached him that morning ten minutes after he arrived at the office. It took him an hour to locate Major Graystone by telephone, and the rest of the morning to put his cases in the hands of another lawyer. Bessie had his bag packed when he reached home, and she rode with him to Penn Station where crowds of service men jammed the concourse waiting for trains.

It was unusually muggy for April. Moisture beaded Bessie's lip as they waited in the crowd for the gate to open. Her cheeks showed brightly under her rouge. She unbuttoned the coat of her gray sharkskin suit and fanned her hips with it. Larry saw that she looked worried.

He had kept himself from worrying all day by tending to the details of the trip. Now he wanted to sleep before dinner. If he speculated on Bemrose's illness, he might think of it as more serious than it was. The important thing right now was to get some rest. Fortunately he had the section to himself and stretched his stubby legs on the seat opposite, noting that his dark green socks didn't go with the red tie he had on.

At Trenton a shuffling in the aisle and angry voice woke him.

"We've been back there, and there ain't none," a tired blond sergeant explained to the conductor. "Last night was the same thing. We had our tickets, and no seats. We're too tired to stand."

The conductor's oak leaf nose curled thin and long. He examined the tickets which the sergeant and his friends handed him. "These are coach tickets," he said in a high, strangled voice. "You can't sit in a Pullman with these."

“There ain’t no coach seats. We been back there,” the sergeant wearily repeated.

Larry moved toward the window and motioned the boys to sit down. The conductor grudgingly returned their tickets. “Okay, but when the folks with this space turn up, you’ll have to clear out.”

Joe, the sergeant, sat next to Larry, and the other three crowded into the seat opposite.

“Joe’s still got ’em. He can’t take a chance riding backward,” grinned a skinny corporal with buck teeth.

A feckless smile hovered around the sergeant’s lips.

“You boys have a rough night?” Larry asked.

“The vestibule wouldn’t have been bad if we had along our field gear,” the one in the middle replied. “I slept anyway. I guess I can sleep standing.” Guiltily he eyed the sergeant. “It was nice and cool out there.”

Before the train reached North Philadelphia, Larry knew all about it. Dark-eyed Gerry, short for Geramina, did most of the talking. Occasionally the sergeant inserted an anemic word, and the aisle and window occupants endorsed the details with a vigorous, “You said it!”

They had been shipped from Boston after eating a fish dinner that gave them dysentery. A fellow could sit down with dysentery, they explained, but wasn’t much good on standing. They had coach tickets for the trip from Boston. The train was jammed, and there were no seats. After remaining vertical as long as they could, they went to the diner for a late supper. The sight of food didn’t appeal to them, but they had to find an excuse to sit down. They had a couple of beers and got acquainted with the dining car steward who had a nephew in the Philippines before Pearl Harbor. When they told him about last night’s fish, he brought them boiled rice to wash down with the beers. Rice was supposed to be good for the trots. It was nine o’clock when they finished eating, and they made a deal with the steward to sleep on the diner floor. In an hour, he told them, the car would be clean and everyone out. They brought their blue barracks bags back with them for pillows and had just settled down for the night when the conductor came through and kicked them out. The s.o.b. didn’t just tell them to go. He waited there until he saw them leave. They had to lug the bulky bags back

five cars to the coaches, bumping through the aisles and knocking against people who were undressing behind curtains. Pulling and tugging luggage didn't do much for their condition, and when they reached the coaches, one whiff of the smoke-fouled air was plenty. They headed for the outside vestibule, and spent the night retching, trying meanwhile to keep their balance on the shifting platform. Someone gave up on the sergeant's bag; so he stood all night and was feeling shot today.

Larry took a good look at the kids who seemed young enough to be put to bed by their mamas. They had gone through a tough training period, and in another few months would be making juicy targets for the Nazis. They needed their sleep, and while civilians like himself stretched out in clean berths, they rode in a grimy train vestibule all night. It didn't make sense.

Larry reached for his wallet and handed his pink sleeper reservation to the sergeant. Joe thanked him but said he was getting off soon and wouldn't need a berth. Larry tried to persuade the kid to let him have it made up now so that he could sleep a few hours before he got off the train, but Joe didn't want the others to stand. Then Larry tried to buy them all a drink, but they were afraid of going to the club car and having another argument with the conductor.

At North Philadelphia a mob, heavy with luggage, crowded from the station platform into the cars. Larry watched to see whether the ticket holders for his section put in an appearance, but the kids were in luck. Not only the space in Larry's section but some seats across the aisle remained empty. The train jogged past the Philadelphia streets filled with their red and white houses, announcing that in a democracy things are sometimes uniform as well as equal, and eased into the lower level of Thirtieth Street station. Three more soldiers wandered in, and were greeted by Gerry and the boys. They belonged to the same outfit and had been looking for a place to sit down since Trenton. Joe pointed to the empty seats across the aisle, and the new crowd started to move in.

"You boys got Pullman tickets?" It was old Leaf Nose.

"Coach."

"You can't sit here."

A baby-faced private first-class with pink cheeks and a lone stripe wistfully pointed to the boys sitting with Larry.

“They got to go back to the coach, too,” the conductor decided.

“They’re sick boys, and they had to stand up all night,” Larry protested.

Old Leaf Nose clucked, his voice plated with sarcasm. “That *still* don’t give ’em seats. This company ain’t in charity, it’s in business.”

“I guess you want to lose your pension rights,” Larry squeezed the words through a corner of his mouth. “This story will look good on the front page of my paper.”

“They ain’t entitled to sit here without tickets.”

Larry took out a pencil and used the back of an envelope to make notes. “How do you spell your name? I want the readers of the paper in New York to spot a patriotic citizen.”

A corny gag, but it seemed to work. The conductor nervously plucked the rubber bands on his black leather book.

“I’d let ’em sit here if they had reservations.” Cautiously he moved down the aisle.

“Your initials,” Larry threatened. “People ought to find out how the Company is helping the War.”

“Okay, *you* take the responsibility.” Old Leaf Nose shuffled away.

“It worked!” Larry rubbed his knees delightedly.

“What paper y’ on?” Gerry smiled.

“I’m a lawyer.” Larry felt good, and they grinned their appreciation.

He needed a smoke and left them griping about some detail they had been handed at the last barracks. The sergeant hoisted his bag to the seat, spit on his handkerchief, and went to work on the memoirs of the night before.

They were good kids. It was easy to see how Bemrose might have overdone it, working with them. Larry pushed aside the thought of Bemrose and grabbed the moving curtains of the men’s room entrance. He slid along a black leather bench next to the window.

When he woke with a crick in his neck and the smell of a fifteen cent cigar in his nostrils, night showed under the green window shade. Larry rubbed his broad nose in his palm and, rousing himself, dug in his pocket for a cigarette. A man in a torn undershirt was splashing water on his beard. Larry decided that some cold water wouldn't hurt him either, and got up to wipe his face with a damp towel.

"I hope the Statler saves a room for me. You going to Washington?" asked a hawk-faced traveler of two hundred pounds with hard gray eyes. He moved over on the bench to make room for Larry. "They're sleeping in the men's room down there." His middle quivered with the joke. "If you're lucky, they'll rent you a can in the men's room for only five bucks."

"I've been to Washington twice, and I'm goin' again. They refuse me a priority this time, and I'm out of business," said a man in blue serge at the water cooler. "Lamp shades are my line," he said helplessly, waiting for a thin trickle to fill the paper cup.

"You can't tell whether you're in or out of business," the hawk-faced man agreed. "One minute they hand you an A-A-1 priority, and the next minute they grab back the stuff for parachutes."

"You in lamp shades, too?" The man at the cooler looked surprised.

"Wholesale silks, but you watch and see. They'll have us *making* the damned 'chutes next instead of selling them the material."

"One of those bright professors down there screwed up our priority." As the train lurched, the man in serge grabbed the basin edge. "They promised us plenty of rayon if we compromised with them and made our frames of plastic. We switched, and now I don't know. This teacher running the show in Washington says we're non-essential."

"I suppose *he's* essential."

"After taxes a fellow won't be able to make a decent profit, priority or no priority," said the lamp manufacturer.

"Profits? Who worries about profits? I'm trying to figure out how to meet the payroll."

Like hell you are, Larry edited silently. You're not thinking about those kids in the next car, or the profits they'll collect either—profits like a couple of

shells in the shoulder. Fellows like Bemrose are knocking themselves out while you eat yourselves up over your lousy take. Go on, criticize. That's what you know how to do. You're experts.

A train jolt knocked over a heavy metal ashstand, and it fell on the size twelve shoe of the silk manufacturer. He yowled, and Larry was pleased, silently admiring the wisdom of inanimate objects.

Joe, the sergeant from back in the car, pushed through the curtain, and saw with relief, the metal tab marked "vacant."

While he was inside, Larry told the rest of them about the kids being sick. The ashstand victim stopped nursing his foot long enough to mutter, "It's a rotten shame."

"What do you expect with the stinking way they run things?" The man who had changed to plastic frames looked at the dark, cool field out the window as though he'd like to crawl there and stay.

The sergeant came out of the toilet and smiled sadly in answer to Larry's "Doing all right?" His shoulders fell forward as he pushed through the green curtain.

"Wait and see, they'll screw things up in the Army, too," someone said when he had left.

"A few Army guys must know the score. They're taking some good men," Larry pointed out.

"You wait. They won't have the say."

Bemrose probably won't, Larry thought, if he's sick as that major made him sound over the phone. Bemrose had known the score when ninety-nine percent of the others, including himself, were insulated. He knew the score by heart—about the petty bureaucrats like Old Leaf Nose who were pulling an inflated importance out of the War, and about the smoking-room commandos who talked priorities and worried about profits. Backwards and forwards Bemrose knew them, and had figured that fellows like him better see things were done right. Personally. Larry himself was a delayed-action Joe. He had to be exposed first-hand to conditions, but now he was beginning to wake up.

Chimes sounded in the passage, and the others filed out for dinner. Larry stayed with the cold black leather of the smoking room. He thought of Bemrose in the Army hospital. What if the Army gave him a discharge? Bemrose, dependent and helpless, was a skyscraper without utilities, a river cut from its source. Bemrose leaning on others, would be a cliff twisted and bent toward the river, a bleeding stone shaft. Others might welcome dependence, but Arthur had always resisted it. His was a giving philosophy, almost a warped giving. Bemrose, the Provider. The fixed vision of working for others that unfitted him for easy living with them. A twisted dream, but what became of Bemrose if it were snuffed? That's what troubled Larry.

He decided to go to the diner. On his way to the rear, he checked in with the kids. They were playing stud poker on their barracks bags and wanted to deal him into the game, but he refused and had the porter bring them a table. A stack of match stems in front of Joe had picked him up like benzedrine. Wide awake from winning, there was color in his yellowish skin.

The littered floors of the cars, as Larry walked through, promised further wartime neglect. Already the old train equipment creaked and groaned. Larry grabbed a dirty window bar in the passage outside the diner and took his place in line. The lumpy procession advanced slowly toward the doorway a foot or so at a time.

As Larry waited to approach the entrance of the diner, he diverted himself by thinking of Lucy, and her frail kind of beauty, wondering what strength lay behind it, and whether it would stand up in the not-so-good days that threatened ahead.

Chapter 15

The headline on the station newsstand read: CALIFORNIA WEATHER HITS MIAMI. Larry ducked into a cab, and asked the driver to recommend a hotel. At a crawling twenty miles an hour the cab rocked from the wind. Sheets of rain curtained the windshield, and while Larry was conscious of traffic, the downpour isolated his taxi so that he couldn't see another moving vehicle. They crossed Biscayne Bay to Miami Beach, turned into Collins Avenue, and pulled up in front of a white stucco hotel that reminded Larry of the model houses at the New York World's Fair. When he opened the cab door, a sudden sharp squall wrenched it out of his hands. Shouting apologies to the driver, he dashed for the lobby.

A friendly clerk whose brother practiced law in New York offered him a temporary hotel room, explaining that the Army might take over before tomorrow. They were snapping up places so fast that a hotel man didn't know from one day to the next whether he was in business. He warned Larry not to turn on any lights at night since the Beach was blacked out, and the Army and Navy were stationed there by the thousands. The Army Air Force ran a basic training center for selectees and enlisted men in Miami, an officers' candidate school for ground force commanders, and an officers' training school quartered in style at the Roney-Plaza up the street. It was for technical and business experts, mostly older men, whom the Air Force had commissioned in a hurry out of civilian life. These older guys went through calisthenics over at the golf course just like the youngsters. Some of them had gray hair and must be sixty, but they'd be out there sweating and bending like the kids, trying to get rid of their pot bellies. And knocking themselves out, the clerk added.

In the elevator to his room, Larry heard an Air Force wife with poinsettia cheeks complain to her companion, "They *promised* him a pass to stay overnight, but I've been here a month. All I see of him is forty-five minutes a day. He studies, studies, studies. I'm sorry I came."

"Don't you go to the beach?" the other asked.

“The water’s full of seaweed. It’s like bathing in hot vegetable soup.” She crinkled her nose.

Larry decided it had been smart of Lucy to stay home, although maybe if she had been around, Bemrose would have had to take it easier.

The hotel room was surprisingly pleasant, with simple furniture of light wood, and raspberry colored tiles in the bathroom. Outdoors the palm trees hissed in the wind and rain, and the strip of beach below lay muddy and beaten by the storm.

Larry phoned Major Graystone who agreed to see him at the hospital after lunch.

The rain had quit by the time Larry finished shaving and went out. On Collins Avenue he passed men in khaki counting “Hup, hoop, heep, horp” as they swung along, their brown leather hitting the pavement. They had light blue notebooks firmly in hand. These must be the officer candidates, kids in their early twenties who looked as if they meant business. Around the corner Larry passed a squadron in shirts and shorts fresh from calisthenics. They ran in double time and sang the rollicking R.A.F. song, “I’ve got sixpence, pretty little sixpence.” It climbed to high C which the kids hit squarely. “Happy as the day when the airman gets his pay, as we go rolling, rolling home.”

Larry passed some of the big hotels that used to charge guests twenty-five dollars a day. Soldiers instead of doormen guarded the entrances, and a quick look through glass doors showed the lobbies stripped of carpets, furniture, and potted palms. A few slip-covered chairs symbolized the new look of clean, grim efficiency. Night clubs had been converted by the Army into daytime classrooms, and watching more men in khaki troop out of them, Larry remembered the old horse-racing and roulette Miami. He wondered how long before it would come back.

A captain walking ahead of Larry said to his wife, “Until you came down I couldn’t tell which were pretty and which I only thought were pretty. I’ve been committing mental rape.”

She laughed and clung tighter to his arm.

At the hospital Major Graystone had left word for Larry to meet him in his “office” at a nearby hotel. It turned out to have a desk, ladies’ dressing

table, some bedroom chairs brightly upholstered in yellow silk, and a wall mirror. Major Graystone, a bulky man with white hair and chest expansion, looked incongruous in the pre-war setting.

“You’re the friend of Colonel Bemrose I talked to over the phone?” Tense lines divided his eyebrows. His wiry hair stood in stubborn points around a massive head. “We try to teach them to take it easy—the School hands out salt tablets and orders them to quit exercising the minute they feel it’s too much, but a lot of them keep on until they drop.”

“You mean he went in for drill?” Larry asked. “I thought he was down here with Colonel Lowell organizing the school.”

“He was, and he worked at it seventeen hours a day,” Graystone said. “Don’t you know the story? They came in on a Monday and took over the Roney-Plaza Hotel. They had it organized and running when their first group of men came in on Wednesday. It was a magnificent job. Staggering.” His small nose twitched. “Bemrose signed up for the athletic program on the side, as a volunteer, in addition to his administrative work. If he’d come to see me first—” The major fretfully scribbled on a pad next to him.

“Is it his heart?”

“No, it’s a nerve trouble, something called multiple sclerosis.”

Only nerves. Larry felt relieved. Bemrose could take it easy for a few months and pitch in again.

“Not ordinary nerves,” the medical officer explained. “It’s a disease of the central nervous system where the myelin sheaths encasing the nerve fibers degenerate, just like insulation on electric wire wearing off in spots. The nerve impulse goes through about eighty percent, and the worn areas are eventually replaced by scar tissue. These lesions can hit almost anywhere. They affect one part of the body, then another. We don’t know what causes them, and there’s no efficient treatment. Some doctors think the trouble comes from a spirochete, and they use malaria and typhoid vaccine to fight it, but so far their results have been only fair. The condition is quite rare in older—how old is Colonel Bemrose?”

“Forty-four.”

Major Graystone drew together his forehead. “I went into his history pretty thoroughly. No infections, no traumatism, just this period of extreme exhaustion before he was stricken——”

“Is he very sick?” Larry asked.

“He’s not in pain, and he won’t be. The chances are he’ll have a remission.”

He saw that Larry didn’t understand. “A period of recovery when he seems to be all right,” the major explained. “Remissions are characteristic of the disease, but then the trouble almost always returns. He can carry on,” the doctor reassured Larry. “I’ve seen patients go along for twenty years with it, keeping up most of their regular activities.”

“What are his symptoms?” Larry asked.

“His walking and his speech are affected. There’s a loss of muscle coordination. We call it an intention tremor. His arms and hands shake. His walking will be the worst——”

“He’ll need crutches?”

“I don’t know. That has to be worked out. Some of them use a cane. We have him in bed now.”

“Has he tried to walk? Is he unsteady on his feet?”

The major nodded. “Can’t coordinate,” he said. “He’ll have trouble getting around at first, but after a while he’ll learn.”

“How does he talk? Thick? Is it like a stroke?”

“He pauses between words, what we call scanning speech.”

“But anyone can understand him?”

“Oh, perfectly.”

Larry smiled. As long as Bemrose could talk, he’d be able to practice law and try cases. The walking and the tremor didn’t matter too much.

“I guess he’ll be getting out of the Army,” Larry speculated.

“We’ll have him retired. There’s nothing much we can do for him medically. Someone should watch the condition all the time, a good neurologist. When he’s back home and settled, see that he locates one.”

Graystone continued to scribble triangles and wavy lines on the pad in front of him.

“When can I see him?” Larry asked. “I’d certainly be grateful, Major, if you _____”

The officer picked up his phone. “Arrange for Lieutenant Willoughby to take Mr.—” He covered the mouthpiece. “Mr. Frank to visit Colonel Bemrose in H building.”

He wrote out a pass and handed it to Larry. Lifting his weary bulk, he stood up and shook hands. “He asked if you could take him home.”

“I’ll stay down until he’s ready to go.”

“If there’s anything else you want to know about his condition before you leave—” the major offered.

“Do I have to act any particular way when I see him?” Larry asked, admiring this quiet man whose voice was burned out with fatigue.

“Let him know that you’re sure he’s going to be all right. Act as confident as you can.”

Larry gripped Major Graystone’s hand. “Thanks for taking time to go over the details. I’ll wire his wife. She’s waiting to hear.”

Silently he followed the lieutenant who had been assigned to him. They passed the flawless jade pool of the Shelborne Hotel where deeply tanned officers the color of their swimming trunks were shouting to each other and tossing a volley ball. They walked by pink-blooming oleanders and hedges of fluffy sea grape. Outdoors it was warm and friendly. Larry shivered slightly as they entered the medicinal hush of H building.

The lieutenant showed the pass to a soldier at the desk. He signed it and said, “It’s the fifth floor. Give this to the nurse on duty.”

“I don’t think I’ll go up,” Larry decided abruptly. “Do you know where I can find Colonel Lowell?”

“Sure, at the Vanderbilt,” the lieutenant said. “I’m going back that way. Come on, I’ll show you.”

Larry wiped a sweaty palm on the lining of his trouser pocket. He wasn't quite up to seeing Bemrose.

Outside the hospital his lungs reached gratefully for the moist, humid air. "Hope I didn't put you out," he apologized. "My friend worked for Colonel Lowell. I better talk to him first."

The lieutenant eyed him as if civilians were a species apart. "No trouble. I can always use the exercise."

"I understand they kill you with it down here," Larry said. "Don't you get up at five-thirty to drill?"

"Not me, I've had my basic. This is my third year in." He pulled in his stomach self-consciously. "The only exercise I get is pushing papers on my desk."

"Why did you sign up so long ago?" Larry asked.

The officer grinned, and he hunched his shoulders. "Figured the job had a future in it."

There was a fifteen minute wait at the Vanderbilt outside Colonel Lowell's office. When the adjutant showed him in, Lowell, a short, quick-moving man in his late forties, jumped up to shake hands. Larry was conscious of an oversized flag behind the desk and stiffened his spine against a chair as he sat down.

The colonel was a machine-gun talker who rapped out an account of Bemrose's negotiations for the transfer of Miami hotels, stores, and restaurants to the Army. Colonel Bemrose knew how to handle the press and the townspeople, Lowell said. Hard feelings had been avoided, and the deals went through on the split second. No officer had contributed more to the smooth running of the school. In a few months Bemrose had chalked up a record that many a regular Army man would envy. Larry figured the colonel was West Point.

He told Larry that they still had plenty of headaches. They had the problem of putting older men, the civilian experts, in top-notch physical condition. It meant hardening them up, taking off fat, teaching personal hygiene, even giving them a voice training course so that they learned to sound like officers. Not only the men, but their women made trouble. They ran down

here, hysterical, and hung on like leeches when the men needed the time for study. If they could drown the women, it would increase the efficiency of the school. Colonel Lowell nailed Larry with his intensity. He explained that he had counted on Bemrose to help him solve some of the problems. It was bad luck, having him crack at this time when things were beginning to get under way. He couldn't understand how Bemrose had passed his physical. He must have been stringing along on low energy for years. A man doesn't crack up from overwork unless his resistance is down to start with.

Larry began to feel guilty under the colonel's accusations. "I haven't seen him yet. I wanted to talk to you," he broke in.

The colonel's small bright eyes turned solemn. "You won't like what you see. It isn't a pretty sight."

"I wondered if his retirement could be postponed." Larry suggested. "He's heart and soul in this thing. Maybe he'll recover. Maybe in another few weeks—" He fumbled aimlessly in his coat pockets. "It means everything to Bemrose, being in it. If he thinks that he's washed up— It's hard to say what effect it would have on a man like that to think he might be useless."

"He can return to his law practice," Lowell said.

"Right now the War is the only thing that interests him," Larry explained. "He's a one-tracked person. When he used to be busy with the law, that was the beginning and the end of everything."

Lowell rapped his desk sharply. "I'd like to keep him. God knows I can use him! I haven't the say. The medical officer——"

"Major Graystone?"

Lowell dismissed him by rising and extending his hand. "Damned fine record. Damned shame he cracked. The general was going to put him in for full colonel. Get in touch with me when you get home with him. Let me know how he stood the trip."

The colonel's clipped sentences stung in Larry's ear as he rode into Miami on the bus, crossing the causeway behind a line of Army trucks past the leaden tankers in the bay. The man next to him pointed to a shipyard across the water and said it was working full tilt on mosquito boats for the Navy. A

British cruiser lay at anchor next to a converted pleasure yacht, renamed War Emergency II. There were plenty of tankers and freighters down here, the man explained to Larry. You saw them come into the harbor almost every night, escorted by subchasers. Sometimes when there was a flash at sea, you couldn't tell whether it was lightning or gunfire. Chances are, though, it was gunfire. The other morning some wreckage had been found on a hotel beach. It probably came from a ship that was torpedoed. The man had seen columns of fire several hundred feet high out at sea. He described them with his hands. No question about it, they came from torpedoed tankers.

Across the street the man pointed to a sign in front of a hotel that had been taken over: "Civilians keep out!"

They rode through a noisy business section of the city. "This is Jew Town," he told Larry in the disinterested voice of a tourist guide.

In the seat behind two women gossiped. "We'll never be able to handle them after the War. Not after their families stand out on the parade ground Sundays and see 'em drillin' with white troops. They got the notion already they're equal."

As the women's shrill voices ripped on, the dazzling white buildings that lined the thoroughfare seemed to turn a dirty yellow. Larry decided that the prejudices of the townspeople were something the Army hadn't been able to take over.

He got off the bus, found a Western Union office, and wired Lucy to open the house and have it ready for their return. He waited at a dingy intersection for the light to change and realized that he needn't have come miles out of his way to send the telegram. His hotel would have transmitted it. Then he remembered that he hadn't eaten since an early breakfast on the train, and stopped at a delicatessen restaurant. He ordered a tongue omelette, but decided he wasn't hungry when the waiter put it in front of him. Swallowing some weak coffee from a lipstick-marked cup, he got up to pay his check.

A lanky form was draped over the cashier's desk. Larry recognized the sandy head and ugly yellow tweeds and laid a timid hand on Steve Holmes'

shoulder, not sure that the rough, awkward frame would be there the next minute.

“Oh, hullo!” Steve’s red face came to life, and his big head indicated the swinging door. “Let’s get out of this pig pen.”

They walked toward the lavish, streamlined shops of Lincoln Road. Steve told Larry he was down on a job for *Everett’s*. They had assigned him to do oil paintings of the commanding general and of a Navy man. If Jimmie Doolittle showed up, Steve was going to try and do him on his own. He had always liked that tough little so-and-so. He got the assignment because Janice had introduced him to the art editor of the magazine. It was a swell break. There was healthy money in the work.

Larry listened halfway, and refused Steve’s offer of a drink.

“Still worried about that guy?” Steve’s head twisted sharply toward him.

“This time there’s really something to worry about.”

Larry reported his talk with the medical officer, and Holmes accelerated his gait. Larry, trotting beside him in the pure white heat of early afternoon, felt a salty swamp collect inside his belt.

“Jesuschris’, that’s lousy.” Holmes’ bony shoulders lunged forward. “Have you seen him?”

“I’m on my way up there.” Larry grabbed Steve’s arm. “Say, won’t you _____”

“I’d just as soon skip it for now.” Holmes slowed down. “Maybe in a day or so if you say it’s okay. Want me to walk you up?” he offered.

“Do you think I should phone Janice and let her know?” Larry asked. She could drop whatever she was doing and come down. If anyone would make Arthur feel better, she would: They could tell him that *Everett’s* had sent her down to write the captions for Steve’s paintings.

“Phone her?” Steve looked at him. “She’s on her way to China. She left San Francisco Friday.”

“That’s the second lousy break,” Larry said.

“The third.” Steve pulled at his bulky knitted tie, the red one he had worn at Arthur’s reception. “She turned me down again, and she meant it this time.”

Larry looked his sympathy.

“We got drunk one night, and she told me she was still in love with him,” Steve said. “It kills her that he married that girl. It kills her, and it gives her hope. She doesn’t see how it can last.”

“Why didn’t she stick around then?” Larry asked.

“The Air Force ordered the story on China and got her a top priority.”

“Did you think she was going to accept you on the rebound?”

Steve pocketed his thick knuckles. “I guess I thought so, but it’s no use. She’s got him in her protoplasm. Part of her is marked ‘Bemrose.’”

“Now that he’s sick she might give up the idea of having him,” Larry said. “It looks as if his marriage will have to last now, whether or not——”

“Might as well try to take an acorn away from a squirrel when he has his teeth fixed sharp in it,” Steve predicted. “She’s not giving up.”

“He might be a cripple the rest of his life.”

“Won’t faze her. Not Janice. She’ll hang on harder. That’s the kind of suffering she enjoys. You’ll see. She’ll prove she wasn’t wrong about him, and she’ll prove to him that she can take it. I think she’s crazy, but——” Steve shrugged.

They were around the corner from the hospital. “Sure you won’t come up with me?” Larry asked.

“There are a couple of girls at the hotel who look as if they’d eat dinner. I’m going to call for them. Join us later,” Steve offered.

Larry refused for the evening, but promised to give Steve a ring the next day and jotted down the number of the hotel. He watched Steve’s clumsy frame disappear along the crisp, sun-baked thoroughfare, sorry for Holmes, for Janice, for himself, but sorriest of all for Bemrose.

Following the walk kept immaculate by the Army, he reached wearily for the cool glass door of H building, hoping when he saw Arthur that he’d

remember what Major Graystone had told him and be able to act as if he didn't notice anything was wrong.

Chapter 16

Three weeks later Larry wheeled Arthur onto the train for New York. From his seat in a drawing room, Arthur pointed to the group of resplendent new second lieutenants who waited, lean and bronzed, on the station platform. “See that look they have,” he said. “They’re so—” He halted as the speech mechanism slowed down. “Alive,” he continued.

“They’re swell kids. I hope the tough going over there won’t knock it out of them.”

“They’ll win the war first.” Arthur’s right hand shook as he tried to manipulate the wheel on a cigarette lighter.

“Here, let me do that.” Larry took it from him and held the flame close to the tip of Arthur’s cigarette. “What about the older men? Are they hopped up, too?”

“They know the score. They’re pretty—” Again he faltered. “Grim.”

“The young ones will be grim when they come back,” Larry said, as the train moved out of the station and headed north along the coast. “You can’t expect them to keep that shiny, eager look they have now.”

“Those kids know the score already. They’re the greatest bunch of realists the country’s ever produced,” Bemrose said earnestly, carried along in unbroken phrases by his conviction. “I’ve got to get back to them, Larry,” he said. “There’s work to be done, and no time to do it.”

“You’ll be okay, fella. Give yourself a chance.”

So Bemrose expected to return to service. Larry had tried to unwind the red tape for him the past three weeks, and it had seemed interminable, in spite of Major Graystone’s efforts to expedite action by the Retirement Board. Graystone appeared first before the Disposition Board which notified the commanding general and recommended Bemrose for retirement. Then the Retirement Board, a group of nine men, five of whom were doctors, met at a general hospital and determined that he should be retired rather than returned to duty or given limited service. Their recommendation went to the

War Department in Washington which finally sent orders for his retirement. Even if Bemrose someday seemed equal to the job physically, Larry realized he would have to go all through this procedure again. But his recovery was doubtful. Graystone had insisted that he wouldn't see service again in this war.

"What do you hear from Bessie?" Arthur shifted his awkward legs toward the window by taking hold of his knees and directing them.

Larry had made it a point during these weeks not to talk to Bemrose about home. He kept in touch with Lucy by telephone but didn't repeat their conversations to Arthur. He avoided mentioning his own affairs because he didn't want him to think or worry about what was ahead—the house, Lucy, or the problem of reopening his office.

"Bessie's fine. She's glad I'm having a spring vacation for a change. It's the first one I've ever taken."

Bemrose's hand shook as it reached toward him. "I want you to know I'm grateful you came down." He paused, waiting for the words to steady themselves. "You helped save my life."

As Larry watched the overbright green of the Florida spring weave past the train window, he realized there never had been an occasion until now for Bemrose to thank him. Thank him or anyone. It was the first time he had needed a favor, unless Larry counted the attempt some months ago to persuade him to join the office. Larry wondered if Arthur were going to ask him again to wind up his practice and come in with him.

"That's the first time I've thanked you for anything," Bemrose said. "It's the first time I thanked you, and you've been doing things for me most of my life. I never got the habit of thanking people." Bemrose let his disturbed hand finish the sentence. "I always expected everyone else to thank me."

"Most of the time you gave them reason to thank you," Larry said.

"You can't thank someone for pulling out the best inside of you. I can't thank you——"

"Skip it," Larry said.

"I can't thank you for making believe you didn't find anything but the best when you reached in." He sounded as if he were presenting a case

objectively in arbitration.

Arthur turned his head, and softly addressed the somnolent grasses. “*Who restores and comforts me.*” His voice was rhythmic quiet.

“I looked a long time at the white ceiling of that hospital,” Arthur said. “I figured out a few things.”

He traced the metal catch on the train window and studied the grime on his finger.

“Did Professor Storey go in?” he asked abruptly.

“I heard he was doing some special research for the Army,” Larry said. “I don’t think they gave him a commission, but there won’t be much teaching at the University this year. He’s using his laboratory for the Army project.”

Arthur nodded approval. “The Air Force can use him. There are problems concerning light, the question of blackouts.”

“I think he’s working on that.”

“The blackout thing in Miami wasn’t licked,” Arthur said. “We had the boys study in an inside hall at night so they wouldn’t turn on the lights in their rooms. Someone was always breaking the rules. We never knew whether that had much to do with it, but plenty of tankers were torpedoed right off the coast.”

“At the hotel the guests put card tables up in the hall because they couldn’t play in their rooms,” Larry said. “It was damned funny. You’d see a couple of codgers hunched under a bridge lamp in a narrow hall squinting at the aces. One night in Miami I tripped over a pair of pinochle players set up for business right outside the door of my room.”

“What about Judd Harrison? Did he—” Bemrose had trouble talking again.

“Go in?” Larry prompted. “I don’t think so. Not the last I heard.”

Arthur fussed with his legs. “Remind me, I’ll talk to him. They need Judd.”

Larry told him about running into Steve Holmes the first day he was in Miami, and about Steve’s job—the break it was for him to get work from *Everett’s* and how glad he was for a chance to see Miami during the War. Steve had wanted to come and visit him at the hospital, only he was

assigned to go to Key West and paint the portrait of an admiral. They talked in circles about Steve. They talked about everything but Janice.

Finally Bemrose wanted to know whether Steve ever saw her, and as he asked, the old tic returned.

“He did before she left.”

“Then she—?” Impatient lines tugged at Arthur’s forehead.

“China.”

“That’s good. She’ll do a swell job,” Bemrose said. “They need her to put dynamite under the boys in Washington.” His fingers slipped unsteadily among the coarse strands of his mustache. “The right kind of stories will help do it. I’d like to have a look at that war out there myself,” he added wistfully.

“Steve asked her to marry him, and she turned him down.”

“Too bad, he’s a helluva fine fellow. She won’t do better than Steve.” Bemrose looked concerned.

“You said once he didn’t have a chance with her.”

Arthur shrugged. “That’s when I wanted her myself. I used to think she could make me into a great guy. That she could and was holding back.”

“You didn’t exactly need her for that,” Larry said.

“I thought I did.”

“She might have been afraid you’d take advantage of her when she finished building you up,” Larry said. “The new, inflated you.”

“She might have been right,” Arthur agreed. “I never understood what I wanted from her and wasn’t getting. It came to me one afternoon when I was staring at the blank white space over my bed at the hospital. I wanted someone to tell me I was a great guy, every hour on the hour. Or look it if the words didn’t come out. She was too smart to settle for that,” he said.

“Before she went to China she wanted to come and see you. Steve said so.” Larry rang for a porter. He needed a drink.

“It would have been good to see her.” Arthur’s tone was calm, quiet. His sincerity seemed as unspotted as the white square that formed a headrest on

the seat behind him. With or without steady limbs, with Janice or alone, Larry knew that he was in good shape inside.

Larry kicked at the suitcase under the opposite seat. “Look, try to take it easy when you get back. You’ll have to help Lucy. At first it may be a shock. Just the first few days——”

“These, you mean?” He pointed to the crutches.

“She’s prepared for them, but you’ll have to give her a chance to get used to — You’ve always been so independent.”

“I’m——” The word stuck, and wouldn’t come. “Relaxed,” he said finally, rearranging his legs. “She won’t have to worry.”

Things went smoothly at Penn Station the next morning. The conductor had wired New York for a wheelchair to meet them, and a special attendant who was waiting on the platform in response to the telegram, seemed to know how to handle Arthur. He helped him into the chair, and later into a cab. The taxi driver was okay, too, and got right into the spirit of things. At the door of the house on Eighty-second Street Lucy watched, pale and quiet, and the cabbie stayed close by, supporting Bemrose into the hall and up the carpeted steps to the second floor. There was a bad moment at about the fifth or sixth step when Arthur lost his purchase and grabbed the railing. Figuring that Bemrose would manage better alone Larry shoved some bills into the driver’s hand and dismissed him. Arthur made it quite easily to the landing with only slight support from Larry.

Upstairs in the sitting room, sunshine crowded through the white mesh of curtains. A bowl of pink roses, bedded fern in a miniature glass bowl, brightened the coffee table.

“Well, this is pleasant.” Arthur smiled at Lucy, and his face resumed its old easy contour. He indicated the flowers. “They’re like the wallpaper you wanted for the bedroom last year,” he said.

“Are you tired from the trip? Shall I turn down your bed?” She leaned over him.

“I’d like a cup of tea,” he said. “Those stripes in the bedroom were a mistake. We should have had roses,” he admitted.

Later that day Larry told Bess that it wasn't easy to see a strong man like Arthur Bemrose unbend. If Bess could have heard him on the train, trying to say thank you— It made Larry feel like a heel to have him grateful. What was there for him to be so goddam grateful about? What had he done? Sit in the hospital with him? Bring him back to New York? Anyone would have helped a friend who was in the shape that Bemrose was.

Bessie refused to be upset over his illness. "You'll see, Larry. It will do him good to know what trouble is. He had things easy for too long," she insisted.

"You talk like all he had now was the measles," Larry said, somewhat put out by her callousness. "This illness isn't something he'll get over in a few weeks."

"He needed some real trouble," Bessie repeated. "You watch, he'll get along better with his wife after this."

"But he can't control his legs. His hands shake when he goes to light a cigarette," Larry explained.

She poured him a fresh drink, and as he watched her plumply sensuous fingers around the glass, he remembered it was weeks that he had been missing her. Steve Holmes could have his girls in Florida. All he had wanted and had missed down there was Bessie.

"If he goes back into practice, why don't you take that job he offered you a long time ago?" She splashed whiskey generously over the ice cubes. "You'd be able to help him get back on his feet, and it might not be so bad for you this time. He sounds much nicer than he used to be, not like such a boss."

If not for Bemrose's illness, it might have ended by his hating him, Larry realized. The process had already begun before Bemrose left for the Army. Larry couldn't keep on accepting favors from him and not rebel eventually against the indebtedness. Now that he was able to do something for Arthur, now that it was two-way, he ought to be able to live around him again.

"Go on, help him out at the office," Bessie urged.

Larry walked over to her and flattened a round curl against her cheek. “We’ll decide that later,” he said. “Right now I have other things on my mind.”

She pressed her lips unaggressively on his. “Were the meals on the train any good, Larry?”

Chapter 17

One June afternoon Bemrose stood on his crutches in front of the doctor's office waiting for Larry to hail a cab at the corner. The dust of Eighty-third Street, gold in the five o'clock sun, touched the pavement with the light, speech, and feel of full summer. Across Madison Avenue the weathered brick of an old building glowed warm and solid behind swaying, languorous sycamores. No change of weather threatened. Summer had floated into the city, settled quietly, and was prepared to stay.

The doorman where Arthur's doctor had an office must have left the front entrance to get a cup of coffee. The block seemed under lock and key. Bits of paper lay motionless in the street, and the windows of the apartments above sheered off empty and sightless. Larry started toward Madison Avenue for a cab when a pleasant older woman came out of the house, and finding no doorman, chatted with Bemrose. She called after Larry to get another cab for her if he could find one.

He gestured and whistled until a decrepit vehicle pulled up to the curb. Jumping on the runningboard, he directed the driver to Arthur who was shifting uncomfortably on his crutches, tired from the long wait and the strain of seeing the doctor. Larry offered the cab to the woman, but she assured him that she was in no hurry. He started to protest when Arthur thanked her and hobbled toward the taxi. A few months ago he probably wouldn't have accepted such a favor, but now he didn't seem to give it a second thought. He was soon chatting easily with the cab driver.

Larry noticed that Arthur went out of his way these days to make friends with people who performed the anonymous minor services—waiters, doormen, elevator operators, telephone girls and newsdealers. At a restaurant yesterday he soothed a belligerent waiter by asking whether he had ever made goulash and if, in his opinion, the sauce of the establishment's product, which Arthur had ordered for lunch, were the right color. The waiter, a Hungarian, transferred the remaining beef cubes to Arthur's plate, and spooning the sauce expertly, solemnly pronounced that real goulash should be a darker brown. He urged him to come back the next

day when *sauerbraten*, the house special, would be served with *spaetzle* and a sauce he could underwrite.

More people seemed to tell Bemrose their troubles now, probably figuring that a man on crutches knew about trouble and would understand. The cab driver was unloading his grievances against the Mayor, railing against the new traffic regulations and clarifying what the Mayor, in his opinion, could do to himself. He passed a soiled piece of paper to them through the lowered glass partition, and Larry saw it was a ticket for speeding.

Bemrose invited the driver to call him about the ticket in the morning, and asked Larry to write out the office phone number for the man whose name, according to a card facing them, was McGuinn. Before many more red lights his new client was offering Arthur a divorce case, something Haynes and Bemrose never touched, even when it meant alienating good clients of the firm. In the month since Larry had gone to work for Bemrose as his office manager, Arthur had insisted on referring three divorce actions, which involved good clients, to less fastidious colleagues, unwilling to mar the Haynes tradition of never handling a domestic matter. But now he seemed interested in the cab driver's difficulties.

"I'm having trouble-trouble with my wife," the man explained, taking sulky jerks at his steering wheel. "They say it's tough-tough to get a divorce in New York the way things-things is bolixed up."

"What's the matter with your wife?" Arthur asked. The fellow's double-jointed stutter had the effect of unlimbering his own speech.

"She never run-runs around," McGuinn vouchsafed.

"Money troubles?"

But McGuinn apparently made out all right. His brothers owned property in Brooklyn near Coney, and cut him in regularly on rent from two of the houses. He had paid an income tax last year.

"Any children?" Bemrose prompted.

McGuinn whipped out a cellophane-covered snapshot of Georgie, Jr., drooling on a bib. The youngster seemed to be rolling up his daily weight gain.

“A youngster like that ought to keep you together.” Bemrose blew some dust off the cellophane and handed the picture back to McGuinn.

“We just don’t jell-jell,” McGuinn explained. “I’m a-always asking for night work because it’s no good-good going home.”

“Why? Doesn’t your wife make you a nice home?”

“She’s a swell-swell cook,” McGuinn admitted. “She keeps the house clean, and she irons my shirts-shirts, but we don’t j-jell. We ain’t the right combination.”

“And you want a divorce?” Arthur asked.

“I was think-thinking of it.”

A red light held them up, and Bemrose leaned back, his eyes half closed. “Go easy on this divorce proposition,” he said. “Better make sure you want one. You have a nice home, nice kid, and your wife’s not chasing other men. What are you looking for—excitement?”

“I saw a guy pull-pull a hold-up a block from here,” McGuinn volunteered.

“That’s the point,” Bemrose said. “You can see all the hold-ups, murders, street brawls, knifings, and race riots you want for excitement. If things get dull in this neighborhood, you can drive up to Seventh Avenue.”

“Maybe I should be satis-satisfied,” McGuinn conceded. “She’s a sweet-sweet kid, but you know. Blah!” He threw out his underlip in disgust.

“Supposing you do live on milk and crackers at home. You can order steak when you go out,” Bemrose told him.

“I guess you’re right, boss. I know it ain’t easy to get un-unhitched.”

“Ain’t always good sense,” Bemrose echoed. He handed McGuinn a twenty-five cent tip, but the driver shook his head.

“Figure they pay you more than two-two bits for advice,” he said. “I got off cheap. Call you in the morning, boss, about the t-ticket. Watch your head with them crutches.”

While they waited for someone to answer the doorbell, Larry said, “You did all right. I didn’t know you could do such a job of selling marriage. You sounded like an old hand.”

“What the hell? By the time that guys pays for a divorce and finds himself a floozy— What’s he going to get that’s any better?”

Lucy opened the door, and if Bemrose had wanted to present his new client, McGuinn, with an argument for marriage, he couldn’t have found a better example than Mrs. Bemrose in a sheer dark blue dress with sleeves that showed the creamy white of her upper arms. There had been changes in Lucy these past months, Larry decided. Having something to do, someone to look after had given her an animated look of accomplishment.

As if to demonstrate her new security, she kissed Arthur full on the lips before she stepped aside to let them into the house. He slid his crutches onto a hall chair, and Larry spontaneously kissed her, too, wanting to for the first time he could remember, somehow warmed by her new awareness. He invited himself to stay for a drink before Lucy had a chance to tell him about the Martinis that were mixed and waiting upstairs.

She asked to hear the details of their visit to the doctor’s. Larry debated how much of the truth he should tell her. So far the doctor had remained fairly noncommittal in his talks with her. Larry himself went out of his way to report signs of progress in Bemrose which he noted at the office. The day Arthur walked twenty feet to the water cooler without crutches, Larry phoned her at once. She’d be encouraged to fuss more over Arthur’s comfort, Larry felt, if she thought he were improving. Her optimism would be communicated to Arthur.

Recently Larry had begun to wonder whether this somewhat unrealistic optimism might someday react unfavorably. Lucy might reproach him for his lack of candor someday when she found out that Arthur really hadn’t improved. He had learned to use his crutches with greater skill, and he was more resigned to his condition, but the nerve sheaths had not healed. Larry had considered easing Lucy into the facts, gently while he reported what the doctor had said, but in this pleasant room, on an unruffled summer day, with Bemrose apparently contented and reconciled, Larry decided to continue the deception until some marked change in Arthur necessitated greater frankness.

“Did the doctor really think he was better?” Her gray eyes widened.

“He’s doing fine.” Larry studied the stem of his cocktail glass. “The doctor expects him to have a remission any time now.”

The old anxiety, when she worried about Arthur’s dislike of the Daughertys, shadowed her forehead.

“That’s nothing bad. His symptoms will disappear. That’s what it means.” Larry laughed deep and low.

“Oh.” Slowly the concern thawed from her face. “That’s wonderful. Do you hear, Arthur? The doctor says you’ll be well.”

Instantly Larry regretted having extended her hopes. He might have let things ride along, saying that the doctor had found Arthur about the same. Actually he had been discouraged that Bemrose’s walking had not improved at a faster rate. The doctor told Larry privately today that he might decide to try typhoid shots or sodium cacodylate if there weren’t a change soon.

“Aren’t you happy about it, Arthur? Isn’t it wonderful?” Lucy asked eagerly.

“I’m very happy,” he said quietly.

Larry had as little faith in Bemrose’s seeming contentment as in today’s summer weather. First, second, and last Arthur was a realist, and if he thought protest would benefit his condition, he’d demonstrate noisily. Since quiet and placidity seemed indicated, he remained calm. While he was insecure and helpless, Arthur would behave and be docile around Lucy. The change in him was probably opportunist, the way a small boy behaves when he has to. Larry would have liked to believe that the transformation went deeper. A major illness *might* have that effect on some men, but he couldn’t convince himself that Bemrose had gone through any fundamental change.

The upstairs telephone jangled noisily, and Bemrose’s calm left him as he picked up the receiver and talked to Davis Shore. Larry saw puckers of concern gather in his chin.

“Anything wrong?” he asked when Arthur hung up.

“How can I tell?” Bemrose’s hand shook as he fingered a crease in his trousers. “He wants to see me tomorrow morning about that appeal, the one

that has been up for months, since long before I went into service. I can't understand why he's in a hurry. Court has recessed."

"What time are you seeing him in the morning?"

"Eight a.m."

"Oh, Arthur—" Lucy put out her hand in a frightened stab at authority, but the unfamiliar power conferred by his helplessness soon drifted through her fingers. "You're supposed to sleep until eight. The doctor told us——"

"Does Shore know you've been sick?" Larry asked.

"Who doesn't know?" Bemrose asked with unexpected bitterness. Or self-pity.

"Everyone understands, and everyone is sympathetic," Lucy protested. "You could have asked Mr. Shore to make it later. He would have understood."

Larry tried to warn her. "That's all right. I'll pick Arthur up in the morning."

With synthetic brightness, she changed her tack. "You haven't told me how you like working at the office, Larry."

"Is anyone supposed to like working?"

She hesitated a moment before her laugh caught on. It lapped at the ceiling and flowed in ripples toward the wall.

"We'll make a decent lawyer out of him if he gives us time," Bemrose said.

"I have to take that, too," Larry objected. "It isn't enough that I see his bills are paid and he stays out of jail."

"Does he order you around?" Lucy asked, taking up Larry's line of abuse.

"He orders everyone around. That poor Miss Thompson. Have you ever *seen* Miss Thompson?" He covered his eyes.

"She looks very intelligent," Lucy said.

"Intelligence isn't what I admire in women. I like women who keep their brains out of their faces."

"I gave her money a year ago to buy herself a new hat. Did she ever buy it?" Bemrose asked.

“What she needs is one of those schools that give you a new personality,” Larry insisted.

“Maybe just a trip to the beauty parlor regularly,” Lucy suggested.

“Beauty’s too much to expect,” Larry insisted. “A less-than-ugly-parlor.”

Bemrose shook with quiet laughter. “She’s been around so long,” he said helplessly. “I never bothered to look. I never took the time.”

“He must be a busy man,” Larry said to Lucy. “I’d just as soon look at the lawyer who used to share my office, and he never won any beauty prize. Did I ever tell you about Moe? He was this big—” Larry measured his shoulder. “And he used to get a cold water permanent for the hair growing out of his ears.”

“Oh, Larry—” Lucy laughed and the threat of Davis Shore’s phone call was forgotten for the moment.

In a little while, when Larry felt they were both all right, he got up to go. He had walked as far as the stairway when Bemrose called after him, “Don’t break your neck to get here in the morning. I have a hunch Shore isn’t going to keep the appointment.”

Chapter 18

Arthur invited the poker crowd to play at his house on a hot Saturday night in July. It was the first time the boys had visited him at Eighty-second Street. The game was set up in the dining room where Cy O'Malley, Tremont, Dick Reber, Hagerty, Chuck Adams, Paul Schmid, Lucy's Uncle Ed, and Jack Michaels, a friend of Ed's, were hard at play. Bemrose, who sat in the game for a while, was taking it easy now, stretched out on a sofa in the air-conditioned living room, visiting with Larry and with Edna Michaels.

The Michaels were new friends whom Marge and Ed Daugherty had brought around recently. Edna came from Albany and reminded Bemrose that they used to walk home from school together. Once he might have shied off Edna because she came from Albany, but ever since his illness, he seemed to want to talk about the old days. Maybe this recollection of his childhood relieved Arthur, or maybe it was just that he liked Edna.

Tonight Larry noted that Edna sat with one foot twisted under her in a defiance of comfort which seemed to pattern her life. She had left home at sixteen when her mother forbade her to squander a week's salary on a red straw hat. Edna bought the hat, bummed a ride to New York, and as rapidly as nature's lethargic process would permit, gave birth to a girl and boy by different men, unencumbered by marriage. She supported the children working as Jack Michaels' secretary, learned the textile business from him, and when she became indispensable during and after business hours, he married her. That was ten years ago, and there had been another son by Jack who amiably transferred his name to the preceding anonymous offspring.

An unretouched white that streaked Edna's dark hair was the only index to these rather severe episodes. Larry noted that she had retained her plump cheeks, unlined lips, and firm, single chin, but not by taking care of herself, he knew. In the milieu of lava around Edna, things exploded, seethed, boiled, erupted, or went dramatically flat. The source of eruption was always Edna herself who, even on days that ran smoothly, had a trick of inflating phases, moods, and chance incidents into "problems." Edna's 'teen

age children did not merely refuse to wash or dress neatly, but “went through adolescence” with all the farce and tragedy she could inject into the inevitable transition. Her servants were not drab recruits from Harlem’s wage-earning thousands, but “types,” meriting the bold master stroke of a Hemingway. Instead of going through an early menopause aided by sound therapy, Edna manufactured enough adrenalin, thyroid, and estrogens to swing her giddily over the troughs of depression which bogged down other women. Since Jack Michaels had rescued her from major catastrophe, she had constantly been in minor trouble, synthesized, Larry decided, for the pleasure Edna had in telling about it.

Arthur bought aisle seats to Edna’s performances. He was encouraging her now to tell Larry a story she had excavated earlier in the week about the Albany days. Bemrose’s head lay back on the sofa as he laughingly recalled the details.

“Tell him about the time your brother Micky tied fifty knots in the sheets my mother hung up in the yard. Tell him what she did,” he urged.

“Clapped his ears and said his father must be a crook and his mother a whore to have such a kid.” Edna fluttered her eyelids in a false show of refinement.

“That was my mother all right. Her language upset my father’s sense of what was decent and proper. He was furious the time she rented an apartment over a garage. Do you remember that place?”

Edna nodded. “There was nothing wrong with it. It had steam heat.”

“It didn’t have a street address. My father worried what to tell people when they came to visit us. ‘We can’t tell them we live *between* number one forty-five and one forty-six,’ he’d say.”

“Couldn’t you tell them one forty-five and a half?” Larry asked.

“My mother wasn’t bothered for a minute. The rent was cheap, and it was the first steam-heated place we’d ever lived in. The entire two years we stayed there my father refused to invite anyone to the house.”

“People couldn’t stay away from your mother. They came anyway.” Edna talked rapidly with teeth that worked up and down like a cutting edge. “My

mother always said she'd bust if she couldn't tell Mrs. Bemrose her troubles."

"She never went to school past the third grade, but all sorts of people used to ask her advice," Arthur said thoughtfully. "The high school principal scared most of us. He was a quiet scared little man himself, a history teacher who lived in the time of Alexander the Great. He hated administrative work, and cut interviews short with the students so he could get back to his research. My mother went to see him about a college scholarship for me, and he kept her in his office for three and a half hours." Arthur shrugged. "I still don't know what they talked about, but I remember mother invited him to have coffee with us above the garage, and my father almost died of shame."

Bemrose bent over and rubbed his legs which were stretched lifelessly on the sofa. "She insists they talked about children. He probably wanted her advice on how to run the school." His voice, low and rhythmic when he was relaxed like this, gave Larry as much pleasure as a good performance at the theater. "A Mrs. Allen, one of the society women in town, took a shine to mother when she came to talk to her once about a neighborhood settlement house. Every month after that mother was invited for coffee at the Allens' big place near the country club."

"I never saw the inside of a nice house until I moved away," Edna Michaels said. "Until I was seventeen, I never knew people had dining rooms."

"You think *you* were poor," Arthur protested. "I still can't spend fifteen cents for a shine without feeling guilty. Do you know how many miles I used to walk to save fifteen cents?"

He had always tried to walk away from it, Larry decided, by excelling at college, by pushing and stretching his talent in practice, and by overdoing for others.

"Do you remember the time you shined my dad's shoes with the wrong polish?" Edna asked.

Lucy and Marge, who had been busy in the dining room serving drinks, came over to empty the ash trays. Arthur made room for Lucy on the sofa next to him. "Go on, Edna, I'd like Lucy to hear."

“You usually came around on Saturdays to sell dad a shine,” Edna reminded him. “I think you charged three cents, but most of the time he didn’t have that much on him. This Saturday he was flush and told you to go ahead. The kitchen was dark, and you shined his brown shoes with black polish. Boy, was he mad when he found out! He sent me right over the next morning to get you.”

Delighted, Arthur pressed Lucy’s hand. “I’ll never forget that Sunday. It was way below zero, and the garage pipes were frozen solid.”

“Dad threatened to sue you if you didn’t pay for the shoes,” Edna said.

“Hell, they were probably his only pair. They laced up high and must have cost him five dollars. It took me about a year, but I paid him back, didn’t I? Ten cents a week. I used to have nightmares about going to jail.”

“Kids always worry about things like that,” Edna added. “Once I knocked against a stove at a hardware store, and something crashed. I was sure the stove was broken, and I’d be locked up if the storekeeper found me. I ran out of the place scared, and for years wouldn’t walk near the block.”

“You don’t think your old man was mean enough to have me put in jail?” Arthur asked.

“He was mean enough, all right.”

“Mine was the sweetest, the mildest—” Bemrose looked thoughtful. “I didn’t know him well, not even as well as I knew the high school principal. As a kid I didn’t try to understand him, I took him for granted. Most of his life he was broke, and when he finally got hold of some money, he gave it away. A distant cousin looked me up not long ago and said my father had given him the money to finish medical school. He has a good practice now, and wanted to repay the family.”

“What’s his name? The doctor’s?” Marge said. The cross-hatching showed clearly under her eyes, and her mouth set tightly.

“Feeling nauseous?” Lucy picked up Marge’s hand which fell limply to her lap again.

Bemrose looked at Marge and reached for his crutches. He hobbled to the phone, balancing carefully on the telephone stool. Tremont Friendly called to him from the dining room to take a hand in the game, but Arthur went on

dialing. "Ask him to do it as a special favor for Mr. Bemrose," he told the operator.

On his way back to the sofa, Bemrose touched Marge's cheek affectionately. "Make yourself comfortable upstairs," he said. "The doctor will be over. I left word with the messenger service to reach him."

"Why didn't you let me phone for you?" Larry protested.

A few minutes later chairs shifted in the dining room, and Ed Daugherty wandered in with Jack Michaels. He glanced around nervously and asked for Marge.

"Upstairs resting," Arthur told him. "What's the matter? Is the game breaking up?"

"We're sitting out a round or two," Ed explained. "She hasn't one of her migraines, has she?" he asked anxiously.

"I think Lucy said her stomach's upset," Arthur told him, and Edna nodded.

"She shouldn't have had the shrimp salad," Ed pulled gravely at his pipe. "She can't take care of seafood, and she's always ordering it. She's allergic to shrimp."

"Remember the Saturday we thumbed a ride out to the lake?" Edna broke in.

"Your brother was sent to bring us back," Arthur assisted her.

"Can't you two stop rehashing old times?" Ed sounded irritable. "What's going to happen, Arthur? Are we or aren't we going to open a second front? We seem to be taking our time."

A second front. Less than a year ago he thought we should stay out altogether, Larry reflected. The hindsighters always were good at making a big noise, as if to cover up their wrong guesses.

"The Army's not paying me to think any more," Arthur said.

"You read the papers, don't you?" Ed snapped. "All this dillydallying! Troops sitting over in England and Ireland twiddling their thumbs."

Their guns, Larry silently corrected.

“There’s no reason why we should be pushed into anything until we’re thoroughly prepared,” Arthur said. “There’s no percentage in losing the few trained men we have.”

Some of the poker players trooped in from the dining room and gathered around Arthur.

“How about a little aggravation?” Cy O’Malley nodded toward the card table.

“You seem to be doing all right without me. Maybe Larry would like to sit in.”

“The host should be in the game,” Tremont reminded him.

“Ask Emil Post,” Chuck said, kidding Terry. “Come on, Arthur, you’ll never get another chance to play with us in a swell, air-cooled dump like this. Wait until Danny hears about the uptown competition.”

“Where’s Lucy?” Cy O’Malley looked around.

“She went upstairs with my wife,” Ed replied. “My wife’s allergic to seafood, and she ordered shrimp——”

“Tell Lucy to come down so I can make love to her.” Cy went to the dining room to find his highball, and on his way back called up the stairs. “Hey, Beautiful, come on down, I want to make love to you.”

Arthur laughed and turned to Edna Michaels. “My pals.”

Cy called to the others. “Time is money. What are we waiting for?” He settled on the arm of Edna’s chair and offered her a drink out of his glass. “Have you been here all evening?” Helplessly he addressed the others. “Why do we have to play poker when there are beautiful women around?”

Tremont lingered behind. “Sure you won’t join us, Arthur?”

“Not just now. The doctor’s coming over, and I’d have to quit anyway.”

“I’m sorry.” Terry looked concerned. “Is there anything I can do?”

“Thanks, but I’m feeling all right. He’s not coming to see me.”

Terry puckered his lips old-maidishly. “It’s sweet of you to have us up, Arthur. You know how much we all appreciate it, and we want to thank Mrs. Bemrose for going to the trouble——”

Cy whooped from the dining room, "Sandwiches!" and rushed in with a plate of food. "Found them covered up on the sideboard."

"Maybe Mrs. Bemrose wanted to save them for later," Terry protested.

"Uhhnuhu." Cy stuffed his mouth with sliced ham and rye bread. Swallowing, he said, "Danny can take lessons from Mrs. Beautiful," and started back to the dining room, the plate tilted precariously.

From the doorway he turned around and winked at Edna.

Waving to him she said to Arthur, "They're quite a gang."

"The last few years I lost track of what really went on with any of them. I got too busy." He turned to Larry for confirmation. "Larry tried to brief me. He was always telling me not to swap old friends for new clients, but a fellow gets—" Bemrose faltered. "A fellow gets caught up," he finished.

"They feel swell about your inviting them. Reber and Hagerty told me it was the best session we've had since college," Larry said.

"They're good boys."

Bemrose took an envelope out of his pocket and drew the diagram of a parlor problem in geometry which had to do with burning a hole in a carpet, and by one strategic cut, piecing the carpet into a standard size rug. "They're right on the ball," he said, preoccupied. "More than can be said for the clients. When the boys heard I was sick, they all wanted to know what they could do, but the clients, particularly the ones I thought were my friends——"

"Marge and Ed have been mighty attentive," Larry reminded him.

"My own family couldn't have done more. If I had a family that acted like one," Arthur explained to Edna. "Not that I blame the folks. I lost touch with them, too, except for mailing a check home every month."

"Has your mother been down since you're sick?" Edna asked.

"My sister, Helen, still has t.b., and mother had to go to the mountains with her," Bemrose explained.

"Give me her address, I'd like to write to her."

Bemrose started Jack Michaels and Ed Daugherty on the rug problem and they worked silently with pencil and paper while he napped and Larry sat quietly with Edna, hearing the slap of poker chips from the next room.

When the doorbell rang, Lucy called down to Larry. The servants were out for the evening. Lucy had purposely let them go out so the boys would feel more at home.

The doctor, a harassed man with blotchy complexion and inflated cheeks, asked anxiously at the door, "Did Mr. Bemrose have an accident?"

"No, he's fine," Larry assured him. "It's Mrs. Bemrose's aunt. She took sick suddenly."

"A neurological case?"

"You'd better talk to Mr. Bemrose before you go up."

Larry returned to the next room and tapped Arthur's shoulder. Bemrose instinctively reached for his crutches when he awakened, the way a myopic feels for his eyeglasses in the morning.

Larry pointed toward the hallway and whispered the message to Arthur, trying not to attract Ed's attention.

"I'll go up with him," Arthur volunteered.

"Talk to him in the hall. I'll take him up."

"No, I want to." Stubbornly Bemrose swung to the door and greeted the doctor whom he invited to follow him.

"Let me," Larry offered.

"Marge would do it for me," Arthur insisted, and handing his crutches to Larry, managed the stairs alone by clinging to the handrail.

Larry kibitzed the game a while, and finally had the boys deal him in. He lost fifteen dollars in the next half hour. Paul Schmid suggested that they quit, ribbing him about starting to play too late to get his money back, but Larry didn't mind the loss. He was anxious to clear out so that the Bemroses could look after Marge undisturbed.

When the boys went in to say goodnight a little later, the doctor had gone and Arthur, Lucy, and Marge were downstairs in the living room. Larry sat

down next to Marge. “Is it serious?” he asked.

“I have to go to another doctor in the morning and take a test.” She rolled her eyes and pressed Larry’s arm. “Don’t say anything to Ed.”

“Have you figured out the rug problem?” Larry called over.

Ed’s eyes looked red from rubbing them. “It’s a stickler, all right. Are you sure it can be done with one cut?”

“Absolutely. Your nephew solved it in ten minutes.”

“Arthur did?” Ruefully Ed took out his watch. “We must have been at it half an hour.”

At the door Cy picked up Lucy, tossed her in the air, and kissed her goodbye on both cheeks.

Breathlessly she tried to answer Larry about Marge. “Arthur will remember the name of the test.”

“Ascheim-Zondek,” Arthur said.

“You mean she might be—” Incredulously Larry looked at Marge.

Outside the entrance Ed was mopping his face and complaining about the heat.

Chapter 19

The old problem of what to do about Tammany plagued Larry. A few days ago, about eight weeks before the city election, he had been approached to take a special job in the clubhouse of his district. It wasn't a Mayoralty election year, and the assignment wouldn't involve much work, but now that Larry was on the firm's payroll, he wanted to discuss it with Bemrose.

Arthur was watching two window washers who swung from their leather straps on the ledge outside his office window. It was like working on the top mast of a ship fifty stories high and made Larry dizzy to look at them.

He sat down next to Arthur's desk where the windowsill screened the penthouse of the Bankers Club next door and gave him the illusion of being at sea. A river barge seemed to disappear between the buildings. When Larry mentioned this visual illusion, Arthur explained the operation of the barge canal system around New York: Newtown creek, Coney Island creek, the Gowanus canal, Flushing creek, and Mill Basin on Jamaica bay where coal, oil, cement, and carload freight unloaded. Arthur knew these obscure waterways as well as most New Yorkers knew the piers where the giant liners tied up. Before the War he had fancied himself a marine expert and always kept the shipping page of the *New York Times* on his desk. Even without referring to it he could identify most of the freighters in the river as well as the lesser craft.

Larry explained the recent Tammany proposal. "They'll come back," Larry prophesied. "A political organization always comes back. There's reform for a while and things are reshuffled, but the public eventually tires of reform and wants a change. When that happens, Tammany is organized to get out the votes. Things are back where they started, with a new set of faces on the billboards but the same local bosses running things."

"Don't waste your time with Fourteenth Street. Hook up with the labor crowd," Arthur advised him.

They had been over it all before. Larry tried to explain that the American Labor Party would have to play ball with Tammany if it expected to get

anywhere in the city. The present Fusion crowd had found that the Mayor played footie with Tammany Hall when he needed extra votes. If Larry started with a new organization, he explained to Bemrose, he'd have to sacrifice his equity in Tammany Hall and begin at the bottom with a set-up that probably would lose. That was the history of many third-party movements. They served as a healthy public irritant, very often, and they influenced elections, but they seldom turned out a decisive vote. Larry had been through the leanest years with Tammany. By '45 the Hall would elect its candidate for Mayor and come back. They would pick a man who looked independent, but he would be a Tammany man. No matter what kind of front the Hall gave him. And the A.L.P., in return for post-election favors, would back Tammany. If Larry stuck it out, he'd be entitled to a plum himself.

"What makes you think they'll pay off?" Bemrose asked.

"Give them till the end of forty-five, and they will."

"Like hell they will. The local political system in this country stinks. When a good man joins an organization and is willing to work, he's buried in a clubhouse while the top manipulators who keep out of the newspapers run the show and hand their private yes-men the judgeships."

"That's why fellows like you don't monkey with politics," Larry said. He sometimes wished that he could stay out himself, but the political habit was strong in him.

"The system soils a man all the way up. Until he becomes President," Bemrose said. "Even then he's not always able to wash it off. Personally, I think it's a mistake for the President to mix in local politics."

"They all do," Larry protested. "It's what keeps the organization together."

"Well, it's wrong."

"Take your own case, Arthur. If they offered you a job in Washington now, you'd probably grab it with the War going on. As soon as the War ended, you'd go right back to private practice and keep on practicing until someone decided you were Supreme Court material. You'd get out of the public eye fast. How can we have first class men in public office as long as fellows like you won't stick?"

“I don’t know the answer,” Arthur admitted. “We ought to pay good men more. We should educate the public to respect men who make a career of Congress.”

“Are you kidding?” Larry asked. “With characters like Bilbo in Washington, do you expect people to take Congress seriously?”

“It’s a paradox, but the people are always better than the government they elect,” Bemrose pointed out. “They are, you know. It isn’t true that they get the government they deserve, or that the government they elect represents them. Look at the people organizing right now to fight the War. When they really want to tackle a job——”

“They don’t think local politics are important,” Larry said. “They can’t see struggling to elect a guy who is going to sit in Congress with Bilbo.”

“Damn it, it is important!”

“Well, if it’s important, I’d better stick to Tammany Hall,” Larry said. He thought of Judge Haynes’ private contempt for “the people” and wondered how far Bemrose had freed himself from the Judge’s influence.

Arthur’s secretary announced Davis Shore, and Bemrose suggested that Larry stay in the room.

“I meant to——” Arthur swallowed, awaiting the next word. “I was going to ask you to sit in anyway. You ought to meet the clients.”

It wasn’t necessary for the managing lawyer to meet clients, Larry knew, but he appreciated the effort to make him feel like part of the firm. He had avoided Davis Shore ever since that glimpse of him at Bemrose’s reception when Shore clumsily tried to extricate himself from the tête-à-tête with Lucy.

“I’d rather not stay,” he decided.

“Oh, sit down.”

Davis Shore padded in and halted expectantly in front of Bemrose’s desk.

“Mr. Frank, my associate.”

Larry jumped up and offered Shore his chair, although there were three others vacant.

“Frank, Frank, there used to be a member of the Board at Southern Power and Light—” Shore hung on to Larry’s hand as he traced the relationship. He hoarded his voice so that it was high and as immature as the babyfine white hair.

“All my folks live in Brooklyn!” Larry overshook Shore’s hand.

“I didn’t know Arthur had a new associate,” Shore said, bewildered. “Very helpful right now to have a good friend about.” He indicated the crutches. “Excellent idea to have an associate right at the elbow.”

Arthur sucked at his cheeks and shifted his legs restlessly. The marbles seemed to be back in his mouth, impeding his speech.

“I guess you want to talk business, I’d better be going,” Larry said, louder than he intended. He knew how to act when he met an important client like Shore. Only it was coming out wrong. Bemrose should have known better than to try and bring them together. With a snob like Shore, Arthur would have had to submit drawings in advance of Larry’s family tree. He knew that Davis Shore picked lawyers with the right social connections, as much as he selected them for their ability.

Larry wondered in what decade the social circles in American life began to crystallize. Way back, he guessed. When some of the early statesmen wrote of equality, they really meant an exchange among those who already were social equals. They described a uniform society of landowners, with non-agrarian whites and Negroes excluded. The distinction persisted and had intensified with each generation. Davis Shore of Oyster Bay didn’t sit down to dinner with Larry Frank of Second Avenue if he could help it. Nor with Arthur Bemrose divorced from the impressive Judge Haynes connection. It wasn’t a pleasant realization, but Larry had come to accept it, and Arthur should have known better than to try and cross the line.

On the way back to his desk down the corridor, Larry recalled a letter of introduction which Haynes had given a prominent American jurist to Didier. “See that he meets some of the legal brains of France,” Haynes had written. “You needn’t bother to entertain him socially. I don’t think he’s interested in society.... I will be careful in the future, my old one, not to abuse your hospitality and will refer only very special people to you.”

Larry reflected on Judge Haynes's honesty with Didier. "I will be careful to refer only very special people.... You needn't bother to introduce him to society." A man might be an eminent jurist, and still not an acceptable dinner companion. Haynes, with his worldly shrewdness, had accepted that narrow and unpleasant reality. Arthur had accepted it while Haynes was alive.

Since the War, since Janice, since his illness, Bemrose had begun to construct a world without those barriers, a cellophane overlay he superimposed on the old social map. Bemrose had perhaps started with the wrong two men—Shore and himself—but Larry realized that if he were not part of the experiment and had not smarted under Shore's patronizing scrutiny, he'd be cheering for Bemrose. As it was, he cheered with his emotions but not with his common sense instincts.

Larry occupied an office next to a large room which housed the secretarial staff. Miss Thompson, who kept the girls quiet while she was at her desk, did it unconsciously with the cold set of her masculine features. As Larry turned into his room, he saw that her office chair was vacant. The girls buzzed in a happy release of spirits.

"I swear it's the truth," said the assistant who came to work in open-toed shoes and no stockings. "He said I could quit any time Joe got a furlough." She giggled nervously. "He used to hit the ceiling when I threatened to quit. That's how I got my last three raises."

"Ja hear what he did with Mr. Osterlink?" The file clerk crossed her feet and fluttered some papers she was putting into a folder. "He called in Mr. Osterlink and gave him a raise before he even asted, and if there's a father's draff, Mr. Osterlink will have to go." She jerked her thumb toward the door. "He didn't even ast for the raise. Canyuh imagine?"

The other girl sighed. "A big change has come over Mr. Bemrose. It must be because he's sick."

"He's just learnin' to appreciate. You wait 'til some more of 'em are drafted. They'll all start appreciatin'."

"He's sadder since he came back from the Army." The older girl mooned in her chair. "Even when he's nice and talks to you, it makes you feel like bawling."

“Doesn’t make me—” The girl clicked the file drawer shut.

Miss Thompson’s rubber heels, tapping the linoleum, silenced them, and Larry tried to concentrate on the proof of a brief.

A shriek roused him, and he saw Miss Thompson rush to her window. He hurried to his own. A man in shirtsleeves, balanced precariously, walked the narrow ledge of the penthouse next door, swaying as he placed one cautious foot in front of another, his arms waving in the wind.

“Quick, Mr. Frank! He’s trying to commit suicide,” Miss Thompson called. She dashed over to his door. “I’ll phone the police.”

The man had turned the corner, and his left foot slipped off the ledge. Larry gripped the windowsill, as if to maintain the man’s balance for him.

“The police are there now!” Miss Thompson reported in an uncontrolled staccato. “They say he won’t come back in. They’re talking to him, and he doesn’t pay any attention.”

Larry watched the man’s back and could sense his muscles twist beneath the flimsy white cloth of his shirt. His arms balanced like feathers, light and graceful as a ballet dancer’s. No one should try to prevent a man from picking his own method of committing suicide, Larry decided. He should be able, if he liked, to fling himself forty stories to the pavement with as great a display of eccentricity or exhibitionism as he pleased.

“Oh, stop him, Mr. Frank!” Miss Thompson pushed her hands against the window, as the man teetered again.

The next minute it was over. The figure had walked West toward the river, into the pure unsooted air. Windows opened and an ambulance wailed urgently.

Miss Thompson crawled back to the chair behind her desk, blanched and shaking. The other girls covered their eyes, too sensitive to want to decipher the undignified pulp of blood and flesh below. Larry could skip it, too, and decided that he needed a cup of coffee.

He glanced at Miss Thompson on his way out, reflecting that her sex life occurred vicariously behind an office desk. She continued to tremble in an orgasm of terror.

When Larry returned, he found a message to see Mr. Bemrose at once.

Arthur was slumped in his chair, looking blitzed. The mounting mishaps of the afternoon had culminated in the desperation written on Bemrose's face.

"I knew there was something wrong when he didn't show up for the appointment the other morning," Arthur said.

"The morning we came in at eight o'clock? You mean he didn't keep the appointment?"

"When he called me at home the afternoon before I knew——"

"But why did he get you down here at eight o'clock?" Larry insisted. "You're too sick a man——"

"He knows that," Arthur pointed out. "He's using my health as an excuse to get outside trial counsel."

"Who?"

"Jorgensen."

Larry sat down thoughtfully. "Jorgensen will do all right. He's the only man——"

"I'm washed up."

"Just because that pompous——?"

"Five years of preparation," Bemrose said. "I put five years into that case." He rocked angrily in his chair. "I'll be damned if I tell Jorgensen how to try it."

"Why does he insist on Jorgensen? You've lived with the case. If Jorgensen were John Marshall, he couldn't prepare it in six months. I'll tell you, have someone talk to Shore. Can't Tom Newton, or Harrison, or _____"

"They've already retained him," Bemrose reported. "He says I can't manage the physical hurdles of the courtroom. He doesn't see how I can stand on my feet, examine witnesses, manipulate the reference volumes, or turn the pages of the briefs. Oh, Shore hasn't overlooked a detail," he said harshly. "What do they expect me to do?" His hand jerked toward an

inkwell cover lying on the desk. “Do they expect me to give up trial work because my legs aren’t steady?”

“You *can’t* give it up.”

“I’d be throwing away three-quarters of my practice. I belong on my feet in court. The Judge drilled me in the idea that a lawyer should take his own cases to court. I might as well stop practicing.”

“You’re not going to stop, and you’re not going to give up trial work,” Larry insisted. “*Let* him have Jorgensen. He’ll come running to you on the next case.”

“He won’t have another like this in twenty years.” Bemrose shoved his crutches viciously across the room. “I’ll be damned if I’m the kind of lawyer who sits behind a desk and settles cases.”

“How about that appeal of Cy’s?” Larry asked. “He’ll go broke if the City makes him pay back what his family collected in the condemnation fifteen years ago. Cy hasn’t any reserves——”

“I never took a condemnation case, and I don’t want to start now,” Bemrose protested. “Not if all the O’Malleys in New York starve. It’s one kind of law I don’t want to practice.”

“But the case involves an interesting question of law.”

“What’s the question?” Arthur looked up.

“The City claims that one of the provisions in the original state grant to the O’Malleys was concealed from the court, a covenant saying that the City could recapture the property any time by repaying what the State had charged the O’Malleys for it. Peanuts, of course. The City ignored the covenant and handed Cy’s family healthy money for the land fifteen years ago. Now it wants to get back the difference.”

“Why didn’t the City think of that fifteen years ago when they condemned Cy’s property?” Arthur asked.

“The City says it was handled crookedly at that time. No one mentioned the trick covenant when the case was being tried.”

“And Cy’s supposed to go broke in order to correct the City’s mistake? That’s lovely.” He leaned back in his chair. “How far has the case gone?”

“Affirmed in the Appellate Division, one judge dissenting,” Larry reported.

“So he could take it to Albany?” Arthur swung around toward the window and looked out thoughtfully.

Suddenly Larry thought of the suicide dance on the ledge. “Cy couldn’t, but *you* could,” he said. “He’s had a lousy deal from the City. You’d be helping out a pal——”

“I suppose the documents go way back.”

“You’d have a good time with the case,” Larry predicted. “You could dig around in the historical material. There are fascinating old maps of the waterways. It’s just the kind of case you like. Take it, Arthur.”

Bemrose pointed to his crutches. “What’s the use? I’d never be able to argue it in Albany. Cy would have to hire appeal counsel.”

“That’s tripe. You’ll argue it yourself if we have to take you up there in a wheelchair.” Larry rubbed his knees in anticipation. “We’ll show that stuffed penguin whether you’re finished.”

“Who’s going to pay to have briefs printed?”

“Cy. It’ll be easier for him to raise money for the briefs than to try and pay the City.”

“I wouldn’t have to charge him a fee,” Bemrose said. “The case must have cost him plenty already.”

Not charging fees again. The old pattern. But if Bemrose won this appeal in Albany, he’d come out all right. It would prove that he was still a good courtroom lawyer, in spite of Davis Shore. The boost to his morale would be tremendous.

“The case has cost him plenty, and if he loses and has to pay the City, he’ll be in hock the rest of his life,” Larry said. “I wouldn’t mind if it happened to some fellows, but Cy—well, you know Cy.”

“Needs a nursery school,” Bemrose agreed. “I never expected to have the dubious privilege of representing him. I’ll bone up on abuse before we start. It’s the only way to get along with Cy. You have to insult him louder than he insults you.”

“He’s scared of you, Arthur. He’ll behave.”

“Cy scared?” Bemrose’s head jerked backward, and he laughed. It was the first time today that he had let go.

“You’ll have a helluva lot of fun working with him. Shall I give him a ring?” Larry moved toward the door.

“Not yet,” Bemrose decided. “Get hold of the briefs and let me study them. I want to find out about this concealed covenant.”

When Larry turned around he saw Miss Thompson at the door looking like a shock case.

She covered her face. “Did you see him, Mr. Bemrose?”

Larry shrugged at Bemrose and maneuvered Miss Thompson down the hall. “Come on, the Boss wants us to locate some papers for him,” he explained.

It wasn’t the day for Bemrose to hear about the fellow who had walked off the ledge.

Chapter 20

The headwaiter indicated a table at the far side of the room, across the floor from the orchestra, and Larry and Bess felt their way in the purplish light around the small, slick floor. The orchestra was playing *June Night*. Larry had made love to his first girl by it, and could hear it now flowing singsongy and nasal through her thinly etched nostrils.

They blinked their way through the murky room where cigarette smoke banked like fog, and Arthur half rose when he saw them, tabling his hands for support, while Bess rushed over to steady the fragile cane chair under him.

“Hello.” Arthur’s eyes challenged Bessie, and he motioned to the empty seats at the table.

A brocade evening bag lay on the table in front of an empty place. It must belong to Lucy.

Larry slid into the far chair and let Bess and Bemrose get comfortable. They seldom saw each other, and needed time to become acquainted. Larry knew that it wouldn’t take long. Bess would relate some irrelevant and trivial incident, and soon Bemrose would be swept along with her sure narrative skill.

Among the dancers Larry located Lucy’s gray-blond head brushing the dark sleekness of Philip Kenyon’s. He was the Green network salesman whom Larry remembered from the first night at the Daughertys’ when he had called on Lucy about the lawsuit. Her arm relaxed on his collar, and Larry saw that they danced easily and well, her high, flat breasts conforming to his dark blue concavity. The music trickled to a close, and Kenyon must have said something which flushed her amber skin. As the band started, nostalgically sobbing *As Time Goes By*, she returned, smiling, to his arms.

Bemrose motioned Larry to move closer. “They make a nice couple. They used to go dancing before we were married,” he said.

“Are you trying to fix her up?”

“Sometimes I feel as if she were my daughter,” Bemrose confessed. “She must have missed going dancing after she married me. She was a little young to settle down. I realize it now.”

Lucy fluttered a hand at him from the floor, and he smiled back at her.

“You’re not in mothballs yet. For Chris’ sake——”

“I’m glad Kenyon is around. He’s a nice fellow to take her dancing. Especially now that I can’t.” Bemrose rearranged his legs.

“What are you going to do, hand her all the fun while you play papa?” Larry laughed. “Whose idea is this anyway? Lucy’s?”

But Bessie motioned him to be quiet. Lucy and Kenyon, knit in quiet conversation, were on their way to the table.

Lucy drew up a chair close to Arthur, freshened his highball with some soda, picked up his napkin from the floor, and solicitously asked whether he were tired. Her cool beauty reassured Larry. She never looked lovelier than in the sheer black dress she was wearing. It furnished solemn contrast to her light eyes and gave the gray-blond hair a dreamlike quality.

Kenyon, chatting happily with Bessie, took on her tone as he pitched his amiability to hers. He was an adaptable man who reflected the personality of others and unconsciously imitated their speech and gestures. When a principal figure walked off the scene, Kenyon became neutral as a photographer’s background.

Lucy, noting Arthur’s hand shake on his highball glass, asked the waiter to give him a straw. While she was ordering drinks for the rest of them, Larry saw the carefully tailored sleeve of a man at the next table slip around the bosom of the girl who was with him. He reached greedily for her left breast, and when she tore his hand away, looked pained and helpless.

“Why do you always have to drink too much?” she asked peevishly.

“Don’t sound like your mother,” he complained. “Unpleasant bitch!”

His daughter shoved her napkin toward him as if pushing away something loathsome. She was kodachrome pretty, with red hair.

He grabbed her arm, clearing a set of heavy silver bracelets. “You’re grown up now. You might as well know that men—” He clawed her breast, clutching the gold cloth of her dress. “They’ll want to sleep with you, Baby.”

Frantically she called to the waiter. “He’ll pay the check. I have to catch a train back to school.” She took time to daub her nose while he fumbled in a confusion of bills and silver.

Larry used the whiskey in front of him to purify his palate. He saw Arthur’s glance follow Lucy’s dark dress as it threaded the tables. She was going out to phone Marge Daugherty, who had been sick again. Bessie left to dance with Phil Kenyon, and Bemrose and Larry were alone.

He stirred uneasily and addressed Bemrose, “I don’t know whether this is the time to bring it up——”

Arthur encouraged him to go on.

“You and Lucy seem to be making a go of it, and I don’t want to do anything to upset it,” Larry continued.

Silently Arthur waited for him to finish, refusing to help. His hand shook as he reached for an ash tray.

“I don’t want to interfere, you understand, not if things are going better with you and Lucy——”

Arthur shrugged. “That depends on what you mean by better.”

“I can’t stall Janice any longer,” Larry complained. “She’s been after me for weeks. She phones, she wires, she writes—” Larry’s palms felt warm. “I don’t want her to bother you, fellow, not if you’re all set with Lucy.”

“We go to bed together. In spite of these.” He kicked his crutches. “I’m not precisely an acrobat, but— So far she hasn’t complained.”

Bemrose’s shoulder twitched, and his lip began to jerk. He covered his face. After three or four minutes he said bitterly, “What does Janice want of me?”

“Forget it, Arthur. I’ll tell her you’re in no condition——”

“What good does she think I would do her? I suppose she’d like to wheel me around Central Park on Sunday mornings.”

“She’d like to come up and see you some weekend, that’s all. She doesn’t expect you to take her to night clubs.”

“What did you write her?” Arthur asked sharply. “Did you tell her the truth, that Lucy bathes and dresses me every morning and undresses me at night, that she waits on me hand and foot?”

“I spared her the part about Lucy undressing you. No use torturing the girl. No, I wrote her you had changed.”

“I’ll say so. She ought to see me try to walk from here to the door. She’d get a shock all right.”

“I didn’t mean your sickness. I meant really changed inside, the way she’d like. No devil driving you. Not pushing to be Number One. Easy and nice. I figured the way you are now— Well, she ought to know about it.”

Arthur shook his head. “What kind of deal would it be for her? Figure it out for yourself. She’s waited a long time. She deserves a decent break from some guy. I had something good to offer her once, but I was too dumb and self-absorbed to see it. What can I give her now except a brokendown nervous system?” He felt uncertainly for his coat pocket, and Larry knew the speech had been hard for him.

“I figured Janice hasn’t found the going easy lately, and it might cheer her up to come to New York.”

“Anything wrong?”

“Yes, her brother’s been sick.”

“I’m sorry. She’s crazy about her brother.”

“Her letters sound as if she’s broken up. I thought if she came up some weekend and got her mind on something else——”

“Not just now, Larry. Neither of us could take it. Wait a little while. What I’ve got with Lucy is working pretty well right now. She’s given up the idea of any high romance with me, and as long as I treat her considerately, she’s willing to put up with my needs. That’s quite a good deal. I’m not easy to live with these days.”

“Is it enough? Do you want to settle for it?” Larry asked.

“I know it’s not the big thing, but when you have the big thing at home, you’re exposed. I’ve been ducking that kind of exposure most of my life. I don’t want to go around with my thalamus aching. I’d rather save the emotional turmoil for trial work. I’d rather pour it out in a courtroom where it has more of a chance of repaying me.”

Lucy was back, and Larry rose to pull out her chair. “I’ll write Washington on that matter,” he promised Arthur. “They’ll be disappointed not to see you over the weekend, but I’ll try to present your views.”

“Are you two talking business?” Lucy asked absentmindedly.

Phil Kenyon was back, leaning over her. “Save the next dance for me, Sug.”

The band played a rumba, and they left the table, while Arthur devoted himself to Bessie with diplomatic smoothness. He made Bess feel as if his entire friendship with Larry depended on her, and from now on it was going to be the three of them, not the two of them any longer. Under Bemrose’s suave handling, her old antagonisms melted and her dark lips played delightedly over the flawless teeth. The curls on her forehead bobbed in quick, excited shakes as she agreed with Arthur about Larry quitting Tammany and hooking up with the A.L.P. Things were fine and easy between Bess and Arthur. She sipped at his charm, lingering over its bouquet, and rewarded him with an animation she usually kept from strangers.

Together they eulogized Elizabeth Brett and her good, female earthiness. Even when he and Liz fought the hardest, he enjoyed her, Bemrose maintained. He liked women with conviction and taste. His manner left no doubt that he bracketed Bessie with this chosen group.

Flushed with the subtle flattery Bemrose had lavished on her, Bess asked Larry to dance, although she knew he didn’t care much about it. On the floor she complimented the one-step he had learned twenty years ago, and pressed her soft warmth against him, circling his neck. Spelled by Bemrose she seemed to mesmerize herself into thinking of Larry as a romantic figure.

“They’re happy.” She sighed. “I think he’s charming to her. And she’s nice. Before he asks for anything, she hands it to him. It’s wonderful how she understands.”

A pocket of traffic pinned them to their spot on the floor, and Larry overheard a man say, “Just like old times, isn’t it, Sug? I used to get mighty lonesome.”

The voice continued, “I always liked you best in black, Sug.”

Larry wondered about Lucy. He wondered how long she’d be content to cushion Arthur’s disability, nursing him with every gentle comfort she had, sacrificing her own desires to make him feel more secure. It was hard to penetrate Lucy’s fortress of reserve. Larry wasn’t at all sure how strong her desires were. Kenyon’s might be a different matter, but whether or not Lucy complied with them——

“I think it’s sweet the way he invites a friend along to dance with her,” Bessie said. “I think it’s nice that he wants her to have a good time. Some men would be sensitive——” She nudged him. “Look at that hair-do, Larry. The pink feathers!”

But Larry was indifferent to the fashion this season of killing and stuffing love birds for decorative use in the hair. He was conscious of Bemrose alone at the edge of the dance floor, his shoulder twitching and his lip moving in sudden jerks. At this moment Arthur strained to find Lucy among the dancers as he twisted and knotted the napkin she had picked up from the floor for him during the last intermission. Every nerve worked overtime while he waited, tensely, for her to come back and sit next to him.

Larry wondered how much guts it had taken for Bemrose to turn down the chance of seeing Janice. He was glad to have given him the chance. No matter how much conflict the decision cost, it must have been flattering to feel wanted, even for a little while, strongly and passionately desired by a woman. It must be good to know that Janice was still around waiting for word from him.

“Fun to go dancing, isn’t it, Larry?” Bess’s plump fingers wooed the back of his neck. “I’m glad you’re my husband, Larry.”

He felt the roll of flesh above her waist as he drew her closely toward him. “A little too much of you here maybe,” he said, pinching her, “but as wives go, not bad. Not at all bad.”

Chapter 21

It was December 7, the day that Cy O'Malley's case was to be argued in the Court of Appeals. Larry walked from his hotel, which was located across from the Capitol, to the Court of Appeals Hall on Eagle Street. Glancing across at the Capitol building, he wondered how many times Bemrose, as a kid, must have looked up those steep stone steps and thought of walking in someday to see the Governor or the Legislature on official business. Larry detoured into the park and stopped before a stern bronze statue of Philip Schuyler. The formidable likeness might have frightened a small boy who was standing in the snow all day Saturdays to drum up shoeshines.

The Courthouse itself was a hundred years old, according to the cornerstone dated 1842, and was fronted by six weathered Greek columns.

Larry remembered the first time he came up to hear an argument when he was just out of law school and the Court had seemed remote and sacred. He always meant to have a look around the historic building. This morning ought to be a good time. He would have to wait anyway until the clerk asked the Chief Judge if Arthur might deliver his argument seated.

A girl at the information desk inside the bronze entrance doors told Larry the clerk wouldn't be available for fifteen or twenty minutes. Larry walked into the rotunda with its gold Star of David in the floor, and looked up past overhanging balconies to the white frosted dome. Shut into the circular space by eight massive columns, he had a moment's claustrophobia. The sensation eased as he emerged into the high arched ceilings of the entrance hall. Near the telephone booth, a painting of David Dudley Field, his hand thrust into a Prince Albert coat, was flanked by Florentine chairs embossed with the New York State shield.

Larry wandered into the library and glanced at a copy of the *Law Journal* on a table neatly blottered in green. He took down a volume of *Hopkins Chancery Reports* in the tan binding with red title panel, and leafed through it aimlessly.

From a corner of the room glared a marble bust of Ambrose Spencer, former Mayor of Albany. Larry wondered if Spencer were responsible for cobblestoning the steep inclines of Albany, a city that had ice on the streets five months a year. The ground now was lightly covered with snow, and green patches of grass showed restfully through the white cover. Larry had realized on the trip up, riding along the Hudson, how building-weary his eyes must have become the past months, and how much he needed this chance away from New York to look at water, sky and earth.

He stepped across to the lawyers' waiting-room with its oversized leather chairs and picked up a copy of the daily calendar. The O'Malley case was second on the list. That ought to give Bemrose plenty of chance to finish his argument this afternoon. A timetable lay beside the calendar. If they were out by six o'clock, and Arthur decided not to stay over with his family, they could have dinner, catch an evening train, and be back in New York tonight.

Larry walked through the hall to Room 119, and reverently opened the door. He seldom walked into the courtroom without feeling as if he were blaspheming. Oil portraits of former judges circled the room in two rows, the full-length figures above and head-and-shoulder portraits below, framed by carved golden oak panels.

Larry remembered sitting as a spectator behind a rail in the back of the high-ceilinged room, intimidated by the giant fireplace of yellow marble, sunk in the left wall, with its giant claw-footed andirons of bronze. Intricate baskets of carved golden oak above the fireplace symbolized another generation's concept of rich decoration. The sheer, stupendous hand labor involved in carving every oak wall panel, fashioning a rosette in the arm of every oak chair, decorating the legs and stretchers of the seven counsel tables, whittling gargoyles and cathedral doors of golden oak into each panel of the semi-circular bench at which the judges sat, and hewing from raw wood the elaborate fifteen foot cabinet of the grandfather's clock which told the day of the week and month as well as the time, this human effort of fashioning, designing, perfecting, molding, and veneering the walls, ceilings, and furnishings of a space fifty feet wide by one hundred feet long overwhelmed Larry. In the chill December light that speared through three towering windows on the right, the artifice of the woodcarvers whose strong fingers must have grown knotted and stained in this work seemed an obsolete craft. It had little affinity with the contemporary feeling about

wood, the desire to bring out and emphasize the simple, natural beauty of the grain. This older art treated wood like filigree, working it into forms that might more delicately have been executed in platinum, and hiding its character under shiny layers of varnish. A modern designer like Elizabeth Brett would call it unfunctional, Larry knew. As if to prove the truth of this modern view, he saw that the fireplace had never been used, the clock had stopped, and the weighty bronze crowns, suspended by chains from the ceiling, obstructed the light from the electric globes they decorated.

Observing the same lack of forthrightness in some of the portraits, Larry studied a full figure of Judge Haynes. The artist had made him pink-and-white pretty with an unlined face. Larry found in it little resemblance to the austere lived-in countenance he remembered. The stocks, the whiskers, and the colored flowing robes of some of the older judges mellowed their portraits, as did the tarnished nameplates below, but the empty emotion of the more recent paintings showed as raw as their color in the winter morning light.

There was a commercial calendar next to the silent clock, a chromium-trimmed lamp on the desk of the case clerk, and a functional water cooler near the window, showing that the room couldn't get along without the modern. Ample radiator boxes at the windows, working wall thermometers and metal ventilators also indicated that no expense had been spared to circulate fresh air among members of the Court.

Larry walked to the counsel table a few feet in front of the bench where Arthur would present his argument. A lawyer speaking from behind the lectern stood at eye level with the Judges. It was a pleasantly informal arrangement, and today Larry felt particularly grateful for this closeness between Court and counsel. Although Bemrose would be arguing seated from behind the table, the Judges should have no trouble seeing or hearing him. Larry decided he would sit at Arthur's left where he could hand him papers and reference volumes with ease.

The case clerk greeted Larry by name. He had been with the Court for more than twenty-five years and was as much a part of the scene as the marble based statue of Robert Livingston inside the entrance.

"This room used to be in the State Capitol," he volunteered. "They moved it over here piece by piece. All the panels are hand carved."

“It’s impressive,” Larry agreed. “Where good lawyers dream of coming when they die.”

Larry told him about Arthur having to argue seated, and the clerk promised to take it up with Judge Lehman. He came back in a few minutes to say that Judge Lehman had been happy to grant Mr. Bemrose’s request.

“How is his health?” the clerk inquired. “I heard——”

“His legs aren’t steady, but that’s the only thing about him that isn’t a hundred percent.” Larry fastidiously pulled his pocket handkerchief out a quarter of an inch. He had on a new blue herringbone. Arthur’s tailor had made it for him from a pre-War length of English woolen. The suit fitted him right. He felt sure enough of himself to be arguing a case of his own today. “This will be the first time he’s been in court since the Army,” Larry explained.

“You mean the first time since his troubles?” The clerk ran a hand along his legs.

Larry nodded.

“It must be pretty important,” the clerk said. “Not the case. But important for him. I remember the first time I saw him. Fresh out of law school and smart as paint. Judge Haynes was crazy about him.”

“Today’s important, all right,” Larry agreed. “You’ll see. He’ll come through okay.”

“I remember the time he was up here on that insurance case. He made a beautiful argument. When you listen to Mr. Bemrose, you always forget about oratory. Not like with some of the big ones who carry you away. You get interested in what he’s saying, and don’t want to miss a word.”

“He’ll show some of them who’ve been going around saying he’s finished ——” He will if his speech doesn’t throw him, Larry thought. “The Old Man will pull him through,” he added, pointing to Judge Haynes’s portrait.

“Today’s a big day,” the clerk said. “Judge Erving has a case on the calendar, and so has A. Atherton Clark. And I hear the Attorney-General is up from Washington.”

“Tom Newton?”

“He’s interested in the case of that German—” the clerk explained.

With that kind of audience today was going to be a real test for Bemrose.

“Einstein dropped in yesterday and may come back this afternoon. He’s been visiting Judge Lehman.”

“You mean Albert Einstein?” Larry asked.

The clerk nodded.

“Quite a gallery for Mr. Bemrose.” Larry picked up his coat from a chair and took another look around. “Well, he can’t complain. He has the right setting.”

The yellow window shades hung unevenly. Their disorderly cords supplied the only note of rakishness in the oaken formality.

Outside Larry shook hands with the clerk, and the rotunda seemed open and friendly.

A. Atherton Clark’s argument lasted until four o’clock. Tom Newton, who had come up specially for it, made no attempt to leave when it was finished, and Larry wondered if he were waiting over specially to see Arthur.

Bemrose entered the courtroom during the last fifteen minutes of Clark’s argument. He had trouble manipulating his crutches through the back gate, and as he swung down the center aisle over the faded gold carpet, Newton, who was seated at one of the counsel tables in back, started to reach out as if to steady him. Old Ambrose Dane nervously rubbed the top of his nose until Bemrose was seated, and Larry saw two or three other lawyers follow every step he made.

Arthur’s case was called, and Chief Judge Lehman moved the box of his hearing aid forward. Lawyers arguing before the Court superstitiously watched the black box, believing that if it were switched off, an argument was lost.

Judge Lehman gave Bemrose his attention, and smiling, said, “This is the first occasion on which the Court will hear an argument by a member of the

bar back from the service. We welcome you on your return.”

The remark was in keeping with the Court’s tradition for courtesy.

Arthur laid aside his papers to thank the Judge and was directed to proceed.

Quietly he reported the facts of the old condemnation case and the award to the O’Malleys. He reviewed the City’s successful move to reopen the matter after fifteen years. His voice ran smooth and confidently, as if he had been in court every day for six months. Reassured and able to relax, Larry scanned the row of chairs behind the back railing for Cy O’Malley. Cy’s face was dough white, and he pulled at the blond strand of hair that fell over his eye.

Judge Lehman’s voice interrupted the smooth cadence of Arthur’s phrases, and Larry abruptly turned around. The first hurdle. Every case argued here was two-way. The Court questioned sharply. No lawyer was allowed to present his appeal precisely as it had been planned.

“Mr. Bemrose, have you considered the rule that limits us to questions of law?” Judge Lehman incisively asked. “You know, of course, that orders granting new trials are usually in the discretion of the Supreme Court. We do not ordinarily decide such questions.”

Larry waited confidently, knowing that Arthur had foreseen this objection.

“There is a well-recognized exception in cases where the error the new trial has been granted to correct is an error of law,” he pointed out. “I shall attempt to demonstrate that the decision below was based on the power of the Court to grant a new trial, a question of law.”

Judge Lehman nodded. “You may attempt to satisfy the Court on that issue.”

Three of the Judges moved forward attentively in their chairs. A fourth poured a spoonful of medicine, swallowed it, and killed the taste with a square of chocolate he kept in his drawer.

In preparation for this appeal Bemrose had studied original historic sources—the old City Charter, the ancient proceedings of the Land Office commissioners, and long-forgotten cases on the construction of water grants. In a few weeks he had made himself an expert on commerce and navigation history in the State and knew by heart the reports that the

commissioners had made to the legislature in 1811, the old diaries and letters of barge captains as well as the more recent technical reports by waterway engineers. Steeped in the history of the State's canals, waterways, and harbors, Arthur had concluded that the clause providing for recapture by the State of Cy's waterfront property meant something quite different from what it said. The State, or its agent, the City, did have the right to recapture such property for the price originally paid the owner. *But only if such property were used by the State for navigation and commerce.* That was the implied principle which he now brought to the attention of the Court. That was what the elder statesmen who had drawn the old City Charter clearly stated and what the land commissioners had relied upon for their authority when they drew the clause used in the O'Malley grant, he explained.

Bemrose clarified for the Judges the reasoning behind this principle. Before railroads and concrete highways had been developed, the plodding canal boat was the only reliable carrier of goods and produce between the Atlantic seaboard and the West. The Erie Canal, opened in 1825, not only peopled the Middle West, but made New York City, which was then a second- or third-rate port, the leading harbor of the world. The Canal provided the only highway between the Atlantic and the Great Lakes that did not necessitate crossing mountains. Commerce, life blood of the new nation, depended on navigation, and the lawmakers had recognized this, Bemrose pointed out.

He explained to the Court that as early as 1769, Benjamin Franklin, recognizing that the Canal was a more efficient carrier of freight than any road then existing, urged more canal building, and George Washington carried on the fight. Early decisions of the Federal Supreme Court gave the public interest in commerce and navigation precedence over the old and respected principle of *eminent domain*. The only time the State could take property without just compensation and the only time that waterfront owners could be deprived of their property rights was in order to promote commerce and navigation, Bemrose emphasized. This had been decided early in the country's history, and draftsmen of the old City Charter, steeped in that thinking, had limited the recapture of waterfront land to property that was necessary for navigation and commerce. The State could destroy riparian rights without compensation only on one condition, Bemrose

maintained, and only when the recapture of the land benefited navigation and commerce.

Citing historic sources and documenting his argument with early law, Bemrose made this point again and again.

Judge Lehman rubbed his palm along the smooth surface of the table and said, "Having inserted the recapture clause in the O'Malley grant according to the provision of the Old Charter, the language of the grant will be limited to the purpose in the Charter even though that language is not repeated in the grant. Is that your point, Mr. Bemrose?"

The Court understood. Arthur had clarified with exceptional lucidity the complex issue. There would be no misstatement or confusion as to his premise.

"That is my point, your Honor." Satisfied, he settled behind his mustache. "Since the condemnation was for a street improvement and not for a harbor or waterway, it was not a taking for commerce and navigation." It was his clinching argument, and he paused. "The clause in the O'Malley grant could not, as a matter of law, have been applied to cut down the award to my client."

Judge Lehman nodded. His hearing box remained before him undisturbed while the lawyer for the other side, agitated, hurried through the pages of his brief.

Larry turned around and saw Cy O'Malley nudge his neighbor.

At the end of the row reserved for visitors in back Larry spotted Janice Baldwin. She sat forward tensely, her gloved hands clasping the railing. Larry tried to stare her into awareness across the vast room, but her solemn wide eyes were riveted on Bemrose. With the brown fur of her coat gathered around her shoulders, she blended into the oak of the room, another fine ornament in the expanse of golden carving.

Suddenly Judge Lehman's voice, questioning Arthur, acquired a new, hard tone: "... how the question was not argued in the old case?" Larry had missed the beginning, but it was obvious that Judge Lehman suspected that the old case might have been dishonestly tried. In the days when Cy's father had received the award, Tammany was corrupt. Maybe the O'Malleys'

lawyer had made a deal with the unscrupulous City lawyers to forget the recapture clause.

“Why didn’t anyone argue the point?” Judge Lehman demanded. “From what you’ve said so far, it evidently takes considerable arguing. If your point is well taken, which of course is undecided——”

The tic started in Arthur’s lip. Larry knew that unless he could explain why the point had not previously been argued the Court would affirm without opinion, reasoning that a new trial might be a good thing if the old one had been fixed.

“If the Court please, I cannot speak from personal knowledge,” Bemrose’s voice flowed on unobstructed. “When this case was tried, I was not a member of the bar. Our trial counsel and opposing counsel in the old case are both dead. My client was a child, and his father, who received the award, died ten years ago.” His clear, assured tone denied the hopelessness of what he was saying.

“When this case was tried, the law consisted in what the lower court had decided in the Upper New York Bay case,” he pointed out. “In that case the recapture clause was declared null and void regardless of the purpose of taking. The reasons are given on page thirty-four of my brief. Both sides in this case apparently had agreed that the recapture clause was worthless, and saw no point in arguing it. Have I——” Arthur’s speech played the old trick, and a quiet rocked the room. “Have I answered your Honor’s question?” he continued confidently.

“You have at least been logical.” Judge Lehman smiled.

He had saved his case. From the back row Cy wordlessly cheered. Old Ambrose Dane shelved his lower lip in approval, and whispered to Tom Newton behind his hand.

“If I were standing——” Bemrose gestured expressively. “I must ask your Honor to recognize the Respondent’s counsel.” The Judges stirred amiably in their chairs.

Larry asked Bemrose to excuse him as the Assistant Corporation Counsel set about to refute the appeal. Hurrying to the back of the room, he slipped into an empty chair next to Janice.

The blue puffs showed under her eyes. She had been crying. Larry took her hand in wordless comfort.

“It went fine,” he reassured her. “He got over the two big hurdles. I think they’ll reverse.”

The tears started again, and her hand shook in his.

“He proved that he can do it,” Larry said.

She sobbed out loud, and the man next to her looked around.

“You saw him come in?”

She nodded dumbly.

“It looks worse than it is,” Larry said. “He gets around all right. You’ll see. Wait for us outside.”

She motioned Larry to follow her out of the courtroom and in the waiting room explained to him that she couldn’t stay until Arthur was through. She was making the five o’clock train back to the city. She had to get to Washington that night, and had a plane reservation from New York at nine.

“But he’ll want to see you, Janice. When I tell him you were here——”

She held up the stiff, sharp hands.

“He’ll be so happy you were.”

Her smooth dark head fell forward over the thick arm of the chair, and she pressed her eyes into the leather. Larry put his arm around her shoulder. “I hate to see you go back alone.”

She bravely rearranged her features.

“He’ll be wondering what has happened to you,” Janice said. “You’d better go back in there.”

“You’re sure you don’t want him to know?” Larry smoothed the dark straight strands of hair along her cheek.

Janice shook her head. “I’ll be in New York next week. I’ll call you.”

Larry followed her through the marble rotunda to the door. She looked small and lost among the massive columns.

“How did you know about today?” he asked.

“Tom Newton. I met him on the train coming up from Washington.” She reached up and clung to Larry’s lapels. “I was a fool to make the trip. I should have known when you told me not to come to New York——”

He kissed her. “He’ll feel fine if the Court decides for him. It’s going to set him up. Today isn’t a bad day to hang around——”

Miserably she shook her head, and her eyes were soft and damp. Larry figured she wasn’t crying for the wounded she may have left behind her in China, but for her own private casualty here at home.

During the remainder of the Corporation Counsel’s argument, Larry sat in the back of the courtroom with Cy O’Malley. Cy’s baby face had lost its roundness, and his blue eyes were mute, as the City’s small, blond lawyer, whose irregular features looked as if they had been torn out of paper, replied to Bemrose’s argument. The lawyer’s response lacked conviction. The more he argued, the more cumbersome and unnecessary it seemed to rouse the gray-bearded O’Malley judgment from its fifteen year slumber. It appeared impractical to indulge the City in its “second guess,” as Bemrose had called it, and reopen litigation that long had been considered final. Apparently Arthur felt no threat in his opponent’s argument. When the other lawyer finished, Arthur waived a reply, although it was only ten minutes of six, and the Court did not adjourn until six o’clock. Confident that the Judges had grasped his point, he shrewdly decided to rest the case. Larry saw Cy’s relief when it was over and they went up front to help Arthur collect his papers.

“Nice going,” Cy said. “I think you nailed them.”

Arthur greeted them looking rested and content. “Help me out of here, will you, Larry?” He bent over to pick up his crutches which lay on the carved stretcher of the table. “I’d like to see Tom Newton before he gets away.”

Newton was waiting outside with John Elias, the Assistant Corporation Counsel, and A. Atherton Clark and Ambrose Dane, both of whom were prominent trial lawyers.

Clark, cold as the black and white tile of the entrance hall, held out his hand. “Beautiful legal questions. A very satisfying case,” he said, congratulating Bemrose.

Ambrose Dane, hearty and bearlike, hovered over him. “I kept thinking of the Old Man. He would have enjoyed that argument. Too bad he couldn’t have been up there on the bench.”

The Assistant Corporation Counsel knifed his way into the group. “You did a fine job. I think I’m licked.”

Tom Newton, who fringed the gathering and was waiting for Bemrose, eyed the young lawyer tolerantly. He came in and put his arm around Arthur’s shoulder. “You didn’t forget how in the Army. That was—” He circled his thumb and finger. “But on the nose.”

He motioned to an empty corner across the hall, and Arthur hobbled after him.

A few minutes later Larry heard Arthur say, “Next week, Tom. Not later than Wednesday. And thanks.”

A white-haired woman with a familiar smile embraced Arthur. Larry hadn’t seen Mrs. Bemrose for twenty years, but there was no mistaking the inclusive smile. He left them alone and when he returned, the other lawyers had gone.

“I came early and heard the whole thing,” Mrs. Bemrose reported.

Larry responded to her ample, outgoing spirit. “It was a tough case. He did a fine job.”

“You’ve been good to him. You’ve helped him—” She pressed Larry’s arm by way of thanks.

“His father would like to see him. He didn’t want to come to Court.” Her tired eyes lifted to the glass dome of the rotunda. “Come to supper. You’ll only have to stay a little while.”

Larry wondered whether the day had been too much for Bemrose. The trip up, the strain of the argument, the hand-shaking and standing afterward, and now the family.

But Arthur's voice was crisp and reassuring. "Tom has a swell job for me in Washington. A war job. He wants me to come down and see him about it next week."

So that's why Newton had hung around. To see whether Arthur could handle whatever work he had lined up for him.

"How about letting us take *you* out to dinner?" Larry asked Mrs. Bemrose. "I haven't been out with a good-looking girl for years."

Laughing, she stood aside and let Arthur through the bronze doors. Her big head swept back proudly.

"I hope they'll take him in Washington," she told Larry. "I hope they'll find some interesting war work for him."

Larry noted that she seemed composed when Arthur fumbled for the rung of his crutches. If she were crying inside, Larry never knew. Apparently Mrs. Bemrose kept her tears where they didn't show.

Chapter 22

Larry took Bemrose to Washington the next week to hear about the job that Tom Newton had in mind for him. They entered one of the newest and most dazzling of the government tombs, rode to the floor of Tom's office, and started down the endless corridor. Larry felt as if he were walking into his own burial place, with the white hall a collapsible telescope, and the exit of the corridor a side road into the hereafter. It was a future world requiring neither ascent nor descent but approached on the same level at which one had lived. Elations and frustrations rotated unhappily in the tube of white stone, until they seemed more important than when first they had been laughed or ached over. Larry thought of how an acorn dropping on an awning sometimes detonates like a bullet.

The rubber tips of Arthur's crutches grabbed the stone floor. Obsessed with memories of his first trip to the Capitol under Judge Haynes' tutelage, Arthur kept quoting the Old Man. Either Bemrose was aging, Larry decided, and reached into the past for gifts the present withheld from him, or the Old Man's restless spirit demanded a hearing.

"Whenever we walked through the Capitol, he'd never let me stop to read the inscriptions on the statues. I think he envied them," Arthur said. "Do you know the one of Marshall on the west terrace of the Capitol? I used to feel like taking off my hat when I saw it, but he'd rush me past. I don't know why he should have felt that way about Marshall."

"Competition, maybe."

"We used to drop into the old Supreme Court. When it was still in the Capitol," Arthur added. "I think he hated those staring marble busts of the Justices. He never had much use for tradition, you know. He said the past was something we couldn't help. His theory was that you didn't have to like the past. You only had to put up with it."

"Now he's the past." Bemrose sighed. "I can never get it through my thick head. Some mornings when I walk into the office, or when I'm on a trip to

Washington like this, I expect to see him coming at me, his black robes billowing around that skinny frame of his.”

“As long as his ideas are still good, he’s really not the past,” Larry said.

“They weren’t always good. That’s the trouble. He was often stinking anti-social.” The rubber thumped the stone dully as Arthur beat out his re-evaluation of Haynes. “He smothered his reactionary views in charm, and people forgot to take offense.”

“What do you mean by ‘anti-social’? Whose society was he against?” Larry asked, grateful to have a human voice penetrate the mausoleum quiet of the hall and break the mournful rhythm of this walk.

“He’d take me to Rock Creek Park, and we’d race his game leg up and down the hills—they have real inclines over there. But it wasn’t the exercise he wanted. Mostly he’d want to talk.” Arthur bore down on his crutches as he reconstructed the Judge’s thinking while Larry watched to make sure that his crutches didn’t skid.

“He’d say that whenever labor got control, it began to fuss and rail against conditions. The more gadgets the working man bought and the more bathrooms he had, the more he complained about conditions. The Judge’s theory was that people had a better time without modern comforts, that when they lived poorer, worked harder, and didn’t have the benefits of education, they had more fun than with their high wages, their ideology, and their unions. He claimed that the soldiers who were with him at San Juan Hill laughed more and had a better time living in mud than the well-fed working man at home. He said when you shortened hours and gave people time and energy to complain, they would start being miserable, like the French peasants before the revolution. He called union leaders big business men who had forgotten what most business men knew—that the way to make a living was to work hard. As much as he liked the adventure and excitement of a military war, that’s as much as he hated class war.”

A Senator that Arthur knew stopped to say hello.

“Another labor-baiter,” he said when the Senator had gone.

“You wouldn’t call the Old Man——?”

“He wasn’t intentionally vicious,” Bemrose admitted. “His trouble was that he believed the best in people. Capital offered no threat to labor, and labor would smarten up in time and see class war didn’t get anywhere. No one, according to the Old Man, ever plotted against anyone else. Naïve, wasn’t it? I suppose he was wrapped in court wool for too many years. Street fights and brawls were just newspaper stories to him. He didn’t think they happened. Besides, he always thought more education would iron out the unreasonableness.”

Larry paced his step to Arthur’s measured gait.

“The Old Man himself, for all his learning, could never control his temper,” Arthur said. “On Sunday we’d go out to Arlington and read the names on the graves, and he’d growl at every fourth or fifth name. He was an eloquent hater. He could hate the dead as hard as he hated the living.” Arthur paused.

“Harder,” he continued. “I’m glad they let him go to Arlington. He always wanted to. I think he liked the idea of spending the rest of time across the bridge from Lincoln. You’ve seen that seated figure of Lincoln—the memorial by French.”

Larry nodded.

“The Old Man used to stand in front of it for hours, looking into Lincoln’s wise face. It was one statue he didn’t sneer at—I think he felt Lincoln knew something human, something about the way people operate, that he had never got hold of.”

“How about taking the Old Man some flowers if we finish with Newton early?” Larry suggested.

“We’ll take him geraniums. He always said they smelled badly and looked awful, and that’s why he liked them. Honest. No frills about geraniums and no perfume worth mentioning.”

“You’re sure Newton’s office is down the hall?” Larry asked. “I bet we’ve passed fifty doors already.”

Arthur indicated some doors about a quarter of a mile further on. “Five minutes away. When Zantzinger, the architect, submitted blueprints for this tomb, he should have included roller skates.”

“Did the Old Man ever say what he wanted for you? What he really hoped? Was it the Supreme Court?” Larry asked.

“It might have been,” Arthur admitted. “He might have had it in mind. That is, before they moved it east of the Capitol and gave it the biggest columns and the biggest pediment and entablature of any tomb in Washington. He hated the biggest of anything. He had misgivings about the new Court and said they would get the swelled head once they’d moved over there. I’d see him stand in front of the new building, a Pigmy alongside those marble slabs, and wither the columns with his superiority. You could see them shrivel. Then he’d turn around and threaten me. ‘Wait ’til they send you up here someday!’ That’s how he put it.”

“Send you up, huh. Like Sing Sing.”

“He probably had naïve ideas of what I had to do in order to be ‘sent up.’ Write a few brilliant briefs and execute a couple of first-class jobs in Washington. That’s all there would be to it. I’d be noticed and they would invite me to sit on the Court.”

“Well, here’s your chance. Newton’s noticed you. What do you think he has lined up?”

A black cat ran in front of them, and Arthur twisted his left shoulder to look down the corridor, watching it slide along the floor. “Murder cases,” he said.

“You said it was a war job, didn’t you?” Larry asked. “I suppose that would have suited the Old Man down to the ground.”

“Sure. He’d say I was committed to fighting this War, and I ought to go on with it. Even if they hand me a tough assignment which doesn’t seem to be hooked up directly with the fighting. He’d say that if I believed in the War, I ought to work with everything I’ve got no matter where I come out, and if _____”

It was the first time during the funereal walk that Bemrose’s speech stumbled.

“You’re tired.” Larry steadied his elbow.

“If brains are all I have left, I ought to fight with them,” Arthur concluded his thought.

Larry had a sudden flash of insight. The march down the long corridor showed Arthur's incapacity to make war like other men. It confirmed his fears about others doing his physical fighting for him. His decision to consider Newton's desk job was recognition that he considered himself through physically. He must feel that the quickness was drained from him. While he might believe hard in the War, he couldn't physically execute his beliefs. The alternative was to accept Tom's job and fight at a desk. Larry figured that was the way Bemrose reasoned about it.

"Lucy's the one I have to worry about," he continued. "This trouble of mine is costing real money. She's never complained about the cost or the bother, but I haven't any right to ask her to live on a dollar a year."

"After all, she won't have to, will she?" Larry pointed out.

Arthur braced himself for the final sprint down the hall and swung along silently. This last wordless stretch seemed longer than the initial mileage. Larry had a sense of proceeding to a waiting doom at the end of the cryptlike corridor. Then, as swiftly as the brush of a cat's tail, the mood of bleak fate altered. A figure stepped from Newton's door into the hall and turned sharply toward them. She stopped, cried out, and reached to steady Bemrose.

Larry saw the tightly wrapped face and dark searching eyes and knew that this was the inevitable and recurring pattern in Bemrose's life—a long face with high cheekbones and oversized eyes, an economy of smooth, dark skin distributed over a large-boned frame. This was the leitmotif relentlessly performed and encored.

"Tom told me he was expecting you." Janice kept her hand on the sleeve of his overcoat.

Arthur rejoined the living with his smile and swung around accusingly. "Did you write Janice?" he asked Larry.

With exaggerated fervor, Larry protested. "Of course not. I thought this trip was going to be business."

“Tom won’t give you more than an hour. It’s a madhouse in there.” She indicated the door. “I’ll pick you up and drive you to the house for lunch. I have a place in Georgetown, and a new painting by Julio de Diego someone lent me for the drawing room. You’ll have to see the painting. Is it all right if I come back at one?” She glanced nervously at her watch.

Larry offered to check with Newton’s secretary and find out. He found five secretaries in a reception room large enough for a Legion convention and promptly located the one who knew about Bemrose’s appointment.

A resigned and weary line waiting to see the Attorney-General eyed Larry hostilely as he hurried past the pale blue walls, indirect lighting, and chromium to the outer hall.

“Newton will see him in five minutes,” Larry touched her cheek. “You don’t mind if I look at your house another time, do you, Jan? I have some personal business to take care of.”

She grabbed his hand. “How personal?”

“No, honestly. I’ve been promising a client for a month that I’d see a man in the O.P.A. about the ceiling price on bone buttons.”

“You’ll drive him back to the hotel in time, won’t you, Jan?” He guided Arthur to Newton’s door. “We’re planning to catch the five o’clock home.”

“No one has to drive me to the hotel. I’ll get a cab,” Arthur protested, but Janice reassured Larry with a nod that she would take care of him.

They missed the five and the six o’clock back to New York, and Larry, tired of waiting for Bemrose, changed their parlor car seats to a drawing room on the sleeper. After a late dinner which consisted mainly of succulent chincoteagues on the half shell, one of the reasons for coming to Washington, Larry always figured, they went up to their hotel room. Larry unpacked his toilet kit in the next room while Bemrose told him about the interview with Newton.

“It’s cloak and dagger stuff,” he explained. “Work with the F.B.I. drawing up indictments against Nazi sympathizers in this country. The F.B.I. has the

evidence, and my job would be to make it legal under section nine, title eighteen, of the federal code.”

“Have you grounds for indicting the bastards?” Larry asked. “They’re slick operators, particularly that Yorkville jerk—you know the one I mean. They probably are smart enough to sweep up good and clean when they finish a job.” Larry threw away a torn tube of shaving cream. The wartime metal was like tissue paper and had split the second time he used the tube.

“They’ve tried to stir up insubordination and mutiny in the Army and Navy,” Arthur said. “Distributed printed matter advising disloyalty and refusal of duty.”

“What can they get?” Larry asked. “What’s the maximum?”

“Ten years’ imprisonment, or a ten thousand dollar fine, or both.”

Larry whistled. “And Tom thinks the F.B.I. has the goods that will nail them?”

Arthur nodded. “Tom has to make it stick. That’s not so easy.”

“Every time I hear those birds talk about how Roosevelt asked the Japs to attack Pearl Harbor—” Larry spit into the wash basin. “The bastards should be locked up. Remember Jan and that fellow Richter, the art dealer?”

“You understand it’s graveyard, Tom’s proposition,” Arthur reminded him.

“What kind of money did he talk? You told him a dollar-a-year was out _____”

“He recognizes my medical expenses are heavy, and thinks he can stretch the job to pay eight or nine thousand. I can manage on that. Not in style, but we can live. I still have to talk to Lucy and see how she feels about pulling up stakes in New York.”

“I hope you can get rid of the slimy bastards. That would be an accomplishment, all right,” Larry said enviously. “If you decide to come down here and close the office, I may try for a commission.” He walked in from the bathroom, and threw his toilet kit on the bed. It bounced on the damask bed cover.

“See how things shape up with me first,” Arthur suggested. “There may be a job down here for you. Or this thing of Tom’s might only last a few

months. Maybe I'll even decide to keep the office going."

Larry frowned and sat down hard on the edge of the bed.

"There I go again, telling you what to do while I go out and cut myself a slice of war. I guess I'll never learn," Arthur apologized. His voice was high and strained. "You do what you want."

"It's okay." Larry went back to the bathroom for a shoe cloth.

"Next time kick me around the block."

Larry bent over the tub and wiped his shoes. "What does Jan think about your moving down?"

"Come again."

"What does Jan think?" Larry repeated.

There was silence from the other room.

Larry waited for Bemrose to answer, and when he didn't hear anything, he went into the bedroom, circled the bed and picked up the phone. "You're packed, aren't you?" Larry asked him. "I'll find out from the bell captain what time the train is made up. Let's get to the station early and grab some sleep before we pull out."

Chapter 23

The next afternoon in New York Larry bumped into Davis Shore leaving Arthur's office. Shore jerked his recognition and moved on.

"Someone tell him a clean story? He looks downhearted," Larry observed.

"He wanted me to take a case for him. I referred him to Harrison," Arthur said.

"That must have felt lovely."

"I thought it would, but it didn't," Arthur went on signing his mail.

"Wasn't he in once before this week?"

"Yes. He's been after me to try this new case ever since Albany. He must have heard about my argument up there."

"And it didn't feel good to turn him down?" Larry asked. "If I were you, I think I would have stuck in the knife and twisted it."

"You wouldn't pull a leg off a dead spider. There's no fun in that," Arthur said.

"What kind of cattle boat did his ancestors come over on anyway? He must have something to cover up, or he wouldn't be such a snob."

"He's a helluva good reason for accepting the job in Washington," Arthur agreed. "I wonder if Tom really has anything on that Nazi crowd. If he has and we can prove——"

"I'll help you home with your bag," Larry offered. "You've had a long enough day, coming right down here from the sleeper this morning. I don't suppose you've told Lucy yet?"

"When I called up to say we were back, I hinted about it."

"You'll have to tell her all the details. Let's get going."

On the way uptown, Arthur outlined some of the ideas he had for Newton. Exhilarated, his thoughts turning with propeller speed, he was already at

work on the indictments. Larry realized that it would take more than Shore's offer of a big case to keep Bemrose in New York for the duration.

Their cab stopped for a WAAC parade that was crossing Thirty-fourth Street. The dumpy first lieutenant who barked the marching orders looked more like a tough sergeant from World War I than the dewy-eyed model silhouetted against a flag in the current WAAC recruiting poster. Oblivious to the slush underfoot, the girls stepped out smartly. Their seriousness filtered through the sidewalk crowd, and two men straightened, a woman heavily burdened with packages stopped to watch, and an old man uncovered his head.

"Give 'em hell, girls!" Bemrose touched his fingers to his forehead. "It's a fine thing, isn't it, when women have to do your fighting?" he said to Larry.

A month or a week ago he wouldn't have joked about it, Larry knew. He was too busy licking his wounds a month ago. It wouldn't have been funny.

"If they draft me, I wouldn't mind a job next to the little redhead on the end," Larry observed.

"She's not in the chorus, she's a soldier."

Larry shrugged. "I can't take a good-looking woman seriously."

"They take them seriously in Russia."

"Maybe they're not as good-looking."

"To the Russians they are."

"I can't help it. When a woman's good-looking——"

"I know, I know. You want to go to bed with her," Arthur said.

The last WAAC cleared the Avenue, and an angry honking from behind jolted their driver into action. Larry took a last mournful look at the neatly covered buttocks moving in disciplined rows. "Helluva waste of women," he sighed.

"Them women ain't wasted," Arthur said. "Ask any G.I. if you think so."

The remains of last night's heavy snowfall clogged traffic, and pedestrians waiting at bus stops stood back gingerly to avoid being splashed. The piles of soiled snow melting in the gutters furnished dirty contrast to a window at

the corner of Fifty-sixth Street and Fifth Avenue which sparkled with clean-lined modern glassware.

They rode silently past the stone transverse which divided Central Park. Bemrose turned abruptly toward Larry. “Does Lucy know she lives in Washington?”

“Not from me. I took them both out to dinner when you were at Maxwell Field, but she hasn’t talked to me about her since. Did she write you about going out with me that night?”

“The longest letter I ever had from her,” Arthur said. “She was wound up. You didn’t tell her anything that night?”

“Hell no.”

“No, of course not,” Arthur said thoughtfully. “I haven’t anything to worry about. She’s never been jealous.”

“What did she write you about the night we all had dinner?”

“I remember how she put it in the letter. She wrote ‘Miss Baldwin is still in love with you.’”

Larry nodded. “I wasn’t sure how she’d react. It’s hard to tell about her. I don’t suppose you’ll say anything about running into Jan yesterday.”

“I don’t know. I may.”

“Well, I’ll keep my mouth shut,” Larry promised.

Arthur let them in with his house key, and Larry called upstairs to Lucy. She emerged, flushed and breathless, from the kitchen on the ground floor and embraced Arthur warmly. “Was the sleeper awful? Are you dead?”

“I had a tough trip, too.” Larry offered his cheek.

When she promptly responded, he had the pleasant guilty sense of perhaps having done her an injustice for months.

Larry straightened his tie, a new one of geometric daring. “Some taste, isn’t it?”

“Your ties are always—” she hesitated—“different.”

“A euphemistic remark,” Arthur guffawed.

She drew her cool, amber brow together. “What does euphemistic mean, Larry?”

Larry put his arm around her. “He doesn’t know either. He’s showing off. He was afraid he’d come home and find you in the WAAC.”

She disengaged herself from Larry. The kitchen door, which she had carefully shut behind her, swung open and Phil Kenyon, his mustache pert and bristling, greeted them from behind a trayful of Martinis.

Arthur waved to him affably. “Hello. You must have read my mind. How about bringing them upstairs?”

“Get the olives I left on the table, Lucy,” Phil directed. “I heard you’d be back this afternoon,” he told Bemrose. “I ducked out of the office early to be on hand.”

“I’m glad you did,” Arthur said.

“Remember Randolph?” he asked Larry when they had all settled in front of a fire upstairs. “He belonged to one of the big shops downtown.”

“Don Randolph. Winchester and Seymour,” Larry prompted.

“That’s the fellow. The State Department called him in to do a hush-hush job, made him a full colonel, and sent him to England last spring on a secret mission. That was more than nine months ago, and his wife just had a baby _____”

Lucy blushed. “Did you see someone in the State Department who told you?”

“I ran into a friend.”

“I forgot to tell you about the O.P.A.,” Larry broke in. “My client is going to have to make two or three holers instead of four if he wants to crack the ceiling price.”

“Buttons,” Arthur explained to Phil Kenyon.

“He’ll need a new mold, and molds use war material,” Larry continued. “It’s a waste of time, material and labor to make new molds, but he has to do it to get around the O.P.A. In the end he charges his high price on the new line. The ceiling price only holds on old merchandise.”

“That’s one of the bad features of O.P.A.,” Bemrose acknowledged. “Just the same it’s doing a job.” He stretched lazily and poured himself another Martini.

“I think Larry has a point,” Phil Kenyon started to argue, but Lucy’s silence headed him off.

The pale eyes were on Bemrose waiting for him to say something about Newton’s offer.

“I met a Senator down there—” he started to say.

“Arthur!” Her tone reproached him. “Phil’s interested, too. You can talk about your job in front of him.”

Silently he sipped his cocktail.

“You three talk, I’ll run along,” Kenyon offered.

“Lucy’s right. We haven’t any secrets you can’t hear. Stick around.”

“Newton offered me just what you’d expect,” he continued. “He wants me to come down and fight the Battle of the Department of Justice.”

Lucy walked away from the fire, her slender fingers trailing below the tailored cuffs of a gray-blue woolen dress. The closely woven fabric concealed her fragility. She looked remarkably durable.

“How would you like to move to Washington?” Arthur talked to her back as she crossed the room.

She stopped alongside Phil Kenyon’s chair and picked up a box of matches from the table. He took it out of her hand and struck a match for her. For an instant, their glances met.

Larry bent to tie his shoelace.

“How do you think you would like to move down?” Arthur asked.

She returned slowly to her chair opposite him. “I won’t be able to leave New York. Marge is going to have a baby.”

“Why, that’s great! Maybe there’s hope for Bess and me,” Larry raised his glass. “Good for Ed, the son-of-a-gun.”

Lucy tried to smile, but didn’t make it.

“When is she expecting the baby?” Arthur inquired dully.

“Not for several months.”

“I promised to let Tom know next week.”

Lucy brushed some wisps of hair from her cheek.

“Is Marge having a tough time?” Larry asked.

“It isn’t easy for a woman of forty-two to have her first baby!” Lucy’s careful diction failed to conceal the agitation she felt.

“Ed carrying on and upsetting her?” Larry asked.

“He’s jumpy,” she admitted.

“Maybe he’s having the baby,” Arthur injected bitterly.

“Oh, Arthur—” Lucy’s eyes were wet, and Larry realized that it was she, not Ed, who was having the baby for Marge. As long as she was married to Arthur, the chances were that she wouldn’t have any of her own. She probably felt a desperate necessity to stick with Marge.

Uneasily Phil Kenyon said something about having to keep an appointment, and Lucy went downstairs with him to the door.

“That’s that, I guess.” Arthur fingered the stem of his glass, but his hand trembled. He slumped deeper in his chair.

“I’d take the job anyway,” Larry said. “She’ll follow you in a couple of months when Marge is out of the woods.”

“She wants a baby. She can’t have a baby with me,” Arthur’s shoulder jerked. “It isn’t a good feeling for a man to know that——”

Larry made no comment. A few minutes later he said, “Let her move down with you and come back to New York weekends. Tell her she can stay up here with Marge the last few weeks. Marge wouldn’t want you to give up an interesting job.”

“Well, I can’t settle it this afternoon. I’m pooped.” Bemrose pulled himself out of the chair, and his body hung a dead weight on the crutches. “Tell Lucy I’m going to grab some sleep before dinner.”

He found her at the head of the red-carpeted stairs, and they sat at the top of the landing, her fingers limply trailing the step below.

“It isn’t fair to you, either, Larry,” she complained. “Not after you gave up your practice. He shouldn’t walk out on you like this.”

“He absolutely must cut himself a piece of war,” Larry pointed out. “When a guy like Bemrose stops doing the big thing, he stops.”

“I guess if that’s what he wants to do, he should go to Washington.” There was the strength of element-proof chromium in her cool appraisal.

“But you have other plans?”

She nodded. “I can’t leave, and to tell you the truth, Larry, I don’t want to leave. I’ve been happy the last few months. I’ve felt—well, younger.”

Larry sensed the quality of the unstrained, carefree friendship with Phil Kenyon. He realized how it contrasted with the more mature burdens of her marriage. It was the difference between childhood and a grown-up world. Lucy may never have known a real childhood. She perhaps was catching up on what she had missed.

“If you like, I’ll go down to Washington with Arthur and stay with him for a few months to get him settled,” Larry offered.

She stared ahead miserably: “You’ve done enough, Larry. You have to think about yourself and Bessie——”

“I could only stay for a few months,” he admitted. “Bessie wouldn’t like me to be away any longer. But if it will help you out——”

Competently she straightened the round, schoolboy collar of her dress. “I’ll find a place for him down there if he likes, then come back. Once he’s busy at Newton’s office, he’ll be all right.”

“You mean you’ll come back to New York alone?”

“He has friends in Washington, and it’s his kind of place. He needs room to think in, and I can’t give it to him. I know he feels cramped around me. I’ve about decided that he always will. I’ve just been waiting for him to get well enough to look around for what he needs.”

Larry covered her hand which lay on the step next to his. "I used to wonder if you'd grow up," he said.

"Have I?"

"You're willing to give up what belongs to you, even though you have a mortgage. You helped put Arthur back on his feet. You have rights. It takes guts and some pretty grown-up feelings to surrender a valuable property."

"You don't make people happy by owning them," Lucy said. "And you can't really own them unless they want to belong."

He asked her to come downstairs with him while he looked for his coat. On the way out he smiled and said, "I like your friend Kenyon. He's okay."

PART IV

Chapter 24

Six weeks later Larry spent a Saturday in Georgetown at Janice's house where Bemrose had been living for more than a month. Arthur's painful probing of the hotel and apartment situation had ended as it almost always ended these days, with no room and no apartment, and Janice insisted that he move into her guest room until he found something else of his own. She registered the room with the O.P.A. and he paid her the approved rental.

During the grim winter of '43 when more planes were put into the English skies than returned to landing strips bedded in the Oxford-Cambridge villages, in the winter the Red Army, freed by the Stalingrad victory, advanced against Rostov in a drive to reopen the Caucasus and the Crimea, in the winter that MacArthur's men, mopping up in Papua and the Solomons, awaited tensely "a Jap move of utmost importance," and Montgomery, triumphant after El Alamein, stubbornly battled Rommel's last outpost in Tunis, in the winter the home front retched at Hull's choice of Vichyite Peyrouton for governor of Algiers, in that grim winter Janice bloomed. Larry figured that the times were hers. She seemed to understand and belong to the times, and they rewarded her.

It was the winter, Larry predicted, that Janice would look her most beautiful, just as there seems to be a year when almost every woman becomes life-ripened and achieves her fullest flavor, fragrance, color, and texture. With Janice this ripening must have been curiously delayed. In her twenties she was too scrawny and intense, with eyes that grabbed on too quickly. In her early thirties, the flesh retreated to her bones where it clung tight and dry. Now in her middle thirties, a radiance took hold. The black chips of eyes, which had burned defiantly and stubbornly, threw back opalescent lights of green, rose, and gold. The dull boy's hair acquired brilliance, as if stroked fifty times a night, and the parched flesh satisfied its thirst, suffused by the racing fluid of vein and capillaries.

In the high-ceilinged drawing room of Janice's house this afternoon in early February, Bemrose sat at the edge of the crowd and followed her pattern of light as it illuminated the guests. Larry, from a corner next to the damask-

hung window, reflected that the significant moments of Bemrose's life, and perhaps of many a modern man's, were lived in crowds. Larry thought of the crowded evening at Professor Storey's when Arthur had first begun to know Janice, of the crowded drawing room at home when he had become engaged to Lucy——

Larry thought he understood why many contemporary painters selected crowds to show the face of America. More and more the individual was judged by an impression snatched in a group. The crowd had become measure of the man, and the interest a man commanded in a crowd often mirrored his position in the social framework. Formerly a portrait by Rembrandt, Copley, or Gilbert Stuart told the story of a society, but today the crowd seemed to have replaced the individual as sitter.

About seventy-five cards spilled from a silver dish on the table of Janice's entrance hall. She had invited some friends from the Russian embassy, and although she could not compete with the caviar and champagne they served at official functions, Janice had paid them a subtle tribute. Behind the drawing room in her study, she had used an empty magnum salvaged from the last embassy party to decorate the hearth. A Russian with shiny skull bent to examine the bottle, and as he wiped the dusty neck with his finger, he smiled approvingly.

Janice brought over a Senator to meet him, and immediately the Russian stiffened. Knowing they belonged to different planets politically, Janice steered them toward Arthur, apparently hoping that he could establish the two on amiable ground—whatever that area might be. Larry tried to imagine a mutually agreeable subject and ended with Donald Duck. Disney, in a future world government, would be a logical Secretary of Communications.

The other guests, including cabinet assistants, newspapermen, congressmen, and two Supreme Court wives, also gravitated to the cluster of quiet around Bemrose, as if he assured them respite from the crowd chatter. They had come to expect a quiet strength, a sound opinion from Arthur. Guests who met him, often for the first time, intuitively felt this quality. That's what Janice told Larry. Larry, himself, had seen it happen in New York recently. With the dependable crowd instinct which used to sidestep his blustering,

people now sought him out, attracted by his deep quiet, and seeming to find in it solace for their own worries or the world's worries.

A Washington hostess, whose Friday night suppers sowed items regularly in the gossip columns, approached Larry on miserly ankles. "You're his best friend, aren't you?" she asked sharply.

Larry backed toward the window away from her bulk of bosom.

"I hear the President is delighted he came to Washington. I hear the President regards him as one of the most brilliant lawyers we have. Wonderful how he manages to get around on those crutches—" She used her malnourished hands to emphasize the words.

"Wonderful how the President manages," Larry said evasively.

The woman moved closer and watched Janice spar with one of the *Everett's* editors, her legs astride and chest high. "Nice for both of them, his staying here," she observed.

Larry lit her cigarette. "It's a lucky thing she took him in with the hotels jammed."

"Man in his condition doesn't belong in a hotel! Plenty of room here. Good for her to have a man in the house. Good for everyone. I need someone in my barn." Hawkishly she eyed Larry, but he unhooked himself. "You must let Janice bring you up some Friday night——"

He sat on the windowsill to recover, and felt immense relief. Washington paid attention to the woman. She'd stop the gossips. It was a real break, having her on their side. She'd make it seem patriotic for Janice to have taken him in.

"Caroline thinks you're a lamb," Janice said a few minutes later. "She claims you're the best dressed man in the room."

Larry glanced curiously at the sleeves of his blue coat.

"She talks too much. She's a hyperthyroid. Come on and meet some of the nice people."

Janice took his hand, but he said, "I'll see how Arthur is."

“You’ll never get near him. You’d think he was giving away red points.” The radiance dimmed for a moment. “I hope he’s having a good time. They’re all in love with him.”

She sighed. “You were right. He has changed. He’s stopped trying to be important.”

“He’s important to us,” Larry said.

“I think it’s the War,” Janice speculated. “At first I thought it was his illness, but now I don’t know. I think the War may have helped to pull him out of himself——”

“Your friend Caroline approves of his staying here,” Larry said.

“I try to invite people he likes, try to make it comfortable——”

“You do all right when you try,” Larry reassured her. “Go on back to your guests. I’m fine.”

The tomato face of Davis Shore gleamed under his white cap of hair. He motioned affably to Larry who, remembering Shore’s recent snub at the office, figured it must be the good liquor at work. “Here’s Mr. Bemrose’s associate,” Shore said to a lawyer Larry recognized from the Treasury. “He’ll tell us the catch in it. That preposterous scheme of Ruml’s to forgive nineteen forty-two taxes——” he explained. “I don’t see how the Treasury can afford to——”

“But forty-three is going to be an even bigger tax year,” the lawyer expounded patiently. “I’m trying to convince Mr. Shore that the Treasury won’t lose anything. It’s just a matter of bookkeeping.”

“Forgiving taxes! When we have a war to pay for! It takes genius to dream up such a scheme. I’d like to ask our friend, Bemrose——”

“I discussed it with Bemrose last night at the Morgenthau’s,” the lawyer reported. “He thinks it’s sound.”

Shore’s ruddy countenance turned an exasperated white. “Worst time in history for Bemrose to bury himself down here,” he confided to Larry. “We need him at our end of things in New York. We’ve tried to make it interesting. I wouldn’t want you to repeat this, Mr.—” He twitched uncomfortably.

“Frank.”

“Oh, yes, Frank. Well, our Board authorized me to invite Bemrose to become General Counsel of the company. Adams, who has been with us for thirty years, had an embolism. Fine fellow, Adams, but we don’t expect him back.”

“I suppose Arthur felt he couldn’t leave Newton,” Larry sympathized.

“Newton could fill the job with a dozen other men.”

“I don’t know. Arthur seems to think the work down here is important.” Larry rehearsed his most cordial manner. Someday Bemrose might be glad to be General Counsel to a utility.

“Thought I might tackle Newton to release him,” Shore said. “Didn’t I see Newton come in a few minutes ago?”

“He’s over there with Arthur.” Larry started toward the study.

“By the way, Frank, what are you doing now that Bemrose’s office is closed?”

“I’m back at my practice.”

“Downtown?”

“Midtown.”

Shore winced. “Too bad you couldn’t stay with him. Fine training for a lawyer to work around Bemrose.”

“My old roommate is putting up with me.”

“Then you’re tied up—” Shore added vaguely.

Arthur was telling an Englishman where he could buy ladies’ girdles to take back with him to London when Shore and Larry walked into the room.

“Just moved to Washington and he knows where to shop for girdles,” Tom Newton kidded.

“I hope you’re not going to keep him down here,” Shore said.

Newton tossed a cigarette into the fire. “He signed up for the duration plus six months.”

“I don’t want to lose my job,” Arthur said. “I like my boss.”

Affectionately Newton stroked his shoulder. “You’re pretty good at your job for a youngster just out of law school.”

“Why *don’t* you put in a youngster?” Shore asked. “We need him for that Reynolds case. Isn’t another lawyer who understands our problems and can try the damn case. How about giving him six months’ leave?”

Newton pretended sympathy. “We’d like to oblige, but in Europe there’s shooting going on.”

“He’s only chairborne infantry,” Shore remarked, and Larry waited for Bemrose to wince.

“Why shouldn’t I stay here and have the privilege of wasting some of the taxpayers’ money?” Arthur chuckled. “Everyone else does. How about it, Tom?”

“I have orders from the White House to keep him on the payroll,” Newton said. “If you don’t want to upset the Commander-in-Chief, you’ll stop trying to seduce him with your retainers.”

Shore flattened his babyfine hair across his forehead. Apparently resigned, he said, “I don’t suppose you can recommend a lawyer.”

“What’s the matter with—” Arthur started to say.

A lady columnist jostled Shore and spilled the Martini he had in his hand. She plopped on the arm of Bemrose’s chair. “Is it true you have the goods on that Yorkville reptile? Come on, give. I hear you have enough to hang him.” She wiped her face with a soiled chiffon handkerchief. Turning her back on the others, she fingered Arthur’s lapel.

Janice streaked across the room. “Your friend, Vorosoff.” She interrupted the girl. “I theenk he would like to make with you circle around park.” Janice bowed, impersonating the Russian. “At the door he is waiting in black cloak. Very dremetikal.”

When the columnist had gone, Janice sat down, exhausted. “You’d have been misquoted in every Morris paper,” she told Bemrose. “All seventy-nine of them. I meant to warn you——”

“My press secretary,” Arthur said, pointing to Janice. “She has the best legs in Washington.”

“Fool!” Janice grabbed Tom Newton and shouldered her way to the drawing room.

“They are,” Larry said. “I never noticed. Anything I can get you?”

“I *have* everything,” Arthur said cryptically. “You’re staying over tonight, aren’t you?”

“You’ll be dead by the time this crowd leaves. You won’t want to stay up and talk. You’ll be worn out.”

“I want to talk to you about that case of Shore’s. Maybe we can get him to turn it over——”

“I wouldn’t know what to do with it if he did,” Larry protested. “It’s way over my head.”

“I’d help you with it. That part is easy. But I have to figure out an angle with Shore. We’ll have to sell you to him. Subtly, of course.”

“He wouldn’t want me,” Larry said.

“Who gives a damn what he wants? There’s a good fee in it——”

“You never charged him.”

Arthur laughed. “This time he’ll pay through the nose.” He changed the subject abruptly. “Is it true old Caroline wanted to rape you?”

Larry fingered the buttons on his double-breasted coat. “She didn’t waste much time on me. She was too busy giving you and Janice the green light. It’ll be okay on both sides of the Mason and Dixon line. They listen to Caroline.”

“Didn’t you tell her I was a married man?”

“I don’t think she cares.”

Solemnly Bemrose fingered the strands of his mustache.

“So you think you rate a bedroom and bath for the O.P.A. ceiling price?” Larry asked. “Without performing any services?”

“I’m very useful, I watch the house,” Arthur protested. “Most of the Georgetown police have been drafted. Someone has to keep an eye on the house for her.”

“She always dressed well, but now she’s pretty,” Larry nodded toward Janice. “You’re therapeutic.”

Arthur sobered. “Contented. It’s almost the first time the little man inside hasn’t been sticking pitchforks in me, pulling and pushing me out of shape.”

“Maybe it’s Janice. She’s happy you’re here, and she’s making a big effort _____”

“Other people have put themselves out,” Arthur reminded him.

“Maybe the life and the people down here suit you more,” Larry said.

“I’ve always been scared of people.”

Larry mocked. “You? Why you self-possessed bastard——”

Arthur’s voice was calm and insistent. “It’s the first time in my life I’ve really felt at home with people.”

“Maybe it’s because they’re more your kind than—well, Ed and Marge,” Larry speculated.

“Nothing wrong with Ed and Marge,” Bemrose insisted. “Trouble was with me.”

Janice brought over Judd Harrison. He asked Arthur his opinion of the Japs and their chances of jockeying a negotiated peace.

While he and Bemrose discussed the problem, Janice urged Larry to stay overnight. “We’ll fix supper, just the three of us,” she promised.

“Bessie expects me home.”

“Just this once. When I’m happy,” she pleaded. The blood-red fingertips crept along his collar. “You’ve almost always seen me at my worst, Larry. Yes, you have. I’d like you to be around once when I’m——”

On the way upstairs to phone Bessie, Larry stopped to read the inscriptions on some photographs which lined the wall—the picture of a Chinese General whose name was elaborated in characters as ornate as his medals, Janice in Paris with De Gaulle, Janice with Jimmy Doolittle and Queen

Elizabeth on an English airdrome, Janice in Honolulu at a USO show surrounded by G.I.'s, and an old one of Janice in a cloth coat down to the ankles on her way home from China.

In her bedroom Larry fingered the candlewick spread before deciding to sit on the bed. The room was unpretentious, bright with rag rugs and chintz, and the polished pine floorboards gleamed warmly. Larry settled down and relaxed against a sturdy bedpost.

Bessie's voice rang sweetly in his ear. "Having a good time, Larry? Is it snowing? There's a blizzard here."

But Janice's heels clattered across the wooden doorsill, and she grabbed the phone from him. "He'll call you back," she told Bessie. "There's been an accident——"

As she dialed, Larry pictured Bemrose sprawled on the floor downstairs. "For God's sake, Janice!"

She covered his mouth with her hand. "Henry Chu, Chinese Embassy. Heart attack."

She gave the doctor crisp directions.

"Call Bessie back right away. She'll be worried," Janice insisted when Larry offered to go downstairs with her. "There are three or four doctors around, but they thought I ought to get his own physician. Poor Henry, he's green as a billiard table."

Bessie also thought it was Arthur, of course. "You can tell me the truth," she insisted, still skeptical when Larry tried to reassure her. "If you want me to call up his wife——"

Larry finally straightened her out. "Arthur is really in good shape. He's having the time of his life down here. You should see him, Bess. He's in his element."

"That's lovely, Larry. You stay over and have a good time. Did you take your overshoes with you?"

Before he went downstairs, Larry tried to find a mystery he could read tonight in bed. Janice had shelves of every thriller from Gaboriau to Erle

Stanley Gardner. He selected *The Golden Violet* by Joseph Shearing and put it on a table in Bemrose's room.

If only it would last with Bemrose—if he could have just a year of this, he'd be set up.

In the study downstairs Henry Chu's eyelids fluttered weakly, and Janice held a glass of whiskey for him to sip. He was birdlike, frightened, and too young to have a heart attack. The other guests had disappeared into the drawing room, and Henry Chu's doctor was explaining the history and symptoms of the case not to Henry, not to Janice nor to Larry, not to the doctors who were in the next room, nor to Caroline who was a patient of his and had waited outside to see if she could help, but meticulously and earnestly to Bemrose.

Chapter 25

For all Bessie's foreboding of a blizzard, the noise of gossiping birds awakened Larry the next morning. He threw up the loose frame window and let in the spring air. The worn stone steps of a house across the street sagged gracefully in the early light, and a lilac bush was putting out rows of buds prematurely. Except for the birds it was quiet in the narrow, shaded street, and the uneven brick of the old houses, painted dull red or white, recalled the lost leisure of another age.

Only a few minutes away the Pentagon's network of ramps confounded visitors, and short-tempered lines a block long waited for rooms at the Statler, but in this ancient settlement where Gilbert Stuart once had an art studio, where Francis Scott Key lived and John Howard Payne was buried, Larry felt a village peace.

He had breakfast downstairs with Arthur and Janice. After they had loafed through the *New York Times* and two cups of coffee apiece, Janice asked about their plans for the day. "I have to finish a piece that's overdue," she explained. "Why don't you make some nice arrangements, and if you feel like coming back around four, I'd love to fix you an early tea." She looked crisply iced in a chartreuse housecoat.

Bemrose fumbled in the pocket of his old bathrobe and produced a card. "How far is Thirty-first and L?" he asked. "Walk over there with me, will you, Larry? If it's not too far?"

Janice studied the address. "I think that neighborhood is colored."

"It's where the Old Man lived fifty years ago, when he was down here as law secretary to——"

"A Supreme Court judge, wasn't it?" Janice assisted. "I can't place the house. It may *not* be colored. The neighborhood is mixed now, and there's really no way of knowing."

"It's only four or five blocks from here. Do you mind taking me over, Larry?"

“Sure, let’s go. It’s a swell day to get out.”

“The car keys are in the hall table drawer. I’ll get them—” Janice started for the door. “Will you mail my article for me in New York tonight, Larry? It’ll save a day in getting there, and I’ll appreciate it.”

But Arthur motioned her to come back. “Don’t bother with the car keys. I’d like to go to this place on foot. It’s a kind of pilgrimage,” he explained. “There are some things I’ve been meaning to straighten out with the Judge.”

The sidewalks sagged like the doorsteps, and Bemrose stopped to rest against one of the Lombardy poplars which lined the street. He was wound up and wanted to talk about the Judge. “The Old Man put his faith in the single brilliant mind working independently,” Bemrose recalled. “He shied away from mass solutions.”

“It might help explain why he opposed labor unions,” Larry said. “Do you remember the letter he wrote to his friend Didier, where he sneered at the so-called common man? It always made me gag, that letter. The Old Man was a Back Bay snob, but modern Back Bay, not the old Boston. The roughnecks who spilled tea in the harbor were okay. They had guts, all right. By the time their blood was passed down to the Haynes family some of the democracy was filtered out.”

“I used to worry about that letter, too,” Arthur admitted. “He probably didn’t mean it, but he was obsessed with the need for being different from the herd. He believed in a man exaggerating his differences. He always found for the minority.”

“A minority of one,” Larry added. “Haynes in agreement with Haynes.”

“He wanted me to develop along his own individualistic lines, and that was a fallacy.” Arthur paused. “I might be fashioned in his image and still only turn out to be a faint carbon copy, without the Old Man’s vitality. I could pick up the mannerisms, follow the rules, and still only be a watered down edition of him, the way those Back Bay customers can’t begin to touch Sam Adams. Let’s say I did turn out to be a reasonably good imitation of Haynes—without the Old Man’s wisdom, of course. The point is, I wouldn’t be Bemrose.”

Arthur pointed to a hedge across the street. “Lovely box.”

They waited at the intersection before he attempted to swing across the broken curbstone. “I didn’t know it at the time, but I was never happy functioning alone. For all my eccentricities, I’m not a lone wolf. When the War came along and I did that job on Lend-Lease, the Old Man’s notions about my being a solitary worker seemed to go down the hatch. I made what, for me, was a big discovery. I was more of a group man. I had a kind of aptitude for working with people. Before, when I was going it alone, well — I really wasn’t doing what I wanted to do. Not nearly as much as I thought, anyway.”

Arthur paused again to rest. “What goes on in private practice? We worry whether A or B will collect the money, or hang on to his franchise. But how many people except A or B and their families give a damn? I can’t seem to get as worked up about A and B’s problems any more. I was fairly happy working on Lend-Lease, pretty contented in the Army, and I’m having a good time down here working for Tom. I think it’s because the work in Washington and the work in the Army involved doing something for more than one or two guys and their bank accounts. Maybe I’m just kidding myself, of course, but a war seems to indicate we ought to do more. The individual seems to be most useful when he is part of something bigger. Alone, very often, unless he’s another Robinson Crusoe, he can’t even survive. And unbombed islands are fairly scarce today.”

Arthur looked up at the clouds that lay curled and frozen in the gray-blue sky. “I suppose I should have my sights up there,” he said. “But at heart—I might as well face it, Larry—I’m probably a goddam piston.”

After a few minutes he said, “Do you remember the number of that house?”

Larry walked on ahead to investigate. He saw it was the faded yellow house, third from the corner.

“The Old Man wouldn’t have wanted you to go on pulling and pushing yourself out of shape,” Larry assured him when he returned, noting the sweat on Arthur’s chin and forehead. “You’re not trying to be like him, and that’s what he believed in. You’re being yourself. I think that’s all the Old Man ever wanted.”

Arthur laughed. “Not the Old Man. I’m afraid he would call it a decadent philosophy—losing identity in the crowd, becoming *like* other men,

agreeing with the opinions of others, working *with* them instead of apart from them——”

“He’d understand you have to work it out your own way,” Larry insisted. “Do you want to go inside the house? Supposing the people who live here _____”

It was the Negro section, as Janice had guessed. The old boards of the steps were whittled and grayed, and a broken rocker from last summer tilted face down against the porch rail. In the yard alongside the house, a boy and girl in red sweaters stared at them. Larry rang the rusty bell, and a woman of around twenty-five opened the door.

Arthur took off his hat. “I wonder if it would be possible to see the room at the head of the stairs to the left.”

“That’s our room and it’s not for rent.” She talked briskly, like a Northerner. “My husband and I have been living here two years and expect to stay.”

“I don’t want to rent it.” Bemrose’s tone was persuasively low, the voice he used for juries. “If it won’t inconvenience you, I’d like to look at the room.”

“The bed hasn’t been made. I just got back from church a few moments ago. I was going to fix some coffee for breakfast,” she added grudgingly.

“Perhaps if it wouldn’t disturb your family——”

“There’s only my husband and myself. He’s working in the garden.”

“A friend of mine used to live in your room,” Bemrose explained. “He’s dead now, but I remember him talking about the house and the neighborhood. In his time there were ships in the Potomac and the wharves were stacked with sugar and molasses——”

“That’s interesting about the River. My grandmother used to live down there at the water. I guess it’ll be all right for you to come up,” she relented. “The stairs are steep.” She looked dubiously at his crutches. “You wait down here anyway while I tidy the room.”

The stiffly furnished sitting room had a handwinding gramophone and a wicker fern stand painted green. Larry sat in a wooden rocker with stamped carving on a seat pad of flowered cotton. Arthur, exhausted from the walk, relaxed in a tan velour armchair and rested his head against a freshly

starched antimacassar. A sepia print of a child posing as Cupid, like one Larry remembered from his boyhood, was framed in a heart-shaped mat. With its pink cotton draperies and lace curtains, Larry figured that the room could have looked pretty much like this in the Judge's day.

The woman directed them upstairs while she stayed down to fix breakfast. The soles of Bemrose's shoes stuck to the corrugated matting of the steep oak steps, and he steadied himself on the polished stair rail. Upstairs in the small, sunny room there was only one chair; so Arthur sat on the bed. He reached into his coat pocket for the Judge's letters and studied a faded sketch in one of them. "That's where the commode must have stood." He pointed to the North wall. "His desk was here at the window, and——"

"I wonder where he put the bed. Maybe just where they have it." Larry studied the crude drawing from over Arthur's shoulder.

"No electricity, of course. He must have worked by kerosene lamp."

"What do you figure this was? A book shelf?" Larry indicated a line on one of the sketches.

"I imagine so. It must have been here, above the bed." Arthur studied the plaster. "They knocked it down and painted over the wall. Look."

"Just a minute." Larry ran his fingers over lumps in the plaster. "Here, do you suppose?"

Arthur shrugged. "How could he stand it without heat in winter?"

"He probably used wood or kerosene."

"It must have been a cold cubbyhole," said Bemrose, shuddering.

"It's warm today, and there's no heat on." Larry felt the radiator. "This is still February."

"It was cold and small and mean, but it didn't prevent him from writing that noble prose of his. They were better men in those days. I don't know how they did it."

The woman appeared with two cups of coffee on a tray. "I thought you might like some."

“Why, that’s very kind of you.” Arthur reached for the coffee. “I hope you don’t mind my sitting on your bed after you went to the trouble of making it.”

A powerfully built Negro in a khaki windbreaker put his head through the door. The woman introduced him as her husband. After chatting for a few minutes Bemrose showed them the Judge’s sketches.

She had heard of Judge Haynes and wanted to know more about him. Arthur described what he looked like. The Judge knew every inch of Georgetown by seeing it on foot, Arthur explained. He could tell you where all the well-known lawyers had lived—Gautt, Morsell, Durlop, the Coxes, Ould, and Caperton. He loved books, he had written a series of famous letters, and had been a distinguished lawyer before he sat on the bench.

“I’ve often wondered—was he really a liberal?” the man wanted to know.

“His decisions made him look like a liberal,” Arthur qualified. “He usually decided in favor of the fellow who was down, but in his heart I don’t think he honestly believed that all men are free or equal. I think he felt that they might have been born that way, but education gave some a tremendous jump on others.”

“Wasn’t he right!” The man grinned. “We sure go along with him there, don’t we, Martha?”

“We worked our way through Howard,” she explained.

“Specializing in anything?” Arthur asked.

“I took a major in statistics. I work at the Department of Commerce,” the man volunteered. “Martha was a home economics major.”

“I have a job as assistant housekeeper at a medium-sized hotel.”

The Negro sat down heavily on the bed next to Bemrose. “Going to college helps, but it’s a long way from being equal,” he said. “During the War they’ll make exceptions and take anyone for the job, but wait until peace breaks out— We’ll be the first to go. That’s the way it was during the Depression, and conditions haven’t changed. Not fundamentally they haven’t.”

“We can’t let ourselves think that way,” Larry protested. “We’re trying to put an end to that kind of discrimination. Isn’t that one of the reasons we’re fighting? I don’t say we’re going to succeed. And of course I’m biased. I have a personal stake in the outcome, like you have. I make myself believe it’s going to get better.”

The man looked dubious. “I wish I could go along with you.”

“Have you a picture of Judge Haynes?” Martha asked.

Bemrose looked through his wallet. “I must have left it in another billfold. I’ll write home for one. Would you like to have copies of some of these letters?”

The man nodded. “We would appreciate it if you could spare them.”

“I’ll send them to you,” Arthur promised. He thanked the couple for the visit and the coffee and got up to go. The man motioned Larry aside and helped Bemrose with his powerful hands, almost lifting him down the stairs on his broad palms.

“I gather you folks must have walked over. Would you like a taxi?” he offered.

But Bemrose preferred to make it back to Janice’s on foot.

The couple waved goodbye to them from the front porch, and when Larry turned around for a last look at the faded, yellow house, he saw the man walk through the gate, probably back to his gardening.

After a silent few blocks Arthur said, “There was one of those letters I wanted them to see, but they’d better read it themselves. When he was twenty-three or twenty-four years old, the Judge wrote his family from Washington. I’ll try to quote, ‘You don’t see much outward sign of equality between colored and whites. If they are equal, as Jefferson said, it must be a state of mind, and true equality a way of feeling inside.’”

“More of them might have the feeling, if people treated them as you do.”

“Those two helped me get things straight a little,” Arthur said. “I’m glad we found them living there.”

“Did you notice? You didn’t try to give them any advice, not even when they began worrying about after the War,” Larry remarked.

“And I’m not looking for advice any more. Not even from him,” Arthur said of the Old Man.

Larry nodded. “Seems to me you’ve straightened things out with him pretty well. I wouldn’t be surprised if you’ve just about freed yourself.”

Larry looked up at the clouds, which appeared whiter than usual because the sky was such a deep blue, and noted that they moved impersonally through the heavens.

Chapter 26

Lucy had gone back to her old job at the Green Network, and Larry dropped around at her office to take her to tea a few days after he returned to New York. It was a dirty February afternoon, too slushy to look for a restaurant outside; so they went down to the drugstore in the building. A woman who conducted a successful household program, a radio comedian, and the M.C. of a quiz show occupied stools at the fountain.

“They ought to bring the tourists here after they’ve been to *Superman*,” Larry remarked. “They would find out more about radio than in those glass cages they have for visitors upstairs.”

Lucy smiled indulgently. She laid her black suède gloves on the plastic table and smoothed the fingers. “Arthur always liked this drugstore. How is he?” she asked.

“I think he’s fairly well found himself down there. Better off than he seemed to be practicing law in New York.” Larry found himself imitating her cool detachment.

She confided in her gloves, stroking the fingers as she talked. “I’m glad. Is he working hard?”

“I think he puts in a reasonably full day. He may have even dropped a few pounds——”

Her face clouded with maternal concern.

“Oh, he’s in good shape,” Larry reassured her.

“And Janice?”

“You know Janice. Going strong.”

“Did he tell you she took him to a specialist at Johns Hopkins, a doctor who’s a friend of hers?” Lucy asked.

“I didn’t have time to hear the medical details,” Larry admitted. “There was too much going on—a big party on Saturday and people around most of the weekend.”

“Arthur always liked big parties.”

Larry noticed that a minute ago Lucy had said: “Arthur always liked this drugstore.” Apparently he was the past tense. It gave Larry a twinge to hear her talk about him in that way.

“Is he getting over the feeling of being an invalid?” Lucy asked, dribbling lemon into her tea. The wedge slipped from her slender fingers. “I think he needed a change. If I had gone down to Washington with him, it would have been taking his nurse along. I think he had to do it alone.”

Lucy sighed. “She’s good for him, Larry. That’s what I really want to say.”

Good for him. Larry thought of the sleek dark head which had havocked the last few years of his life, tormenting and taunting him, trampling his sleeping and his waking——

“It’s what he always wanted, Larry. It’s what he really wanted when he married me.” Lucy’s shallow eyes turned on him. Only now he could not be certain of their lack of depth.

“Why did he marry you then?” Larry asked her.

“I suppose it was kind of a business deal. For both of us. He wanted a home and a wife he could dominate, and I wanted what I thought was security. There’s nothing wrong with a business deal that doesn’t work out,” she added, echoing an old conviction of Larry’s.

“I’m glad she found room for him at her house where it’s comfortable,” Lucy continued after a moment. “I’m glad she invites her friends over. They’re probably his friends already.”

Larry reached for her coat which had dropped over the low chair and was trailing the rubber flooring. He draped it gently over her shoulders.

“That’s all right, Larry.” Her smile faded. “It has to do with something inside of him. Something that wants to find whatever’s exceptional about his work or his friends. Or even at home. I was brought up to be unexceptional. My mother would have called it showing off if we ever tried to be different.”

Larry found himself admiring, of all qualities, Lucy’s good manners. The neutral quiet which had always shrouded her seemed to become a positive,

tangible asset.

“He talked while I was down there about *not* wanting to be exceptional,” Larry said. “He claims that he’s happiest as a group man, working with other people. He claims that he doesn’t want to stand out in any way.”

“Maybe he talks that way, but Arthur can’t help being exceptional.” She paused. “It would be like changing the color of his skin for him to try. I used to think he needed someone plain around him for balance. Someone like me.”

“With your face?” Larry protested.

“I talked myself into thinking that no house was big enough to hold two exceptional people, but I wasn’t really honest about it,” Lucy said. “Now he can see the difference. Now that he’s around someone who can give him the kind of life he wants.”

“So that’s how you have it figured out. When did you start thinking so?” Larry asked.

“When he first asked me to marry him, I guess. You know how you do at first. You figure it out with your mind. Your common sense tells you that’s how it is. But you don’t honestly believe it. You don’t really feel it— You know it’s not what you really think.”

“But you finally did begin to think so?” he asked.

“When he took sick,” Lucy explained. “I wanted him to get well. That’s all I seemed to care about. I wanted it so hard that I would have settled for anything— I was willing to forget about myself—just so he got back on his feet. Don’t think I was trying to be wonderful or have him thank me. I guess I was just scared. I prayed for him. When I saw him on crutches the first time, I didn’t want to live unless he could get well.”

“I wouldn’t want you to think I’m a fool, Larry,” she added. “But I was almost glad when he came home with you that afternoon and said he’d like to move to Washington. I knew what it meant. I knew it was his chance to get away——”

“And you didn’t mind?” he asked her. “You were willing to have him get away?”

Miserably the gray eyes assented. "It was my chance, too. It hasn't been easy on me. It's been a strain. Sometimes I think marriages for practical reasons aren't much good. People should feel more than we do if they're going to stay married. I worry that if Arthur and I go on as we are, I'll wake up someday and find my real feelings shriveled up. I want to keep on feeling alive, Larry, and how can I if we try to go on living the way we are?"

"You know I encouraged him to take the job in Washington," Larry acknowledged, none too pleased with himself at the moment.

"I know."

"I wasn't sure you were enough woman for him. Right from the beginning I was afraid of it. I don't think I was fair to you. You're plenty of woman, or you wouldn't be willing to put his interests first." He refilled her tea cup from a green china pot, anxious through some small act to make it up to her.

"Even if you're willing to go on with him, I think it'll backfire," Larry told her.

"How?"

"You'll get tired of it. You'll be giving up your life for his, and in the long run you'll expect payment. Even if you think you won't. He'll never be able to give it to you, of course, not ever enough, anyway, and in the end you'll feel cheated."

"You don't have to find excuses, Larry," she comforted him. "You didn't break us up. He never would have gotten through his trouble without you; I don't think he would have wanted to make the effort if you hadn't been around giving him a boost. I don't think any friend could have done more. You mustn't blame yourself."

Lucy's fingers trailed tentatively along his sleeve. "You helped me, too. I want you to know about it. Do you remember before he got sick? I always thought it was my fault. I didn't understand, and he frightened me. You never said anything, but you were around, and I knew I could count on you. You mustn't blame yourself, Larry. You've helped both of us."

"You understand about it now, I suppose," he told her. "You know that it wasn't you he was fighting in those days, it was himself."

“I just happened to be the nearest person,” she agreed. “I was there, and when he was angry with himself——”

“That’s it. He took it out on you.”

“Janice had more sense, don’t you think so?”

“Why?”

“Because she went away. She wasn’t around. He couldn’t blame her when he was in trouble. He couldn’t possibly. He couldn’t even pretend she was to blame.”

“Maybe she didn’t care for him enough to hang around,” Larry suggested. “Maybe it didn’t mean enough to Janice. She didn’t want to try and help him.”

“I think she cared, Larry. I think she’s in love with him.” Lucy’s hands lay white and unstarched in her lap, as if in resignation.

“Love’s a big word,” Larry warned. “Right now, I’ll admit that she’s sorry for him. She sees that he’s sick and having a tough time, and she wants to do everything to make him comfortable. She’s lucky that she has a big house, and can. And don’t forget. She has a fine time when Arthur’s around. She’s not being any martyr. I wouldn’t be surprised if she were pretty selfish——”

“Does Arthur think so?” Lucy immobilized him with her calm, gray eyes. “Did he say she was selfish?”

“He’d never bring it up,” Larry said. “You know Arthur about things like that. You can get as much conversation out of him as out of a tomb. He did tell me to be sure and report to you first hand that he was getting along fine, and he gave me another message——” Larry unpinned the wilted carnation in his lapel and put it on the red leather seat of an empty chair next to her. “He wants to know when you’re planning to come down. Is Marge well enough for you to leave?”

The spoon trembled in Lucy’s hand. She might be fairly objective in discussing Arthur, but Marge’s name set off a different set of emotions. Marge must be mother to Lucy, Larry figured. Throughout her tempestuous marriage to Arthur, Marge had remained the dependable hearth, the secure shelter. Maybe when she married Arthur, Lucy had expected him to supply

the parental love and security. But of course he hadn't. She had never been able to count on his approval. At best he was kindly and tolerant. He had refused to be her father, her mother, and in any deeply emotional sense, her husband. Meanwhile, the bond with Marge held. Larry could see that any danger Marge might be in would upset her. She could talk calmly about Janice because the tie with Arthur was, in a sense, secondary, not her basic drive or consideration.

"You know yourself what it means to have a first baby at forty-two," Lucy said. "The doctor keeps saying she'll get along all right, but she's been wretched. Simply wretched. Do you remember how she used to giggle?"

The hysterical cackle that broadcast Marge's unfulfillment with Ed rang now in Larry's ear.

"She never does any more. She doesn't even smile."

"Wait until the baby comes. She'll feel better. By the way, how's Ed?"

"Having labor pains," Lucy smiled. "He hasn't slept eight hours any night in months."

"He'll lose his jitters outside the delivery room. When is the baby due?"

"In a few more weeks. The doctor doesn't know exactly. I can't leave her. You see why, don't you, Larry?"

"I see some things," he admitted cautiously. "How about Phil? Does he look after you?"

She fondled the rim of the thick white cup with her finger. "He trots me over to Marge's every night, and on weekends he makes me get away and go to the movies."

"He's been around for a long time. He must mean it. Nice boy, Phil." Larry hadn't intended the remark to sound patronizing. A nice boy was what Lucy needed, someone to be young with.

"What do you think I should do, Larry? If Arthur decides to stay down there? You're *his* friend, of course, and it isn't fair to ask your advice, but I can't go to Marge and Ed. They're too upset right now, and anyway I'm not sure they would understand." Lucy dropped her hands limply into her lap. "It's a strange thing, Larry, considering how he used to act around them, but

do you know they're fond of him? Ever since Arthur took sick and started to be a little more considerate. When I spoke to Marge this morning, she asked me if I'd had a letter from Washington. She asks me almost every day. I think Arthur means a great deal to her."

"Don't they care for Phil?"

"They take him for granted. You see, to them, he's not special like Arthur. Just because he's nice to all of us and never raises a fuss—" She paused thoughtfully. "Arthur takes him for granted, too. Phil's that kind of a person, easy going, no trouble to be with."

"You don't take him for granted, do you?"

"I feel comfortable with him, and you were right before, Larry. I'm tired. I'd like to forget problems and fussing. If I could sit somewhere quietly with someone who likes me for myself——"

Larry looked at the gray-blond lashes, quiet on her cheek, and felt at peace, the way he had a year ago at the funeral of a friend. It was as if he had witnessed the death of her turmoil and sharp emotions. It was a kind of amen to the small, ignoble discords between the Bemroses.

"Phil can't advise me. He's too mixed up in it. Tell me what you think," Lucy urged.

"How can you be sure what to do? Washington may not work out," Larry reminded her. "In a month or so—" He shrugged. "There may be a blow-up. You can't tell about a woman like Janice."

If they clashed, it would be a good, earthy blow-up that let off steam, Larry knew, not a nagging quarrel, but because Arthur and Janice cared enough for it to matter. The thought comforted Larry.

"All right." Lucy sighed. "I know you can't be sure, and anyway you don't want things spoiled for him. You're afraid someday he'll want to come home, and you think the place should be there waiting for him. There's no rush about deciding, and of course it always will be there." She tidied the wisps of hair under her nursemaid bonnet of blue ribbon. "I better go. I promised Ed that I'd help fix Marge's supper."

On the way to the Broadway car she promised to go to Washington, since Arthur insisted, as soon as Marge was out of the woods. Although Larry

knew it wouldn't repair the frayed moorings of their marriage, he felt better for having obtained her word. Bemrose was almost certain to question him.

The trolley was a good four or five blocks away, and they stomped on the corner to keep warm. "Does Phil want babies?" Larry asked her.

"Why?"

"You ought to have some. You'd be good for them."

She touched the back of his thick, lined glove. "Poor Larry," she sympathized.

While he was brushing his teeth that evening, he realized what she had meant. Poor Larry. No kids of his own. Poor Larry, an inveterate father hen with no babies. Poor Larry, fussing over Bemrose because there was no one else to fuss over.

Chapter 27

The day Larry picked to see the O.P.A. in Washington was the day after a Federal grand jury indicted the twenty Nazi sympathizers Arthur had been investigating. In the New York morning papers the story was front page. Larry had never gathered from talking about the case to Bemrose that they were sensational enough to be featured in the paper. Arthur had apparently established the fact that the crowd under indictment organized Nazi groups and distributed subversive literature, but he hadn't been able to uncover definite acts of espionage. Since war news crowded the front page, and the story hardly seemed headline material, it was surprising that both papers gave it a feature box with more than a column carry-over. The *Tribune* even ran Bemrose's picture. The story wasn't page one. It must be Arthur's connection with the case which made it news.

At the railway station a stockingless girl with waved platinum bangs teetered past Larry on strapped, platform soles, and he smiled at her. The greenish platinum face spat her annoyance— Papa-out-for-a-Pickup. He didn't care about the girl, although she was pretty enough in the artificial new way of the young. He was grinning because Bemrose—damn it, you couldn't keep him anonymous—had hit the jackpot again. So he was going to hold an inconspicuous place in Tom's office, a number, not a name any more, a forgotten bureaucrat, a group man. This pat idea of disposing of the old Bemrose had lasted—how long?—about three months, and today he was back on page one. Maybe it was going to be more difficult to live down the Haynes tradition of individualism than Bemrose thought.

For humid minutes Larry hopped from island to island on the ramp outside the station trying to squeeze into a cab headed Northwest, and at last was assigned to one. He talked steak with a Navy man just back from Guadal, turned down the driver's offer of an old Ingersoll for twenty-five dollars, grabbed his briefcase as they pulled up in front of the Department of Justice building, and shoving a generous tip into the driver's hand, made a dash for Bemrose's office.

Larry used his elbows to get through an impatient crowd of reporters and photographers spilling from the door. He found the Dale Carnegie secretary who remembered his name and face from the last trip, and was promptly shown in.

Arthur had on a conventional blue business suit that fitted him. The absence of his loose, conspicuous tweeds jolted Larry. In smooth cloth which hugged his shoulders, neck, and waist, Arthur looked like a drawing in crisp line instead of crayon, a man unblurred by the loose evasiveness of the tweeds.

Seated next to his desk, Larry saw Davis Shore nervously raveling the corner of a used envelope. Shore jumped to his feet. "Why, Mr.——"

"Frank," Larry assisted. "How you doing?" he asked Bemrose.

"Frank. Frank. My memory for names——" Shore sat down, confused. "I wish you'd give the boy a try," he said to Arthur.

"We have a strict rule in the Department," Bemrose explained. "We don't hire sons, relatives, or friends of friends. If you start that kind of thing in Washington, there's no end to it, Davis. A man comes along with the right experience, someone you really want to hire, and there's no line for him in the budget."

"But the boy has a fine record. He was in the Corporation Counsel's office for three years. He did an outstanding job and has wonderful letters——"

"4F?"

Shore nodded. "He'd like to be closer to the War. His mother says it's having a bad effect on him, seeing all his friends in uniform. She's my only sister, and——"

"Too bad he's your nephew, Davis," Arthur said. "He sounds like we might be able to use him."

"You can't hold that against him," Shore protested.

"Strict rule of the Department. If he wants to come to Washington, I'll give him a card to Don Richberg. There's a shortage of good young lawyers down here in the private shops." He took a card out of his wallet and scribbled on it. "There, that will get him in to Richberg."

“That’s the third time I’ve turned him down,” Arthur said, when Shore had left. “This time I hope he stays turned down.”

“He looked like his grandmother kicked him in the stomach.”

“—— his 4F nephew.”

“I remember when you used to crawl for the guy.”

“I’m trying to forget it,” Arthur said. “How’s Bessie?”

Larry offered to clear out and make room for the reporters, but Arthur was wound up. He wanted to talk about the indictments. Janice’s old suspect, Richter, had given him the clue which helped crack the cases. Bemrose had sent to the F.B.I. for the art dealer’s file, and on a hunch, wired him to come down. Sure enough. Before the War, Goering’s agent in Berlin had ordered Richter to negotiate for a Titian. Richter located the painting but lost money on the exchange. This must have turned him against the Nazi gang in Germany, and he had been looking for a chance to get even. During the thirties he had met some of their sympathizers in this country, and knew where many of them hung out. Nervous because the F.B.I. had a file on him, Richter was willing to tell what he could and clear himself.

Bemrose promised him immunity if he talked, and immediately put a staff to work on the leads he gave them. In a couple of months they had rounded up enough facts for the indictments, and the rest was window dressing, building the evidence into a story.

“So Janice was on the right track all the time when she suspected Richter,” Larry said.

“I don’t think he had any paintings with him on the boat that time,” Arthur said. “Once the War started he was too smart to be caught. But he’s a bad egg. She was right about that.”

The buzzer sounded, and it was Newton on the phone, asking Arthur to see the reporters. Bemrose insisted to Tom that he was the chief and ought to see them, but Newton argued that the case belonged to Arthur. Since he had the details, he ought to hand out the story.

“What’s the use, Tom? There aren’t any new angles,” Bemrose protested. “I gave them a complete release.”

Newton, from what Larry could gather, must have urged him to see the photographers, even if he wouldn't bother with the reporters.

"How about that picture in this morning's *Tribune*?" Arthur objected. "Just a minute, Larry's saying something." He covered the mouthpiece with his hand.

"Refusing fees again. Don't spend the rest of your life refusing fees," Larry repeated.

Arthur uncovered the receiver. "Okay, Tom. I'll see them."

"I thought I was through with that baby stuff," he told Larry.

"I suppose you want Tom to be grateful to you the rest of his life."

"Putting myself in solid," Arthur admitted.

He sent word to his secretary to let the photographers in, and asked Larry to stick around. "They'll fuss with the lights for a while. We'll have time to talk."

Luckily the man Larry was supposed to see at the O.P.A. agreed to put off his appointment. Arthur seemed relieved that he could stay. While the photographers slid their plates into position and changed their flash bulbs, he inquired about Lucy.

"Fine," Larry assured him. "Better looking than ever."

Tensely Bemrose rubbed his palms along the leather arms of his chair. "Did she say anything about coming down?"

"As soon as Marge is straightened out."

"Is Phil around?"

Larry nodded toward the photographers who were getting ready to shoot.

When they finished, a kid with fresh blue eyes turned as he was leaving, and said out of the corner of his mouth, "Thanks, Mr. Next-Attorney-General."

"The rumor mill," Bemrose explained. "They have Tom running for the Senate, and they have me his successor. I doubt if the voters in Tom's district know about it."

“Mr. Attorney-General. Wouldn’t Janice like that.”

A flash of red came through the door, and Janice stood astride before them, both hands planted in the patch pockets of her bright coat. “What would I like?”

Larry nodded toward Bemrose. “The next Attorney-General.”

“Not according to my sources. That’s a job for a good party man.”

“Why can’t I go into politics without a party?” Arthur asked.

Larry appealed to Janice. “He’s been telling me to get out of politics for twenty years, and now he wants to know why he can’t get in. A few months ago he was going to be a cog in a machine——”

“What machine?” She rocked on her heels. “Tom Newton’s? Ed Flynn’s?”

“Not a political machine,” Larry explained. “One of Henry Ford’s. He was going to be one of those pistons that go up and down like every other piston, doing a job, not bothering the other pistons——”

“When was all this?” The straight mouth broke in a dozen delighted places.

“And today when I walked in here, the Nobody had locked out a crowd of reporters and was fighting to keep his name out of the papers.” Larry shrugged. “I don’t know what it proves. Maybe that you can’t keep a good piston down.”

Arthur faked his distaste. “Let’s get out of here, Jan, before he starts making bad puns.”

“There’s no reason why he shouldn’t go into politics, even if some smart reporter did make a crack. He can’t be the next Attorney-General because the incumbent has been picked, but how about making him a Judge? What’s wrong with that?” Janice bore down on her pockets, balancing on the soles of her feet.

“A fine group activity for a group man,” Larry scoffed. “Our friend, Bemrose, alone behind the bench, and the group out in front pleading for justice.”

“Shut up, both of you. Hand me my crutches, and let’s get out of here.” He hooked Janice affectionately by the neck when she came over to help him.

“We’ll take him along. He came down to see the O.P.A. and put off his appointment for us. We’ll have to do something nice for him. How about the car? Did Jim fix you up with gas?”

“He left a press car in front, and I’ll get a ticket if we don’t hurry. Come on, Larry.”

She had arranged a consultation for Bemrose with a new specialist at Johns Hopkins. The ride to Baltimore, impregnated with their happiness, with Arthur’s recent success, and with the warmth of late May, offered reprieve for an hour from the anxieties, frustrations, and inconveniences of wartime. Larry leaned back and enjoyed the luxury of riding again in a private car. Most of his friends’ automobiles were in storage. The taxis were rattletraps. Riding in something that had a decent pair of springs was a pre-War treat. Larry withdrew to a corner of the back seat and let the spring afternoon chatter to him. He must have dozed off because the next thing he knew, the car had stopped and Janice was climbing over him to help Arthur get out.

In the hospital waiting room, while Arthur was in with the doctor, Janice had a chance to talk to Larry. An ugly niche at one end of the white corridor, some hard chairs, and the inevitable tired plant that lives in public rooms at hospitals, supplied the setting. Larry had noticed before that people waiting in hospitals, drawn together by the proximity of pain, felt free to unburden themselves as Janice did now.

“His real sickness is over,” she asserted. “This other is inconvenient and makes it hard for him to get around, but it’s not as serious. Inside he has started to heal. The cancer that used to eat into him seems to be under control.” She hesitated. “At least I think it is. I think he’s over that crazy desire to own other people. I hope I’m right, Larry, and don’t wake up someday to find myself in a trap he has camouflaged to catch me in. I don’t want to be hopelessly—” She walked to the window, and the structure of her profile had the strength of an ancient coin. Larry tried to imagine a trap powerful enough to hold her.

“It’s been hopelessly for a long time, hasn’t it?” He rested his hands next to hers on the high white sill. “I wouldn’t worry too much about the change being temporary if I were you,” Larry cautioned. “I don’t think it was a cancer. A cancer spreads. Call it a tumor that’s been removed. I’d go ahead and make some plans now.”

She had been staring, trancelike, at the clouded window glass, but now her head tilted toward him. “Make personal plans today? How can we? They’d have to be changed a thousand times. I can’t think of any plans, including some of Eisenhower’s, that will stand up. There’s too much in the air that’s unpredictable. Of all the times in history to make plans for the future——”

“War maneuvers are unpredictable,” Larry agreed. “But people don’t have to be.”

“That’s heretical. It’s absolutely against the belief of our times,” Janice protested. “Don’t you know it’s things, *things* that don’t change? We haven’t faith in human beings. It’s things that stand up.”

“All right, but I’d make some plans just the same,” Larry insisted. “Soon. While he’s down here and happy with his job.”

“What about New York? What about her?” Janice asked.

“It’s okay with her. I’ve talked to her and I’m sure.”

Janice slipped her hand into the loose sleeve of her coat and pulled down her heavy bracelet. “The man you told me about?”

“Yes. He seems more for her. If she married him, they’d have children by now. I don’t think he’s rushing her into anything. He seems to understand about Arthur. But just the same I guess he’d be happy if she made up her mind.”

Janice rested a foot on the radiator pipe and turned away from Larry.

He put a hand on her shoulder. “What’s the matter? Scared?”

“He hasn’t asked me. I can’t even tell whether he wants to.” She twisted away. “He talks about Lucy coming down. When I tell him I may have to go overseas, he doesn’t object. He probably doesn’t want to commit himself.”

“Maybe he thinks you know your mind, and when you’re ready, you’ll say so,” Larry suggested. “It’s one of the prices you pay for being independent. He’s probably waiting for some sign from you.”

Her jaw set stubbornly. “I don’t want to crowd him. I want him to be sure about us. As long as there’s a war, I don’t know how he can be. It’s like planning a future home in a trailer. I may feel permanent about Arthur and

he may feel a little like that about me, but these aren't permanent times." She dug her soles into the rubber-matted floor. "We're feeling the blast of blockbusters that are three thousand miles away. The ground is shifting under us. Washington, New York and Des Moines are as thoroughly bombed as London. Not that many people realize it now——"

Larry shook his head.

"You can put buildings together again, but you don't hear of any post-War plans for restoring hopes," Janice continued. "All you see and feel is the disintegration. If Arthur doesn't want to pretend a permanence he can't feel, I don't blame him. He tried to use marriage for ballast once, when he was restless before the War, and what happened? The ballast turned into dead weight. That mustn't happen to him again. I won't let it. I've waited all this time, and I can wait another few years to see what comes out of the mess. If he and I have anything in the way of happiness that will help give it meaning— Meaning!" She shrugged. "That's too much to expect. Survival is what I'm trying to say. Freedom to enjoy parts of some days, the feeling that it's good to be together, and when we're apart it stays good—I'll settle for that. He doesn't have to sign any papers."

"But you have waited," Larry insisted. "Supposing you *do* make plans and have to tear them up. You'd have the satisfaction now of making them. I wouldn't let things ride. I'd have a talk with him," he told her.

"I'm going to wait and I'm going to be patient," she decided. "This time there's something to wait for. This time, if he'll have me——"

She flung herself on Larry, sobbing, and an elderly woman with a line-ridden face, who slumped heavily in her chair across the room, leaned forward startled. He stroked Janice's smooth dark head, mumbling comfort into her hair. When she lifted her face, he dried her off with a fresh handkerchief. The tears stopped, and she brightened. "This time I'm going to hold out for the big thing. I want him to marry me."

The elderly lady had returned to her own brooding, and they were sitting quietly on a wicker sofa near the door when Dr. Turnbull's nurse called them.

In a room at the end of the hall they found the spare, balding physician who had been a research man on antibiotics at the Rockefeller Institute before he

accepted the post at Hopkins.

“Well, I’ve completed the examination,” Dr. Turnbull reported.

Arthur interrupted him. “I’m straight garden variety, not even interesting material for the medical journals.” Complacently he puffed a cigarette.

“Fortunately no unusual complications,” Turnbull continued. “But some new things we’ll be able to try someday. Miss Baldwin spoke to me about penicillin. I can’t see that penicillin notatum, the kind we work with now, will do much good. I thought of suggesting streptomycin, but that’s off the track.” He turned to Janice. “I may be wrong, of course. There hasn’t been enough work done to exhaust the possibilities of any of these newer drugs.”

“Antibiotics are your field. You’re the one person who *would* know the possibilities.” Janice’s active, bony fingers reached toward him.

He had been constrained at first, but now he unbent. “The longer you work in a field, the less you are sure of anything. Every country doctor today knows more than I do about penicillin. He’ll tell you just what to use it for and how much to give——

“A year ago we were working on a mold that is close to streptomycin in some of its effects but has one characteristic which makes it a possibility—I’m not saying it will work, but in multiple sclerosis it’s certainly worth a trial,” the doctor continued. “The project has stopped during the War, but as soon as personnel becomes available and we can reorganize, I’ll have some material for experimental purposes. If Mr. Bemrose will keep in touch with me——”

The doctor shook hands. “Try to be patient,” he admonished Bemrose. “Give us six months from V-J Day. Until then we’ll have to be patient and wait.”

Janice had said it a few minutes ago, and Dr. Turnbull was saying it now, Larry realized. Wait. Patience. Until the War is over. Until the War ends. It was like waiting for the millennium, or a small child on the eve of his birthday expecting to be three inches taller the next day. There was something wrong about believing that peace would bring abrupt improvements, and the day the War ended, plans and projects would get under way. That wasn’t the order of things. The chaos, the restlessness, the shifting values of now would carry over. The seeds for peace were already

being sown. Peace would be a phase of war, not a separate state, as convalescence is a continued phase of illness. That's why Larry disliked the postponements of the present time, the almost universal reliance on "when the War is over" as a solution for present problems. Peace would be no dead end, but a cross-country thoroughfare marked by the same old anxieties.

Outside the hospital Larry said, "I know one thing we can do without waiting for the War to be over. We can go to Reilly's and have the finest shore dinner in Baltimore."

He sat in front of the car with Janice to direct her to the restaurant. It was near the railway terminal, and had been recommended to Larry years ago by Bessie's brother who ran a chain of clothing stores in Baltimore.

"I don't think Turnbull would have promised to try the drug unless he thought it was going to work, do you?" she asked quietly so as not to disturb Bemrose who was stretched out on the back seat resting.

"Turnbull doesn't know. How can he know until he tries it?"

"You could let me hope," she said crossly.

"I thought Turnbull was very encouraging." Larry patted her knee. "After going over the case, he seemed to think that *with* crutches Arthur's in good shape. He doesn't have to be completely well, does he? Who is completely well?"

She stroked the steering wheel thoughtfully. "I'm not."

"That makes two of us."

"I should have thought of that myself," she said. "Look up there."

She pointed to a star in the early evening sky, and Larry felt her happiness rocket to meet it.

Reilly, the restaurant proprietor, remembered Larry and brought the steamed clams to the table himself. They washed them down with a pungent sea broth, and later drank a dry white table wine with their lobster. The French bread was fresh and crusty, and as a special treat, Reilly produced a good

fine with the coffee. Arthur who dissected the lobster with a steady hand, swapped Irish stories with Reilly, and while they ate they laughed, all three of them, not two paired against the third. Larry thought of it later as the best dinner of his life, and whenever friends took him to a favorite seafood restaurant, he remembered the vividness of Janice in her red jacket and the pleasure of Bemrose as he watched her from across the table.

After dinner Larry offered to drive the car back to Washington. The painted white line of the highway had grown dim with the War, and Larry became involved in the unfamiliar mechanics of steering and shifting. As they stopped for a light near Washington, he turned around and saw that Janice was asleep on Arthur's shoulder.

"Pooped," Bemrose said, cradling her head in his arm. "She dropped off right away."

"I suppose Turnbull was right," he added later. "No use doing anything in any department until the War is over. I have to make up my mind to wait. Helluva nice guy, Turnbull. It must be great to work with stuff like penicillin."

"Turnbull was only talking about that new drug when he told you to wait. He didn't mean to wait for other things. Conditions aren't going to change that much with the end of the War. If you go ahead and make plans now _____"

"It's easier not to look ahead," Arthur said. "I thought HAYNES and BEMROSE would go on forever. I thought when I married Lucy— What's the good of planning?"

"You have to plan," Larry insisted. "Things outside change and get messed up. Inside you have to have a blueprint. Then something is left when the outside falls to pieces."

"I see what you're driving at," Arthur agreed. "The trouble is, I guess, I've lost faith in some of my blueprints."

Janice's voice came through the darkened tonneau. "Who's building a house?"

"Arthur. I'm trying to talk him into building one," Larry said.

"Is he going to ask us to live in it?" she inquired sleepily.

Blood and heart seemed to make more sense at the moment than a meticulous ten-year plan, and Arthur, answering her in the dark, demonstrated that he knew it.

Chapter 28

By June of '43 when Larry went down to spend another weekend with Arthur in Washington, the output of heavy bombers was beginning to outnumber submarine sinkings; Eisenhower had met in Algiers with De Gaulle; the military establishment at Pantelleria had been bombed out, and Italy's supply system in the South was cracking. Invasion was expected any day, and people waited, content to read about B-17s grounded by weather in England, tolerant of the coal strike at home, sure that Jimmy Byrnes, head of the new O.W.M., and kingpin of Washington production czars, would soon have materials rolling to the invasion troops.

The night before Larry left New York, Bessie complained about his going. "I hope you don't have to make many more trips down there," she said petulantly.

Larry let it pass. Liz Brett had come in for a drink during the evening to tell them about her new husband, a forty-five year old captain in the Marines. Liz, imitating the kids, had met him one week when he was home on leave and married him the next. She wanted to get out to Pearl Harbor where he was stationed, and had almost talked a theatrical producer into sending her. In return she promised him a set for a play he was doing about the Pacific. There was so much trouble, though, in clearing her papers and passport that the producer was forced finally to rely on Navy photographs for his data. While she was telling this to Larry and Bess, Liz looked around the living room and noticed a tear in one of the slipcovers. She advised Bessie not to try and order new ones until the War ended and some decent fabrics again became available.

After Liz went home, Bess's spirits took a nosedive. She walked around the room fingering rips, faulty zippers, missing snap fasteners, and threadbare spots in the chintz covers as if each were a badge of disgrace. Larry, jubilant because he had found a pair of black shoes on his expiring Number Seventeen ration coupon, tried to cheer her by saying that it might be his last trip to Washington to see Bemrose.

“I hope it is,” Bess said. “You can’t pick up and leave your practice every time he’s lonesome and wants to see you.”

“But he referred most of the practice to me.”

Her purple lips puckered. “The clients like you for yourself. You know they do.”

“They’ve really been coming in lately,” Larry admitted. “First thing you know I won’t be able to stay one of those Little Shots you admire.”

“You’ve worked hard for it, Larry. He did his friends a favor, recommending a good lawyer to them.” Her dark lips parted with curiosity. “What makes you think it’s the last weekend you’ll have to go down?”

“I have a hunch he’s going to start to get along without me. It took him years to shake off the Old Man, but he finally managed it. Next, I think he’s going to let Lucy go. That leaves me.” Larry stroked her neck, under the dark curls in back. “You’ll have more of me on your hands,” he threatened.

Bessie’s eyes petulantly refused to be glad. “Maybe he won’t need you, but that doesn’t mean anything. He likes you. He’ll want to see you.”

“Sure, once in a while. But not because he has to have another crutch to lean on. Once he stops depending on me——”

“Why don’t you wear your new tie, Larry?” she asked. “It goes much better with that suit.”

He fingered the small patterned maroon tie which harmonized with the dark red pin stripe in his sharkskin. “What’s the matter with this one? It’s a perfect match.”

“I suppose he’s going to marry Miss Baldwin,” she said. “But how can he if she’s overseas? Didn’t you say she went over for the invasion? I suppose the invasion’s important, but why did she go away and leave him by himself in that big house?”

“She left him with a good housekeeper. He’s getting along all right.”

“Maybe if he misses her enough, he’ll make up his mind. You’d think he would know by now. Didn’t you say someone named Holmes, an artist, used to be crazy about her?” Bessie asked. “I saved something from the

paper about him.” She searched in the drawer of her desk for a clipping. “If it’s the same Holmes,” she said, handing it to him.

Apparently Steve had been out in Australia working on a series of paintings for a drug manufacturer and had been hurt in a jeep accident. He had been taken to a hospital with head injuries, Larry read, but they were believed minor, and he was expected to recover.

“She might hear about the accident and go to see him,” Bessie suggested.

“Where did you dream up a romantic idea like that? From England to Australia?”

“I don’t see why not. She could fly to Australia,” Bessie insisted.

“I’ve been trying to tell you she likes Bemrose. She’s not going to fly out to see Holmes. It’s Bemrose she’s crazy about.”

“If she’s so crazy about him, why did she go overseas?” Bessie stared stolidly ahead. “What’ll you do with the extra time, Larry? After they’re married?”

“I can work hard and become one of those corporation lawyers.” He stuck out his stomach.

“Silly.” She pushed it down. “How old was her aunt, the one who had the baby?”

“Whose? Lucy’s?”

“The aunt with the husband.”

“I should hope so.”

She frowned. “No, how old?”

“Forty-one, maybe forty-two. I don’t know exactly.”

Her eyes questioned him.

“You mean us?” he asked.

“I’m not saying we have to, Larry. I guess you’ve never wanted to very much, but you’re doing better now at the office and I thought— You’re taking a topcoat to Washington with you, aren’t you?”

He considered it on the train the next day. Maybe Bessie was right. They had never given it enough thought. In the hand-to-mouth struggle for a living since they were married, they hadn't considered seriously the idea of having a family. Did he want one? And if he didn't want children, what did he want? Not more clients. He had enough, the way things were going, to keep him busy at the office. Not a more active career in politics. He was sick and tired of the political scramble. Maybe a family. Maybe he ought to make a few plans of his own. Maybe he ought to take some of the advice that he had been busy dishing out to Bemrose.

When Larry arrived in Georgetown the next day, he found Fred Maxwell, an old beau of Janice's, drinking brandy in the study with Arthur.

"Fred phoned around dinner time and said he was free tonight," Bemrose explained. "You haven't seen Washington until you've met Fred. He's a landmark, like the Washington monument——"

"Old and dead," Maxwell interrupted.

"Not according to Janice," Arthur protested.

"She hasn't been out with me for ten years. She wouldn't know. By the way, I spoke to her today. She phoned in a story from London."

"How is she?" Arthur sat forward in his chair.

"That's what she wants to know. How you are. She gave me hell because I hadn't been over to check up. Tell me a few details so I can square myself tomorrow when I talk to her." Maxwell's skinny leg hung loosely on his knee. The strong arch of his nose kept its slender tip from faltering, but his cheeks fell away in unashamed gulleys. A pompadour of graying hair offset his cadaverousness, and the humor lines around his mouth looked as if they might have been put there by off-color stories. Washington editor for *Everett's* since 1915, Maxwell had hired Janice as a novice, taken her past the brass knockers into the big houses, and introduced her to Congress, Senator by Senator, over a series of whiskeys and sodas. For about a year she was "Fred's girl." Then they stopped seeing each other until Arthur

moved down. Maxwell liked Bemrose the minute he met him and had hung around ever since.

“Fred is a bachelor, the lucky stiff,” Arthur told Larry. “They tell me he’s hell with women, but he’s always been too smart——”

“Too smart is right. I thought I was better off single. But lately I’ve found out there is a catch in this business of having your freedom. I didn’t figure out some of the other ways a man can be tied down. Guess how many nights a week I have off.” He held up a finger. “One.”

“Fred lives with his sister, and she hasn’t been well,” Arthur said.

“Cancer. It hit her a year ago,” Maxwell explained. “The doctor gives her another eight months. I go out the one night, and they phone me when she has pain and can’t stand it alone.”

Larry nodded his sympathy, and Arthur said, “I suppose there was a time when you thought about getting married——”

“About ten years ago was the last time, when Janice and I went around together. But I decided that I didn’t want to be tied down. I didn’t marry any of the others for the same reason. With Janice, I knew it was probably the last time I’d consider it. Getting too old.”

Larry found it difficult to tune in sharply on what Fred Maxwell was saying. He kept thinking of Janice. Almost everything in the room reminded him of her—the licks of shadow on the ceiling, the ink spot on the leather top of her desk, a mess of papers under her Chinese bronze weight, her uncovered typewriter, and the wall of ragged bindings piled crazily to fill the bookshelves. He found himself believing that she was out on a late assignment. She’d come in dead beat any minute and ask for a cup of coffee or for some of the brandy.

“It’s fellows like me who get hooked,” Maxwell said. “The kind who know all the answers. We feel good about ducking responsibility. Then, when we’re too old, we wake up and find that everything else has passed us by, too. That place of mine is a hospital, a morgue. Do you know the fellows I envy? The plodding Joes who took responsibilities when I was busy making fun of them and have some swell kids to show for it today. I’m the big freedom guy. Only freedom’s caught up with me. It was an illusion anyway, and it didn’t last. If I had it to do over again, I would have married a dumb

little girl when I was twenty-five, the kind who believed me when I told her that I had to work a couple of nights a week.”

“Wouldn’t Janice have let you out?” Bemrose asked.

“She was never that dumb.” Maxwell tapped the table with the bowl of his meerschaum pipe. “After fifty-three years I know my limit with a woman,” he said. “It’s six months. I’d have done fine with the right kind of wife. I’d have had a home today, not a hospital, and on the side I’d have had enough variety.”

“To six months with a woman!” Bemrose lifted his glass.

“To Janice.” Maxwell altered the toast. “Why don’t you stop kidding around, Bemrose? Why don’t you get a divorce and marry her? By the way, how are you feeling? If I know Janice, she’ll have me on the phone first thing in the morning. Your symptoms are going to cost *Everett’s* plenty.”

“He hasn’t any symptoms,” Larry said. “Have you?”

“You can tell her I have a cold feeling of anger when I fall over the bedroom slippers she forgot to put in her closet.”

“You should hear Bess,” Larry said. “She’s furious that Janice left you in the house alone. She thinks it’s an outrage——”

“Who’s Bess?” Maxwell asked.

“My wife.”

“Well, you tell Bess that the readers of *Everett’s* would be outraged if this fellow made a housekeeper of her.”

“How long before the invasion?” Bemrose asked suddenly.

“Six months to a year,” Maxwell said.

“But I thought——”

“Sure, I know. So does everyone else. That’s why all those correspondents are sitting over there. There are enough of them in England to sink the damned island. They could come over here and get back again half a dozen times before anything happens.”

“Then she could come home and get back?” Larry said.

“Why don’t you hang around the office tomorrow morning and talk to her when she phones?” Fred asked Arthur, his ghostly face coming to life. “Tell her that you’ve thought about it and you don’t want her to go in on the first wave. You don’t think it’s safe.”

“I’m not sure I want her to go in at all,” said Bemrose, his jaw set obstinately.

“That’s no way to get her to say ‘yes,’” Maxwell advised. “How about it? Do you want to come down tomorrow and talk to her on the phone?”

Silently Bemrose quizzed Larry.

“Maybe he’d rather cable her,” Larry suggested. “The connection might not be good, and she might not be able to hear him over the phone.”

“Larry’s right. I think I’d rather cable,” Arthur said gratefully.

He found a lined yellow pad on Janice’s desk, and rolled a sheet of paper into her typewriter. Deliberately his fingers tackled the keys. “Take it down for me, will you?” He folded the message and handed it to Larry. “When you get there, you can read it.”

At the corner of the dark, cool street, Larry disregarded the blackout and struck a match. He held its flame close to the message.

MAXWELL SAYS YOU HAVE TIME COME HOME
MARRY ME WILL YOU TAKE RISK LOVE
ARTHUR BEMROSE

Although Larry knew it was one of the last errands he was going to do for Bemrose, he didn’t feel any special regret. He wasn’t even sorry about giving up an old habit. He saw the trolley coming, and stepped briskly into the street to signal it.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JUSTICE IS A
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