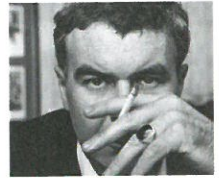


Raymond Carver

## ONE MORE THING



L.D.'s wife, Maxine, told him to get out the night she came home from work and found L.D. drunk again and being abusive to Rae, their fifteen-year-old. L.D. and Rae were at the kitchen table, arguing. Maxine didn't have time to put her purse away or take off her coat.

5 Rae said, "Tell him, Mom. Tell him what we talked about."

L.D. turned the glass in his hand, but he didn't drink from it. Maxine had him in a fierce and disquieting gaze.

"Keep your nose out of things you don't know anything about," L.D. said. L.D. said, "I can't take anybody seriously who sits around all day reading astrology magazines."

10 "This has nothing to do with astrology," Rae said. "You don't have to insult me."

As for Rae, she hadn't been to school for weeks. She said no one could make her go. Maxine said it was another tragedy in a long line of low-rent tragedies.

15 "Why don't you both shut up!" Maxine said. "My God, I already have a headache."

"Tell him, Mom," Rae said. "Tell him it's all in his head. Anybody who knows anything about it will tell you that's where it is!"

20 "How about sugar diabetes?" L.D. said. "What about epilepsy? Can the brain control that?"

He raised the glass right under Maxine's eyes and finished his drink.

"Diabetes too," Rae said. "Epilepsy. Anything! The brain is the most powerful organ in the body, for your information."

25 She picked up his cigarettes and lit one for herself.

"Cancer. What about cancer?" L.D. said.

He thought he might have her there. He looked at Maxine.

"I don't know how we got started on this," L.D. said to Maxine.

30 "Cancer," Rae said, and shook her head at his simplicity. "Cancer too. Cancer starts in the brain."

"That's crazy!" L.D. said. He hit the table with the flat of his hand. The ashtray jumped. His glass fell on its side and rolled off. "You're crazy, Rae! Do you know that?"

"Shut up!" Maxine said.

35 She unbuttoned her coat and put her purse down on the counter. She looked at L.D. and said, "L.D., I've had it. So has Rae. So has everyone who knows you. I've been thinking it over. I want you out of here. Tonight. This minute. Now. Get the hell out of here right now."

L.D. had no intention of going anywhere. He looked from Maxine to

be abusive tale grimt til  
fierce (her) rasende  
disquieting foruroiligende  
low-rent med lav husleje  
simplicity enfoldighed  
counter køkkenbord

jar of pickles glas med  
syltede agurker  
pitch kaste  
to a tee på en prik  
Naugahyde suitcase  
kuffert af imiteret læder  
clasp spænde  
brass buckle bæltespæn-  
de af messing  
dental floss tandtråd

the jar of pickles that had been on the table since lunch. He picked up the jar and pitched it through the kitchen window.

Rae jumped away from her chair. "God! He's crazy!"

She went to stand next to her mother. She took in little breaths through  
5 her mouth.

"Call the police," Maxine said. "He's violent. Get out of the kitchen before he hurts you. Call the police," Maxine said.

They started backing out of the kitchen.

"I'm going," L.D. said. "All right, I'm going right now," he said. "It suits  
10 me to a tee. You're nuts here, anyway. This is a nuthouse. There's another life out there. Believe me, this is no picnic, this nuthouse."

He could feel air from the hole in the window on his face.

"That's where I'm going," he said. "Out there," he said and pointed.

"Good," Maxine said.

15 "All right, I'm going," L.D. said.

He slammed down his hand on the table. He kicked back his chair. He stood up.

"You won't ever see me again," L.D. said.

"You've given me plenty to remember you by," Maxine said.

20 "Okay," L.D. said.

"Go on, get out," Maxine said. "I'm paying the rent here, and I'm saying go. Now."

"I'm going," he said. "Don't push me," he said. "I'm going."

"Just go," Maxine said.

25 "I'm leaving this nuthouse," L.D. said.

He made his way into the bedroom and took one of her suitcases from the closet. It was an old white Naugahyde suitcase with a broken clasp. She'd used to pack it full of sweater sets and carry it with her to college. He had gone to college too. He threw the suitcase onto the bed and began put-  
30 ting in his underwear, his trousers, his shirts, his sweaters, his old leather belt with the brass buckle, his socks, and everything else he had. From the nightstand he took magazines for reading material. He took the ashtray. He put everything he could into the suitcase, everything it could hold. He fastened the one good side, secured the strap, and then he remembered  
35 his bathroom things. He found the vinyl shaving bag up on the closet shelf behind her hats. Into it went his razor and his shaving cream, his talcum powder and his stick deodorant and his toothbrush. He took the toothpaste too. And then he got the dental floss.

40

\* \* \*

He could hear them in the living room talking in their low voices.

He washed his face. He put the soap and towel into the shaving bag.

Then he put in the soap dish and the glass from over the sink and the fingernail clippers and her eyelash curlers.

draw oneself up  
rette sig op

He couldn't get the shaving bag closed, but that was okay. He put on his coat and picked up the suitcase. He went into the living room.

5 When she saw him, Maxine put her arm around Rae's shoulders.

"This is it," L.D. said. "This is good-bye," he said. "I don't know what else to say except I guess I'll never see you again. You too," L.D. said to Rae. "You and your crackpot ideas."

10 "Go," Maxine said. She took Rae's hand. "Haven't you done enough damage in this house already? Go on, L.D. Get out of here and leave us in peace."

"Just remember," Rae said. "It's in your head."

"I'm going, that's all I can say," L.D. said. "Anyplace. Away from this nuthouse," he said. "That's the main thing."

15 He took a last look around the living room and then he moved the suitcase from one hand to the other and put the shaving bag under his arm. "I'll be in touch, Rae. Maxine, you're better off out of this nuthouse yourself."

20 "You made it into a nuthouse," Maxine said. "If it's a nuthouse, then that's what you made it."

He put the suitcase down and the shaving bag on top of the suitcase. He drew himself up and faced them.

They moved back.

"Watch it, Mom," Rae said.

25 "I'm not afraid of him," Maxine said.

L.D. put the shaving bag under his arm and picked up the suitcase.

He said, "I just want to say one more thing."

But then he could not think what it could possibly be.

(1981)

## GETTING STARTED

**Individually:** What is your first impression of the text? Write a brief summary of the text in no more than 100 words.

**In pairs:** Find a partner and read your summaries aloud to each other. Discuss your first impressions of the text and what it is about.

## DIGGING INTO THE TEXT I: QUOTATIONS

Describe L.D. by analyzing his actions (and inactions) in the story. Read the quotations below and discuss what they reveal about L.D.

### CHARACTERIZATION CLUE

### WHAT IT REVEALS ABOUT L.D.

*He raised the glass right under Maxine's eyes and finished his drink.*

*L.D. had no intention of going anywhere. He looked from Maxine to the jar of pickles that had been on the table since lunch. He picked up the jar and pitched it through the kitchen window.*

*"I'm going," L.D. said. "All right, I'm going right now," he said. "It suits me to a tee. You're nuts here, anyway. This is a nuthouse. There's another life out there. Believe me, this is no picnic, this nuthouse."*

*He threw the suitcase onto the bed and began putting in his underwear, his trousers, his shirts, his sweaters, his old leather belt with the brass buckle, his socks, and everything else he had ...*

*He put the suitcase down and the shaving bag on top of the suitcase. He drew himself up and faced them.*

*He said, "I just want to say one more thing." But then he could not think what it could possibly be.*

## DIGGING INTO THE TEXT II: CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Based on your analysis of the clues above, do a character analysis of L.D. at the beginning and at the end of the story. Discuss the following list of adjectives and place them into the table. Add 3 adjectives of your own.

*inarticulate – aggressive – pathetic – simple-minded – assertive – uncaring – willful – manipulative – detached – desperate – submissive – caring – wretched – harmless – passive – ignorant – determined*

### THE BEGINNING

### THE END

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**In pairs:** Discuss the possible interpretations of “One More Thing” listed below and decide which one you find more convincing. Support your choice with references to the text.

- “One More Thing” scorns the American lower middle class by portraying its members as inarticulate, dimwitted and generally disagreeable people.*
- “One More Thing” is a story about human willpower.*
- “One More Thing” shows us the devastating effects which alcoholism and unemployment can have on a family.*
- Through its main characters “One More Thing” offers an insight into the emotional inadequacies of modern-day families.*
- In “One More Thing” we see a typical example of the breakdown of traditional gender roles.*

## ANALYZING A PHOTOGRAPH: GREGORY CREWDSON

**In pairs:** Describe what you see in the photograph and comment on:

- The setting
- The atmosphere
- The style

Compare the photograph to “One More Thing” and discuss whether the man in the photograph could be a depiction of L.D. after the story has ended.

*Gregory Crewdson:  
Untitled, 2002*



## ALTERNATE ENDINGS

“One More Thing” first appeared in Raymond Carver’s 1981 short story collection, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*. However “One More Thing”, along with several other stories, had been heavily edited before publishing by Carver’s editor, Gordon Lish. The name of the daughter in “One More Thing” was changed from Bea to Rae as was the ending that Carver originally wrote.

Consider the two endings and address the points below.

1. Describe the differences between the two versions in terms of language and style.
2. In what way does Carver’s original ending alter your understanding of the three characters? Go back over your characterization of L.D. and the adjectives you chose. Would you leave some out or add new ones if presented with the original ending?
3. Discuss to what extent our entire reading of the story would be influenced if the publisher had chosen to leave the ending the way Carver originally intended it.
4. Find information on the internet about the various reactions to the edited versions of Carver’s work.

### Lish’s ending as it appears in your text:

*L.D. put the shaving bag under his arm again and once more picked up the suitcase.*

*He said, “I just want to say one more thing.”*

*But then could not think what it possibly could be.*

[End]

### The original Carver ending:

*L.D. put the shaving bag under his arm again and once more picked up the suitcase. “I just want to say one more thing, Maxine. Listen to me. Remember this,” he said. “I love you. I love you no matter what happens. I love you too, Bea. I love you both.” He stood there at the door and felt his lips begin to tingle as he looked at them for what, he believed, might be the last time. “Good-bye,” he said.*

*“You call this love, L.D.?” Maxine said. She let go of Bea’s hand. She made a fist. Then she shook her head and jammed her hands into her coat pockets. She stared at him and then dropped her eyes to something on the floor, near his shoes.*

tingle dirre

*It came to him with a shock that he would remember this night and her like this. He was terrified to think that in the years ahead she might come to resemble a woman he couldn't place, a mute figure in a long coat, standing in the middle of a lighted room with lower eyes.*

mute tavs

*"Maxine!" he cried. "Maxine!"*

*"Is this what love is, L.D.?" she said, fixing her eyes on him. Her eyes were terrible and deep, and he held them as long as he could.*

[End]