Relationships

IRL

FHF 2025

Nemi (comic strip)

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Happy Endings

John and Mary meet.
What happens next?
If you want a happy ending, try A.

worthwhile værdifuld, meningsfuld
remunerative indbringende, rentabel
real estate fast ejendom
live-in help hushjælp, som bor på stedet
to be devoted to holde meget af
challenging udfordrende

A

John and Mary fall in love and get married. They both have worthwhile and remunerative jobs which they find stimulating and challenging. They buy a charming house. Real estate values go up. Eventually, when they can afford live-in help, they have two children, to whom they are devoted. The children turn out well. John and Mary have a stimulating and challenging sex life and worthwhile friends. They go on fun vacations together. They retire. They both have hobbies which they find stimulating and challenging. Eventually they die. This is the end of the story.

B

merely udelukkende
ego gratification selvtilfredsstillelse
tepid lunken

Mary falls in love with John but John doesn't fall in love with Mary. He merely uses her body for selfish pleasure and ego gratification of a tepid kind. He comes to her apartment twice a week and she cooks him dinner, you'll notice that he doesn't even consider her worth the price of a dinner out. And after he's eaten the dinner he fucks her and after that he falls asleep, while she does the dishes so he won't think she's untidy, having all those dirty dishes lying around, and puts on fresh lipstick so she'll look good when he wakes up, but when he wakes up he doesn't even notice. He puts on his socks and his shorts and his pants and his shirt and his tie and his shoes, the reverse order from the one in which he took them off. He doesn't take off Mary's clothes, she takes them off herself, she acts as if she's dying for it every time, not because she likes sex exactly, she doesn't, but she wants John to think she does because if they do it often enough surely he'll get used to her. He'll come to depend on her and they will get married, but John goes out the door with hardly so much as a good-night and three days later he turns up at six o'clock and they do the whole thing over again.

reverse modsat

Mary gets run-down. Crying is bad for your face, everyone knows that and so does Mary but she can't stop. People at work notice. Her friends tell her John is a rat, a pig, a dog, he isn't good enough for her, but she can't believe it. Inside John, she thinks, is another John, who is much nicer. This other John will emerge like a butterfly from a cocoon, a Jack from a box, a pit from a prune, if the first John is only squeezed enough.

emerge dukke op, komme ud
cocoon puppe
Jack from a box trold ud af en æske
pit sten (i frugt)
prune sveske

One evening John complains about the food. He has never complained about the food before. Mary is hurt.

Her friends tell her they've seen him in a restaurant with another woman, whose name is Madge. It's not even Madge that finally gets to

Mary: it's the restaurant. John has never taken Mary to a restaurant. Mary collects all the sleeping pills and aspirins she can find, and takes them and a half a bottle of sherry. You can see what kind of a woman she is by the fact that it's not even whiskey. She leaves a note for John. She hopes he'll discover her and get her to the hospital in time and repent and then they can get married, but this fails to happen and she dies. John marries Madge and everything continues as in A.

repent fortryde

C

John, who is an older man, falls in love with Mary, and Mary, who is only twenty-two, feels sorry for him because he's worried about his hair falling out. She sleeps with him even though she's not in love with him. She met him at work. She's in love with someone called James, who is twenty-two also and not yet ready to settle down.

John on the contrary settled down long ago: this is what is bothering him. John has a steady, respectable job and is getting ahead in his field, but Mary isn't impressed by him, she's impressed by James, who has a motorcycle and a fabulous record collection. But James is often away on his motorcycle, being free. Freedom isn't the same for girls, so in the meantime Mary spends Thursday evenings with John. Thursdays are the only days John can get away.

field (her) arbejdsområde

John is married to a woman called Madge and they have two children, a charming house which they bought just before the real estate values went up, and hobbies which they find stimulating and challenging, when they have the time. John tells Mary how important she is to him, but of course he can't leave his wife because a commitment is a commitment. He goes on about this more than is necessary and Mary finds it boring, but older men can keep it up longer so on the whole she has a fairly good time.

commitment forpligtelse

keep it up blive ved

One day James breezes in on his motorcycle with some top-grade California hybrid and James and Mary get higher than you'd believe possible and they climb into bed. Everything becomes very underwater, but along comes John, who has a key to Mary's apartment. He finds them stoned and entwined. He's hardly in any position to be jealous, considering Madge, but nevertheless he's overcome with despair. Finally he's middle-aged, in two years he'll be bald as an egg and he can't stand it. He purchases a handgun, saying he needs it for target practice – this is the thin part of the plot, but it can be dealt with later – and shoots the two of them and himself.

breeze in komme farende
hybrid blanding (af euforisende stof)

entwine sammenflette
despair håbløshed

purchase købe
target mål

Madge, after a suitable period of mourning, marries an understanding man called Fred and everything continues as in A, but under different names.

mourn sørge

D

Fred and Madge have no problems. They get along exceptionally well and are good at working out any little difficulties that may arise. But their charming house is by the seashore and one day a giant tidal wave approaches. Real estate values go down. The rest of the story is about what caused the tidal wave and how they escape from it. They do, though thousands drown, but Fred and Madge are virtuous and lucky. Finally on high ground they clasp each other, wet and dripping and grateful, and continue as in A.

tidal wave flodbølge

virtuous dydig

E

Yes, but Fred has a bad heart. The rest of the story is about how kind and understanding they both are until Fred dies. Then Madge devotes herself to charity work until the end of A. If you like, it can be "Madge," "cancer," "guilty and confused," and "bird watching."

charity velgørenhed

F

If you think this is all too bourgeois, make John a revolutionary and Mary a counterespionage agent and see how far that gets you. Remember, this is Canada. You' ll still end up with A, though in between you may get a lustful brawling saga of passionate involvement, a chronicle of our times, sort of.

bourgeois [buəʒwa:] småborgerlig
counterespionage agent kontraspion
lustful vellystig, liderlig
brawl larme, skælde ud

You'll have to face it, the endings are the same however you slice it. Don't be deluded by any other endings, they're all fake. Either deliberately fake, with malicious intent to deceive, or just motivated by excessive optimism if not by downright sentimentality.

The only authentic ending is the one provided here:
John and Mary die. John and Mary die. John and Mary die.

delude vildlede

malicious ondskabsfuld
excessive usædvanlig stor, overdreven

So much for endings. Beginnings are always more fun. True connoisseurs, however, are known to favor the stretch in between, since it's the hardest to do anything with.

connoisseur (sb) [kɔnəsɜ:] kender

That's about all that can be said for plots, which anyway are just one thing after another, a what and a what and a what.

Now try How and Why.

(1983)

The Roaring Twenties

The 1920s. The "Roaring Twenties" were a decade in which nothing big happened—no major catastrophes of large events—at least until the stock market crash of 1929—yet it is one of the most significant decades in U.S. history because of the great changes that came about in American society. The Twenties were known by various images and names: the Jazz Age, the age of the Lost Generation, flaming youth, flappers, radio and movies, bathtub gin, the speakeasy, organized crime, confession magazines, Hemingway and Fitzgerald, Lindbergh, Babe Ruth, Bobby Jones, the Great Crash, Sacco and Vanzetti, AL Smith, cosmetics, Freud, the "New" woman, the Harlem Renaissance, consumerism —all these images and more are part of the fabulous twenties!

In fact, the 1920s may have been the decade of the greatest social change in American history. Reacting perhaps to both the disillusionment from the First World War and against the strictures of Victorian culture, Americans abandoned old ideas with a vengeance and adopted new concepts wholesale. It was also a time of deep divisions: wets (for repeal of prohibition) against drys, town against country, nativists versus foreigners, Catholics against Protestants; the decade also saw a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and an American sense of alienation from the rest of the world.

The decade began amidst the ashes of the Great War, blossomed into a riotous age of spending and profit making, cheap automobiles and new consumer products. Everybody seemed to be on a roll. Then in 1929 the Crash hit the stock market, and for many complicated reasons the Great Depression followed. The 1930s became a time of unimaginable economic hardship for millions of Americans. Thus the "roaring twenties" ended with the bleak prospect of lessened expectations and strange new challenges—and for many the challenge was simply to stay alive.

Into the midst of the chaos of that Depression came the next imposing figure we will study: Franklin Delano Roosevelt. His New Deal program was the most ambitious legislative program ever taken by a President to that time, and while it did not really end the Depression, Roosevelt's New Deal changed the face of American government forever.

The Twenties were in a sense a reactionary decade—a reaction against Victorian ideas of morality that saw young men and women openly defy what their parents still viewed as proper behavior for relationships between the sexes. Young people went wild, in the eyes of some, though studies have suggested that there was more talk than action. It was also a rebellious age, in which women continued the process of breaking out of older social patterns as they had begun to do during World War I. They changed their dress styles, cut their hair short, smoked in public and were not above taking a nip from a flask of prohibition whiskey. That phenomenon led to changes in family relationships, as birth rates fell and young people had more freedom, provided in part by the automobile, but also by shifting cultural practices.

The twenties were also a time of reaction against war—the Great War in particular and war in general—for although the Americans suffered relatively few casualties in 1918, they came during a very short period of time—over 100,000 men died from all causes in about 6 months of actual fighting. From that disillusionment the Twenties also brought a reaction against the expansionist ideas that had gotten America an Empire and embroiled her in the Great War.

Although Americans wanted to be left alone at peace, there were may internal struggles in the 1920s. The decade saw city divided against country, the resurgence of the KKK, a rebellion against the open-door immigration policy that had gone on since the Civil war. There was a fight for law and order as prohibition made technical criminals out of many otherwise law-abiding citizens.

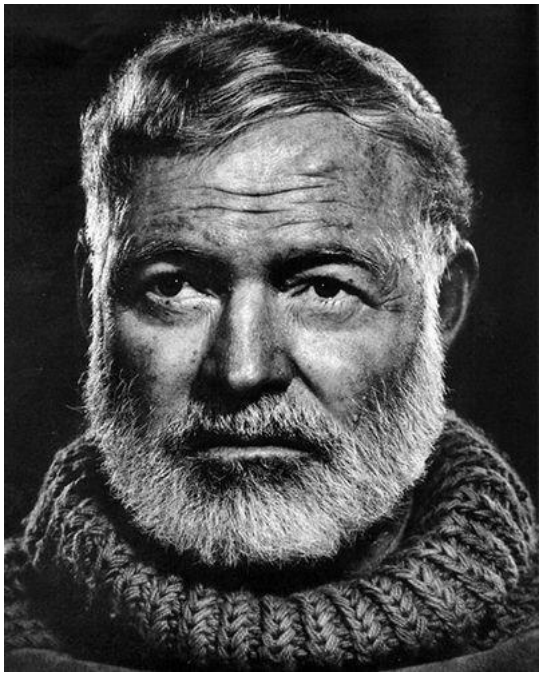
It was a decade of huge figures—heroes of the kind we don't see any more, or not often: Charles Lindbergh, Babe Ruth, Bobby Jones and others. Americans started going to the movies and listening to the radio in enormous numbers, and they found themselves becoming more affluent as the markets rose, seemingly without end. If was a time of new awakening for African-Americans, many of whom had fought in France, and the Harlem Renaissance opened Americans to Black literature, poetry, music and other arts of a quality never seen before. Literary figures like Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Thomas Wolfe brought white American literature to a new plane as well. The Progressive movement was not dead in the twenties—a Progressive Presidential candidate got almost 5 million votes in 1924—but it was not an activist decade. Everybody knew what Harding meant when he called for a return to "normalcy," even though there was no such word in the dictionary.

A "Golden Age." Americans in the 1920s discovered many things. They had more leisure time, and they discovered radio and movies. The first "talkie," "The Jazz Singer" was produced in 1927; color pictures followed a few years later. Americans of that era loved film stars like Charlie Chaplin, and they honored heroes like Charles Lindbergh. They had more time to participate in and watch sporting events, and Babe Ruth became the first athlete to earn a salary of $100,000 for a season. When reminded that that was more than President Hoover made, the Babe replied, "I had a better year." It was also a golden age of literature as well. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, Marjorie Rawlings, the Black writers mentioned above and many others brought American literature to new heights.

Women's Issues. Women gained the right to vote in 1920, but as was said in a famous play of the time, they could no longer hide behind the petticoat. Liberation brought increased responsibility, and it was only partial in any case. People talked more openly of sex, but anti-obscenity laws still made it difficult to get information about birth-control. Women found it easier to find jobs, and working outside the home was more acceptable, but women rarely became doctors, lawyers or business managers. Initially women voters changed the political landscape very little, as most tended to vote with their husbands or other male family members. The first Equal Rights Amendment was introduced in Congress but got nowhere. Women had come a long way, but still had a long way to go.

The following copied from:
http://www.enotes.com/roaring-twenties-primary-sources/hemingway-ernest

One of the most influential authors of the twentieth century, Hemingway was a leading figure among the famous U.S. expatriates (people who live outside of their home countries) who lived in Paris during the Roaring Twenties. As a young man who had participated and been wounded in World War I (1914–1918; the United States entered the conflict in 1917), Hemingway both embodied and voiced the viewpoint of the disillusioned postwar generation. His work is characterized by a spare, succinct writing style with a distinctively modern feel that, especially in the 1920s, presented a strong contrast to the ornate prose of the nineteenth century.



Ernest Hemingway

Ernest Hemingway was born on July 21, 1899, in Cicero (now Oak Park), Illinois, to Clarence and Grace Hemingway. Hemingway was the second of six children. As a child, Hemingway often spent summers at the family cabin by Walloon Lake in northern Michigan, where Hemingway developed a love of the outdoors. In high school, Hemingway began writing for the school paper, the *Trapeze,* and edited the school yearbook, basing his style on professional journalists he admired. He graduated in 1917. Eager to leave his conservative suburb, Hemingway became a journalist for the *Kansas City Star*. The stylistic demands of the newspaper – short sentences and vigorous language – would go on to influence Hemingway's famously sparse writing style. He only stayed at the newspaper for about six months.

Later in 1917, Hemingway applied for military service to support the United States' efforts in World War I. However, he was rejected from the Army because of his poor eyesight. Instead, he signed up with a Red Cross volunteer ambulance unit and shipped off to Italy in May 1918. Unfortunately, that July, Hemingway was caught in mortar fire while delivering supplies to troops on the front line. Heedless of his injuries, he worked to get Italian troops to safety, and the Italian government awarded him with the Silver Medal of Bravery. Hemingway spent months in a Red Cross Hospital in Milan recovering. There, he met and fell in love with nurse Agnes von Kurowsky. He returned to the United States in January 1919, assuming Agnes would join him, but she left him for another man. This heartbreak would later influence some of his writing, including his novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929).

Hemingway had a difficult time readjusting to life back in Chicago because of his experience in the war. He worked as a journalist in both Michigan and Toronto before returning to Chicago to edit the journal *Cooperative Commonwealth.* Around this time, he met Hadley Richardson, whom he married in 1921. They had a son, Jack, in 1923. In 1921, Hemingway took a job as a foreign correspondent for *The Toronto Star*, and he and Hadley moved to Paris. Throughout the 1920s, Hemingway covered The Greco-Turkish War for the *Star*. This period also introduced Hemingway to some of the most important relationships of his career. Many American writers and intellectuals lived in the Montparnasse neighbourhood, including Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ezra Pound. They shared a disillusionment with modernity that caused Gertrude Stein to dub them "The Lost Generation," which Hemingway would portray in his first novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). The novel also drew on his visits to the San Fermín festival of the bulls in Pamplona, Spain.

Hadley and Hemingway divorced in 1927 after Hadley discovered Hemingway's affair with another American expat, Pauline Pfeiffer. Hemingway and Pauline married in May 1927. The couple moved to

Key West, Florida in 1928, where they had their two sons, Patrick, and Gregory. Throughout this period, Hemingway spent a lot of time outdoors, hunting in Wyoming and fishing in Cuba. He returned to Spain briefly to research bullfighters for his nonfiction work *Death in the Afternoon* (1932). In 1933, Hemingway and Pauline went on safari in East Africa, which inspired another work of nonfiction, G*reen Hills of Africa* (1935), and several short stories. Hemingway took up a war correspondence post in Spain for the North American Newspaper Alliance in 1937, where he covered the Spanish Civil War. There, he met fellow journalist Martha Gellhorn, who would become his third wife in 1940, after he and Pauline divorced. His experience covering the war led to his writing *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). Hemingway became a foreign correspondent again during World War II. While on assignment he met and fell in love with journalist Mary Welsh. His marriage with Martha crumbled, and Hemingway and Mary wed in 1946.

After the war, Hemingway began to spend his winters in Cuba. His time there inspired *The Old Man and the Sea*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1952. His significant catalogue of novels and short fiction led to his winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. The committee in particular admired *The Old Man and the Sea*, and praised his "straightforward" prose and effective use of understatement. Despite this crowning achievement, Hemingway fell into a deep depression in the 1950s as many of his literary contemporaries began to die. He also faced numerous injuries from successive plane crashes, alongside liver trouble from years of heavy drinking. Despite these setbacks, he began work on a memoir about his expat days in Paris, *A Moveable Feast* (1964). In 1959, he bought a house in Ketchum, Idaho, where he would live out the remainder of his life. He died by suicide on July 2, 1961.

https://www.sparknotes.com/author/ernest-hemingway/

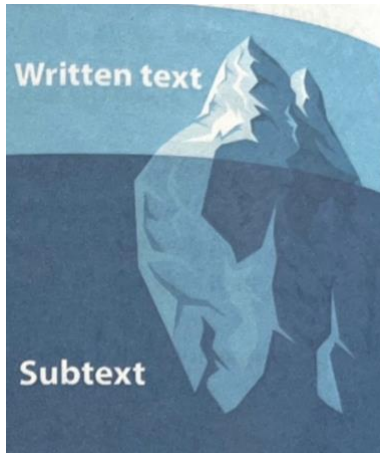
Writing style

Ernest Hemingway used sparse and minimalist language and his writings are well known for their simple sentences and empty spaces that mask the real emotions of his characters. This type of writing is often referred to as the iceberg technique because the reader has to look at what is beneath the surface in order to fully comprehend the text and its characters.

Many critics agree that Hemingway, in spite of an apparently simple and straightforward writing style, still employs symbols (although subtly so) in his writings, for example as regards setting.

The Iceberg Technique

Literary critics often claim that Ernest Hemingway's writing style is minimalistic and can be described by the so-called "Iceberg technique", meaning that Hemingway only describes "the tip of the iceberg" in his texts so that the reader has to 'fill in a lot of blanks' to interpret the meaning of his texts.



Therefore, Hemingway's writing seems simple on the surface, but the real meaning of the text is to be found beneath the surface in the subtext or "the empty spaces".

An extract from *Though literary landscapes* (2020), pp. 241-2, 248.

The Lost Generation

Modernism was not solely a British phenomenon and in America the group known as The Lost Generation has become synonymous with Modernism. The group arose in the aftermath of World War I, and consisted of Americans who all moved abroad to work with their art. During the 1920's, many of them met in Gertrude Stein's apartment in Paris where they discussed their art and inspired and gave critique to each other. The term, The Lost Generation, was coined by Gertrude Stein and later used by Ernest Hemingway in his novel The Sun Also Rises from 1926.

The term Lost here refers to the lack of purpose or drive a generation of young people were left with after the atrocities of World War I. They felt a sense of disillusionment after having witnessed what humanity was able to do to each other, and what war did to young men. The Lost Generation no longer felt that the values they had inherited, like courage, patriotism, and masculinity, were relevant and a feeling of alienation arose in them.

American writer Ernest Hemingway is a good example of a member of the lost generation who was concerned with Man's search for meaning and purpose in a world that had lost these two things. His characters' search often becomes futile and in some of his stories, Hemingway can even be said to be embracing existential nihilism. He explores this philosophical theory that simplified means that life has no meaning or value and that purpose and meaning in this existential void has to be invented by the individual.

Glossary

distaste sb. afsky
notion sb. ideen
noble adi. ædelt
solely adv. udelukkende
phenomenon sb. fænomen
arise vb. blive til
coin vb. skabe
lack vb. mangle
purpose sb. formål
atrocity sb. grusomhed
disillusionment sb. desillusionering (skuffelse forårsaget af for høje forventninger)
inherit vb. arve
alienation sb. fremmedgørelse

From *Though literary landscapes* (2020), p. 195.

Ernest Hemingway – Cat in the Rain (1925)

There were only two Americans stopping at the hotel. They did not know any of the people they passed on the stairs on their way to and from their room. Their room was on the second floor facing the sea. It also faced the public garden and the war monument. There were big palms and green benches in the public garden. In the good weather there was always an artist with his easel. Artists liked the way the palms grew and the bright colors of the hotels facing the gardens and the sea. Italians came from a long way off to look up at the war monument. It was made of bronze and glistened in the rain. It was raining. The rain dripped from the palm trees. Water stood in pools on the gravel paths. The sea broke in a long line in the rain and slipped back down the beach to come up and break again in a long line in the rain. The motor cars were gone from the square by the war monument. Across the square in the doorway of the café a waiter stood looking out at the empty square.

The American wife stood at the window looking out. Outside right under their window a cat was crouched under one of the dripping green tables. The cat was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on.

"I'm going down and get that kitty," the American wife said.

"I'll do it," her husband offered from the bed.

"No, I'll get it. The poor kitty out trying to keep dry under a table."

The husband went on reading, lying propped up with the two pillows at the foot of the bed.

"Don't get wet," he said.

The wife went downstairs and the hotel owner stood up and bowed to her as she passed the office. His desk was at the far end of the office. He was an old man and very tall.

"*Il piove*," the wife said. She liked the hotel-keeper.

"*Sì, sì, Signera, brutto tempo*. It's very bad weather."

He stood behind his desk in the far end of the dim room. The

wife liked him. She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She liked his dignity. She liked the way he wanted to serve her. She liked the way he felt about being a hotel-keeper. She liked his old, heavy face and big hands.

Liking him she opened the door and looked out. It was raining harder. A man in a rubber cape was crossing the empty square to the café. The cat would be around to the right. Perhaps she could go along under the eaves. As she stood in the doorway an umbrella opened behind her. It was the maid who looked after their room.

"You must not get wet," she smiled, speaking Italian. Of course, the hotel-keeper had sent her.

With the maid holding the umbrella over her, she walked along the gravel path until she was under their window. The table was there, washed bright green in the rain, but the cat was gone. She was suddenly disappointed. The maid looked up at her.

"Ha perduto qualche cosa, Signera?"

"There was a cat," said the American girl.

"A cat?"

"Si, il gatto."

"A cat?" the maid laughed. "A cat in the rain?"

"Yes," she said, "under the table." Then, "Oh, I wanted it so much. I wanted a kitty."

When she talked English the maid's face tightened.

"Come, Signora," she said. "We must get back inside. You will be wet."

"I suppose so," said the American girl.

They went back along the gravel path and passed in the door. The maid stayed outside to close the umbrella. As the American girl passed the office, the *padrone* bowed from his desk. Something felt very small and tight inside the girl. The *padrone* made her feel very small and at the same time really important. She had a momentary feeling of being of supreme importance. She went on up the stairs. She opened the door of the room. George was on the bed, reading.

"Did you get the cat?" he asked, putting the book down.

"It was gone."

"Wonder where it went to," he said, resting his eyes from reading.

She sat down on the bed.

"I wanted it so much," she said. "I don't know why I wanted it so much. I wanted that poor kitty. It isn't any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain."

George was reading again.

She went over and sat in front of the mirror of the dressing table looking at herself with the hand glass. She studied her profile, first one side and then the other. Then she studied the back of her head and her neck.

"Don't you think it would be a good idea if I let my hair grow out?" she asked, looking at her profile again.

George looked up and saw the back of her neck, clipped close like a boy's.

"I like it the way it is."

"I get so tired of it," she said. "I get so tired of looking like a boy."

George shifted his position in the bed. He hadn't looked away from her since she started to speak.

"You look pretty darn nice," he said.

She laid the mirror down on the dresser and went over to the window and looked out. It was getting dark.

"I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth and make a big knot at the back that I can feel," she said. "I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her."

"Yeah?" George said from the bed.

"And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes."

"Oh, shut up and get something to read," George said. He was reading again.

His wife was looking out of the window. It was quite dark now and still raining in the palm trees.

"Anyway, I want a cat," she said, "I want a cat. I want a cat now. If I can't have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat."

George was not listening. He was reading his book. His wife looked out of the window where the light had come on in the square.

Someone knocked at the door.

"*Avanti*," George said. He looked up from his book.

In the doorway stood the maid. She held a big tortoise-shell cat pressed tight against her and swung down against her body.

"Excuse me," she said, "the *padrone* asked me to bring this for the *Signora*."

Ernest Hemingway – Hills Like White Elephants (1927)

The hills across the valley of the Ebro were long and white. On this side there was no shade and no trees and the station was between two lines of rails in the sun. Close against the side of the station there was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain, made of strings of bamboo beads, hung across the open door into the bar, to keep out flies. The American and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade, outside the building. It was very hot and the express from Barcelona would come in forty minutes. It stopped at this junction for two minutes and went on to Madrid.

"What should we drink?" the girl asked. She had taken off her hat and put it on the table.

"It's pretty hot," the man said.

"Let's drink beer."

"*Dos cervezas*," the man said into the curtain.

"Big ones?" a woman asked from the doorway.

"Yes. Two big ones."

The woman brought two glasses of beer and two felt pads. She put the felt pads and the beer glasses on the table and looked at the man and the girl. The girl was looking off at the line of hills. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry.

"They look like white elephants," she said.

"I've never seen one," the man drank his beer.

"No, you wouldn't have."

"I might have," the man said. "Just because you say I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything."

The girl looked at the bead curtain. "They've painted something on it," she said. "What does it say?"

"Anis del Toro. It's a drink."

"Could we try it?"

The man called "Listen" through the curtain.

The woman came out from the bar.

"Four reales."

"We want two Anis del Toro."

"With water?"

"Do you want it with water?"

"I don't know," the girl said. "Is it good with water?"

"It's all right."

"You want them with water?" asked the woman.

"Yes, with water."

"It tastes like licorice," the girl said and put the glass down.

"That's the way with everything."

"Yes," said the girl. "Everything tastes of licorice. Especially all the things you've waited so long for, like absinthe."

"Oh, cut it out."

"You started it," the girl said. "I was being amused. I was having a fine time."

"Well, let's try and have a fine time."

"All right. I was trying. I said the mountains looked like white elephants. Wasn't that bright?"

"That was bright."

"I wanted to try this new drink: That's all we do, isn't it – look at things and try new drinks?"

"I guess so."

The girl looked across at the hills.

"They're lovely hills," she said. "They don't really look like white elephants. I just meant the coloring of their skin through the trees."

"Should we have another drink?"

"All right."

The warm wind blew the bead curtain against the table.

"The beer's nice and cool," the man said.

"It's lovely," the girl said.

"It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig," the man said. "It's not really an operation at all."

The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on.

"I know you wouldn't mind it. Jig. It's really not anything. It's just to let the air in."

The girl did not say anything.

"I'll go with you and I'll stay with you all the time. They just let the air in and then it's all perfectly natural."

"Then what will we do afterwards?"

"We'll be fine afterwards. Just like we were before."

"What makes you think so?"

"That's the only thing that bothers us. It's the only thing that's made us unhappy."

The girl looked at the bead curtain, put her hand out and took hold of two of the strings of beads.

"And you think then we'll be all right and be happy."

"I know we will. You don't have to be afraid. I've known lots of people that have done it."

"So have I," said the girl. "And afterward they were all so happy."

"Well," the man said, "if you don't want to you don't have to. I wouldn't have you do it if you didn't want to. But I know it's perfectly simple."

"And you really want to?"

"I think it's the best thing to do. But I don't want you to do it if you don't really want to."

"And if I do it you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?"

"I love you now. You know I love you."

"I know. But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say things are like white elephants, and you'll like it?"

"I'll love it. I love it now but I just can't think about it. You know how I get when I worry."

"If I do it you won't ever worry?"

"I won't worry about that because it's perfectly simple."

"Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't care about me."

"Well, I care about you."

"Oh, yes. But I don't care about me. And I'll do it and then everything will be fine."

"I don't want you to do it if you feel that way."

The girl stood up and walked to the end of the station. Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro. Far away, beyond the river, were mountains. The shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain and she saw the river through the trees.

"And we could have all this," she said. "And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible."

"What did you say?"

"I said we could have everything."

"We can have everything."

"No, we can't."

"We can have the whole world."

"No, we can't."

"We can go everywhere."

"No, we can't. It isn't ours any more."

"It's ours."

"No, it isn't. And once they take it away, you never get it back."

"But they haven't taken it away."

"We'll wait and see."

"Come on back in the shade," he said. "You mustn't feel that way."

"I don't feel any way," the girl said. "I just know things."

"I don't want you to do anything that you don't want to do –"

"Nor that isn't good for me," she said. "I know. Could we have another beer?"

"All right. But you've got to realize – "

"I realize," the girl said. "Can't we maybe stop talking?"

They sat down at the table and the girl looked across at the hills on the dry side of the valley and the man looked at her and at the table.

"You've got to realize," he said, "that I don't want you to do it if you don't want to. I'm perfectly willing to go through with it if it means anything to you."

"Doesn't it mean anything to you? We could get along."

"Of course it does. But I don't want anybody but you. I don't want any one else. And I know it's perfectly simple."

"Yes, you know it's perfectly simple."

"It's all right for you to say that, but I do know it."

"Would you do something for me now?"

"I'd do anything for you."

"Would you please please please please please please please stop talking?"

He did not say anything but looked at the bags against the wall of the station. There were labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights.

"But I don't want you to," he said, "I don't care anything about it."

"I'll scream," the girl said.

The woman came out through the curtains with two glasses of beer and put them down on the damp felt pads. "The train comes in five minutes," she said.

"What did she say?" asked the girl.

"That the train is coming in five minutes."

The girl smiled brightly at the woman, to thank her.

"I'd better take the bags over to the other side of the station," the man said. She smiled at him.

"All right. Then come back and we'll finish the beer."

He picked up the two heavy bags and carried them around the station to the other tracks. He looked up the tracks but could not see the train. Coming back, he walked through the barroom, where people waiting for the train were drinking. He drank an Anis at the bar and looked at the people. They were all waiting reasonably for the train. He went out through the bead curtain. She was sitting at the table and smiled at him.

"Do you feel better?" he asked.

"I feel fine," she said. "There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine."

Ernest Hemingway – The Sea Change (1931)

"All right," said the man. "What about it?"

"No," said the girl, "I can't."

"You mean you won't."

"I can't," said the girl. "That's all that I mean."

"You mean that you won't."

"All right," said the girl. "You have it your own way."

"I don't have it my own way. I wish to God I did."

"You did for a long time," the girl said.

It was early, and there was no one in the café except the barman and these two who sat together at a table in the corner. It was the end of the summer and they were both tanned, so that they looked out of place in Paris. The girl wore a tweed suit, her skin was a smooth golden brown, her blonde hair was cut short and grew beautifully away from her forehead. The man looked at her.

"I'll kill her," he said.

"Please don't," the girl said. She had very fine hands and the man looked at them. They were slim and brown and very beautiful.

"I will. I swear to God I will."

"It won't make you happy."

"Couldn't you have gotten into something else? Couldn't you have gotten into some other jam?"

"It seems not," the girl said. "What are you going to do about it?"

"I told you."

"No; I mean really."

"I don't know," he said. She looked at him and put out her hand. "Poor old Phil." she said. He looked at her hands, but he did not touch her hand with his.

"No, thanks," he said.

"It doesn't do any good to say I'm sorry?"

"No."

"Nor to tell you how it is?" "I'd rather not hear."

"I love you very much."

"Yes, this proves it."

"I'm sorry," she said, "if you don't understand."

"I understand. That's the trouble. I understand."

"You do," she said. "That makes it worse, of course."

"Sure," he said, looking at her. "I'll understand all the time. All day and all night. Especially all night. I'll understand. You don't have to worry about that."

"I'm sorry," she said.

"If it was a man – "

"Don't say that. It wouldn't be a man. You know that. Don't you trust me?"

"That's funny," he said. "Trust you. That's really funny."

"I'm sorry," she said. "That's all I seem to say. But when we do understand each other there's no use to pretend we don't."

"No," he said. "I suppose not."

"I'll come back if you want me."

"No. I don't want you." Then they did not say anything for a while.

"You don't believe I love you, do you?" the girl asked.

"Let's not talk rot," the man said.

"Don't you really believe I love you?"

"Why don't you prove it?"

"You didn't use to be that way. You never asked me to prove anything. That isn't polite."

"You're a funny girl."

"You're not. You're a fine man and it breaks my heart to go off and leave you–"

"You have to, of course."

"Yes," she said. "I have to and you know it."

He did not say anything and she looked at him and put her hand out again. The barman was at the far end of the bar. His face was white and so was his jacket. He knew these two and thought them a handsome young couple. He had seen many handsome young couples break up and new couples form that were never so handsome long. He was not thinking about this, but about a horse. In half an hour he could send across the street to find if the horse had won.

"Couldn't you just be good to me and let me go?" the girl asked.

"What do you think I'm going to do?"

Two people came in the door and went up to the bar.

"Yes, sir," the barman took the orders.

"You can't forgive me? When you know about it?" the girl asked.

"No."

"You don't think things we've had and done should make any difference in understanding?"

"'Vice is a monster of such fearful mien,'" the young man said bitterly, "that to be something or other needs but to be seen. Then we something, something, then embrace." He could not remember the words. "I can't quote," he said.

"Let's not say vice," she said. "That's not very polite."

"Perversion," he said.

"James," one of the clients addressed the barman, "you're looking very well."

"You're looking very well yourself," the barman said.

"Old James," the other client said. "You're fatter, James."

"It's terrible," the barman said, "the way I put it on."

"Don't neglect to insert the brandy, James," the first client said.

"No, sir," said the barman. "Trust me."

The two at the bar looked over at the two at the table, then looked back at the barman again. Towards the barman was the comfortable direction.

"I'd like it better if you didn't use words like that," the girl said. "There's no necessity to use a word like that."

"What do you want me to call it?"

"You don't have to call it. You don't have to put any name to it."

"That's the name for it."

"No," she said. "We're made up of all sorts of things. You've known that. You've used it well enough."

"You don't have to say that again."

"Because that explains it to you."

"All right," he said. "All right."

"You mean all wrong. I know. It's all wrong. But I'll come back. I told you I'd come back. I'll come back right away."

"No, you won't."

"I'll come back."

"No, you won't. Not to me."

"You'll see."

"Yes," he said. "That's the hell of it. You probably will."

"Of course I will."

"Go on, then."

"Really?" She could not believe him, but her voice was happy.

"Go on," his voice sounded strange to him. He was looking at her, at the way her mouth went and the curve of her cheek bones, at her eyes and at the way her hair grew on her forehead and at the edge of her ear and at her neck.

"Not really. Oh, you're too sweet," she said. "You're too good to me."

"And when you come back tell me all about it." His voice sounded very strange. He did not recognize it. She looked at him quickly. He was settled into something.

"You want me to go?" she asked seriously.

"Yes," he said seriously. "Right away." His voice was not the same, and his mouth was very dry. "Now," he said.

She stood up and went out quickly. She did not look back at him. He watched her go. He was not the same-looking man as he had been before he had told her to go. He got up from the table, picked up the two checks and went over to the bar with them.

"I'm a different man, James," he said to the barman. "You see in me quite a different man."

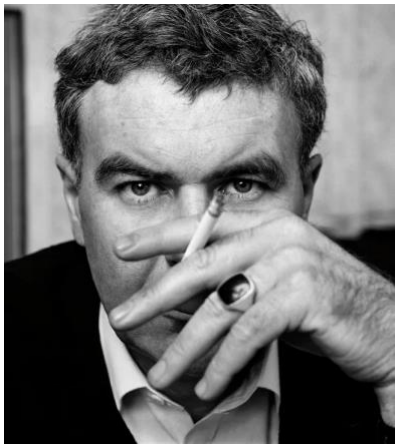
"Yes, sir?" said James.

"Vice," said the brown young man, "is a very strange thing, James." He looked out the door. He saw her going down the street. As he looked in the glass, he saw he was really quite a different- looking man. The other two at the bar moved down to make room for him.

"You're right there, sir," James said.

The other two moved down a little more, so that he would be quite comfortable. The young man saw himself in the mirror behind the bar. "I said I was a different man, James," he said. Looking into the mirror he saw that this was quite true.

"You look very well, sir," James said. "You must have had a very good summer."



Raymond Carver (1938-1988), in full Raymond Clevie Carver, (born May 25, 1938, Clatskanie, Oregon, U.S. – died August 2, 1988, Port Angeles, Washington), American short-story writer and poet whose realistic writings about the working poor mirrored his own life.

Carver was the son of a sawmill worker. He married a year after finishing high school and supported his wife and two children by working as a janitor, gas-station attendant, and delivery man. He became seriously interested in a writing career after taking a creative-writing course at Chico State College (now California State University, Chico) in 1958. His short stories began to appear in magazines while he studied at Humboldt State College (now Humboldt State University) in Arcata, California (B.A., 1963). Carver's first success as a writer came in 1967 with the story "Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?," and he began writing full-time after losing his job as a textbook editor in 1970. The highly successful short-story collection *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (1976) established his reputation.

Carver began drinking heavily in 1967 and was repeatedly hospitalized for alcoholism in the 1970s, while continuing to turn out short stories. After conquering his drinking problem in the late 1970s, he taught for several years at the University of Texas at El Paso and at Syracuse University, and in 1983 he won a literary award whose generous annual stipend freed him to again concentrate on his writing full-time. His later short-story collections were *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981), *Cathedral* (1984), and *Where I'm Calling From* (1988). While his short stories were what made his critical reputation, he was also an accomplished poet in the realist tradition of Robert Frost. Carver's poetry collections include *At Night the Salmon Move* (1976), *Where Water Comes Together with Other Water* (1985), and *Ultramarine* (1986). He died of lung cancer at age 50.

In his short stories Carver chronicled the everyday lives and problems of the working poor in the Pacific Northwest. His blue-collar characters are crushed by broken marriages, financial problems, and failed careers, but they are often unable to understand or even articulate their own anguish. Carver's stripped-down, minimalist prose style is remarkable for its honesty and power. He is credited with helping revitalize the genre of the English-language short story in the late 20th century.

However, controversy arose over the nature of Carver's writing—and even his lasting literary reputation—in the early 21st century. It was revealed that his long-time editor, Gordon Lish, had drastically changed many of Carver's early stories. While Lish's significant involvement in Carver's writing had long been suspected, the extent of his editing became public knowledge when, in 2007, Carver's widow, the poet Tess Gallagher, announced that she was seeking to publish the original versions of the stories in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (which appeared as *Beginners* in the United Kingdom and also as part of the Library of America's *Raymond Carver: Collected Stories* [both 2009]). Lish was shown to have changed characters' names, cut the length of many stories (over 75 percent of the text in two cases), and altered the endings of some stories. However, most of Carver's famously terse sentences were his own, as was the hallmark bleak working-class milieu of the short stories.

https://www.britannica.com/biography/Raymond-Carver

A few definitions of DIRTY REALISM

1. **"Dirty Realism** is a North American literary movement born in the 1970s-80s in which the narrative is stripped down to its fundamental features.

This movement is a derivative of minimalism. As minimalism, dirty realism is characterized by an economy with words and a focus on surface description. Authors working within the genre tend to eschew adverbs and prefer allowing context to dictate meaning. The characters in minimalist stories and novels tend to be unexceptional."

www.wikipedia.com

2. " …authors, whose stories – spare, unillusioned, but compassionate – invoked, with a curious coherence of style, the belly-side of American life: trailer parks, roadside cafés and small mid-western towns"

http://www.granta.com/Magazine/19

3. "[...] it is a realism so stylized and particularized – so insistently informed by a discomforting and sometimes elusive irony – that it makes the more traditional realistic novels […] seem ornate, even baroque in comparison. Many […] write in a flat, 'unsurprised' language, pared down to the plainest of plain styles. The sentences are stripped of adornment, and maintain complete control on the simple objects and events that they ask us to witness: it is what is not being said – the silences, the elisions, the omissions – that seem to speak most." (Buford 1983: 4f.)

http://static.sdu.dk/mediafiles//Files/Om_SDU/Institutter/Ilkm/ILKM_files/InternetSkrift/TeksterInternetskrift/PerKroghHansen.pdf

4. "dirty realism, a critical label attached since the early 1980s to a group of American short-story writers, of whom the best-known are Raymond Carver, Jayne Anne Phillips, and Tobias Wolff. The term refers to a tendency for their stories to recount incidents of impoverished life among blue-collar workers in small-town America, in a bare, unsensational style.":

http://www.answers.com/topic/dirty-realism#ixzz1Lrk9OShe

GLOSER TIL A FEW DEFINITIONS OF DIRTY REALISM

1.
narrative: fortælling
features: træk
derivative: er afledt af, et underbegreb til
eschew: sky, undgå
unexceptional: der ikke skiller sig ud, ikke bemærkelsesværdig

2.
spare: nøjsomme
unillusioned: uden forhåbninger
compassionate: som ejer/har medfølelse
invoked: påberåbte sig (fortælle om)
curious: mærkelig
coherence: sammenhæng
belly-side: underside
trailer parks: område hvor folk bor i campingvogne/skurvogne etc.

3.
Stylized: stiliseret
particularized: konkretiseret
insistent: insisterende
informed: (her) gennemtrængt af
discomforting: ubehagelig
elusive: flygtig
ornate: overbroderet, overpyntede
baroque: barokke
unsurprised: jævnt, som ikke indeholder overraskelser
pared down: skrællet ned
adornment: pynt
elision: udeladelse
omissions: det der springes over (synonym til elision)

4.
label: etiket
recount: gengive, berette om
incident: begivenhed, hændelse
impoverished: fattig, forarmet
blue-collar worker: fabriksarbejder
(i mods. til 'white collar worker': funktionær)
bare: skrabet

Raymond Carver – Neighbors (1971)

Bill and Arlene Miller were a happy couple. But now and then they felt they alone among their circle had been passed by somehow, leaving Bill to attend to his bookkeeping duties and Arlene occupied with secretarial chores. They talked about it sometimes, mostly in comparison s with the lives of their neighbors, Harriet and Jim Stone. It seemed to the Millers that the Stones lived a fuller and brighter life. The Stones were always going out for dinner, or entertaining at home, or traveling about the country somewhere in connection with Jim's work.

The Stones lived across the hall from the Millers. Jim was a salesman for a machine-parts firm and often managed to combine business with pleasure trips, and on this occasion the Stones would be away for ten days, first to Cheyenne, then on to St. Louis to visit relatives. In their absence, the Millers would look after the Stones' apartment, feed Kitty, and water the plants.

Bill and Jim shook hands beside the car. Harriet and Arlene held each other by the elbows and kissed lightly on the lips.

"Have fun," Bill said to Harriet.

"We will," said Harriet. "You kids have fun too." Arlene nodded.

Jim winked at her. "Bye, Arlene. Take good care of the old man."

"I will," Arlene said.

"Have fun," Bill said.

"You bet," Jim said, clipping Bill lightly on the arm. "And thanks again, you guys."

The Stones waved as they drove away, and the Millers waved too. "Well, I wish it was us," Bill said.

"God knows, we could use a vacation," Arlene said. She took his arm and put it around her waist as they climbed the stairs to their apartment.

After dinner Arlene said, "Don't forget. Kitty gets liver flavor the first night." She stood in the kitchen doorway folding the handmade tablecloth that Harriet had bought for her last year in Santa Fe.

Bill took a deep breath as he entered the Stones' apartment. The air was already heavy and it was vaguely sweet. The sunburst clock over the television said half past eight. He remembered when Harriet had come home with the clock, how she had crossed the hall to show it to Arlene, cradling the brass case in her arms, and talking to it through the tissue paper as if it were an infant.

Kitty rubbed her face against his slippers and then turned onto her side, but jumped up quickly as Bill moved to the kitchen and selected one of the stacked cans from the gleaming drainboard. Leaving the cat to pick at her food, he headed for the bathroom. He looked at himself in the mirror and then closed his eyes and then looked again. He opened the

medicine chest. He found a container of pills and read the label – *Harriet Stone. One each day as directed* – and slipped it into his pocket. He went back to the kitchen, drew a pitcher of water, and returned to the living room. He finished watering, set the pitcher on the rug, and opened the liquor cabinet. He reached in back for the bottle of Chivas Regal. He took two drinks from the bottle, wiped his lips on his sleeve, and replaced the bottle in the cabinet.

Kitty was on the couch sleeping. He switched off the lights, slowly closing and checking the door. He had the feeling he had left something.

"What kept you?" Arlene said. She sat with her legs turned under her, watching television.

"Nothing. Playing with Kitty," he said, and went over to her and touched her breasts.

"Let's go to bed, honey," he said.

The next day Bill took only ten minutes of the twenty-minute break allotted for the afternoon and left at fifteen minutes before five. He parked the car in the lot just as Arlene hopped down from the bus. He waited until she entered the building, then ran up the stairs to catch her as she stepped out of the elevator.

"Bill! God, you scared me. You're early," she said. He shrugged. "Nothing to do at work," he said.

She let him use her key to open the door. He looked at the door across the hall before following her inside.

"Let's go to bed," he said.

"Now?" She laughed. "What's gotten into you?"

"Nothing. Take your dress off." He grabbed for her awkwardly, and she said, "Good God, Bill."

He unfastened his belt.

Later they sent out for Chinese food, and when it arrived they ate hungrily, without speaking, and listened to records.

"Let's not forget to feed Kitty," she said.

"I was just thinking about that," he said. "I'll go right over."

He selected a can of fish flavor for the cat, then filled the pitcher and went to water. When he returned to the kitchen, the cat was scratching in her box. She looked at him steadily before she turned back to the litter. He opened all the cupboards and examined the canned goods, the cereals, the packaged foods, the cocktail and wine glasses, the china, the pots and pans. He opened the refrigerator. He sniffed some celery, took two bites of cheddar cheese, and chewed on an apple as he walked into the bedroom. The bed seemed enormous, with a fluffy white bedspread draped to the floor. He pulled out a nightstand drawer, found a half-empty package of cigarettes and stuffed them into his pocket. Then he stepped

to the closet and was opening it when the knock sounded at the front door.

He stopped by the bathroom and flushed the toilet on his way.

"What's been keeping you?", Arlene said. "You've been over here more than an hour".

"Have I really?", he said.

"Yes, you have," she said.

"I had to go to the toilet," he said.

"You have your own toilet," she said.

"I couldn't wait," he said.

That night they made love again

In the morning he had Arlene call in for him. He showered, dressed, and made a light breakfast. He tried to start a book. He went out for a walk and felt better. But after a while, hands still in his pockets, he returned to the apartment. He stopped at the Stones' door on the chance he might hear the cat moving about. Then he let himself in at his own door and went to the kitchen for the key.

Inside it seemed cooler than his apartment, and darker too. He wondered if the plants had something to do with the temperature of the air. He looked out the window, and then he moved slowly through each room considering everything that fell under his gaze, carefully, one object at a time. He saw ashtrays, items of furniture, kitchen utensils, the clock. He saw everything. At last he entered the bedroom, and the cat appeared at his feet. He stroked her once, carried her into the bathroom, and shut the door.

He lay down on the bed and stared at the ceiling. He lay for a while with his eyes closed, and then he moved his hand under his belt. He tried to recall what day it was. He tried to remember when the Stones were due back, and then he wondered if they would ever return. He could not remember their faces or the way they talked and dressed. He sighed and with effort rolled off the bed to lean over the dresser and look at himself in the mirror.

He opened the closet and selected a Hawaiian shirt. He looked until he found Bermudas, neatly pressed and hanging over a pair of brown twill slacks. He shed his own clothes and slipped into the shorts and the shirt. He looked in the mirror again. He went to the living room and poured himself a drink and sipped it on his way back to the bedroom. He put on a blue shirt, a dark suit, a blue and white tic, black wing-tip shoes. The glass was empty and he went for another drink.

In the bedroom again, he sat on a chair, crossed his legs, and smiled, observing himself in the mirror. The telephone rang twice and fell silent. He finished the drink and took off the suit. He rummaged through the top drawers until he found a pair of panties and a brassiere. He stepped into the panties and fastened the brassiere, then looked through the closet

for an outfit. He put on a black and white checkered skirt and tried to zip it up. He put on a burgundy blouse that buttoned up the front. He considered her shoes, but understood they would not fit. For a long time he looked out the living-room window from behind the curtain. Then he returned to the bedroom and put everything away.

He was not hungry. She did not eat much, either. They looked at each other shyly and smiled. She got up from the table and checked that the key was on the shelf and then she quickly cleared the dishes.

He stood in the kitchen doorway and smoked a cigarette and watched her pick up the key.

"Make yourself comfortable while go across the hall," she said. "Read the paper or something." She closed her fingers over the key. He was, she said, looking tired.

He tried to concentrate on the news. He read the paper and turned on the television. Finally he went across the hall. The door was locked.

"It's me. Are you still there, honey?" he called.

After a time the lock released and Arlene stepped outside and shut the door. "Was I gone so long?" she said.

"Well, you were," he said.

"Was I?" she said. "I guess I must have been playing with Kitty."

He studied her, and she looked away, her hand still resting on the doorknob.

"It's funny," she said. "You know to go in someone's place like that."

He nodded, took her hand from the knob, and guided her toward their own door. He let them into their apartment.

"It *is* funny," he said.

He noticed white lint clinging to the back of her sweater, and the color was high in her cheeks. He began kissing her on the neck and hair and she turned and kissed him back.

"Oh, damn," she said. "Damn, damn" she sang, girlishly clapping her hands. "I just remembered. I really and truly forgot to do what I went over there to do. I didn't feed Kitty or do any watering." She looked at him. "Isn't that stupid?"

"I don't think so," he said. "Just a minute. I'll get my cigarettes and go back with you."

She waited until he had closed and locked their door, and then she took his arm at the muscle and said. "I guess I should tell you. I found some pictures."

He stopped in the middle of the hall. "What kind of pictures?"

"You can see for yourself," she said, and she watched him.

"No kidding." He grinned. "Where?" "In a drawer," she said.

"No kidding," he said. And then she said, "Maybe they won't come back," and was at once astonished at her words.

"It could happen," he said. "Anything could happen."

"Or maybe they'll come back and . . ." but she did not finish.

They held hands for the short walk across the hall, and when he spoke she could barely hear his voice.

"The key," he said. "Give it to me." "What?" she said. She gazed at the door. "The key," he said. "You have the key." "My God," she said, "I left the key inside."

He tried the knob. It was locked. Then she tried the knob. It would not turn. Her lips were parted, and her breathing was hard, expectant. He opened his arms and she moved into them.

"Don't worry," he said into her ear. "For God's sake, don't worry."

They stayed there. They held each other. They leaned into the door as if against a wind, and braced themselves.

Raymond Carver – Tell the Women We're Going (1981)

BILL JAMISON HAD ALWAYS been best friends with Jerry Roberts. The two grew up in the south area, near the old fairgrounds, went through grade school and junior high together, and then on to Eisenhower, where they took as many of the same teachers as they could manage, wore each other's shirts and sweaters and pegged pants, and dated and banged the same girls - whichever came up as a matter of course.

Summers they took jobs together - swamping peaches, picking cherries, stringing hops, anything they could do that paid a little and where there was no boss to get on your ass. And then they bought a car together. The summer before their senior year, they chipped in and bought a red '44 Plymouth for $325.

They shared it. It worked out fine.

But Jerry got married before the end of the first semester and dropped out of school to work steady at Robby's Mart.

As for Bill, he'd dated the girl too. Carol was her name, and she went just fine with Jerry, and Bill went over there every chance he got. It made him feel older, having married friends. He'd go over there for lunch or for supper, and they'd listen to Elvis or to Bill Haley and the Comets.

But sometimes Carol and Jerry would start making out right with Bill still there, and he'd have to get up and excuse himself and take a walk to Dezorn's Service Station to get some Coke because there was only the one bed in the apartment, a hide-away that came down in the living room. Or sometimes Jerry and Carol would head off to the bathroom, and Bill would have to move to the kitchen and pretend to be interested in the cupboards and the refrigerator and not trying to listen.

So he stopped going over so much; and then June he graduated, took a job at the Darigold plant, and joined the National Guard. In a year he had a milk route of his own and was going steady with Linda. So Bill and Linda would go over to Jerry and Carol's, drink beer, and listen to records.

Carol and Linda got along fine, and Bill was flattered when Carol said that, confidentially, Linda was "a real person."

Jerry liked Linda too. "She's great," Jerry said.

When Bill and Linda got married, Jerry was best man. The reception, of course, was at the Donnelly Hotel, Jerry and Bill cutting up together and linking arms and tossing off glasses of spiked punch.

But once, in the middle of all this happiness, Bill looked at Jerry and thought how much older Jerry looked, a lot older than twenty-two. By then Jerry was the happy father of two kids and had moved up to assistant manager at Robby's, and Carol had one in the oven again.

They saw each other every Saturday and Sunday, sometimes oftener if it was a holiday. If the weather was good, they'd be over at Jerry's to barbecue hot dogs and turn the kids loose in the wading pool Jerry had got for next to nothing, like a lot of other things he got from the Mart. Jerry had a nice house. It was up on a hill overlooking the Naches. There were other houses around, but not too close.

Jerry was doing all right. When Bill and Linda and Jerry and Carol got together, it was always at Jerry's place because Jerry had the barbecue and the records and too many kids to drag around.

It was a Sunday at Jerry's place the time it happened.

The women were in the kitchen straightening up. Jerry's girls were out in the yard throwing a plastic ball into the wading pool, yelling, and splashing after it.

Jerry and Bill were sitting in the reclining chairs on the patio, drinking beer and just relaxing.

Bill was doing most of the talking - things about people they knew, about Darigold, about the four-door Pontiac Catalina he was thinking of buying.

Jerry was staring at the clothesline, or at the '68 Chevy hardtop that stood in the garage. Bill was thinking how Jerry was getting to be deep, the way he stared all the time and hardly did any talking at all.

Bill moved in his chair and lighted a cigarette.

He said, "Anything wrong, man? I mean, you know."

Jerry finished his beer and then mashed the can. He shrugged.

"You know," he said.

Bill nodded.

Then Jerry said, "How about a little run?"

"Sounds good to me," Bill said. "I'll tell the women we're going."

They took the Naches River highway out to Gleed, Jerry driving. The day was sunny and warm, and air blew through the car.

"Where we headed?" Bill said.

"Let's shoot a few balls."

"Fine with me," Bill said. He felt a whole lot better just seeing Jerry brighten up.

"Guy's got to get out," Jerry said. He looked at Bill. "You know what I mean?"

Bill understood. He liked to get out with the guys from the plant for the Friday-night bowling league. He liked to stop off twice a week after work to have a few beers with Jack Broderick. He knew a guy's got to get out.

"Still standing," Jerry said, as they pulled up onto the gravel in front of the Rec Center.

They went inside, Bill holding the door for Jerry, Jerry punching Bill lightly in the stomach as he went on by.

"Hey there!"

It was Riley.

"Hey, how you boys keeping?"

It was Riley coming around from behind the counter, grinning. He was a heavy man. He had on a short-sleeved Hawaiian shirt that hung outside his jeans. Riley said, "So how you boys been keeping?"

"Ah, dry up and give us a couple of Olys," Jerry said, winking at Bill. "So how you been, Riley?" Jerry said.

Riley said, "So how you boys doing? Where you been keeping yourselves? You boys getting any on the side? Jerry, the last time I seen you, your old lady was six months gone."

Jerry stood a minute and blinked his eyes.

"So how about the Olys?" Bill said.

They took stools near the window. Jerry said, "What kind of place is this, Riley, that it don't have any girls on a Sunday afternoon?"

Riley laughed. He said, "I guess they're all in church praying for it."

They each had five cans of beer and took two hours to play three racks of rotation and two racks of snooker, Riley sitting on a stool and talking and watching them play, Bill always looking at his watch and then looking at Jerry.

Bill said, "So what do you think, Jerry? I mean, what do you think?" Bill said.

Jerry drained his can, mashed it, then stood for time turning the can in his hand.

Back on the highway, Jerry opened it up little jumps of - eighty-five and ninety. They'd just passed an old pickup loaded with furniture when they saw the two girls.

"Look at that!" Jerry said, slowing. "I could use some of that."

Jerry drove another mile or so and then pulled off the road.

"Let's go back," Jerry said. "Let's try it."

"Jesus," Bill said. "I don't know."

"I could use some," Jerry said.

Bill said, "Yeah, but I don't know."

"For Christ's sake," Jerry said.

Bill glanced at his watch and then looked all around. He said, "You do the talking. I'm rusty."

Jerry hooted as he whipped the car around.

He slowed when he came nearly even with the girls. He pulled the Chevy onto the shoulder across from them. The girls kept on going on their bicycles, but they looked at each other and laughed. The one on the inside was dark-haired, tall, and willowy. The other was light-haired and smaller. They both wore shorts and halters.

"Bitches," Jerry said. He waited for the cars to pass so he could pull a U.

"I'll take the brunette," he said. He said, "The little one's yours."

Bill moved his back against the front seat and touched the bridge of his sunglasses. "They're not going to do anything," Bill said.

"They're going to be on your side," Jerry said.

He pulled across the road and drove back. "Get ready," Jerry said.

"Hi," Bill said as the girls bicycled up. "My name's Bill," Bill said.

"That's nice," the brunette said.

"Where are you going?" Bill said.

The girls didn't answer. The little one laughed. They kept bicycling and Jerry kept driving.

"Oh, come on now. Where you going?" Bill said.

"No place," the little one said.

"Where's no place?" Bill said.

"Wouldn't you like to know," the little one said.

"I told you my name," Bill said. "What's yours? My friend's Jerry," Bill said.

The girls looked at each other and laughed.

A car came up from behind. The driver hit his horn.

"Cram it!" Jerry shouted.

He pulled off a little and let the car go around. Then he pulled back up alongside the girls.

Bill said, "We'll give you a lift. We'll take you where you want. That's a promise. You must be tired riding those bicycles. You look tired. Too much exercise isn't good for a person. Especially for girls."

The girls laughed.

"You see?" Bill said. "Now tell us your names."

"I'm Barbara, she's Sharon," the little one said.

"All right!" Jerry said. "Now find out where they're going."

"Where you girls going?" Bill said. "Barb?"

She laughed. "No place," she said. "Just down the road."

"Where down the road?"

"Do you want me to tell them?" she said to the other girl.

"I don't care," the other girl said. "It doesn't make any difference," she said. "I'm not going to go anyplace with anybody anyway," the one named Sharon said.

"Where you going?" Bill said. "Are you going to Picture Rock?"

The girls laughed.

"That's where they're going," Jerry said.

He fed the Chevy gas and pulled up off onto the shoulder so that the girls had to come by on his side.

"Don't be that way," Jerry said. He said, "Come on." He said, "We're all introduced."

The girls just rode on by.

"I won't bite you!" Jerry shouted.

The brunette glanced back. It seemed to Jerry she was looking at him in the right kind of way. But with a girl you could never be sure.

Jerry gunned it back onto the highway, dirt and pebbles flying from under the tires.

"We'll be seeing you!" Bill called as they went speeding by.

"It's in the bag," Jerry said. "You see the look that cunt gave me?"

"I don't know," Bill said. "Maybe we should cut for home."

"We got it made!" Jerry said.

He pulled off the road under some trees. The highway forked here at Picture Rock, one road going on to Yakima, the other heading for Naches, Enumclaw, the Chinook Pass, Seattle.

A hundred yards off the road was a high, sloping, black mound of rock, part of a low range of hills, honeycombed with footpaths and small caves, Indian sign-painting here and there on the cave walls. The cliff side of the rock faced the highway and all over it were things like this: NACHES 67 – GLEED WILDCATS – JESUS SAVES – BEAT YAKIMA – REPENT NOW.

They sat in the car, smoking cigarettes. Mosquitoes came in and tried to get at their hands.

"Wish we had a beer now," Jerry said. "I sure could go for a beer," he said.

Bill said, "Me too," and looked at his watch.

When the girls came into view, Jerry and Bill got out of the car. They leaned against the fender in front.

"Remember," Jerry said, starting away from the car, "the dark one's mine. You got the other one."

The girls dropped their bicycles and started up one of the paths. They disappeared around a bend and then reappeared again, a little higher up. They were standing there and looking down.

"What're down. you guys following us for?" the brunette called down.

Jerry just started up the path.

The girls turned away and went off again at a trot.

Jerry and Bill kept climbing at a walking pace. Bill was smoking a cigarette, stopping every so often to get a good drag. When the path turned, he looked back and caught a glimpse of the car.

"Move it!" Jerry said.

"I'm coming," Bill said.

They kept climbing. But then Bill had to catch his breath. He couldn't see the car now. He couldn't see the highway, either. To his left and all the way down, he could see a strip of the Naches like a strip of aluminum foil.

Jerry said, "You go right and I'll go straight. We'll cut the cockteasers off."

Bill nodded. He was too winded to speak.

He went higher for a while, and then the path began to drop, turning toward the valley. He looked and saw the girls. He saw them crouched behind an outcrop. Maybe they were smiling.

Bill took out a cigarette. But he could not get it lit. Then Jerry showed up. It did not matter after that.

Bill had just wanted to fuck. Or even to see them naked. On the other hand, it was okay with him if it didn't work out.

He never knew what Jerry wanted. But it started and ended with a rock. Jerry used the same rock on both girls, first on the girl called Sharon and then on the one that was supposed to be Bill's.