

JERRY. See for yourself.
GITTEL. You'll move the neckties in for keeps?
JERRY. See for yourself. (From across the room he holds the bed jacket ready for her, the letter poking out prominently.)
GITTEL. (reproachfully). Jerry.
JERRY. Come and get it.
GITTEL. (reproachfully). Jerry, I got to be on my feet to get you?
JERRY. Maybe. Better find out, hm? (GITTEL shakes her head.) Is it so out of the question that I want to keep the goddam neckties here? Come on. (GITTEL just gazes at him, her eyes moist.) Come. Come and get it.
(GITTEL puts the tray aside, moves her legs to the edge, and sits still.) Come on, honey. (GITTEL stands, unsteadily for a moment, then moves toward him, afraid of her belly, afraid of her legs, the progress of someone who hasn't walked in a month; but she gets to him and the letter, unfolds it, and reads.)
GITTEL. You're giving up your flat.
JERRY. Save rent.
GITTEL. You're really ruining me, Jerry! (She keeps her face averted, on the verge of tears.) I didn't use to be a—bitch of a—lousy blackmailer. (Another pause.) And I'm not going to be either! Enough is enough! (And with sudden resolution she tears the letter into pieces.)
JERRY. (equably). That's how you waste forest resources? Now I'll have to write another.

EL. Hey! That's beautiful, what is it?
JERRY. Something to remember me by, at o'clock.
EL. A bed jacket! Ye gods, I'll get up. (She wiggles her fingers for JERRY holds up the folded paper.)
JERRY. This is a letter to my landlord. Slip it into the pocket of the bed jacket.
EL. Huh?
JERRY. At the corner. As soon as you're in feet to make it down there.
EL. Why, what's it say? (Her eyes enlarge.) Get a new tenant! Huh?

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JERRY. (equably). That's how you waste forest resources? Now I'll have to write another.

JERRY. Hell, I'll blow all the answers out of my brilliant nose. (He blows her a kiss and is out the door, gone, leaving her on her feet in the room, shaking her head after him, in her Chinese silk, like a rainbow, half radiance, half tears. She fingers his coat, sits, and brings it to her face; she is much troubled.)
SCENE TWO
JERRY'S room. It is May, almost summer now, a hot muggy dusk, and eight months since this affair began. Once again the windows of both rooms are open—JERRY'S from the top—and the sounds of traffic float in.
In GITTEL'S room the only change is that the table is cleared of all JERRY'S exam preparations, the night table is cleared of medicines, the bed is made.
JERRY'S flat however is a shambles. Packing is in progress, nothing is in its place, cartons stand here and there. In the kitchen JERRY in his shirt sleeves is slowly wrapping dishes in newspaper; in the living room GITTEL—barefoot and back to normal, but with a stratum of gloom underneath—is folding linens into a carton. This separate activity goes on for an interval of silence, until JERRY calls in; his voice is rather dispirited, and so is hers.
JERRY. What about these pots, honey? You want them packed separate?
GITTEL. Separate from what?
JERRY. Dishes.
GITTEL. Guess so. I mean, sure. (They go back to packing in silence. Both are sweetly with the prosaic drudgery of packing, and depressed, but neither is admitting this; there is an atmosphere of something being avoided. Then GITTEL stands on a chair to take down the clothes-dorst curtain, and in the process jogs one support of the rod with its remaining clothes; it falls. GITTEL grabs it.) Help! (JERRY drops what he is doing, and comes at once, on the run.)
JERRY. What's wrong?
GITTEL. This cruddy pole. S'all.
JERRY. (relieved). Oh, I thought you— (He stops himself, takes the rod and clothes off her hands, and lays them on the couch.) Never did get around to

fixing that thing permanently. (Guess I never believed it was permanent, all it takes is two screws and a—) (GITTEL is aware of her eyes moody on him.) Him?
GITTEL. Nothing. (They gaze at each other a moment, something unspoken between them. Then JERRY grips her at the waist, and lifts her down.)
JERRY. You stay on the ground, squirrel.
GITTEL. (irked). Why?
JERRY. Because I've climbed Long's Peak four times. I'm used to these rare altitudes. (He climbs the chair, and begins to unhook the curtain.)
GITTEL. What'd you think, I was doing a nose dive? No such luck.
JERRY. (another gaze). What kind of cheery remark is that?
GITTEL. I mean bad luck.
JERRY. Oh, I thought you meant good bad luck.
GITTEL. What's Long's Peak?
JERRY. Mountain. Front Range, Colorado. Fourteen thousand feet, up on all fours, down on all fives.
GITTEL. (a pause). I been up the Empire State nineteen times, so what?
(JERRY smiles, shakes his head, and turns to hand her the curtain.)
JERRY. Here. (But GITTEL is on her way out to the kitchen, in a mood. JERRY stares, tosses the curtain onto the couch mattress, bare in its ticking, and considers the window drapes.) You want this other one down?
GITTEL. (out of sight). What other one?
JERRY. Window curtain.
GITTEL. D'you want it down?
JERRY. (puzzled). Yes, I want it down.
GITTEL. So take it down!
JERRY. (frowning). What's eating you?
GITTEL. A banana.
JERRY. What?
GITTEL. A banana. (She comes in again, eating a banana.) Want a bite?
JERRY. I said, what's eating you. (He moves the chair to the window, gets up again, and works on the burly drapes.)
GITTEL. Oh, me. What's eating you.
JERRY. I asked you first.
GITTEL. I mean what's eating me is figuring out what's eating you.
JERRY. (seeing). Well, what's eating me is figuring out what's eating you. Which is just about exhausts that investigation. Be altogether fruitless except for the banana

again before that Bar exam. For muscle.
GITTEL. You'll pass.
JERRY. Hell, I'll blow all the answers out of my brilliant nose. (He blows her a kiss and is out the door, gone, leaving her on her feet in the room, shaking her head after him, in her Chinese silk, like a rainbow, half radiance, half tears. She fingers his coat, sits, and brings it to her face; she is much troubled.)
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...the bananas down to her.)
Gittel. Every tugging lower I put in my box I feel worse.

Jerry. (dryly). It's a chore, who likes to break up a happy home? (He fishes in his shirt pocket for cigarettes.) Though in a peculiar way it has been. I won't forget this first-aid station in a hurry.

Gittel. There's always the next one.
Jerry. What next one?
Gittel. The one we're fixing up for me (Jerry looks at her, lights the cigarette, and to avoid the topic mounts the chair again with the screwdriver. Gittel takes a fresh breath and dives in, very brightly.)

Look, Jerry, why don't we just, sort of, get married and get the goddam thing over with, huh?
Jerry. Half-turns, to gaze over his shoulder.
Jerry. Bigamy. Big of you, I mean, I have one wife now.

Gittel. I mean after the divorce. I'm not going to be just a ball and chain, now you passed that Bar exam you know the first thing I'm going to do? Take up shorthand!

Jerry. Shorthand is the one thing this romance has lacked from the beginning.
Gittel. So when you open your law office, here, I am! A goddam secretary, you're really going to save dough on me. And soon as I make enough out of that loft I'm going to fix up the flat for us, real nice.

Jerry. It's real nice.
Gittel. Stinks.
Jerry. What stinks about it?
Gittel. It's a dump, you think I don't know that? My God, how can you entertain somebody a cockroach committee comes out of the sink to see who's here! Hasn't been an exterminator in there since Babe Ruth.

Jerry. Who are we exterminating?
Gittel. Huh?
Jerry. I meant to say entertaining.
Gittel. Well, anybody you need to. Customers! Partners, the Taubmans, maybe criminals, you don't know who yet, but you can't have a dump for them. Can you?

Jerry. (a pause). No. I couldn't think of representing some dope addict who'd just murdered his mother and have him see a cockroach. Here's the brackets. (But Gittel is folding the drapes to put in the carton, and he steps down with

Gittel. Who will move to even. You know wanted to live in. Jerry. Me?
Gittel. An elevator! With an elevator you can invite anybody.
Jerry drops the brackets in her purse, next to her little radio. The radio stops him, he contemplates it, rubs it with his thumb, and then finds Gittel's eye on him.)

Jerry. (smiles). Remembering the day you left this at the door. We kept each other company many a wee hour, I hate to see it end up all alone in some closet.
Gittel. Nah, we'll use it.
Jerry. (mildly). If you have in mind plastic neckties, they're also out. I have the radio out into the kitchen. Gittel on her knees begins on another carton, loading in books, papers, a miscellany.)

Gittel. (calling out). What about this stuff, Jerry, bills? Gas, phone—
Jerry. (out of sight). Leave them out where I'll see them, I don't think I paid those yet.
Gittel. (discarding them). What do you want to pay them, all they can do is shut it off if you do or you don't. Let's—(She unfolds one, on feminine blue rationery.) "Jerry dearest, I—" Whoops. (She shuts in a hurry, not reading it, but at the 'puts it away she comes to a legal document in blue backing it, it tickles her memory: the last time she saw it was in her room, in Jerry's hands. She reads, frowning, her lips moving at first soundlessly, then becoming audible.) "—although the plaintiff has conducted herself as a true and faithful wife, to the defendant, the said defendant has been guilty of acts of cruelty toward the plaintiff, destroying the—" (Now Jerry is standing in the doorway, a cup in his hand.)—"—peace of mind of the plaintiff and, the objects of—matrimony. It is hereby ordered, adjudged—"

Jerry. (slowly).—and decreed by the Court that the bonds of matrimony heretofore existing are severed and held for naught. And that the said plaintiff is granted an absolute divorce from the defendant. Unquote.

Jerry. (a pause). I had to live with it. A while longer. Digest it. Let it grow out with my fingernails, till I was—rid of it.
Gittel. (Another pause)
Jerry. Not till I was—on top of it. Do you know what the sense of never is? Never again, not even once? Never is a deep hole, it takes time to—close over.

Gittel. Then what'll you do?
Jerry. Then?
Gittel. Yeah. Then.
Jerry. (a pause, gently). I think I'll do one thing at a time.
Gittel. What?
Jerry. Pack this cup. (He comes to the carton with it, kneeling near her.)
Gittel. You sonofabitch. (Jerry wheels on his knee to confront her.) You tell her about me? That you moved in?
Jerry. (whitely). Yes.
Gittel. Because I had a hemorrhage?
Jerry. I'm not a sonofabitch—
Gittel. Did you tell her I had a hemorrhage?

Jerry. Yes.
Gittel. And you didn't tell me about this (She slings the decree straight into his face. Jerry squats, rigid. Gittel then scrambles up and makes for her shoes. Jerry rising slams the cup into the carton of crockery.) Smash them all, who needs them?
Jerry. What are you off on this time?
Gittel. I'm getting out of here, you— you goddam—(But the grief breaks through, and she waits to him out of loss.) Jerry, why didn't you tell me?
Jerry. I couldn't.

Gittel. (Gittel gazing at him takes this in; then she finishes putting her shoes on, and makes a beeline for her bag.)
Gittel. Yeah. You only tell her about me. My God, even when you divorce her it's a secret you have with her! One of these days you'll marry me, she'll know it and I won't! (But when she turns to the doorway, Jerry is planted in it, blocking her.)
Jerry. You're not leaving.
Gittel. Jerry, look out!
Jerry. Sit down.
Gittel. You look out or I'll let you

Jerry. (a pause). I had to live with it. A while longer. Digest it. Let it grow out with my fingernails, till I was—rid of it.
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Handwritten signatures: Mrs. Sweet, Mrs. Moe, Mrs. Moe

ERK. Go ahead, street drawler. (Gittel slaps hi' n across the face, he is unmoving; she slaps him again backward, he is like a statue; she then wheels looking for a weapon, comes up from the carton with the broken cup, and charges his face, but hesitates; Jerry stands motionless, waiting.) Do, I'll beat your behind off. (Gittel flinging the cup past him throws herself averted on the couch, tearful with rage.)

GITTEL. Sonofabitch, all my life I never yet could beat up one goddam man, it's just no fair!

JERRY. Why do you think I told her about the hemorrhage?

GITTEL. To prove something to her on me, now.

ALY. How what?

ALY. Like what?

ALY. How you're so wonderful, G after me, you don't need her help.

ALY. I told her because she asked my help. She wants me home.

GITTEL. To prove something to her on me, now.

GITTEL. She does.

JERRY. When at last she really needs me, and I'm enough my own man to help, I had to say no. And why.

GITTEL. (A deep breath.) Okay, Jerry. You said make a claim, right?

JERRY. Yes.

GITTEL. So I'm going to make it.

JERRY. All right.

GITTEL. I want you here. I want all of you here. I don't want half a hunk of you, I want—I mean it's—(With difficulty.) It's leap year, Jerry, tell the truth. Would you—ever say—I love you? Once.

JERRY. (Pained.) It's a lifetime promise, infant, I've only said it once. (But the moment he turns again to the kitchen, her voice rises after him.)

GITTEL. Jerry, Jerry, give me a break, will you? Don't kid me along. Is that a friend? (This word nails him, he turns back with his eyes moist.) I'll tell you straight, you move in I just—won't give up on you marrying me. You—you let me have it straight, too. (He stands, gazing at her.) Jerry, you my friend?

JERRY. (Finally.) I'm your friend. Here it is, straight. You say love, I think you mean in love. I mean so much more by that word now—

GITTEL. I mean wanting. Somebody. So had—

Handwritten notes:
I think Jerry had
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having and, having had, year in and out, that a man and woman exchange—guts, minds, memories, exchange—eyes. Love is seeing through the other's eyes. So because she likes bridges I never see a bridge here without grief, that her eyes are not looking. A hundred things like that. Not simply friend, some ways my mortal enemy, but wife, and ingrown. (He looks down at the decree.) What could I tell you about this—piece of paper, that the bonds of matrimony are not severed? Why would I—love my right hand, if I lost it? That's what love is. To me, now.

GITTEL. (Gittel keeps her eyes on him for a long moment, then she closes them.)

JERRY. You ever tell her that?

JERRY. No. I should have told her years ago. I didn't know it then.

GITTEL. (Gittel rolls up; she climbs the chair at the window and hangs gazing out, to find her way through this.)

JERRY. You'll never marry me, Jerry.

GITTEL. I can't, infant.

GITTEL. So what kind of competition can I give her, have a hemorrhage twice a year? Trap you that way, be more of a cripple, one month to another? Get half of you by being a wreck on your hands, will that keep you around?

JERRY. As long as you need me, I'll be around.

GITTEL. (Gittel turns on the chair, staring at him, as it dawns on her.)

GITTEL. And you'll move in. Even now.

JERRY. What's in me to give, without shortchanging, I'll give—

GITTEL. My God, I'm in a goddam trap, (A pause; then Jerry nods.) You're one, all right, I could—lose a leg or something in you.

JERRY. Yes, you could lose—a lot of time. You're a growing girl, and of the two things I really want, one is to see you grow. And bear your fruit.

GITTEL. And the other is—

JERRY. Tess.

GITTEL. Jerry, Jerry, Jerry. (She regards him, her eyes blinking; this is hard to say.) I don't want the short end. I want somebody'll—say to me what you just said about her. (She gets down, retrieving her bag, and stands not looking at him.)

What do you say we—give each other the gate, huh, Jerry? (She moves to pass

Handwritten notes:
I think Jerry had
I think Jerry had

stare, her eyes.)

JERRY. For whose sake?

GITTEL. Jerry, I haven't taken one happy breath since that hemorrhage. I want to get out of here and breathe. (After a moment Jerry lets her go. She brushes quickly past him, through the kitchen and out of the flat. He turns in the doorway, looking after her, with his hands up on the jambs, unmoving as the lights dim.)

SCENE THREE

Both rooms. It is a few days later, a gray afternoon.

JERRY's room is cleaned out, altogether bare except for his suitcase and portable typewriter standing there, and the phone on the floor near them. Jerry is not in sight, though we may hear him in the kitchen.

GITTEL is in her room, taking the dance photos of herself down from the wall. She is engaged in this without feeling, almost without awareness; it is something to do while she waits. What she is waiting for is the phone, as we see from her eyes. She takes the photos to her night table and drops them in a drawer, then walks nervously round and round her room, eyeing her alarm clock, eyeing her phone.

Meanwhile a match has been lighted in Jerry's dark kitchen, Jerry making a last survey of it. When he comes in, he is in street clothes and hat; he is shaking the match out; his other arm cradles a few last toilet articles, shaving cream, brush, razor. He kneels at the typewriter case, and fits these articles carefully in. Then he consults his wrist watch. He stands over the phone a heavy moment, picks it up, and dials.

The phone in Gittel's room rings, and she flies to sit on her bed.

GITTEL. Yeah, hello?

JERRY. (A pause.) Honey, I'm—all packed here, I—

GITTEL. (Softly.) Hiya, Jerry.

JERRY. (A pause.) Some cartoons of— odds and ends in the kitchen here, the key will be with the janitor. If you want anything.

GITTEL. I won't want anything.

JERRY. If you do. (A pause) Look, if

Handwritten notes:
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Lincoln, I don't have the distance will give it to you. Lincoln, Nebraska. Not Nevada.

GITTEL. Not Nevada.

JERRY. And not Omaha, I'm not walking back into that mistake, ever again. As soon as I get an office and a phone I'll send you the number. Now if you—

you need anything in a hurry. I mean instantly, will you call Frank Taubman? You won't have to explain anything; it's taken care of, just call him.

GITTEL. (A pause.) Yeah.

JERRY. No. Promise.

GITTEL. I promise. (A pause) Jerry, I'm all right now. You just—you just get what you want out there, huh?

JERRY. I'll try. It's back to the wars. My terms are steep. I won't work for Lucian, I won't live in Omaha, and all we'll have is what I earn. I'm beginning very—modestly, a desk and a phone and a pencil. And what's in my head.

GITTEL. It's a lot.

JERRY. But I won't shortchange her. It has to be a new deal, on both sides.

GITTEL. I'm rooting for you, Jerry.

JERRY. No backsliding. By you either, Gittel, don't you give up either, hm?

GITTEL. Oh, I don't! I bounce up like a jack in the box, you know?

JERRY. I'm rooting for you, too. It's a big city and you're the salt of the earth. Just don't waste it, he's around some corner. You'll find him.

GITTEL. I'm looking. I got a better opinion of myself now, I'm going to propose more often. I'll send you a birthday card now and then, huh?

JERRY. Now and then.

GITTEL. Twice a week!

(Jerry pinches his eyes, he is shaky.)

JERRY. Gittel. What am I doing. I—

moments here I think I—

GITTEL. You're doing right, Jerry. I mean I don't want any handouts either, you know? That's no favor.

JERRY. If I know anything I know that.

GITTEL. And I'm not going to be just giving them out, from now on. I want somebody'll take care of me who's all mine. You taught me that. And nobody like Sam or Jake, between them, couldn't take care of a chickie. I mean things look a lot different to me.

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