

RUTH. Oh, Walter—(softly) Honey, why can't you stop fighting me?

WALTER. (Without thinking) Who's fighting you? Who even cares about you—! (This line begins the retardation of this mood.)

RUTH. Well—(She waits a long time and then with resignation starts to put away the laundry.) I guess I might as well go on to bed—(more or less to herself) I don't know where we lost it—but we have—(Then to him as she crosses above sofa to c.) I—I'm sorry about this new baby, Walter—I guess maybe I better go on and do what I started—I guess I just didn't realize how bad things was with us—(crosses R. front of sofa) I guess I just didn't realize—(She picks up laundry basket and starts for R. bedroom, then stops.) You want some hot milk?

WALTER. Hot milk?

RUTH. Yes—hot milk.

WALTER. Why hot milk?

RUTH. 'Cause after all that liquor you ought to have something hot in your stomach.

WALTER. I don't want no milk.

RUTH. You want some coffee then?

WALTER. No, I don't want no coffee. I don't want nothing hot to drink. (almost plaintively) Why you always trying to give me something to eat!?

→ RUTH (erupting in hurt and anger) What else can I give you, Walter Lee Younger? (crosses into bedroom, flings down the basket and stands facing U.S.)

~~WALTER. (He lifts his head in a new mood which began to emerge when he asked her "Who cares about you?") Baby, it's been rough, ain't it? (She hears and turns.) I guess between two people there ain't never as much understanding as folks generally thinks there is. (She comes to doorway.) I mean like between me and you—(She turns to face~~

~~him.) How we gets to the place where we scared to talk softness to each other. (He waits, thinking hard himself.) Why you think it got to be like that? (He is thoughtful, almost as a child would be.) Ruth, what is it gets into people ought to be close?~~

~~RUTH. I don't know, honey. I think about it a lot.~~

~~WALTER. On account of you and me, you mean. The way something's come down between us.~~

RUTH. There ain't so much between us, Walter—Not when you come to me and try to talk to me. Try to be with me—a little, even.

~~WALTER. Sometimes—sometimes—I don't even know how to try.~~

RUTH. (crossing slowly toward him) Walter—

~~WALTER. Yes—?~~

RUTH. (coming to him, gently and with misgiving, but coming to him) Honey—Life don't have to be like this. I mean sometimes people can do things so that things are better—(She comes up behind him, stroking his head, groping for the words) You remember how we used to talk when Travis was born—About the way we were going to live—the kind of house... (She reaches into his shirt.) Well, it's all starting to slip away from us...

end

(He turns to look at her, puts his head against the new life in her belly, then reaches up and draws her face to his. They kiss and cling hungrily. A key is heard in the door. RUTH clings involuntarily, MAMA enters and WALTER breaks away as RUTH stands shaken in frustration.)

WALTER. Mama, where have you been?

MAMA. (puts hat and handbag on bureau) My—them steps is getting longer and longer. Whew! (She ignores