

## THE LONG GOOD-BYE

Apartment F, third floor south, in a tenement apartment situated in the washed-out middle of a large mid-western American city. Outside the trucks rumble on dull streets and children cry out at their games in the alleyways between walls of dusty-tomato-colored brick. Through the double front windows in the left wall, late afternoon sunlight streams into the shabby room. Beyond the windows is the door to the stair hall, and in the center of the back wall a large door opening on a corridor in the apartment where a telephone stand is located. A door in the right wall leads to a bedroom. The furnishings are disheveled and old as if they had witnessed the sudden withdrawal of twenty-five years of furious, desperate living among them and now awaited only the moving men to cart them away. From the apartment next door comes the sound of a radio broadcasting the baseball game from Sportsman's Park. Joe, a young man of twenty-three, is sitting at a table by the double windows, brooding over a manuscript. In front of him is a portable typewriter with a page of the manuscript in it, and on the floor beside the table is a shabby valise. Joe wears an undershirt and washpants. The noise of the broadcast annoys him and he slams down the windows, but the sound is as loud as ever. He raises them and goes out the door on the right and slams other windows. The shouting of the radio subsides and Joe comes back in lighting a cigarette, a desperate scowl on his face. Silva, an Italian youth, small, graceful and good-natured, opens the entrance door and comes in. He is about Joe's age. By way of greeting he grins and then takes off his shirt.

### CHARACTERS

JOE

MYRA

MOTHER

SILVA

BILL

FOUR MOVERS

JOE: Radios, baseball games! That's why I write nothing but crap!

SILVA: Still at it?

JOE: All night and all day.

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

SILVA: How come?

JOE: I had a wild hair. Couldn't sleep.

SILVA [*glancing at page in machine*]: You're burning the candle at both ends, Kid . . . [*He moves from the table across the room.*] And in my humble opinion the light ain't worth it. I thought cha was moving today.

JOE: I am. [*He flops in table-chair and bangs out a lime. Then he removes the sheet.*] Phone the movers. They oughta been here.

SILVA: Yeh? Which one?

JOE: Langan's Storage.

SILVA: Storin' this stuff?

JOE: Yeh.

SILVA: What for? Why don't you sell it?

JOE: For six bits to the junk man?

SILVA: Store it you gotta pay storage. Sell it you got a spot a sh to start on.

JOE: Start on what?

SILVA: Whatever you're going to start on.

JOE: I got a spot a cash. Mother's insurance. I split it with Myra, we both got a hundred and fifty. Know where I'm going?

SILVA: No. Where?

204

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

JOE: Rio. Or Buenos Aires. I took Spanish in high school.

SILVA: So what?

JOE: I know the language. I oughta get on okay.

SILVA: Working for Standard Oil?

JOE: Maybe. Why not? Call the movers.

SILVA [*going to the phone*]: You better stay here. Take your money outa the bank and go on the Project.

JOE: No. I'm not gonna stay here. All of this here is dead for me. The goldfish is dead. I forgot to feed it.

SILVA [*into the phone*]: Lindell 0124. . . . Langan's Storage? This is the Bassett apartment. Why ain't the movers come yet? . . . Aw! [*He bangs up the receiver.*] The truck's on the way. June is a big moving month. I guess they're kept busy.

JOE: I shouldn't have left the bowl setting right here in the sun. It probably cooked the poor bastard.

SILVA: He stinks. [*Silva picks up the bowl.*]

JOE: What uh you do with him?

SILVA: Dump 'im into the tawlut.

JOE: The tawlut's turned off.

SILVA: Oh, well. [*He goes out the bedroom door.*]

JOE: Why is it that Jesus makes a distinction between the goldfish an' the sparrow! [*He laughs.*] There is no respect for dead bodies.

205

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

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205



THE LONG GOOD-BYE

SILVA [coming back in]: You are losing your social consciousness, Joe. You should say "unless they are rich"! I read about once where a millionaire buried his dead canary in a small golden casket studded with genuine diamonds. I think it presents a beautiful picture. The saffron feathers on the white satin and the millionaire's tears falling like diamonds in sunlight—maybe a boys' choir singing! Like death in the movies. Which is always a beautiful thing. Even for an artist I'd say that your hair was too long. A little hip motion you'd pass for a female Imp. Cigarette?

JOE: Thanks. Christ!

SILVA: What's the matter?

JOE: How does this stuff smell to you? [He gives him a page of the manuscript.]

SILVA: Hmm. I detect a slight odor of frying bacon.

JOE: Lousy?

SILVA: Well, it's not you at your best. You'd better get on the Project. We're through with the city guide.

JOE: What are you going to write next?

SILVA: God Bless Harry L. Hopkins 999 times. Naw . . . I got a creative assignment. I'm calling it "Ghosts in the Old Court-house." Days when the slaves were sold there! . . . This is bad. This speech of the girl's—"I want to get you inside of my body—not just for the time that it takes to make love on a bed between the rattle of ice in the last highball and the rattle the milkwagons make—"

JOE [tearing the page from his hands]: I must've been nuts.

206

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

SILVA: You must've had hot britches!

JOE: I did. Summer and celibacy aren't a very good mix. Buenos Aires. . . .

1ST MOVER [from the hall outside]: Langan's Storage!

JOE [going to the door]: Right here. [He opens the door and the four burly Movers crowd in, sweating, shuffling, looking about with quick, casual eyes.] Take out the back stuff first, will yuh, boys?

1ST MOVER: Sure.

SILVA: Hot work, huh?

2ND MOVER: Plenty.

3RD MOVER [walking in hastily]: "I got a pocketful of dreams!" What time's it, kid?

JOE: Four-thirty-five.

3RD MOVER: We oughta get time an' a ha'f w'en we finish this job. How'd the ball game come out?

JOE: Dunno. [He watches them, troubled.]

2ND MOVER: What's it to you, Short Horn? Get busy! [They laugh and go out the rear corridor. Later they are heard knocking down a bed.]

SILVA [noting Joe's gloom]: Let's get out of this place. It's depressing.

JOE: I got to look out for the stuff.

207

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

SILVA: Come on get a beer. There's a twenty-six-ounce-a-dime joint open up on Laclede.

JOE: Wait a while, Silva.

SILVA: Okay. [*The Movers come through with parts of a bed. Joe watches them, motionless, face set.*]

JOE: That is the bed I was born on.

SILVA: Jeez! And look how they handle it—just like it was an ordinary bed!

JOE: Myra was born on that bed, too. [*The Movers go out the door.*] Mother died on it.

SILVA: Yeah? She went pretty quick for cancer. Most of 'em hang on longer an' suffer a hell of a lot.

JOE: She killed herself. I found the empty bottle that morning in a wastebasket. It wasn't the pain, it was the doctor an' hospital bills that she was scared of. She wanted us to have the insurance.

SILVA: I didn't know that.

JOE: Naw. We kept it a secret—she an' me an' the doctor. Myra never found out.

SILVA: Where is Myra now?

JOE: Last I heard, in Detroit. I got a card from her. Here.

SILVA: Picture of the Yacht Club. What's she doin'—yachting?

JOE [*gruffly*]: Naw, I dunno what she's doin'. How should I know?

208

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

SILVA: She don't say? [*Joe doesn't answer.*] She was a real sweet kid—till all of a sudden she—

JOE: Yeh. Ev'rything broke up—when Mom died.

SILVA [*picking up a magazine*]: Four bit magazines! No wonder you stick up your nose at the Project. Hemingway! You know he's got a smooth style. [*Joe stands as if entranced as the Movers pass through to the rear.*] He's been with the Loyalist forces in Spain. Fighting in front-line trenches, they say. And yet some a the critics say that he wears a toupee on his chest! Reactionaries! [*Silva begins to read. Myra comes quietly into the room—young, radiant, vibrant with the glamor that memory gives.*]

JOE: You got a date tonight, Myra?

MYRA: Uh-huh.

JOE: Who with?

MYRA: Bill.

JOE: Who's Bill?

MYRA: Fellow I met at the swimming meet out at Bellerive Country Club.

JOE: I don't think a swimming pool's the best place in the world to pick up your boyfriends, Myra.

MYRA: Sure it is. If you look good in a Jantzen. [*She slips off her kimono.*] Get my white summer formal. No, I better. You got sweaty hands. [*She goes out the bedroom door.*]

JOE: What happened to Dave and Hugh White and that—that K. City boy?

209

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

MYRA [*coming back with a white evening dress on*]: Who? Them? My God, I don't know. Here. Hook this for me.

JOE: I guess what you've got in your heart's a revolving door.

MYRA: You know it. The radio's a great institution, huh, Joe? [*Rapidly brushing her hair*] I get so tired of it. Pop's got it on all the time. He gripes my soul. Just setting there, setting there, setting there! Never says nothing no more.

JOE: You oughta watch your English. It's awful.

MYRA: Hell, I'm not a bookworm. How's it look?

JOE: Smooth. Where you going?

MYRA: Chase Roof. Bill is no piker. His folks have got lotsa mazooma. They live out in Huntleigh—offa Ladue. Christ, it's—whew! Open that window! Cloudy?

JOE: No. Clear as a bell.

MYRA: That's good. Dancing under the stars! [*The doorbell rings.*] That's him. Get the door. [*Joe faces the door as Bill enters.*]

JOE: Why go to Switzerland, huh?

BILL: What? [*He laughs indifferently.*] Oh, yeah. She ready?

JOE: Sit down. She'll be right out.

BILL: Good.

JOE [*sweeping papers off the sofa*]: You see we read the papers. Keep up with events of the day. Sport sheet?

210

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

BILL: No, thanks.

JOE: The Cards won a doubleheader. Joe Medwick hit a homerun with two men on in the second. Comics?

BILL: No, thanks. I've seen the papers.

JOE: Oh. I thought you might've missed 'em because it's so early.

BILL: It's eight-forty-five.

JOE: It's funny, isn't it?

BILL: What?

JOE: The chandelier. I thought you were looking at it.

BILL: I hadn't noticed—particularly.

JOE: It always reminds me a little of mushroom soup. [*Bill regards him without amusement.*] Myra says that you live in Huntleigh Village.

BILL: Yes?

JOE: It must be very nice out there. In summer.

BILL: We like it. [*He stands up.*] Say, could you give your little sister a third-alarm—or whatever it takes?

JOE: She'll be out when she's ready.

BILL: That's what I'm afraid of.

JOE: Is this your first date, Bill?

211



THE LONG GOOD-BYE

BILL: How do you mean?

JOE: In my experience girls don't always pop right out of their boudoirs the minute a guy calls for 'em.

BILL: No? But you sort of expect more speed of a swimming champ. [*Calling*] Hey! Myra!

MYRA [*facing the wall as though it were a mirror*]: Yeah, Bill, I'm coming right out!

JOE: Excuse me, will you?

BILL: Oh, yes. [*He faces Myra.*]

JOE: This Bill of yours is a son-of-a-bitch. If I'd stayed in the room with him another minute I'd have busted him one.

MYRA: Then you'd better stay out. 'Cause I like him. What're you doing tonight, Joe?

JOE: Stay home and write.

MYRA: You stay home and write too much. Broke? Here's a dollar. Get you a date with that girl who writes poetry. Doris. She oughta bat out a pretty good sonnet under the proper influences. Oh, hell—I'm not gonna wear any stockings. Coming, Bill! Look! How is the back of my neck? Is it filthy? Christ! [*She sprays herself with perfume.*] You gotta bathe three times a day to keep fresh in this weather. Doris. Is that her name? I bet that she could be had without too much effort!

JOE: Myra. Don't talk that way.

MYRA: You kill me!

212

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

JOE: Naw, it doesn't sound right in a kid your age.

MYRA: I'm twice your age! G'bye, Joe!

JOE: G'bye, Myra.

MYRA [*facing Bill with a dazzling smile*]: Hello, darling!

BILL: Hi. Let's get outa this sweatbox.

MYRA: Yeah. [*They go out. The Movers come in with a dresser.*]

1ST MOVER: Easy.

2ND MOVER: Got it?

1ST MOVER: Yep. Who the fuck closed that door?

JOE: I'll get it. Careful down those stairs.

SILVA [*glancing up from the magazine*]: A broken mirror is seven years' bad luck.

JOE: Aw. Is that right? The stork must've dropped us through a whole bunch of 'em when we were born. How's the story?

SILVA: It's good strong stuff.

JOE [*glancing at the title*]: Butterfly and the Tank. I read that one.

CHILD [*from the street below*]: Fly, Sheepie, fly! Fly, Sheepie, fly!

JOE [*reflectively*]: Fly, Sheepie, fly! You ever played that game?

213

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

SILVA: Naw. Kids that play games are sissies in our neighborhood.

JOE: We played it. Myra an' me. Up and down fire escapes, in an' out basements. . . . Jecz! We had a swell time. What happens to kids when they grow up?

SILVA: They grow up. [*He turns a page.*]

JOE: Yeh, they grow up. [*The sound of roller skates on the sidewalk rises in the silence, as the light fades. Only the door to the bedroom on the right is clear in a spotlight.*]

MOTHER [*softly from the bedroom*]: Joe? Oh, Joe!

JOE: Yes, Mother? [*Mother appears in the door—a worn, little woman in a dingy wrapper with an expression that is personally troubled and confused.*]

MOTHER: Joe, aren't you going to bed?

JOE: Yes. In a minute.

MOTHER: I think you've written enough tonight, Joe.

JOE: I'm nearly finished. I just wanta finish this sentence.

MOTHER: Myra's still out.

JOE: She went to the Chase Roof.

MOTHER: Couldn't you go along with her sometimes? Meet the boys that she goes out with?

JOE: No, I can't horn in on her dates. Hell, if I had a job I couldn't pay tips for that crowd!

214

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

MOTHER: I'm worried about her.

JOE: What for? She says she's older than I am, Mom, an' I guess she's right.

MOTHER: No, she's only a baby. You talk to her, Joe.

JOE: Okay.

MOTHER: I regret that she took that job now, Joe. She should've stayed on at high school.

JOE: She wanted things—money, clothes—you can't blame her. 'S Dad out?

MOTHER: Yes. . . . She's given up her swimming.

JOE: She got kicked off the Lorelei team.

MOTHER: What for, Joe?

JOE: She broke training rules all the time. Hell, I can't stop her.

MOTHER: She listens to you.

JOE: Not much.

MOTHER: Joe—

JOE: Yes?

MOTHER: Joe, it's come back on me, Joe.

JOE [*facing her slowly*]: What?

MOTHER: The operation wasn't no use. And all it cost us, Joe, the bills not paid for it yet!

215



THE LONG GOOD-BYE

JOE: Mother—what makes you think so?

MOTHER: The same pain's started again.

JOE: How long?

MOTHER: Oh, some time now.

JOE: Why didn't you—?

MOTHER: Joe . . . what's the use?

JOE: Maybe it's—not what you think! You've got to go back. For examination, Mom!

MOTHER: No. This is the way I look at it, Joe. Like this. I've never liked being cramped. I've always wanted to have space around me, plenty of space, to live in the country on the top of a hill. I was born in the country, raised there, and I've hankered after it lots in the last few years.

JOE: Yes. I know. [*Now he speaks to himself.*] Those Sunday afternoon rides in the country, the late yellow sun through an orchard, the twisted shadows, the crazy old wind-beaten house, vacant, lopsided, and you pointing at it, leaning out of the car, trying to make Dad stop—

MOTHER: Look! That house, it's for sale! It oughta go cheap! Twenty acres of apple, a henhouse, and look, a nice barn! It's rundown now but it wouldn't cost much to repair! Stop, Floyd, go slow along here!

JOE: But he went by fast, wouldn't look, wouldn't listen! The snake-fence darted away from the road and a wall of stone rose and the sun disappeared for a moment. Your face was dark, your face looked desperate, Mother, as though you were starv-

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

ing for something you'd seen and almost caught in your hands—but not quite. And then the car stopped in front of a roadside stand. "We need eggs." A quarter, a dime—you borrowed a nickel from Dad. And the sun was low then, slanting across winter fields, and the air was cold. . . .

MOTHER: Some people think about death as being laid down in a box under earth. But I don't. To me it's the opposite, Joe, it's being let out of a box. And going upwards, not down. I don't take stock in heaven, I never did. But I do feel like there's lots of room out there and you don't have to pay rent on the first of each month to any old tightfisted Dutchman who kicks about how much water you're using. There's freedom, Joe, and freedom's the big thing in life. It's funny that some of us don't ever get it until we're dead. But that's how it is and so we've got to accept it. The hard thing to me is leaving things not straight-ended out. I'd like to have some assurance, some definite knowledge of what you were going to do, of how things'll work out for you. . . . Joe!

JOE: Yes?

MOTHER: What would you do with three hundred dollars?

JOE: I'm not going to think about that.

MOTHER: I want you to, Joe. The policy's in your name. It's in the right hand drawer of the chiffonier, folded up under the handkerchief box and it's got . . . [*Her voice fades out and two of the Movers come in carrying a floorlamp.*]

JOE [*clearing his throat*]: Where's the shade to that lamp?

[*Mother slips quietly out as the sunlight brightens.*]

1ST MOVER: It's comin'. [*He knocks the lamp slightly against the wall.*]

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

JOE: God damn you! Why don't you look what you're doing!

2ND MOVER: What's eating you?

1ST MOVER: Lissen, buddy—

JOE: You don't care about people's things! Any old way is all right!

SILVA [*looking up from the magazine*]: Joe, take it easy. They're not going to damage this stuff.

JOE: They're not going to damage it—no!

1ST MOVER: Damage it? Shit! [*The two Movers laugh as they go out.*]

SILVA: If they break a thing you collect on it.

3RD MOVER [*entering with some cardboard boxes*]: What's in these here boxes?

JOE: China. Glass things. So don't go tossing 'em around like—

SILVA: Joe, let's get outa this place. I can't concentrate on a story with all this commotion. What uh yuh stayin' here for anyhow, screwball? It's only—makin' yuh feel—depressed, ain't it?

JOE: You go on if you want. I've got to wait here.

4TH MOVER [*coming in with a handful of bottles*]: Some empty powder an' perfume bottles offa that dresser—you want 'em or not?

JOE: Leave 'em here on the floor. [*The 4th Mover takes up a chair from the room and goes out the door to the stair hall. Joe*

218

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

examines the articles on the floor. He removes the stopper from a perfume bottle and sniffs. The light in the room dims again and the front door is caught in a spotlight. Myra's voice can be heard in the hall outside.]

MYRA: Bill, I had a swell time.

BILL: Zat all? . . . It's dark. They're all in bed. [*Joe rises and straightens attentively.*]

MYRA [*appearing in the doorway*]: Joe's light's still on.

BILL: I'll be quiet, honey. We don't have to make any noise. I'm a wee little mouthie!

MYRA [*kissing him*]: Yes, and you've got to go home.

BILL: C'mere closer. Unh!

MYRA: Bill!

BILL: Whatsamatter? Aren't you the little freestyle swimming an' fancy diving champion of St. Louis?

MYRA: What if I am?

BILL: Well, I can do a swell breaststroke, too—outa water.

MYRA: Shut up. I want to go to bed.

BILL: So do I.

MYRA: Goodnight.

BILL: Lissen!

219

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

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THE LONG GOOD-BYE

MYRA: What?

BILL: I go out with debutantes.

MYRA: What of it?

BILL: Nothing. Except that . . .

MYRA: How should I take that remark?

BILL: Okay, I'll tell you. I'll take "Goodnight I've had a swell time" from the V.P. Queen! But when girls like you try to sell me that stuff—

JOE [*stepping into the spotlighted area*]: Get out!

BILL: Aw. It's big brother. I thought you'd be out on the milk-route by now.

JOE: Get out, you stinking—

MYRA: Joe!

JOE: Before I hang one on you! [*Bill laughs weakly and goes out.*]

MYRA: You were right about him. He's no good. [*Joe looks at her.*] Joe, what do they mean by—"girls like me"?

JOE [*bending slowly and removing a small object from the floor*]: I guess they mean—this.

MYRA [*without looking*]: What?

JOE: Something he—dropped from his pocket.

220

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

MYRA [*dully*]: Oh. [*raising her voice*] Joe, I don't want you to think I—

JOE: Shut up. . . . Mother's sick.

MYRA [*excitedly*]: Oh, I know, I know, it's all a rotten dirty mess! The Chase Roof, dancing under the stars! . . . And then on the way home, puking over the side of the car—puking! And then he stops in the park and tries to— Oh, Christ, I want to have a good time! You don't think I have it sewing hooks an' eyes on corsets down at Werber & Jacobs? Nights I wanta get out, Joe, I wanta go places, have fun! But I don't want things like him crawling on me, worse than filthy cockroaches!

JOE: Hush up!

MOTHER [*faintly from another room*]: Joe—Myra . . . [*She moans.*]

MYRA [*frightened*]: What's that?

JOE: It's Mother, she's sick, she's—[*Myra runs out ball door and the lights come up again.*]—dead!

SILVA: What?

JOE: Nothing. You want some perfume?

SILVA: What kinda perfume?

JOE: Carnation.

SILVA: Naw. I resent the suggestion. [*The Movers crowd in again.*]

1ST MOVER [*to 3rd Mover*]: Quit horsin' around on a job. Git them rugs.

221

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

3RD MOVER: Awright, straw boss. They should've put in a pinch hitter. Meighan or Flowers.

2ND MOVER: Flowers? He couldn't hit an elephant's ass. Grab an end a the sofa. Hup!

4TH MOVER: Cabbage for supper nex' door.

WOMAN [*calling mournfully from the street*]: May-zeeeee! Oh, May-zeeeee!

3RD MOVER: In that game a' Chicago . . . [*The Movers carry the sofa and other furniture out the entrance door. Joe removes a picture from wall.*]

SILVA [*looking up from the magazine*]: Myra's, huh?

JOE: One she had in the rotogravure, time she broke a record in the Mississippi Valley relays.

SILVA [*taking the picture*]: She had a sweet shape on her, huh?

JOE: Yes.

SILVA: What makes a girl go like that.

JOE: Like what?

SILVA: You know.

JOE: No, I *don't* know! Why don't you get out of here and leave me alone?

SILVA: Because I don't want to. Because I'm reading a story. Because I think you're nuts.

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

JOE: Yeah? Gimme that picture. [*He bends over his suitcase to pack the photograph with his things and as he does so the lights dim a little and Myra comes in. She is appreciably cheaper and more sophisticated and wears a negligee she could not have bought with her monthly salary.*]

MYRA: I wish you'd quit having that dago around the place.

JOE [*rising*]: Silva?

MYRA: Yeah. I don't like the way he looks at me.

JOE: Looks at you?

MYRA: Yeh. I might as well be standing naked in front of him the way that he looks. [*Joe laughs harshly.*] You think it's funny—him looking at me that way?

JOE: Yes. It is funny.

MYRA: My sense a the comical don't quite agree with yours.

JOE [*looking at her*]: You're getting awfully skittish—objecting to guys looking at you.

MYRA: Well, that boy is repulsive.

JOE: Because he don't live somewhere offa Ladue?

MYRA: No. Because he don't take a bath.

JOE: That's not true. Silva takes a shower ev'ry morning at the party headquarters.

MYRA: Party headquarters! You better try to associate with people that will do you some good instead of—radical dagoes and niggers an'—

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

JOE: Shut up! My God, you're getting common. Snobbishness, that's always the first sign. I've never known a snob yet that wasn't fundamentally as common as dirt!

MYRA: Is it being a snob not to like dirty people?

JOE: Dirty people are what *you* run around with! Geezers in fifty dollar suits with running sores on the back of their necks. You better have your blood tested!

MYRA: You—you—you can't insult me like that! I'm going to—call Papa—tell him to—

JOE: I used to have hopes for you, Myra. But not any more. You're goin' down the toboggan like a greased pig. Take a look at yourself in the mirror. Why did Silva look at you that way? Why did the newsboy whistle when you walked past him last night? Why? 'Cause you looked like a whore—like a cheap one, Myra, one he could get for six! [*Myra looks at him, stunned, but does not answer for a moment.*]

MYRA [*quietly*]: You never would have said a thing to me like that—when Mother was living.

JOE: No. When Mother was living, you wouldn't have been like this. And stayed on here in the house.

MYRA: The house? This isn't a house. It's five rooms and a bath and I'm getting out as quick as I can and I mean it! I'm not going to hang around here with a bunch of long-haired lunatics with eyes that strip the clothes off you, and then be called—dirty names!

JOE: If my sister was clean . . . I'd kill any fellow that dared to look at her that way!

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

MYRA: You got a swell right—you that just loaf around all day writing crap that nobody reads. You never do nothing, nothing, you don't make a cent! If I was Papa—I'd kick you out of this place so fast it would—Ahhhhh! [*She turns away in disgust.*]

JOE: Maybe that won't be necessary.

MYRA: Oh, no? You been saying that a long time. They'll move every stick a furniture out a this place before they do you!

[*She laughs and goes out. The lights come up.*]

JOE [*to himself*]: Yeah. . . . [*The 1st and 2nd Movers come back and start rolling the carpet. Joe watches them and then speaks aloud.*] Every stick a furniture out—before me! [*He laughs.*]

SILVA: What?

JOE: I got a card from her last week.

SILVA: Who?

JOE: Myra.

SILVA: Yeah. You told me that. [*He throws the magazine aside.*] I wonder where your old man is.

JOE: Christ. I don't know.

SILVA: Funny an old bloke like him just quittin' his job and lamming out to God knows where—after fifty—or fifty-five years of livin' a regular middle-class life.

JOE: I guess he got tired of living a regular middle-class life.



THE LONG GOOD-BYE

SILVA: I used to wonder what he was thinking about nights—sitting in that big overstuffed chair. [*The 3rd and 4th Movers have come back and now they remove the big chair. Joe takes his shirt from the chair as they pass and slowly puts it on.*]

JOE: So did I. I'm still wondering. He never said a damn thing.

SILVA: Naw?

JOE: Just sat there, sat there, night after night after night. Well, he's gone now, they're all gone.

SILVA [*with a change of tone*]: You'd better go, too.

JOE: Why don't you go on ahead an' wait for me, Silva. I'll be along in a while.

SILVA: Because I don't like the way you're acting and for some goddam reason I feel—responsible for you. You might take a notion to do a Steve Brody out one a them windows.

JOE [*laughing shortly*]: For Chrissakes what would I do that for?

SILVA: Because your state of mind is abnormal. I've been lookin' at you. You're starin' off into space like something's come loose in your head. I know what you're doing. You're taking a morbid pleasure in watchin' this junk hauled off like some dopes get in mooning around a bone orchard after somebody's laid under. This place is done for, Joe. You can't help it. [*Far down at the end of the block an organ grinder has started winding out an old blues tune of ten or fifteen years ago. It approaches gradually with a melancholy gaiety throughout rest of play.*] Write about it some day. Call it "An Elegy for an Empty Flat." But right now my advice is to get out of here and get drunk! 'Cause the world goes on. And you've got to keep going on with it.

226

THE LONG GOOD-BYE

JOE: But not so fast that you can't even say good-bye.

SILVA: Good-bye? 'S not in my vocabulary! Hello's the word nowadays.

JOE: You're kidding yourself. You're saying good-bye all the time, every minute you live. Because that's what life is, just a long, long good-bye! [*with almost sobbing intensity*] To one thing after another! Till you get to the last one, Silva, and that's—good-bye to yourself! [*He turns sharply to the window.*] Get out of here now, get out and leave me alone!

SILVA: Okay. But I think you're weeping like Jesus and it makes me sick. [*He begins to put on his shirt.*] I'll see you over at Weston's if I can still see. [*grinning wryly*] Remember, kid, what Socrates said. "Hemlock's a damn bad substitute for a twenty-six-ounce glass a beer!" [*He laughs and puts on his hat.*] So long. [*Silva goes out the door, leaving Joe in the bare room. The yellow stains on the walls, the torn peeling paper with its monotonous design, the fantastically hideous chandelier now show up in cruel relief. The sunlight through the double windows is clear and faded as weak lemon water and a fly is heard buzzing during a pause in the organ grinder's music. The tune begins again and is drowned in the starting roar of the moving van which ebbs rapidly away. Joe walks slowly to the windows.*]

CHILD [*calling in the street*]: Olly—olly—oxen-free! Olly—olly—oxen-free! [*Joe looks slowly about him. His whole body contracts in a spasm of nostalgic pain. Then he grins wryly, picks up his suitcase and goes over to the door. He slips a hand to his forehead in a mocking salute to the empty room, then thrusts the hand in his pocket and goes slowly out.*] Olly—olly—oxen-free! [*Scattered shouting and laughter floats up to the room. The music is now fading.*]

SLOW CURTAIN

227