

“When we were just kids before we married?” Holly goes.

“When we had big plans and hopes? You remember?” She was sitting on the bed, holding her knees and her drink.

“I remember, Holly.”

“You weren’t my first, you know. My first was Wyatt. Imagine. Wyatt. And your name’s Duane. Wyatt and Duane. Who knows what I was missing all those years? You were my everything, just like the song.”

I go, “You’re a wonderful woman, Holly. I know you’ve had the opportunities.”

“But I didn’t take them up on it!” she goes. “I couldn’t go outside the marriage.”

“Holly, please,” I go. “No more now, honey. Let’s not torture ourselves. What is it we should do?”

“Listen,” she goes. “You remember the time we drove out to that old farm place outside of Yakima, out past Terrace Heights? We were just driving around? We were on this little dirt road and it was hot and dusty? We kept going and came to that old house and you asked if we could have a drink of water? Can you imagine us doing that now? Going up to a house and asking for a drink of water?”

“Those old people must be dead now,” she goes, “side by side out there in some cemetery. You remember they asked us in for cake? And later on they showed us around? And there was this gazebo there out back? It was back under some trees? It had a little peaked roof and the paint was gone and there were these weeds growing up over the steps. And the woman said that years before, I mean a real long time ago, men used to come around and play music out there on a Sunday, and the people would sit and listen. I thought we’d be like that too when we got old enough. Dignified. And in a place. And people would come to our door.”

I can’t say anything just yet. Then I go, “Holly, these things, we’ll look back on them too. We’ll go, ‘Remember the motel with all the crud in the pool?’” I go, “You see what I’m saying, Holly?”

But Holly just sits there on the bed with her glass.

I can see she doesn’t know.

I move over to the window and look out from behind the curtain. Someone says something below and rattles the door to the office. I stay there. I pray for a sign from Holly. I pray for Holly to show me. I hear a car start. Then another. They turn on the lights against the building and, one after the other, they pull away and go out into the traffic.

“Duane,” Holly goes.

In this, too, she was right.