

a single glimpse, just to wave her arm and say 'Someone is going somewhere'

She started walking slowly, her hands in the pockets of her coat, the shadow of her slanting hat brim across her face. The buildings around her rose to such heights that her glance could not find the sky. She thought: It has taken so much to build this city, it should have so much to offer.

Above the door of a shop, the black hole of a radio loudspeaker was hurling sounds at the streets. They were the sounds of a symphony concert being given somewhere in the city. They were a long screech without shape, as of cloth and flesh being torn at random. They scattered with no melody, no harmony, no rhythm to hold them. If music was emotion and emotion came from thought, then this was the scream of chaos, of the irrational, of the helpless, of man's self-abdication.

She walked on. She stopped at the window of a bookstore. The window displayed a pyramid of slabs in brownish-purple jackets inscribed *The Vulture Is Molting*. 'The novel of our century,' said a placard. 'The penetrating study of a businessman's greed. A fearless revelation of man's depravity.'

She walked past a movie theater. Its lights wiped out half a block, leaving only a huge photograph and some letters suspended in blazing mid-air. The photograph was of a smiling young woman looking at her face, one felt the weariness of having seen it for years, even while seeing it for the first time. The letters said: '...in a momentous drama giving the answer to the great problem: Should a woman tell?'.

She walked past the door of a night club. A couple came staggering out to a taxicab. The girl had blurred eyes, a perspiring face, an ermine cape and a beautiful evening gown that had slipped off one shoulder like a slovenly housewife's bathrobe, revealing too much of her breast, not in a manner of daring, but in the manner of a drudge's indifference. Her escort steered her, gripping her naked arm, his face did not have the expression of a man anticipating a romantic adventure, but the sly look of a boy out to write obscenities on fences.

What had she hoped to find?—she thought, walking on. These were the things men lived by: the forms of their spirit, of their culture, of their enjoyment. She had seen nothing else anywhere, not for many years.

At the corner of the street where she lived, she bought a newspaper and went home.

Her apartment was two rooms on the top floor of a skyscraper. The sheets of glass in the corner window of her living room made it look like the prow of a ship in motion, and the lights of the city were like phosphorescent sparks on the black waves of steel and stone. When she turned on a lamp, long triangles of shadow cut the bare walls, in a geometrical pattern of light rays broken by a few angular pieces of furniture.

She stood in the middle of the room, alone between sky and city. There was only one thing that could give her the feeling she wanted.

to experience tonight; it was the only form of enjoyment she had found. She turned to a phonograph and put on a record of the music of Richard Halley.

It was his Fourth Concerto, the last work he had written. The crash of its opening chords swept the sights of the streets away from her mind. The Concerto was a great cry of rebellion. It was a "No" flung at some vast process of torture, a denial of suffering, a denial that held the agony of the struggle to break free. The sounds were like a voice saying: There is no necessity for pain—why, then, is the worst pain reserved for those who will not accept its necessity?—we who hold the love and the secret of joy, to what punishment have we been sentenced for it, and by whom? . . . The sounds of torture became defiance, the statement of agony became a hymn to a distant vision for whose sake anything was worth enduring, even this. It was the song of rebellion—and of a desperate quest.

She sat still, her eyes closed, listening

No one knew what had happened to Richard Halley, or why. The story of his life had been like a summary written to damn greatness by showing the price one pays for it. It had been a procession of years spent in garrets and basements, years that had taken the gray tinge of the walls imprisoning a man whose music overflowed with violent color. It had been the gray of a struggle against long flights of unlighted tenement stairs, against frozen plumbing, against the price of a sandwich in an ill-smelling delicatessen store, against the faces of men who listened to music, their eyes empty. It had been a struggle without the relief of violence, without the recognition of finding a conscious enemy, with only a deaf wall to batter, a wall of the most effective soundproofing, indifference, that swallowed blows, chords and screams-- a battle of silence, for a man who could give to sounds a greater eloquence than they had ever carried--the silence of obscurity, of loneliness, of the nights when some rare orchestra played one of his works and he looked at the darkness, knowing that his soul went in trembling, widening circles from a radio tower through the air of the city, but there were no receivers tuned to hear it.

"The music of Richard Halley has a quality of the heroic. Our age has outgrown that stuff," said one critic. "The music of Richard Halley is out of key with our times. It has a tone of ecstasy. Who cares for ecstasy nowadays?" said another.

His life had been a summary of the lives of all the men whose reward is a monument in a public park a hundred years after the time when a reward can matter—except that Richard Halley did not die soon enough. He lived to see the night which, by the accepted laws of history, he was not supposed to see. He was forty-three years old and it was the opening night of *Phaëthon*, an opera he had written at the age of twenty-four. He had changed the ancient Greek myth to his own purpose and meaning: Phaëthon, the young son of Helios, who stole his father's chariot and, in ambitious audacity, attempted to drive the sun across the sky, did not perish, as he perished in the myth; in Halley's opera, Phaëthon succeeded. The opera had been performed then, nineteen years ago, and had closed