

RAYNELLE. Yes, it is. I believe you've met my daughter, Delightful.

REVEREND. Yes, I believe I have. I know this must have been an awful shock to you too. How're you doing, Delightful?

DELIGHTFUL. *(Still eating.)* Okay.

REVEREND. Well, she's a blessing.

RAYNELLE. Yes, she is. *(Pause; they both watch Delightful eat for a moment.)* Our youngest. Sort of a surprise, late in life.

REVEREND. A comfort to you in your old age.

RAYNELLE. She's precious to me.

REVEREND. I can see why. *(They both watch Delightful eat again. Reverend Hooker takes out his pen.)* Well, Sister, as you know, Brother Bud was not a regular member of the church, but I knew you'd want me to say a few words at the service, so I was hoping you might be able to tell me a little something about your late husband that I might be able to include in my remarks. Now, just in your own words, what kind of man was Brother Bud?

RAYNELLE. Well, he was mean.

REVEREND. Mean.

RAYNELLE. Mean as a snake.

REVEREND. I see.

RAYNELLE. And surly.

REVEREND. Surly.

RAYNELLE. Right surly.

REVEREND. *(Writing.)* Right surly.

RAYNELLE. Yeah.

REVEREND. And how many years were you and Brother Turpin married?

RAYNELLE. Thirty-nine years.

REVEREND. *(Writing.)* Thirty-nine years.

RAYNELLE. Thirty-nine long ones, Reverend.

REVEREND. I see. Sister, I did not know Brother Turpin well, but to me he seemed a quiet man. A man of inner strength. A man who knew his own mind, kept his own counsel, and was at peace with the world. A man of few words with a strong sense of family and community. A good neighbor you

could go to if you needed a helping hand. A good husband and father. A man who was close to the earth. A wise, noble and gentle man. *(He pauses to see how this is going over with Raynelle.)*

RAYNELLE. That's cause you didn't know him till he was old and sick. He was mean and right surly.

REVEREND. Sister, in my experience it's best to remember the happier times.

RAYNELLE. Few and far between, Reverend.

REVEREND. I see.

RAYNELLE. You see, Reverend Hooker, after Ray-Bud and Junior were born, I got interested in going back to services. Bud and I were both raised in the church, but we were young and had drifted somewhat from the shore. Well, I started going back pretty regular with Bud's sister, Marguerite. And one night, during a revival preached by the Reverend Reesie Campbell, who was our pastor here for many years before you came, I got saved. Well, when I came home and announced that to Bud, he just about hit the ceiling. You never heard such a stream of filthy language in your life. So I said to him "Your mortal soul is in grave danger, Buddy Boy and if you've got a brain to an acre, you'll go down there and get yourself saved before it's too late." Well, he wouldn't have none of it, so I said to him, "If that's the way you feel about it, mister, I'm cutting you off."

REVEREND. I beg your pardon?

RAYNELLE. Not so much as a warm handshake for thirty-three years, Reverend. I guess you might say we had sort of a stand off. Well, except for that one time. *(They both look at Delightful, who is emptying the last crumbs from the sack into her mouth.)*

REVEREND. I see. Did Brother Turpin ever come to embrace the Church?

RAYNELLE. Not that I know of.

REVEREND. Well, don't you fret, Sister. We don't know what transactions the Lord makes with a soul in those last few moments on this earth.

RAYNELLE. Well, if the Lord made a transaction with Bud,

it must have been a quick one cause he was dead by the time he hit the floor.

REVEREND. Well, we don't know that for sure, do we Sister?

RAYNELLE. Looked dead to me.

REVEREND. (*Putting his notes away.*) Well, I believe I've got all the information I need. I'll just be on my way. I'm sure you've got family coming and all. Is Brother Bud resting down at Patterson's?

RAYNELLE. No, we've got him down at Depew's. Little cheaper.

REVEREND. Now don't you worry, Sister Turpin, I believe I'll be able to come up with a suitable eulogy for your husband. Delightful, is there anything you'd like to add? (*Delightful lets out a huge belch and shakes her head.*)

RAYNELLE. Guess that about does it, Reverend.