

Texas Christian University

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In Sunlight or in Shadow - Stories Inspired By The Paintings Of Edward Hopper



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In the book, *In Sunlight or in Shadow/Stories Inspired by the Painting of Edward Hopper*, Lawrence Block has edited short stories based on Hopper's art work from such diverse writers as Stephen King, Joyce Carol Oates, and Lawrence himself. Some of the art work utilized may not be suitable for your classroom due to the use of nudes in the pictures. Furthermore, some of the short stories contain language which may also be unsuitable for use in your curriculum. With that said, I have chosen four pictures and their corresponding short stories that I think will work for most teachers. Due to time constraints, this presentation will concentrate on two of the pictures and their corresponding short stories. The other two will be located on my website to give you a wider choice.

The following material is adapted from:

"Outside In: Finding A Character's Heart Through Art - ReadWriteThink." *Readwritethink.org*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2017. <<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/outside-finding-character-heart-922.html>>.

Alienation is an important theme in contemporary literature, and it's an idea that adolescents need to confront in order to fully understand what it means to be a human being in our modern world. This activity, based on the art of Edward Hopper and combined with stories by various writers based on the paintings, allows students to explore the idea of alienation while tapping into their creative talents as they learn to create vivid characters through voice. Students view and reflect on an Edward Hopper painting. Working in small groups, students brainstorm everything they can about a character in the painting. They then write a short story based on the character(s) in the paintings. Those characters may reflect the loneliness that appears to pervade modern society.

Begin with the paintings: Observe, interpret, create

Teacher instructions to students:

1. This session will focus on exploring a couple of Edward Hopper's paintings and considering what Hopper is trying to express in his art.
2. Project the first painting, *Room in New York, 1932*, and ask the students to write down quickly their first impressions of the work. Ask them to consider the overall mood, the use of color, the interplay of light and dark, patterns and textures and what they may represent, the focal point of the painting and how it draws your attention, the illusion of space in the picture, their sense of the situation that is depicted, and so forth.
3. Ask students to share their reactions to the paintings. Generally, students use certain words over and over again, describing Hopper's figures as *sad, isolated, cut off, desperate, distant*.
4. Have small groups of students (2-3) discuss Hopper's use of windows as ways to "see in," but also "to cut off."
5. Guide students to think about Hopper's use of shadows and pools of light.
6. Encourage them to share their ideas about the situations the characters are in, their expressions, their clothing, and their surroundings. (i.e. "the characters seem isolated from each other," "she's leaving home," "he's done something bad and feels guilty," etc.) Often students offer a series of scenarios that reflect characters feeling enormous loss and loneliness.

THE MUSIC ROOM

BY STEPHEN KING

1. The Enderbys were in their music room—so they called it, although it was really just the spare bedroom. Once they had thought it would be little James or Jill Enderby’s nursery, but after ten years of trying, it seemed increasingly unlikely that a Baby Dear would arrive out of the Nowhere and into the Here. They had made their peace with childlessness. At least they had work, which was a blessing in a year when men were still standing in bread lines. There were fallow periods, it was true, but when the job was on, they could afford to think of nothing else, and they both liked it that way.
2. Mr. Enderby was reading *The New York Journal-American*, a new daily not even halfway through its first year of publication. It was sort of a tabloid and sort of not. He usually began with the comics, but when they were on the job he turned to the city news first, scanning through the stories quickly, especially the police blotter.
3. Mrs. Enderby sat at the piano, which had been a wedding gift from her parents. Occasionally she stroked a key, but did not press any. Tonight the only music in the music room was the symphony of nighttime traffic on Third Avenue, which came in through the open window. Third Avenue, third floor. A good apartment in a sturdy brownstone. They rarely heard their neighbors above and below, and their neighbors rarely heard them. Which was all to the good.
4. From the closet behind them came a single thump. Then another. Mrs. Enderby spread her hands as if to play, but when the thumps ceased, she put her hands in her lap.
5. “Still not a peep about our pal George Timmons,” Mr. Enderby said, rattling the paper.
6. “Perhaps you should check the *Albany Herald*,” she said. “I believe the newsstand on Lexington and 60th carries it.”
7. “No need,” he said, turning to the funnies at last. “The *Journal-American* is good enough for me. If Mr. Timmons has been reported missing in Albany, let those interested search for him there.”

MY NOTES:

Does the style of writing remind you of another author you have read? How does King build suspense in the story?

8. "That's fine, dear," said Mrs. Enderby. "I trust you." There was really no reason not to; to date, the work had gone swimmingly. Mr. Timmons was their sixth guest in the specially reinforced closet.
9. Mr. Enderby chuckled. "The Katzenjammer Kids are at it again. This time they've caught Der Captain fishing illegally—shooting a net from a cannon, in fact. It's quite amusing. Shall I read it to you?"
10. Before Mrs. Enderby could answer, another thump came from the closet, and faint sounds that might have been shouts. It was difficult to tell, unless one put one's ear right up against the wood, and she had no intention of doing that. The piano bench was as close to Mr. Timmons as she intended to get, until it was time to dispose of him. "I wish he'd stop."
11. "He will, dear. Soon enough."
12. Another thump, as if to refute this.
13. "That's what you said yesterday."
14. "It seems I was premature," said Mr. Enderby, and then, "Oh, gosh—Dick Tracy is once more on the hunt for Pruneface."
15. "Pruneface gives me the willies," she said, without turning. "I wish Detective Tracy would put him away for good."
16. "That will never happen, dear. People claim to root for the hero, but it's the villains they remember."
17. Mrs. Enderby made no reply. She was waiting for the next thump. When it came—if it came—she would wait for the one after that. The waiting was the worst part. The poor man was hungry and thirsty, of course; they had ceased feeding and watering him three days ago, after he had signed the last check, the one that emptied his account. They had emptied his wallet at once, of almost two hundred dollars. In a depression as deep as this one, two hundred was a jackpot, and his watch might add as much as twenty more to their earnings (although, she admitted to herself, that might be a trifle optimistic).
18. Mr. Timmons's checking account at Albany National had been the real mother lode: eight hundred. Once he was hungry enough, he had been happy to sign several checks made out to cash and with the notation "Business Expenses"

written in the proper spot on each one. Somewhere a wife and kiddies might be depending on that money when Father didn't come home from his trip to New York, but Mrs. Enderby did not allow herself to dwell on that. She preferred to imagine Mrs. Timmons having a rich mama and papa in Albany's Mansion District, a generous couple right out of a Dickens novel. They would take her in and care for her and her children, little boys who might be endearing scamps like Hans and Fritz, the Katzenjammer Kids.

19. "Sluggo broke a neighbor's window and is blaming it on Nancy," Mr. Enderby said with a chuckle. "I swear he makes the Katzenjammers look like angels!"
20. "That awful hat he wears!" Mrs. Enderby said.
21. Another thump from the closet, and a very hard one from a man who had to be on the verge of starvation. But Mr. Timmons had been a big one. Even after a generous dose of chloral hydrate in his glass of dinner wine, he had nearly overpowered Mr. Enderby. Mrs. Enderby had had to help. She sat on Mr. Timmons's chest until he quieted. Unladylike, but necessary. That night, the window on Third Avenue had been shut, as it always was when Mr. Enderby brought home a guest for dinner. He met them in bars. Very gregarious, was Mr. Enderby, and very good at singling out businessmen who were alone in the city—fellows who were also gregarious and enjoyed making new friends. Especially new friends who might become new clients of one business or another. Mr. Enderby judged them by their suits, and he always had an eye for a gold watch chain.
22. "Bad news," Mr. Enderby said, a frown creasing his brow.
23. She stiffened on the piano bench and turned to face him. "What is it?"
24. "Ming the Merciless has imprisoned Flash Gordon and Dale Arden in the radium mines of Mongo. There are these creatures that look sort of like alligators—"
25. Now from the closet came a faint, wailing cry. Within its soundproofed confines, it must have been a shriek almost loud enough to rupture the poor man's vocal cords. How could Mr. Timmons

still be strong enough to voice such a howl? He had already lasted a day longer than any of the previous five, and his somehow gruesome vitality had begun to prey on her nerves. She had been hoping that tonight would see the end of him.

26. The rug in which he was to be wrapped was waiting in their bedroom, and the panel truck with ENDERBY ENTERPRISES painted on the side was parked just around the corner, fully gassed and ready for another trip to the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. When they were first married, there had actually been an Enderby Enterprises. The depression—what the *Journal-American* had taken to calling the *Great Depression*—had put an end to that two years ago. Now they had this new work.
27. “Dale is afraid,” continued Mr. Enderby, “and Flash is trying to buck her up. He says Dr. Zarkov will—”
28. Now came a fusillade of thumps: ten, maybe a dozen, and accompanied by more of those shrieks, muffled but still rather chilling. She could imagine blood beading Mr. Timmons’s lips and dripping from his split knuckles. She could imagine how his neck would have grown scrawny, and how his formerly plump face would have stretched long as his body gobbled the fat and musculature there in order to stay alive.
29. But no. A body couldn’t cannibalize itself to stay alive, could it? The idea was as unscientific as phrenology. And how thirsty he must be by now!
30. “It’s so annoying!” she burst out. “I hate it that he just goes *on* and *on* and *on*! Why did you have to bring home such a strong man, dear?”
31. “Because he was also a well-to-do man,” Mr. Enderby said mildly. “I could see that when he opened his wallet to pay for our second round of drinks. What he’s contributed will keep us for three months. Five, if we stretch it.”
32. Thump, and thump, and thump. Mrs. Enderby put her fingers to the delicate hollows of her temples and began to rub.
33. Mr. Enderby looked at her sympathetically. “I can put a stop to it, if you like. He won’t be able to struggle much in his current state; certainly not after having expended so much energy. A quick slash with your sharpest butcher knife. Of course, if I do the deed, *you* will have to do the clean-up.

It's only fair."

34. Mrs. Enderby looked at him, shocked. "We may be thieves, but we are *not* murderers."
35. "That is not what people would say, if we were caught." He spoke apologetically but firmly enough, just the same.
36. She clasped her hands in the lap of her red dress tightly enough to whiten the knuckles, and looked straight into his eyes. "If we were called into the dock, I would hold my head up and tell the judge and the jury that we were victims of circumstance."
37. "And I'm sure you would be very convincing, dear."
38. Another thump from behind the closet door, and another cry. Gruesome. That was the word for his vitality, the exact one. *Gruesome*.
39. "But we are *not* murderers. Our guests simply lack sustenance, as do so many in these terrible times. We don't kill them; they simply fade away."
40. Another shriek came from the man Mr. Enderby had brought home from McSorley's over a week ago. It might have been words. It might have been *for the love of God*.
41. "It won't be long now," Mr. Enderby said. "If not tonight, then tomorrow. And we won't have to go back to work for quite awhile. And yet . . ."
42. She looked at him in that same steady way, hands clasped. "And yet?"
43. "Part of you enjoys it, I think. Not this part, but the actual moment when we take them, as a hunter takes an animal in the woods."
44. She considered this. "Perhaps I do. And I *certainly* enjoy seeing what they have in their wallets. It reminds me of the treasure hunts Papa used to put on for me and my brother when we were children. But afterward . . ." She sighed. "I was never good at waiting."
45. More thumps. Mr. Enderby turned to the business section. "He came from Albany, and people who come from there get what they deserve. Play something, dear. That will cheer you up."
46. So she got her sheet music out of the piano bench and played "I'll Never Be the Same." Then she played "I'm in a Dancing Mood" and "The Way You Look Tonight." Mr. Enderby applauded and

<p>called for an encore on that one, and when the last notes died away, the thumps and cries from the soundproofed and specially reinforced closet had ceased.</p> <p>47. "Music!" Mr. Enderby proclaimed. "It hath powers to soothe the savage beast!"</p> <p>48. That made them laugh together, comfortably, the way people do when they have been married for many years and have come to know each other's minds.</p>	
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Depending on class size, you may want to have the students examine more than one painting and short story. With that in mind, I have included "Automat" by Hopper paired with the short story by Lawrence Block, "Autumn at the Automat". If our APSI session is large enough we will do two paintings and stories, to add variety to the session.

<p>AUTUMN AT THE AUTOMAT BY LAWRENCE BLOCK</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The hat made a difference.2. If you chose your clothes carefully, if you dressed a little more stylishly than the venue demanded, you could feel good about yourself. When you walked into the Forty-second Street cafeteria, the hat and coat announced that you were a lady. Perhaps you preferred their coffee to what they served at Longchamps. Or maybe it was the bean soup, as good as you could get at Delmonico's.3. Certainly it wasn't abject need that led you to the cashier's window at Horn & Hardart. No one watching you dip into an alligator handbag for a dollar bill could think so for a minute.4. The nickels came back, four groups of five. No need to count them, because the cashier did this and nothing else all day long, taking dollars, dispensing nickels. This was the Automat, and the poor girl was the next thing to an Automaton.5. You took your nickels and assembled your meal. You chose a dish, put your nickels in the slot, turned the handle, opened the little window, and retrieved your prize. A single nickel got you a cup of coffee. Three more bought a bowl of the legendary bean soup, and another secured a little plate holding a seeded roll and a pat of butter.6. You carried your tray to the counter, moving very deliberately, positioning yourself in front of the compartmented metal tray of silverware.	<p>MY NOTES:</p>
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7. The moment you'd walked through the door you knew which table you wanted. Of course someone could have taken it, but no one did. Now, after a long moment, you carried your tray to it.
8. She ate slowly, savoring each spoonful of the bean soup, glad she'd decided against making do with a cup for the sake of saving a nickel. Not that she hadn't considered it. A nickel was nothing much, but if she saved a nickel twice a day, why, that came to three dollars a month. More, really. Thirty-six dollars and fifty cents a year, and that was something.
9. Ah, but she couldn't scrimp. Well, she could in fact, she had to, but not when it came to nourishing herself. What was that expression Alfred had used?
10. *Kishke gelt*. Belly money, money saved by cheating one's stomach. She could hear him speak the words, could see the curl of his lip.
11. Better, surely, to spend the extra nickel.
12. Not for fear of Alfred's contempt. He was beyond knowing or caring what she ate or what it cost her.
13. Unless, as she alternately hoped and feared, it didn't all stop with the end of life. Suppose that fine mind, that keen intelligence, that wry humor, suppose it had survived on some plane of existence even when all the rest of him had gone into the ground.
14. She didn't really believe it, but sometimes it pleased her to entertain the notion. She'd even talk to him, sometimes aloud but more often in the privacy of her mind. There was little she hadn't been able to share with him in life, and now his death had washed away what few conversational inhibitions she'd had. She could tell him anything now, and when it pleased her she could invent answers for him and fancy she heard them.
15. Sometimes they came so swiftly, and with such unsparing candor, that she had to wonder at their source. Was she making them up? Or was he no less a presence in her life for having left it?
16. Perhaps he hovered just out of sight, a disembodied guardian angel. Watching over her, taking care of her.
17. And no sooner did she have the thought than she heard the reply. *Watching is as far as it goes, Liebchen. When it comes to taking care, you're on your own.*
18. She broke the roll in two, spread butter on it with the little knife. Put the buttered roll on the plate, took up the spoon, took a spoonful of soup. Then another, and then a bite of the roll.

19. She ate slowly, using the time to scan the room. Just over half the tables were occupied. Two women here, two men there. A man and woman who looked to be married, and another pair, at once animated but awkward with each other, who she guessed were on a first or second date.
20. She might have amused herself by making up a story about them, but let her attention pass them by.
21. The other tables held solitary diners, more men than women, and most of them with newspapers. Better to be here than outside, as the city slipped deeper into autumn and the wind blew off the Hudson. Drink a cup of coffee, read the *News* or the *Mirror*, pass the time . . .
22. The manager wore a suit.
23. So did most of the male patrons, but his looked to be of better quality, and more recently pressed. His shirt was white, his necktie of a muted color she couldn't identify from across the room.
24. She watched him out of the corner of her eye.
25. Alfred had taught her to do this. Your eyes looked straight in front of you, and you didn't move them around to study the object of your interest. Instead you used your mind, telling it to pay attention to something on the periphery of your vision.
26. It took practice, but she'd had plenty of that. She remembered a lesson in Penn Station, across from the Left Luggage window. While she kept her eyes trained on the man checking his suitcase, Alfred had quizzed her on passengers queuing for the Philadelphia train. She described them in turn and glowed when he praised her.
27. The manager, she noted now, had a small, thin-lipped mouth. His wing-tip shoes were brown, and buffed to a high polish. And, even as she observed him without looking at him, he studied his patrons in quite the opposite manner, his gaze moving deliberately, aggressively, from one table to the next. It seemed to her that some of her fellow diners could feel it when he stared at them, shifting uncomfortably without consciously knowing why.
28. She had prepared herself, but when his eyes found her she couldn't keep from drawing a breath, barely resisting the impulse to swing her eyes toward his. Her face darkened, she could feel it change expression, and when she reached for her coffee cup she could feel the tremor in her hand.
29. There he stood, beside the door to the kitchen, his hands clasped behind his back, his visage stern. There he stood,

observing her directly while she observed him as she'd been taught.

30. There he was. With just a little effort, she managed to take a sip of coffee without spilling any of it. Then she returned the cup to the saucer and took another breath.
31. And what did she suppose he had seen?
32. She thought of a half-remembered poem, one they'd read in English class. Something about wishing for the power to see oneself as one was seen by others. But what was the poem and who was its author?
33. What the restaurant manager would have seen, she thought, was a small and unobtrusive woman of a certain age, wearing good clothes that were themselves of a certain age. A decent hat that had largely lost its shape, an Arnold Constable coat, worn at the cuffs, with one of its original bone buttons replaced with another that didn't quite match.
34. Good shoes, plain black pumps. Her alligator bag. Both well crafted of good leather, both purchased from good Fifth Avenue shops.
35. And both showing their age.
36. As indeed was she, like everything she owned.
37. What would he have seen? The very picture of shabby gentility, she thought, and while she could not quite embrace the label, neither could she take issue with it. If her garments were shabby, they nevertheless announced unequivocally that their owner was genteel.
38. A man at the table immediately to her right—dark suit, gray fedora, napkin tucked into his collar to shield his tie—was alternating between sips of his coffee and forkfuls of his dessert, which looked to be apple crisp. She'd given no thought to dessert, and now a glimpse of it ignited the desire. She couldn't remember the last time she'd had their apple crisp, but she remembered how it tasted, a perfect balance of tart and sweet, the crisp part all sugary and crunchy.
39. They didn't always have apple crisp, which argued for her having a portion now, while it was available. It wouldn't cost her more than three nickels, four at the most, and she still had fifteen of the twenty nickels the cashier had supplied. All she had to do was walk to the dessert section at the far right and claim her prize.
40. No.
41. No, because her cup of coffee was almost gone, and she'd want a fresh cup to accompany her dessert. And that would only cost a single nickel more, and she could

afford that even as she could afford the dessert itself, but even so the answer was—

42. *No.*
43. The word again, in Alfred's voice this time.
44. *You are stalling, Knuddelmaus. It's not the pleasure of the sweet that lures you. It's the desire to postpone that which you fear.*

45. She had to smile. If some corner of her own imagination was supplying Alfred's dialogue, it was doing so with great skill. *Knuddelmaus* had been one of his pet names for her, but he had used it infrequently, and it hadn't crossed her conscious mind in ages. Yet there it was, in his voice, bracketed with English words full of the flavor of the Ku'damm.
46. *You know me too well*, she said, speaking the words only in her mind. And she waited for what he might say next, but nothing more came. He was done for now.
47. Well, he'd said what he had to say. And he was right, wasn't he? Robert Burns, she thought. A Scotsman, writing in dialect sure to baffle high school students, and she'd lost the rest of the poem but the one couplet had come back to her:
*wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!*
48. But really, she wondered, would anyone in her right mind really want such a power?

49. The man with the gray fedora put down his fork and freed his napkin from his collar, using it to wipe the crumbs of his apple crisp from his lips. He picked up his coffee cup, found it empty, and moved to push back his chair.
50. But then he changed his mind and returned to his newspaper.
51. She fancied she could read his mind. The restaurant was not full, and no one was waiting for his table. He'd given them quite enough money—for his chicken pot pie and his coffee and his apple crisp—to keep his table as long as he wanted it. They didn't rush you here, they seemed to recognize that they were selling not just food but shelter as well, and it was warm here and cold outside, and it's not as though anyone were waiting for him in his little room.
52. Or for her in hers. She lived a ten-minute walk away, in a residential hotel on East Twenty-eighth Street. Her room was tiny, but still a good value at five dollars a week, twenty dollars a month. She'd long ago positioned a doily on the nightstand to hide the cigarette burn that was a

legacy of a previous tenant, and hung framed illustrations from magazines to cover the worst water stains on the walls. There was a carpet on the floor, sound if threadbare, and downstairs the lobby furniture might have seen better days, but didn't that make it a good match for the residents?

53. Shabby genteel.
54. Two tables away, a woman about her age spooned sugar into her half-finished cup of coffee.
55. Free nourishment, she thought. The sugar bowl was on the table and you could make your coffee as sweet as you wished. The manager, who watched everything, no doubt registered every spoonful, but didn't seem to object.
56. When she'd first begun drinking coffee, she took plenty of cream and sugar. Alfred had changed that, teaching her to take it black and unsweetened, and now that was the only way she could drink it.
57. Not that the man had lacked a sweet tooth. He'd had a favorite place in Yorkville with pastries he proclaimed the equal of Vienna's Café Demel, and paired his Punschkrapfen or Linzer torte with strong black coffee.
58. *You must have the contrast, Liebchen. The bitter with the sweet. One taste strengthens the other. At the table as in the world.*
59. His words were strongly accented now. *Vun taste strengsens ze uzzer.* When she'd met him he was new in the country, but even then his English held just a trace of Middle Europe, and within a year or two he'd polished away the last of it. He'd allowed it to return only when it was just the two of them, as if she alone was permitted to hear where he'd come from.
60. And it was when he talked about the past, about times in Berlin and Vienna, that it was strongest.
61. She took a last sip of coffee. It wasn't the equal to the strong dark brew he'd taught her to prefer, but it was certainly more than acceptable.
62. Did she want another cup?
63. Without shifting her gaze, she allowed herself another visual scan of the room, saw the manager look at her and then away, studied the woman whom she'd seen adding sugar to her coffee.
64. A woman dressed much as she was dressed, with a decent hat and a well-cut dove gray coat, neither of them new. A woman whose hair was graying and whose forehead showed worry lines, but whose mouth was still full-lipped and generous.
65. Now the woman was looking at her, studying her without

knowing she was being studied in return.

66. *Pick an ally, Schatzi. They come in handy.*

67. She let her eyes move to meet the woman's, noted her embarrassment at the contact, and eased it with a smile. The woman smiled back, then turned her attention to her coffee cup. And, contact established, she picked up her own cup. It was empty, but no one could know that, and she took a little sip of nothing at all.

68. *You are stalling, Knuddelmaus.*

69. Well, yes, she was. It was warm in here and cold out there, but it would only grow colder as afternoon edged into evening. It wasn't the wind or the air temperature that made her reluctant to leave her table.

70. It was the fourth of the month, and her rent had been due on the first. She'd been late before, and knew that nobody would say anything until she was a week overdue. So there'd be a reminder in three days, a gentle advisory delivered with a gentle smile, directing her attention to what was surely an oversight.

71. She didn't know what the next step would be, or when it would come. So far that single reminder had achieved the desired effect, and she'd found the money and paid the monthly rental a day after it had been requested.

72. That time, she'd pawned a bracelet. Three stones, carnelian and lapis and citrine, half-round oval cabochons set in yellow gold. Thinking of it now, she looked down at her bare wrist.

73. It had been a gift of Alfred's, but that had been true of every piece of jewelry she'd owned. The bracelet was evidently her favorite, as it had been the last to make the trip to the pawnshop. She'd told herself she'd redeem it when the opportunity presented itself. She went on believing this until the day she sold the pawn ticket.

74. And by then she'd grown accustomed to no longer owning the bracelet, so the pain was muted.

75. *We get used to things, Liebchen. A man can get used to hanging.*

76. Could anyone speak those lines convincingly other than with the inflection of a Berliner?

77. *And you are still stalling.*

78. She put her handbag on the table, then was taken by a fit of coughing. She put her napkin to her lips, took a breath, coughed again.

79. She didn't look, but knew people were glancing in her direction.

80. She took a breath, managed not to cough. She was still holding her napkin, and now she picked up each of her utensils in turn, the soup spoon, the coffee spoon, the fork, the butter knife. She wiped them all thoroughly and placed each of them in her handbag. And fastened the clasp.
81. Now she did look around, and let something show on her face.
82. She got to her feet. Not for the first time, she felt a touch of dizziness upon standing. She put a hand on the table for support, and the dizziness subsided, as it always did. She drew a breath, turned, and walked toward the door.
83. She moved at a measured pace, deliberately, neither hurrying nor slowing. This Automat, unlike the one closer to her hotel, had a brass-trimmed revolving door, and she paused to let a new patron enter the restaurant. She thought about the desk clerk at her hotel, and the twenty dollars. Her purse held a five-dollar bill and two singles, along with those fifteen nickels, so she could pay a week's rent and have a few days to find the rest, and—
84. "Oh, I don't think so. Stop right there, ma'am."
85. She extended a foot toward the revolving door, and now a hand fastened on her upper arm. She spun around, and there he was, the thin-lipped manager.
86. "Bold as brass," he said. "By God, you're not the first person to walk off with the odd spoon, but you took the lot, didn't you? And polished them while you were at it."
87. "How dare you!"
88. "I'll just take that," he said, and took hold of her handbag.
89. "No!"
90. Now there were three hands gripping the alligator bag, one of his and two of her own. "How dare you!" she said again, louder this time, knowing that everyone in the restaurant was looking at the two of them. Well, let them look.
91. "You're not going anywhere," he told her. "By God, I was just going to take back what you stole, but you've got an attitude that's as bad as your thieving." He called over his shoulder: "Jimmy, call the precinct, tell the guy on the desk to send over a couple of boys." His eyes glinted—oh, he was enjoying this—and his words washed over her as he told her he would make an example of her, that a night or two in jail would give her more of a sense of private property.
92. "Now," he said, "are you gonna open that bag, or do we wait for the cops?"

93. There were two policemen, one a good ten years older than the other, though both looked young to her. And it was clear that neither of them wanted to be there, enlisted to punish a woman for stealing tableware from a cafeteria.
94. It was the elder of the two who told her, almost apologetically, that she'd have to open the bag.
95. "Certainly," she said, and worked the clasp, and took out the knife and the fork and both spoons. The policemen looked on with no change in expression, but the manager knew what he was seeing, and her heart quickened at the look on his face.
96. "I like the food at this restaurant," she said, "and the people who dine here are decent, and the chairs are comfortable enough. But as for your spoons and forks, I don't care for the way they feel in my hands or in my mouth. I prefer my own. These were my mother's, they're hallmarked sterling silver, you can see her monogram—"
97. The apology came in a rush, and found her unrelenting. It would be the manager's pleasure to give her a due bill entitling her to this and so many meals absolutely without charge, and—
98. "I'm sure nothing could induce me to come here ever again."
99. Well, he was terribly sorry, and fortunately no actual harm had been done, so—
100. "You've humiliated me in front of a room full of people. You laid hands on me, you grabbed my arm, you tried to grab my purse." She glanced around. "Did you see what this man did?"
101. Several patrons nodded, including the woman who'd spooned all that sugar into her coffee.
102. More words of apology, but she cut right through them. "My nephew is an attorney. I think I should call him."
103. Something changed in the manager's face. "Why don't we go to my office," he suggested. "I'm sure we can work this out."
104. When she got back to her hotel, the first thing she did was pay her rent, the month that was overdue and the next two in advance.
105. Upstairs in her room, she took the knife and fork and spoons and returned them to her dresser drawer. They were part of a set, all monogrammed with a capital J, but they had not been her mother's.
106. Nor were they sterling. Had they been, she'd have

contrived to sell them. But they were decent silver plate, and while she did not customarily carry them around with her, they served admirably when she warmed up a can of baked beans on her hotplate.

107. And they'd served admirably today.

108. In his office, the manager had tried to buy his way out with a hundred dollars, and doubled it quickly when it was apparent he'd insulted her. A deep breath followed by a firm shake of her head had coaxed another hundred out of him, and she weighed that, hovering on the brink of accepting it, only to sigh and wonder if she wouldn't be best advised to call her nephew after all.

109. His offer jumped from three hundred to five hundred, and she had the sense he might well go higher, but Alfred had impressed upon her the folly of wringing every nickel out of a situation. So she didn't jump at it, but thought for a long moment and gave in gracefully.

110. He had her sign something. She didn't hesitate, jotting down a name she'd used before, and he counted out the appointed sum in twenty-dollar bills.

111. Twenty-five of them.

112. *Or ten thousand nickels, Liebchen. If you want to give the cashier a heart attack.*

113. "But it went well," she told Alfred, speaking the words aloud in the little room. "I pulled it off, didn't I?"

114. The answer to that was clear enough not to require his stating it. She hung her hat on the peg, her coat in the closet. She sat on the edge of the bed and counted her money, then tucked away all but one of the twenties where no one would think to look for them.

115. Alfred had schooled her in hiding money, even as he'd taught her how to get hold of it.

116. "I couldn't be sure it would work," she said. "It came to me one day. I had a fork with one bent tine, and I thought how low-quality their cutlery was, and I could imagine a woman, oh, one who'd come down a peg or two over time, bringing her own silverware in her purse. And then I forgot about her, and then she came back to me, and—"

117. And one thing led to another. And it had worked splendidly, and the nervousness she'd felt had been appropriate to the role she'd been playing. Now, seeing the incident from a distance, viewing it with Alfred's critical perspective, she could see ways to refine her performance, to make more certain the taking of the bait and the sinking of the hook.

118. Could she do it again? She wouldn't need to, not for quite a while. Her rent was paid through the end of the year, and the money she'd tucked away would keep her for

that long and longer.

119. Of course she couldn't return to that particular Automat. There were others, including a perfectly nice one very near to her hotel, but did the chain's managers keep one another up to date? The man she'd dealt with, the man with the thin lips and the mean little eyes, had hardly covered himself with glory in their encounter, and you'd think he'd want to keep it to himself. But one never knew, and the less one left to chance—
120. Perhaps, for at least a while, she'd be well advised to take her custom elsewhere. There were many places nearby where the shabby genteel could dine decently at low cost. Childs, for example, had several restaurants, with a nice one nearby on Thirty-fourth Street, in the shadow of the Third Avenue El.
121. Or Schrafft's. The prices were a little higher there, and they drew a better class of customer, but she'd fit in well enough. And if one of them had the right sort of manager, she'd know what to do when her funds got low.
122. One had to adapt. She was too old to slip on a just-mopped floor at Gimbel's, too frail to stumble on an escalator, and there were all those routines Alfred had taught her, gambits you couldn't bring off without a partner.
123. Schrafft's, she decided. And she'd begin by scouting the one on West Twenty-third, in the heart of the Ladies' Mile.
124. Would they have apple crisp? She hoped so.