

holds a spoon.) Yeah, now that's your spoon. Use that to put sugar in your coffee, if you had some sugar, here. And you had some coffee—shoot. I don't really know why we got all these things. But your fork—man, I wish somebody else'd help you with this, 'cause I don't know anything, but—I *think* that your fork—your fork'd be the main thing you'd use. 'Cause you got your eggs, and you got your grits. Y'see? Eat 'em with a fork, just like we been doin'. (*Shows him. Charlie eats. Ellard watches him eat for a while, then speaks slowly, carefully.*) Can — you — say — "fork"? (*Holds up his fork.*) "Faw-werk"? (*Points to Charlie's fork.*) "Faw-werk."

CHARLIE. "Faw. . . ."

ELLARD. "—werk." Two parts. "Faw-werk."

CHARLIE. "Faw . . . werk."

ELLARD. Right. Put 'em together. "Faw-werk."

CHARLIE. "Faw-werk."

ELLARD. Good! That was *great!* (*Charlie smiles tentatively.*)
Yeah. That was *great.*

CHARLIE. "Faw-werk."

ELLARD. *Yeah.* (*Pause. Ellard points.*) "Ai gs"?

CHARLIE. "Aigs"?

ELLARD. Yep. (*Nods.*) Real good.

CHARLIE. "Aigs"?

ELLARD. Uh-huh. Let's see —"grits"?

CHARLIE. "Gris"?

ELLARD. "Grits." It's called "hominy grits," really. (*Charlie shakes his head.*)

CHARLIE. "Horn — ." (*He shakes his head.*)

ELLARD. That's all right. Grits is fine for now. Just "grits."

CHARLIE. "Grits."

ELLARD. Yeah. That's fine. (*Looking around.*) Let's see, what else?
(*Points.*) "Plate"?

CHARLIE. "Plate"?

ELLARD. (*Pointing.*) "Sofa"?

CHARLIE. "Sofa"?

ELLARD. (*Going to the stove.*) "Stove"?

CHARLIE. "Stove"?

ELLARD. "Rug"?

CHARLIE. "Rug"?

ELLARD. (*At the lamp.*) "Layump"?

CHARLIE. "Layump"?

ELLARD. "Bottle"?

CHARLIE. "Bottle"?

ELLARD. "Glass."

CHARLIE. "Glass."

ELLARD. (*Looks around.*) Well— that's all the important stuff in here. You wanna— what do we wanna do now? You wanna— ? We could go outside —check out the trees, 'n' stuff? We don't have to, but — we could. Or — yeah. No, let's just take a break, right now. All right? Rest up. An' then we'll check out the trees and all, directly. 'Cause you will, that's, those are all things you'll want to know about, too. 'Cause, like if you ever want to ask somebody, like, where a tree is, or sump'm? Then— you'll want to know that. Or cars? Or chipmunks, or things, 'n' all? All that outdoorsy stuff? But . . . yeah. Or. You know what I *could* do. . . . (*As if deciding how to spend ten thousand dollars.*) I could go outside and bring some stuff *in*. I just might do that. 'Cause, since that way we wouldn't — we won't have to go outside, or anything, and we'd have everything right in here where—where we want it. Okay? (Hopping up.) All right, you wait here, then. (*Charlie stands.*) No you wait here, I'll be right back. No. *Stay.* (*Charlie stops.*) All right. (*Ellard starts out as Betty enters.*)

BETTY. Where you goin'?

ELLARD. (*Stopping, already breathless.*) Miz Meeks, I'd like to talk, but I'm just real busy right now. (*He exits.*)

BETTY. Laws. (*Going to clear the remains of breakfast.*) You done with yer breakfast, Charlie? You must be. Ye took off your little head-glass. (*Charlie, as if to answer, tears his paper napkin in half.*) That mean yo're done? I reckon it must. (*Experimentally, Charlie stands and, straight-faced, does a brief, wild little dance.*) Ohhh! (*They look at each other.*) That mean ye enjoyed it? (*Charlie does his little smile.*) It does? (*Charlie dances around some more, shading his eyes a la hornpipe, flapping his arms like wings, and doing a fairly complex series of meaningless gestures.*) And—let's see, I don't know if I got all o' that, er not. Sump'm about— was it sump'm about yo're lookin' forward to more o' my cookin'? (*Charlie smiles, watches her.*) And— and ye hope I'll cook ye some chicken? (*Charlie just smiles.*) Well, don't you worry none, Charlie. 'Cause ye know what we're havin' fer dinner this very *night*? *Chicken!* (*Flaps her arms.*) Yes! Laws, *lawsy*, it's mysterious, ain't it— the way I kin jest read yer brain-thoughts comin' out? I had a pet skunk once, I always knowed jest what he was thinkin' too. He had the same kind o' way of lookin' at me, 'n' all. Yo're jest like him. Yes, sir. (*Charlie puts his hands next to his head and wiggles his fingers.*) Ye *what*, now? Ye— ye want me t' play the harmonica fer ye? Why! How'd you know I used t' play one o' them thaings? Why, that was thirty years ago! Wait right here. (*Betty exits.*)

CHARLIE. (*Laughing.*) Oh, Mary, if only you could see— ha! Ha!

(He begins dancing about again. Catherine enters, sees him, stops. Charlie shoves his hands into his pockets.)

CATHERINE. Uh-huh! Mind if I sit down here? I am not going up to that yellow room again. Damn picture on the wall of some dogs playin' poker. *(To Charlie.)* Have a seat, what you lookin' at? People in your country bend in the middle? Have a seat. *(Gestures toward a chair. Charlie sits, hands in lap, regarding her.)* That's it. Oh, yeah. This is— this'd be a good place to hang meat. Don't you think? No, we're not supposed to talk to you, I know. *(Pause.)* You don't care. What do you care. *(Pause.)* You starin' at me for? Make me feel like a T.V. set. *(She picks up a newspaper.)* You want the picture section? No? Suit yourself. *(Finding the front page.)* Today's *Constitution*, my goodness. What do we — ? Aww looky here. Somebody's gone out and torched the Klan headquarters, can you beat that? Up in Atlanta. Yes, sir. Burned the place *down*. That's a switch. Some old boys aren't too pleased right now, you can bet on that. Watch out for them, mister, those Klan boys. They'll get you. You're not a hundred per cent American white Christian, you're liable to find yourself some fine mornin' floppin' around in some Safeway dumpster, minus a few little things. *(Reading elsewhere in the paper.)* Debutante *ball!* Well—look at the little debutantes! Aren't they pretty? Comin' out. *(To the girls in the picture.)* The catch is, girls, you don't get to go back *in*. My, my. *(Absorbed, turning pages.)* What in the world am I doin' ... ? I don't know. . . What else we got here? We got—. *(She says nothing for a moment. Then she puts down the paper and, embarrassed, presses the heels of her hands into her eyes.)* Shoot. 'Scuse me. I don't ever do this. *(Clears her throat.)* I'm just a little bit — weary, this mornin'. *(Clears her throat again.)* I guess? There we go. *(Picks up the paper.)* Uh. . . . *(The paper goes down again, and she hands back over the eyes.)* Shoot. *(A long pause.)* I just get sorta— uh— a little sick and tired of things, from time to time. Sometimes I just — I don't know. I don't know. Or what I'm sittin' here jabberin' away at you for, either. You really, you don't understand me at all, do you? That's why, I guess. Talkin' to Betty, or Ellard, you know, there's always that slim little chance you might be understood. Cain't have that. And David, of course, he's off someplace — instead of stickin' around here gettin' to know me. I just keep thinkin' if he — *(An odd laugh.)* if he knew me a little better, he wouldn't — . Ohh, boy. You ever know anybody that — what's your name? Charlie? Charlie. Anybody that was just so good, that you just feel *vile*, most of the time? Yeah. And he is, he's so sweet, and he does for people, and he's so patient. And you get with him awhile, you just realize you've spent your whole life bein' selfish and silly? Doin' dumb things like *(Picking up the paper.)* this, I was one of these little cutie-patooties, 'bout a year ago. Yeah. One year. Lord. Dressin' up, flouncin' around, bop-pin' all over in my Daddy's plane, sippin' at drinks in revolv'in' restaurants. Dumb, dumb, stupid, useless, mindless bullshit. I miss it. I do. I don't think I was cut out to be a decent person. You know? Some people are just meant to be a waste of food, and I think I'm one of 'em. I'm good at it. And a year from now, what? I'm gonna be a mother? Probably own this house? Preacher's wife? I mean—whew! I mean, hold the damn *phone*, a minute. What — how'd all this happen? You tell me