

he came to appreciate how she helped him make decisions. On her advice, he had picked his first formal suit to wear for business and created interview questions for his magazine stories that always got interesting replies. She taught him how to defend himself against annoying colleagues. She seemed intelligent about that many things; in marrying her, he trusted she would become something like a guide for life. Jan proved up to the task, especially in the beginning when living together in a one-bedroom apartment was new to them. However, Nathan discovered that Jan, as she managed their finances and get-togethers with friends, took to judging him hard and sometimes without reason. While no writer or reader, she nagged him over his magazine pieces. She fingered the drafts on his desk and asked, "How can you word things so? How begin an article like this? Who would read past the opening?" One time she informed him, "You're not up to the prose you did once." Nathan had bowed his head and taken her criticism silently. Self-doubt told him he should have tried to improve his writing anyway.

After Nathan had showed how low he felt in her regard, Jan made an easy pass to bossing him casually. She did not let him stay out late with friends claiming he would end up drinking "until he became ridiculous as a hyena in a suit." He had never drunk much but decided to part with his friends early to please her. Soon after this concession, Jan said Nathan must not bring up his personal writing in conversation because he "tired people with it." He cut short mentions of his magazine work while in company, though it left him hard up for conversation. Then, Jan made him come visit Sue and Irene, uppity

friends of hers in Yorkville that he had said he disliked. When he said it would not be fair after he had bent on his friends, she said hers were different. "Mine can think seriously on more than the sport page," she insisted. Jan's dark opinion struck him as wrong for a first time and he became increasingly upset at her as a result. He thought to defend himself one afternoon. He left her at home and went walking in the city alone. He did several major avenues between Fifth and Eighth. She yelled at him when he returned. In fact, Nathan cringed hearing her. He went alone to his room. When she asked later that he come with her to visit her mother, he refused. In a fit of childlike fear and anger, he cried, "I won't. I won't." They had more arguments and, with each, the tension at his heart rose.

When their bickering hit its height, Nathan told his wife, "If it's this bad between us, dear, why don't we just get a divorce?"

Jan straightened. "The idea had been high on my mind."

"Then I think we should."

Nathan stayed from Jan in the apartment in the following days. He researched places to move to and finally chose a room in Gramercy smaller than he had hoped but the one that presented the least trouble acquiring. He moved his things on a day Jan was at work; he could not have with her there, he felt. Once at his new place, Nathan kept in it except to go to the magazine office or to buy groceries, too timid else to venture out alone. Invited to a first party in years, he declined. He read happily about the shows he

wanted to see at the theatre but did not go to them. He felt stuck and did not know how to escape.

Jan smirked when Nathan reached the bench at the courthouse. "Nice to see you come. You are late if you don't know. The judge would have asked for us already if he had not been kept up."

"I'm sorry. I took longer than usual to get ready. I didn't mean to be late."

Jan did not reply. Nathan sat on the bench, leaving a respectful distance with her.

The two held silent and stiff as they listened to the mumble of proceedings that seeped from the rooms around them. The bailiff came after several minutes and called them into the hearing room. The two walked past the empty audience seats to the front tables; Jan took the one for the plaintiff and Nathan the defendant's across the aisle.

The judge to hear them sat at the bench reading their case file.

"I learn from your paperwork," the judge said after he called the court to order, "that the two of you seek a divorce after enduring several personal problems in your relationship. Mrs. Salle writes in her statement, that she has long had difficulty because you, Mr. Salle, have not taken your tie with her as seriously as she believes you should. She says, among other things, that you have neglected her on multiple occasions to wander the city by yourself while she stayed home. She states that these times she had expected you both could have been together fostering the connection she is sure a husband should have with his wife.