

Not a Day Goes By

Lorne had a sleep and gave himself a careful shave before he drove out to the club. He looked tired, but there was no need for people to guess he'd been up all night driving. Sixteen hours back from Vancouver. Ruth and Bill didn't even know Janice had run off. He'd thought of telling Bill. Thursday at lunch he was going over the details in his mind. How he'd need the chains, whether to worry about the shimmy. He felt a tingling across his hands as he held the menu. That was when he could have said something. But he kept quiet. It would be an embarrassment when Janice came back, when she figured out she had a good thing in Edmonton. When she figured out you didn't just throw away a marriage, you didn't just pull out a home from under three kids.

For days he expected her to walk in at any moment. She'd have the kids, but in his mind they were small again. Babies. He was so sure she'd be back that he snacked on crackers, waiting. Crackers and sharp cheddar. The next night he scrambled eggs in the Teflon fry-pan the kids got her for Christmas. He remembered too late about the plastic spatula. Libby's cat was miaowing and she wouldn't eat her cat chow but kept walking through his legs until he was swearing. He found liver in the freezer and hacked away at it, finally cooked the whole slab in the fry-pan when the eggs were done. Libby's cat did not like food from boxes. The next night he made eggs again and the liver smell was still there, it had got into the gouges.

He couldn't concentrate; he never knew when Janice was going to walk in. He got through each day. He lay in bed waiting for the alarm and when it went off he got up and shaved and went to work. After a few days he put in toast before he shaved and ate it cold when he was dressed. He couldn't get anything else down. He'd found more bread in the freezer. Janice would be back before he'd gone through the loaf. And there was still cereal.

He couldn't read the paper. He glanced over the financial section but his concentration was shot. He wasn't much of a bachelor, but everyone had their sorry story.

Nobody asked about Janice. Nobody knew her. They knew she was his wife. At the open tournament dinner Ruth sat next to her. Ruth wasn't pretty but she wore tight dresses and jewellery. She might have thought Janice's outfit was

plain, and she was right. Lorne couldn't understand how Janice needed an entire afternoon to buy a dress that hung off her.

This dinner was to celebrate Ruth and Bill's anniversary. Their fifteenth. They had booked the club dining room, packed it with people. Lorne golfed with a lot of them, some he knew from the office. But it was easiest to stay close to Ruth. She told him about a duck pond they were putting in. Surely a big waste of money, in Edmonton, but Lorne was nodding. He took crackers from the trays coming around. He was thinking about the weekend he'd had.

He had left work early on Thursday, coughing so that Friday morning he would sound sick when he called from Vancouver. (Then in North Vancouver, somewhere on the Dollarton highway, he used a pay telephone so it wouldn't be traced to his motel room. He felt the tingling in his hands again and worried he was about to tell Lou, the receptionist at work, the whole story. That he was not sick in bed but standing at a gas station on the West Coast. That he had spent the last hour driving around Mount Seymour in an unbelievable fog. That he'd been looking for the Tripps' house with a map that made no sense. He was afraid he'd tell the receptionist about Harvey Tripp, who was married to Janice's sister and had a screw loose. He'd been prepared for Harvey Tripp and his screwy ideas, but he hadn't counted on the look his own little girl gave him. What kind of look was that for a girl to have? Libby was twelve years old. How did Janice brainwash a twelve year-old? Once he'd seen what she had done to Libby he didn't want to see the boys.

That made him a quitter. He admitted that. He wished there was someone who could understand what he had done and what he had been unable to do but it wasn't Bill or Ruth. No one at this party had that kind of understanding in them. Maybe a priest or a preacher would understand. Someone must know what he didn't know. He was a failure if he didn't know how to bring his family back together. After twenty-four hours of driving and talking and trying he'd driven back to Edmonton alone. He was a failure. He admitted that.

Bill and Ruth noticed that he had come alone to their wedding anniversary dinner, but he told them Janice had been up all night with the boys. A flu. Ruth smiled; the boys and Libby were old enough not to need a sitter but Ruth understood, she would have done the same thing. She was sympathetic. "You can't have got much sleep yourself," she said.

As for Lorne pre-meditating anything to do with their daughter Erica that evening, that was nonsense. He was thinking about his own little girl. Sure, Erica was Libby's age. He knew that. He'd driven them home from the pool, dropped her at her front door, waited to see she had her key. In his opinion there wasn't much to like. She was a skinny thing and she was disrespectful. Bill let that go.

Bill was losing his hair and he let that go too. Hair all over his sweater. Everyone got older but you could take some care. Lorne did what he could. When he had time he bent over and brushed the hair he had left for fifty strokes. He ate raw garlic to stimulate the follicles.

Bill was a character. He let his wife run the show. He called her before he left work so she could give him a list of things to do on the way home. Everyone in the office could hear and Bill didn't care about that either.

Later on Lorne had, in fact, nearly hit their daughter, but it wasn't deliberate. He nearly hit her with a door. Off the lounge was a hall with the men's and further on the ladies' and Erica was standing in front of the men's. Lorne asked her did she know she was in a public place, did she know she was standing outside the men's washroom and any man could come out and, without meaning to, walk into her or swing the door open and hit her? Hit her a lot harder than he had?

No, she didn't know that, and no, no one had taught her how to behave in a public place. She shook her head, she wouldn't say anything, wouldn't talk to him. You had to wonder whether she was all there, hiding behind a bathroom door when people coming in and out couldn't help but hit her.

He didn't know why Bill and Ruth had brought her along. It was nearly midnight. They could have got a sitter. But that was their affair. He remembered feeling restless after the meal. They were doing toasts. They toasted Bill and Ruth because it was their party. It turned out they were young with their fifteen year-old marriage; there were couples who had been married twenty-five years and they had to make speeches too. Then there were couples married thirty years. They all took their turns and then they wanted to know who'd been married thirty-five years, and then who'd been married the longest of all. Lorne needed some air. He went to see how the new pool was coming. They would end up wanting to know who planned to stay married the longest, and after that who wasn't yet married but planned to get married and then stay married the longest.

That was nonsense too. Lorne hadn't planned to be married. He hadn't planned not to either. He thought he might get married and raise a family and he did. He was still married. When Janice came back she would have to take a hard look at what she meant, running off to her sister's, running off with the kids in the middle of the school year. He didn't regret marrying Janice. That's not what he was saying. It would have been fifteen years for him and Janice, the same as it was for Ruth and Bill.

He had a lot on his mind that evening but it wasn't Erica. There had to be something smart about her if Libby wanted to be her friend. But she had that stubbornness, a kind of boasting. Libby came home from playing at her house and told her mother that Erica's mother had a television in the kitchen and a mirror above the sink so she could watch t.v. while she was ironing or doing the dishes.

"Is that it?" Lorne asked when Janice told him. "Is that what you want? A television you can watch while you're doing the dishes?"

"No, Lorne, I don't want that," Janice said.

"Then let's not hear any more about Erica's mother watching the t.v. while she does the dishes," Lorne said.

After that Libby didn't play at Erica's. He didn't say she couldn't; she just had the good sense not to. Lorne still went over if Bill and Ruth were having

cocktails but Janice said she had just the one good dress and it showed the bruises, so Lorne usually told them she wanted to stay home with the kids.

In the fall when he'd first started at Sun Life with Bill they'd had to work late and sometimes Ruth brought dinner — fluffy things with names like Potato Dream. She used too much salt and mayonnaise but she was cheerful and often stayed a few minutes while they ate. "So you take a break from premiums," she said. What about summer holidays? she wanted to know. Why not rent cabins together at the lake?

Lorne said that sounded grand, but he told Janice to tell her the next time they were on the telephone that they preferred to camp. Janice didn't tell him she never talked with Ruth on the telephone. It didn't matter; Ruth got the hint. She stopped bringing it up.

In the morning Bill and Ruth were taking the train to Lake Louise. This was what he told them all in his speech. He said it was a shame they couldn't have held their anniversary party at Lake Louise. After he was done it was Ruth's turn. She looked at Bill and said they were going to be alone with the bears in the mountains, entirely cut off from civilisation for two weeks. They'd better feast their eyes now, she said. Everybody laughed. Lorne supposed they were laughing at the notion of Edmonton being civilised. Lorne laughed because it was easy for him to do the right thing in a situation, it had always been easy. But he was thinking that Lake Louise was hardly cut off; nobody roughed it in those hotels.

The first thing he saw on his tour was the receptionist. It wasn't the girl Libby hung around when the family went out to the club on Sundays. That was Susan. Libby read Susan all her stories and poems and Susan gave her some paper with the country club letterhead. Lorne didn't know why Janice wasn't there, why she wasn't taking care of Libby.

He remembered thinking then about the game they used to play together, although that still had nothing to do with Erica. It was when Libby was small, a fat little tadpole. He lay on the bed and pulled his knees up and got her balanced on his feet. Then he threw her in the air. Not too high, a few inches, but she screamed every time, she was delighted. Delighted.

Bill's wife Ruth looked at him sideways when he was first over and told Erica he'd show her a good game, but he wouldn't have even if she hadn't given him that look. What fun could you have teasing a stone? Probably Ruth had worried her little girl out of knowing how to have a good time. Ruth was a good wife but she didn't know what made little girls happy.

Libby had been a fat little tadpole. She screamed, "Stop, Daddy! Daddy, Stop!" Her eyes got a wild look because she liked to think their game was dangerous, as dangerous as it was for her big brothers to prowl in the woods by the river.

He nodded to the receptionist and looked down over the scaffolding where the new pool was going to be. Then he looked into the South Lounge. There were some young people watching television, a religious program. After Janice ran off he'd watched one just because of the preacher. The preacher's eyes, and something about his hands and the way he leaned toward the audience. It reminded Lorne of himself. Mostly the eyes. Lorne could be charming. He made

people laugh, but they also took him seriously. He was tall and had good enough shoulders and he knew he was direct. Janice said his eyes flickered from gray to blue when he was angry. Before they were married they took a picnic to the river by Black Mud and a storm came up. It was a great chance to huddle under a tree while it blew over. She told him then that he had stormy eyes, and he studied himself in the mirror and saw she was right.

He wanted to watch the preacher so he would know more about himself and how people saw him. Janice had told him some people might feel intimidated. They might suspect he knew things they didn't know, things that might be good for him but bad for them. "Do *you* think that?" he'd asked her, but she said no, it was something a person who didn't know him well might think. Or a person who was insecure. They might feel threatened.

When he got back to the party they had finished the speeches and people were getting refills. Lorne was thinking that the preachers on television sounded like simpletons but that didn't stop anyone from getting hooked so it wasn't a matter of intelligence or charisma. It had a lot to do with what you yourself brought to the television. Your secret wishes and your needs. You did a magic trick: you changed a hick into a man of god.

You had to wonder though, what might happen if someone with a great deal of intelligence got on the television and did the same thing. There was money to be made there.

There's nothing you know that will help me, mister, Lorne remembered thinking. He remembered saying it to himself. It was the only way he could talk himself into changing channels after Janice had run off. "There's nothing you know that could possibly help a man like me," he said again.

Now he would have found that ridiculous. He wouldn't have watched for five seconds. He chewed up his olive and swallowed it, smiled at Ruth, who wanted to get him a fresh drink.

"Lorne, *who* are you calling mister, are you calling me mister?" she said "Are you drinking tonight, are you a free agent?"

"Free as a bird," Lorne said. Ruth thought it was Janice who kept him from booze.

"That's grand." Ruth waved at the girl to bring the tray.

Lorne *was* drinking for a change. He got hangovers, but tonight it seemed worth it to get one rather than explain. On that count he preferred Ruth to Bill: you could tell Ruth you were feeling off and she would leave you alone, but Bill had to know what it was you had. He wouldn't drop it. It happened every time they were working late and finally he said, "Bill, you don't ask God why *He's* not drinking. Because He doesn't need to! A fool needs to drink to say what he has to say. I can say anything I want, Bill, and so can you."

That stopped Bill, but the next time Lorne went over for cocktails Bill pushed him again. Lorne had to tell him about the all-day hangovers he got. Sometimes two days. "They're out of this world, Bill," he said.

"I can appreciate that," Bill said, but then he had to go on. "Those aren't hangovers, they're migraines," he said. "Usually it's women who get them but not always."

"Whatever," Lorne said.

Lorne didn't know if he'd been in an unusual frame of mind when he arrived at the party. It wasn't every weekend he drove sixteen hours straight with no chains through the mountains in a car with a shimmy. He was going to pick up Libby and Joey and Jack from their schools. There was no point seeing Janice first. He had to be prepared for a wild reaction from Janice and her sister. They would get Tripp to talk to him. To stop him from driving out to the childrens' schools. Janice would be worried. It was time she did some worrying if she wanted to call herself a mother. What kind of mother left her children in a motel room in the middle of an Edmonton winter while she stood in a pay phone calling her sister on the west coast to see if she could run off there? That or the airport was who she was calling when he drove in. When he finally found the motel she'd taken them to. What kind of mother was that?

The best thing was to go straight to the schools. He supposed they were staying with Janice's sister. He would drive them back to the Tripps' and talk to Janice there. If he could be with all of them, if they could be together, she would see she'd made a mistake and she would come home.

What did happen was different. The garage didn't have time to look at the car and he'd worried about the shimmy until he was into the mountains. Then he worried about not having chains. With the family he would have stopped somewhere in the Okanagan, but he went straight through. He was on the Hope-Princeton before he began to feel tired.

He got out by a creek to stretch his legs. The air was cold and pure. He wondered if everything had been a dream, if he had a family at all. It was one of those thoughts you can get when you're tired. At that moment it had seemed that everything true must be there with him in the mountain night: his stiff back, his stale breath, the Rambler. The rest was fantasy. He got back in the car and sat wishing he still smoked. He even looked through the glove compartment for an old deck. It came to him that he must have a family. Why else would he work all day for a few almighty dollars in a job that ground him down?

In Hope he turned on the radio and learned it was four in the morning, not five. He turned off to have a sleep, but he was too nervous for that. He kept thinking about the morning rush hour traffic into Vancouver if he didn't get in by seven-thirty. He pulled back onto the highway and drove. The traffic was light when he got to Vancouver and he had a chance to look over the Fraser River from the bridge and see the other bridges and a bit of the way the city was being developed. It was a pretty city but he couldn't see why Harvey Tripp wanted to live on the north shore with all the rain.

He drove straight up to Second Narrows and took the first exit off the bridge. At each intersection he looked at the map but before he figured out where he was on the Dollarton highway he saw a motel. He pulled in. It was half past eight. He took off his shirt and slacks and lay down in his undershirt and slept on and off until noon the next day.

It was kids yelling outside the window that woke him. Finally he looked through the drapes and saw they were Indian kids. Maybe that's who Libby's friends were now, Indian kids. Janice wouldn't bother to stop her. Probably the Tripp children had always played with Indian kids.

He shaved and bought a map showing the schools and he circled the most likely ones. It was possible that Janice wasn't at her sister's anymore but he assumed she was. She wouldn't want the kids to change schools again. He and Janice had agreed on the children's education. He didn't know what Janice had to complain about. She had everything she needed. There was nothing they couldn't have worked out between them. She had a tendency to get hysterical. Sometimes he told her she should see a psychiatrist but there was probably no cure for it, it was her personality.

He had a grilled cheese sandwich in the motel coffeeshop and drove to the school he thought was Libby's. He had not been in a school for years; Janice went to the parent-teacher nights. They had good kids, there was never anything the teachers had to tell them. One teacher told Janice he had tried everything but he didn't know what to do with Libby. Lorne thought the teacher must be a goof, but he made Libby look up the word, "courtesy," in the dictionary.

The ceilings in this school were low. He supposed they were low in all the new schools but he thought Libby might like this one because there was art work up in the halls.

Most of the classroom doors were closed but the grade seven door was open. He heard Libby before he saw her. She was with another girl; they were playing a game on the blackboard. There was no one else in the room. He stood in the doorway a moment. Libby wrote an S on a large sloping grid they'd drawn. Then her friend turned and then Libby turned and her mouth fell open. She made a whimpering sound and ran past him with her arms drawn up. She pushed by him and ran down the hall screaming. "Mr Dawes, it's my father, my father's here." Classroom doors were opening as he followed her down the hall to the principal's office.

Lorne was doing his best to drink heavily. He watched the hostess make her way through the groups to the bar and he felt his lip curl up. He knew he did that because his kids started doing it in the car this last summer. He turned and slapped Joey when he saw him in the rearview mirror, but then Libby sulked all the way to Penticton. Libby took up the cause of her brothers if she thought they'd been wronged. If she saw an injustice.

"You have nothing to sulk about," he told her at the campsite. But she stood still as a statue, just her lips moving, "You do it all the time, Daddy, that's why Joey does it, because you do."

All the time? You didn't doubt that she kept track. She watched them all. She was a smart little girl. He couldn't hug her then because that would confuse them, make them think he was like Bill.

All the time? He was certainly doing it now, he could feel his lip curling. The day after Janice ran off he didn't go in to the office; he didn't even call because he had nothing to say. He spent the day in the bathroom reading financial journals and trying to catch himself in the mirror. He imagined himself with different people to see how his face looked and if his lip curled up. He tried to feel the signs of it coming on.

Now he smiled because Ruth was walking toward him. He told her she had bewitched him, there was no other explanation for the way he was drinking. "You've bewitched me," he said, adding a little gust of air. "I'm high as a kite."

Ruth was talking about their garden. They were having problems. Ruth wore her black hair in a braid like a young girl, and bright red lipstick. He was curious about her.

"Does Ruth think she's a girl?" he had once asked Janice.

"I don't know," Janice said.

"I know you don't know," he said, "but you must have some idea, you're a woman."

"I think she doesn't like to wear make-up," Janice finally said. "I don't know why but there are some women who don't. It stings their cheeks, some of the powders can, though I don't know why. I always think it feels lovely and smooth."

"All right," Lorne had said. "I don't want a big production."

Ruth was Polish or Czech. and so plain he'd wondered what Bill had seen in her. Now he wondered if Bill hadn't been the smart one. Her face was plain, but she had a great figure and she knew how to dress, and she was at ease in the club lounge. She could have been in her own living room. She made sure the waitresses brought drinks and she kept things going and talked with the oddballs. And where was Janice? At the foot of Seymour Mountain.

Ruth was telling him they'd found the neighbours' boy going through Bill's tools in the shed. He was supposed to be digging the hole for their duck pond.

Maybe the boy needed some tools, Lorne said.

"Tools to dig a duck pond? Oh Lorne! You're not even listening!" Ruth cried.

Lorne excused himself and then realised he did need to use the facilities. He remembered feeling drunk and a little dizzy and taking extra care. That's where the girl came in. She was standing behind the door when he came out of the men's; you'd think she'd wanted to get hit. He took the time to stop and tell her that she should find another place to play and she looked as if she couldn't figure out what the words meant.

Was she going to stand there all night in front of the men's restroom, was that it? When she wouldn't answer he told her he was going to take her back to her parents. The short way, around the front, he said, and he took her arm. He had to pull a little to get her moving. He didn't want this skinny thing hopping along beside him but he couldn't leave her there in front of the men's. "Your parents are waiting," he said to hurry her up. When they passed the main entrance he had a craving for fresh air and he pulled her outside. He looked at the quiet snow falling on the cars in the parking lot and the girl asked whether he was going to have a cigarette. He said no, but he wished he were. If he'd had one he would have smoked it.

He wanted to take advantage of the fact that the girl was warming up to him. "Did my wife tell you not to speak to me?" he asked her. "I'm not a stranger. I'm a friend of your parents." But the girl had turned back to stone. He leaned against the wall. He didn't dare close his eyes because of the dizziness.

Why had Libby run to the principal? Run from her own father, her high little voice, screaming, "Mr Dawes, it's my father, my father's here!"

He planned to take them out to the A&W. Maybe they'd rather go to McDonald's. He liked the root beer at the A&W, that was all. But Dawes phoned Janice's sister and got her to come pick Libby up. Everything was spoiled. Lorne found the high school but now things were ruined; Libby wasn't in the front seat beside him. He missed the entrance to the parking lot so he pulled over across the street. A group of kids stood by the bushes, smoking, and after a moment he realised they were watching him. He drove off.

He drove until he came to a mall. He found a booth and called Janice's sister. Harvey Tripp answered and he got an earful from him so he gave him an earful back. But that didn't stop Harvey Tripp. "Lorne, you need to get help," he remembered him saying. "Here's a number you can call."

"You can shove your number," Lorne said. "You're the nut."

Harvey Tripp and his wife were coddling their children. They were spoiling Erica but they were coddling the boy too; turning him into a homosexual. Lorne didn't need to call any number Harvey Tripp gave him. So he drove back to Edmonton. End of story.

A light wind came up. The snow was swirling, but he hadn't let go of the girl's hand and so she was still standing there beside him. "Do you want to find your parents?" he asked her. "Did your parents ever tell you to stay put if you got lost? That's good advice, did they tell you that?"

The girl wouldn't answer. He was trying to make his voice sugar but he felt the anger bulging in his head.

"Don't worry," he said. "I know where your parents are." He had to pull at her to get her to come in out of the cold. She couldn't have weighed more than eighty pounds but she made herself into a dead weight. He realised when they got inside that he'd have to walk her around a bit to warm her up or her parents would wonder what had happened. "We'll take another short-cut," he said.

His head was light as air; he imagined that he was in the tropics and had nothing to do but lie on the beach. At the same time he felt he had in front of him a fantastically complex safe to crack. Inside the safe were millions of dollars. He felt free as a bird. He had nowhere to be by nine in the morning the next day and no boys to put through college. No mortgage. He had no plan in his head. Erica was a sulky girl and if she'd been his he would have given her a paddling, but she couldn't spoil his good mood now.

She looked up at him like she thought he was going to take out a gun. Did Libby tell her things at school? What kinds of things was Janice telling the kids? He didn't know. He didn't even know what Janice had told Libby and the boys.

He doubted that Janice had ever wanted to be a mother. There was nothing he could have done about that, though, no way he could have known about that before he married her.

"I want to go back," Erica said. He hadn't expected her to say anything. He smiled down at her but she wouldn't smile back. He felt his patience thin out.

He gripped her hand and said, "Do you think your mommy and daddy love you? Is that what you think?"

The girl wouldn't nod or even look at him now. She screwed up her eyes and stood on one foot and then the other. She was pretending to concentrate on something down at the end of the hall when there was nothing there and when all he wanted was for her to look at him directly, to look at him. "You think your parents love you, is that it? Is that the story?" He thought she might say yes, even a whisper, but she wouldn't say anything and her eyes were wide now, staring. He grabbed her arm. It wasn't much thicker than his wrist, and it was as cold as her hand. She wouldn't say anything, and he didn't know what else he could do so he gave her arm a twist. He remembered her whimpering, and he thought afterward that it was possible she had twisted her body in such a way that it broke her arm. He couldn't think of any other moment when she could have broken it. It was easy to break your arm when you were a kid. His own boy had broken his arm falling from the swings.

The last thing he expected was for her to run off. When she did he lunged but he didn't go after her for a moment because he was so surprised. She disappeared into the locker area and he realised she was going to go whining to her parents. He sprinted and caught up to where she should have been, but she had hidden. That was all right. There was no door at the end. Eventually she would have to give herself up.

He flattened himself against the lockers, listening to his own heart beat. He noticed he wasn't breathing. Only his heart was beating. He felt like a man from a new race that needed no oxygen; possibly he was onto something that the scientists were just discovering in their labs. He would always be optimistic; there would always be doomsday prophets and people who thought they were hard done by, but the only reason they were hard done by was they had no backbone. So she was hiding, the little snip.

He heard a bump. It didn't take long to find the locker; there was a density in the air around it, body heat, it must have been, coming from the slats. He was grinning when he swung open the door.

"Now you're talking," he said. "There's more than one way to skin a cat. So you think your mommy and daddy love you."

The girl nodded. Her lips were covered with snot and he had to push her back in the locker because he hadn't expected that and he didn't know what to do with her. A few months back Janice had begged him not to use the golf clubs but she wouldn't talk, there was no other way to get anything out of her, nothing sensible, anyway, and he had to keep swinging at her. That only made her speak in gibberish and he couldn't get her to stop that either. He swung at her and she wouldn't stop and finally they were both quiet. She was bleeding and had snot on her face and she was certainly a dead weight; he had one hell of a time getting her cleaned up in the car outside Emergency.

Now he stood trying to think what to do. It occurred to him that the girl would be at eye-level with the slats. If ever there had been a moment when he wished he could start his life over and do things differently, it was now. But he already had his watch off. He threaded the worn leather through the lock loops.

“This is a special lock, Erica, because I want to keep you safe. If you break this lock a special alarm will go off and the security policy will come and take you away. Don’t try to break the lock, Erica.” That was it. Oh, yes, there was one more thing he remembered: that his rubber soles gripped the floor enough to make a little sucking sound as he stepped back.

Sure he wanted to see his kids. He thought about them all the time. Not a day went by that he didn’t think about them. What had Janice been saying?