

She got up earlier than usual to make pancakes, eggs, and bacon for Arthur's breakfast.

"What's the occasion?" he asked with a smile.

"No occasion." Norma looked offended. "I wanted to do it, that's all."

"Good," he said. "I'm glad you did." 270.

She refilled his cup. "Wanted to show you I'm not—" She shrugged.

"Not what?"

"Selfish."

"Did I say you were?"

"Well"—she gestured vaguely—"last night . . ."

Arthur didn't speak.

"All that talk about the button," Norma said. "I think you—well, misunderstood me." 280

"In what way?" His voice was guarded.

"I think you felt"—she gestured again—"that I was only thinking of myself."

"Oh."

"I wasn't."

"Norma—"

"Well, I wasn't. When I talked about Europe, a cottage on the Island—"

"Norma, why are we getting so involved in this?" 290

"I'm not involved at all." She drew in a shaking breath. "I'm simply trying to indicate that—"

"What?"

"That I'd like for us to go to Europe. Like for us to have a cottage on the Island. Like for us to have a nicer apartment, nicer furniture, nicer clothes, a car. Like for us to finally have a baby; for that matter."

"Norma, we will," he said. 300

"When?"

He stared at her in dismay. "Norma—"

"When?!"

"Are you"—he seemed to draw back slightly—"are you really saying—"

"I'm saying that they're probably doing it for some research project!" she cut him off.

"That they want to know what average people would do under such a circumstance! That they're just saying someone would die, in order to study reactions, see if there'd be guilt, anxiety, whatever! You don't really think they'd kill somebody, do you?!" 310

Arthur didn't answer. She saw his hands trembling. After a while, he got up and left.

When he'd gone to work, Norma remained at the table, staring into her coffee.

I'm going to be late, she thought. She shrugged. What difference did it make?

While she was stacking dishes, she turned abruptly, dried her hands, and took the package from the bottom cabinet. Opening it, she set the button unit on the table. She stared at it for a long time before taking the key from its envelope and removing the glass dome. She stared at the button. How ridiculous, she thought. All this furor over a meaningless button. 330

Reaching out, she pressed it down. For us, she thought angrily. 330

She shuddered. Was it happening? A chill of horror swept across her.

In a moment, it had passed. She made a contemptuous noise. Ridiculous, she thought. To get so worked up over nothing.

She threw the button unit, dome, and key into the wastebasket and hurried to dress for work.

She had just turned over the supper steaks when the telephone rang. She picked up the receiver. "Hello?" 340

"Mrs. Lewis?"

"Yes?"

"This is the Lenox Hill Hospital."

She felt unreal as the voice informed her of the subway accident—the shoving crowd, Arthur pushed from the platform in front of the train. She was conscious of shaking her head but couldn't stop.

As she hung up, she remembered Arthur's life-insurance policy for \$25,000, with double indemnity for— 350

"No." She couldn't seem to breathe. She struggled to her feet and walked into the kitchen numbly. Something cold pressed at her skull as she removed the button unit from the wastebasket. There were no nails or screws

visible. She couldn't see how it was put together.

Abruptly, she began to smash it on the sink edge, pounding it harder and harder, until the wood split. She pulled the sides apart, cutting her fingers without noticing. There were no transistors in the box, no wires or tubes. 360

The box was empty.

She whirled with a gasp as the telephone rang. Stumbling into the living room, she picked up the receiver.

"Mrs. Lewis?" Mr. Steward asked. 370

It wasn't her voice shrieking so; it couldn't be. "You said I wouldn't know the one that died!"

"My dear lady," Mr. Steward said. "Do you really think you knew your husband?"