

▲ As Dilly rides the streetcar, Eddie's songs keep playing over and over in her head. *Sleep tight, sweetheart, I'm dreaming of you.*

All Dilly can think about is that man, that Eddie Devine. Even while her Tyler fucked her silly in the backseat of his Chevy, she imagined it was really Eddie on top of her. But of course, Eddie would be gentle, and she would be floating, and her butt cheeks wouldn't be sticking to the plastic seat cover, and her feet, held aloft, wouldn't be falling asleep, and the back of her head wouldn't be bouncing on the arm rest, and....

*And when I dream of you it seems....*

Dilly felt she was in church. Not with Tyler, with Eddie. At the concert. There was that same eagerness for release. Just as a preacher would call out, Eddie would sing out, and his band would respond. And the girls would call out, too. Some were crying. Just like in church. Some threw their panties at him. That wasn't like....

Just the same, she loves her Tyler. He is going to marry her as soon as he gets that job on the line at the General Motors assembly plant. Some colored men are making a hundred dollars a week. Even without a steady job, Tyler somehow scrimped and saved to buy a ticket to the Eddie Devine concert. He couldn't even afford a ticket for himself. He loved her so much that he waited outside the Fox while she went inside alone. Just she and Eddie Devine. And a thousand other girls.

Things were changing. Just a few months ago, a bank agreed to hire more Negroes. The streetcar passes a billboard edged in black. It reads simply "November 22, 1963."

*Alone with you, just the night and you, dreaming....*

It's been a long night. This morning, the streetcar is so warm and muggy she dozes off. Eddie is to dream on. A Devine dream. She wakes just as the streetcar glides past her stop, so when she gets off at the next stop, she has to run back two slippery blocks. Now she's going to be late for work.

With all the snow, Gravois Boulevard is deserted. Mr. Langhaus says he wants to hear their mops hitting the floor at exactly the stroke of ten. That's how he is. He says he's a square man with the help as long as the help is square with him. By help, he means colored girls. Yvonne and she are the only help at the Oasis, the entire housekeeping staff, and they are both colored girls. Mr. Langhaus is a fair man, Dilly supposes. He said he was going to pay her twenty-five dollars a week, and that's exactly what he does.

Mr. Langhaus is still sleeping when Dilly arrives. He usually works all Friday night. Friday night's their busiest night, a lot of one-night stands.

Despite what Mr. Langhaus says, not all the customers are two lonely people finding love. Plenty are prostitutes from The Stroll and elsewhere. Everyone knows it, even the police. Especially the police. Yvonne said she saw a white cop go inside a cabin with a colored prostitute. "And it wasn't to arrest her," Yvonne said.

They called it "hauling coal" – Dilly doesn't think it's right to talk like that.

She lets herself into the manager's office with her key. Tubby is sprawled out on the couch, snoring. No wonder his wife left him. He isn't just fat, he snores. Dilly wonders if Tyler snores.

She's never slept with him, not the whole night. No, whenever she is in bed with Tyler, no one does any sleeping.

No need to wake Tubby, no need to let the white man know she's ten minutes late. Dilly finds the guest log on the desk. Fifteen cabins out of fifteen. What's strange is, it doesn't look as if anyone's checked out.

All she wants to do right now is sleep. No use wishing on that. She has a job to do, her twenty-five dollars a week to make. With the strike continuing against The Trappers, business has picked up.

There's another thing she notices. Even though no one's checked out, the place is dead quiet. Only a few cars are still in the lot, covered with snow. Check-out time's at 11:00 a.m. It's Saturday morning, after all.

She backs her housecleaning cart out of the utility room and heads down the icy sidewalk into the courtyard. Over the high brick wall that surrounds The Oasis (another way to keep out prying eyes), she sees The Oasis's sign: a neon camel standing in front of a palm tree, icicles hanging from the bottom like pointy teeth. Below the camel are the neon words: *Everyone welcome*. Except the "w-e-l" has burned out.

A vacuum cleaner whirrs. Yvonne must be Cabin One. Dilly enters.

"How come no one's checked out?" she asks.

Yvonne flips off the vacuum. "I think everyone's gone. I checked the garage, no car. Maybe they saw Mr. Langhaus sleeping, didn't want to disturb him."

Dilly decides she'll check the garage for Cabin Four. She needs to get started working. She's headed there when she sees that the door to Cabin Seven is cracked open, just an inch. Letting in all that cold air. She looks down at the guest log. *Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Lyons*. She's seen that name before. Plenty of times. The log doesn't show they checked out, of course. Then Dilly sees a sooty footprint on the door. Her first thought is she should wipe it off. No, the footprint has made an indentation in the door. And then she sees the door frame. It's cracked.

She steps closer, hears voices, and is about to step away when a crowd cheers. There isn't any crowd in Cabin Seven. It's the television. A football game. She knows that because her Tyler's watching the game right now. Miami versus Alabama.

She knocks. No answer. She calls out, softly at first, "Housecleaning. Hello? Hello?"

No answer. Dilly looks back at Cabin Four where Yvonne has started up the vacuum again.

"Hello? Housecleaning."

She gently pushes open the door of Cabin Seven. What a mess. Blankets on the floor, sheets hanging off the mattress. The pillows are piled up in the center of the bed. Oh, they must have had a fine time. And the place stinks of alcohol. She's never tasted a drop herself, but ever since she's been working at the Oasis, she certainly knows what it smells like.

"Hello?" she calls again. "Anybody home? Mr. Lyons?"

The door leading into the bathroom is open. The bed room is empty. Dilly sighs. Might as well get this over with. She stoops and yanks the blanket from the floor. Beneath lies a man, face-

up, mouth slightly open, shirtless, eyes closed. He could be dreaming. Except beneath his outstretched arms, a large crimson pool stains the linoleum.

Dilly stares, her eyes trying to see the body as another blanket, a dark blanket, the red circle nothing but part of the design.

Once she starts screaming, however, she cannot stop.

