

## *PART ONE*

Cities at night, I feel, contain men who cry in their sleep and then say Nothing. It's nothing. Just sad dreams. Or something like that... Swing low in your weep ship, with your tear scans and your sob probes, and you would mark them. Women—and they can be wives, lovers, gaunt muses, fat nurses, obsessions, devourers, exes, nemeses—will wake and turn to these men and ask, with female need-to-know, "What is it?" And the men say, "Nothing. No it isn't anything really. Just sad dreams."

Just sad dreams. Yeah: oh sure. Just sad dreams. Or something like that.

Richard Tull was crying in his sleep. The woman beside him, his wife, Gina, woke and turned. She moved up on him from behind and laid hands on his pale and straining shoulders. There was a professionalism in her blinks and frowns and whispers: like the person at the pool-side, trained in first aid; like the figure surging in on the blood-smeared macadam, a striding Christ of mouth-to-mouth. She was a woman. She knew so much more about tears than he did. She didn't know about Swift's juvenilia, or Wordsworth's senilia, or how Cressida had variously fared at the hands of Boccaccio, of Chaucer, of Robert Henryson, of Shakespeare; she didn't know Proust. But she knew tears. Gina had tears cold.

"What is it?" she said.

Richard raised a bent arm to his brow. The sniff he gave was complicated, orchestral. And when he sighed you could hear the distant seagulls  
falling through his lungs.

"Nothing. It isn't anything. Just sad dreams." Or something like that.