

The War in the Bathroom

Monday

Late this afternoon she moved out of the old place into the new one. The moving was accomplished with a minimum of difficulty: she managed to get everything into the two suitcases and was able to carry them herself for the three blocks that separate the old place from the new one. She only had to stop and rest twice. She is quite strong for her age. A man came along and offered to help her, rather a pleasant-looking man, but I have told her never to accept help from strangers.

I think the German woman was glad to see her go. She always regarded her with a certain amount of suspicion. She stood on the wooden porch in her slippers, watching, her arms in their gray ravelled sweater-sleeves folded across her fat stomach, her slip hanging an inch below the figured cotton housedress she always wore. I, for one, have always disliked the German woman. I had become tired of seeing that certain things in the room had been moved (though she took pains to set them back in the approximate proper spot, she was never quite meticulous enough), and I had begun to suspect lately that she was looking at the mail: the envelopes had greasy thumbprints, and it is still too cold for the postmen to go without their gloves. The new place has a landlord instead of a landlady; I think, on the whole, I prefer them.

When she reached the new place she got the keys from an old man who lives in the ground-floor front room. He answered the doorbell; the landlord was out, but had told him she was to be expected. An agreeable old man with white hair and a benevolent smile. She took the suitcases up the narrow staircase to the second floor, one at a time. She has spent what was left of the day arranging the room. This room is smaller than the old one, but at least it is clean. She put the clothes into the cupboard and some of them into the bureau. There are no shelves so she will have to keep the saucepan, the cup, the plate, the silverware, and the coffeepot in one of the bureau drawers. However there is a small table, and I decided that the teapot may be left on it, even between mealtimes. It has a decorative pattern.

She made up the bed with the sheets and blankets that the landlord had provided. The room has a northern exposure and will be chilly. Fortunately there is an electric heater in the room. She has always been partial to warmth, although I myself have never been overly conscious of temperature. A compensation: the room is the one next to the bathroom, which will be handy.

The Notebook will be kept on the table, beside the teapot.

Tomorrow she must go outside for some groceries, but now she will go to bed.