The prep school dormitory was a long, white-painted room in which rows of brown wooden bedsteads were alternated with large brown dressers and separated from each other by white curtains on poles. The Sister told Janet these were called alcoves, gave her the corner one, and left her to unpack.

It was ugly and very large and still, but when Janet had pulled her curtains she didn't feel alone. They worked just like the shower curtains in hotels. Then she opened both her windows. At least she had two. The other alcoves had only one window.

It was very quiet outside and she wondered where the other children were. The tall Sister from the office had just taken her on to a big side porch where there were a lot of children and some more nuns, and mentioned all their names, and taken her away again. She couldn't remember any of the names. But she could remember some of the faces. A pudgy little girl with hostile poodle eyes, and a little girl who was very ugly, with glasses and a foolish smile. She'd been the only one who smiled and Janet had felt big and gawky. This was the sort of school where you started in kindergarten and went through college, and these were the ones who belonged. They'd looked at her with the half-eager antagonism of all children toward the new. And she was afraid of them.

But she sighed and leaned on one of her window-sills. At least she had two windows. That was a good omen. Through this one she could look across the campus toward the college building which was Gothic and new and of yellow stone. Between it and the prep school were green lawns and walks and trees and bright beds of zinnias and early chrysanthemums. To the right was a slight slope and the thick trees of the top of the river bank.

The air was hot and hazy but everything had the slight dustiness of fall and there was a fall buzz in the air. It was a lazy, happy day and so beautiful that Janet felt good in spite of everything. She wanted to get out of doors quickly again, so she turned to unpack.

But first she looked out of her other window to make quite sure of the view there. Right outside was a willow tree, rounded and dripping and perfect, and through it she could see more walks and a building. Beyond that, she knew was the river.

In all the literature she'd had of St. Theresa's she'd read about the river and how beautiful it was, and that was what she wanted to see above all. Perhaps, she thought as she turned back to her suitcases, if I hurry I can go now, before supper.

First she arranged her books and the top of her dresser, and then she took her neat piles of cotton underwear from the suitcase and laid them in the musty, wood-smelling drawers; put her stockings in one small drawer and her hair-ribbons and handkerchiefs in the other. She did all this very carefully because everything else in the dormitory was so clean and neat and because it was exciting.
to be arranging her own things in her own alcove.

She was really almost afraid of her excitement. When she was eight she had wanted a sailor dress, but she wasn't allowed to have it. But when she was nine she got two. And then no one wore them. That was the way it always was, and thinking of it frightened her a little so she decided not to. All her life she had wanted to go to school with people and she'd had nurses and tutors. But now she was here — and was even going to sleep in the same room with the girls. And she had two windows and a willow tree.

A big, fat blue-bottle suddenly buzzed in the window with the willow tree and went too high so that he was caught against the glass, beating his body against it. Then he flew away and lunged back at the window, but still too high. Janet almost held her breath watching. Poor fly, she thought, Poor fly. Then after a moment she slapped at it and moved it down so that it found the open air and was gone, the light making a brief blue shimmer on its wings.

After that she took her suit and her dresses and the four blue cotton uniforms out to the hall where there were lockers to hang them. Sister had said hers was Number 12. The hangers were too big for the little cubby and the clothes hung crookedly and looked very funny, but at least they went in.

Then suddenly she thought she couldn't wait any longer to get out of doors into the sun. She started for the steps and then she remembered something about the quiet, white severity of the place that made her go back and stuff the papers in her suitcase and push the case under the bed. She even smoothed the bed and pulled the curtain back.

There was a light feeling of release in her as she tore out of the dormitory and ran down stairs. And on the second flight she slid down the iron bannister. Just outside the wide doors were the grass and the sunshine. But just as she jumped off the railing a thin girl with very dark hair and thick eyebrows came in through the front doors. "Hey," she said, "that's against regulations."

"Oh," said Janet. And suddenly she felt terribly guilty. She looked around quickly to see if anyone else had noticed her, but the tiled hall was otherwise empty.

The girl was grinning a little. "It's all right," she said, "but you'd better not let Sister Blessilla catch you."

"Who's she?" asked Janet.

"Don't you know?"

Janet shook her head feeling ashamed.

"She's the head Sister," said the girl a little scornfully.

"Oh," said Janet.

"Where were you going?" asked the girl then.

Janet suddenly felt secretive. Somehow she had a feeling she shouldn't say anything about the river or someone would tell her she couldn't go there.

"Just — out," she said.

"Well — You're Janet, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"I'm Babbette Bowers."

"Hello."

"Hello." They stood looking awkwardly at each other for a moment. Janet knew she ought to say something but she felt uncomfortable and she wanted to get away, out of the dim hall and she didn't know what to say.

Finally the other girl said, "Well, see you," and ran on up the steps.

Janet watched her go unhappily. The
other girls were unfriendly and this one wasn't, but because she was ugly and looked like the Kipling boy in *Stalky* and because she was sure of herself, Janet couldn't speak to her.

She went slowly down the steps and out into the sunshine. The children were shouting somewhere now and their voices sounded like the echoes of voices. Perhaps she thought, she never could be one of them. She'd sit alone in her corner alcove and look out of her two windows toward the river.

But she could go and look at this river. No one had said she couldn't and it wouldn't make any difference anyway. But she felt stealthy as she went toward the trees.

There was no one on the walks, though there were some old nuns going into the chapel. She ran down the walk and around the square building she could see from her window. On the other side was another walk and a strip of grass and then the trees. But there was a fence along the ridge.

Then the river was forbidden territory. But it didn't matter. If she were careful she could go down anyway. At least she could go down once. She went to the fence and looked over. It was made of pipe and on the other side the bank was very dense and very steep, and far below was a shine of water. She could have climbed over it easily but there were windows in the building behind her, watching, and the bank didn't look very practical. But surely if she ran along this fence long enough she could find a place.

She turned and began to run very quickly down the grass, because, quite suddenly, there was nothing in the world so important as getting over it and down that river-bank. If she couldn't do that, she was shut into a prison of white walls and curtains and still women in black serge. On the bank were green vines with red stems and old trees, and under them beetles and ants and silver-trailing snails and small snakes. And they were all alive. Up here even the moths were sluggish.

Quite abruptly she stopped running. Any place was as good as another. But still she hesitated. It wasn't that she was afraid of being seen or that she was afraid of the bank. She was never afraid of things like that. But she was afraid of something, and she didn't like the feeling. Maybe if she didn't do it now she never would.

She put her hands on the iron, and it was warm from the sun, and it was rough and slightly unpleasant to her palms. She drew her breath tight and started to lift one leg.

And then a voice was calling behind her. Someone was calling, "Little girl!" Janet stood very stiffly and that terrible feeling of guilt rose in her again. Slowly, then, she loosed her hands and looked up. Leaning out of the window was a Sister with a round face and thick green glasses that made her eyes seem to go out beyond her coif. They were staring at Janet blankly as caterpillar's eyes. And because of her guilt Janet couldn't look into them.

"Where were you going?" the Sister asked.

"I was just — looking around," said Janet.

"You're too close to the edge," said the Sister, "and it's time for supper. You'd better hurry back." And then she was gone.

Janet stared at the blank window and then down at the river. She wanted to go on, but a bell began to ring, and she slowly turned around. It was that
they were so cold and remote, she thought. It was like disobeying gods.

As she rounded the corner of the square building she looked up at the willow tree and thought she saw her window. At least she had two windows, she thought. That was an omen. Then she remembered the fly on the glass. And her hands were dirty for supper.

Tangled Patterns

JANET JARRETT

The woman pressed her body against the wall and leaned her forehead against its hardness. She tightened her body against the wall and beat upon it with her fists. The dull thud came through to her with an insistent beat, and the urgency she felt lost itself in the pounding of her own fists. She leaned against the wall and let herself become the pounding and nothing more. She wished the pounding could be inside the minds of all the people she knew in the next room. She wanted to beat against their heads until there was nothing left for them either but the thudding sound.

When the pounding finally stopped, she walked to the window. The cold glass was good to feel against her cheek, and she pressed her wrists against it too and cooled them until the little pulse that was there beat slower. The pointed lights in the street below had a hypnotic quietness. If she opened the window there would be the river smell; but she would not open the window, it might bring back the pounding, and the lights below would become too hypnotic to resist.

She thought she would have to be back soon to the people she knew in the other room. She remembered how it had been when she left. The heaviness had beat upon her mind and body until the room had flattened out into a cardboard bedlam. The noise made by the man at the piano had poured through the room and stopped at the other end where it rebounded endlessly between the floor and the ceiling.

The room was filled with the people she knew and she hated to go back. She knew them all too well. They had all at one time or another brought the twisted patterns of their lives to her. She knew more about them than they knew, and being with them only snarled the tangles of her own mind. She wanted to scream at them to make them listen to her. She had learned to be alone and to straighten out her own pattern of existence for herself. Why couldn't they?

Because her mind was losing itself in the lights below, she let it remember the day she had left the man she loved.

Ann stood at the door of the cottage and looked out at the lake that lay quiet in the pink of the early morning sun. Allen had already gone out someplace, he always liked to get up when the morning was still gray. He said that morning was like a woman. You couldn't know her properly until you had seen her without paint.

She felt the wood of the door beneath