

WINTER

ARDATH WEIGLER

Faint, uncertain fluorescence of day struggling to penetrate the murk of man-made atmosphere — pushing through the exhalation of factory and furnace, making silhouette background for life. An occasional, broken shuffle of steps along the gritty alleyways as a solitary devotee gropes his path to the six o'clock mass. Lining the street — drab frame houses point a picket finger of mediocrity. Unrelieved monotony of mansard roofs jaggging against the dun-colored sky, holding the saturated weight above.

Blank panes set in the soot-stained ripples of weather-boarding punctuate the flatness as their gaze keeps vigil with the lamp posts. Paths of broken cement divide the filled-in evenness of earth — setting apart precise squares of front yards. Here and there a few patches of weedy grass have survived the pressure of feet and wagons.

The black asphalt pavement is lightened in places by the gravel-gray of chuckholes — fluted edges breaking the smooth placidity of man's invention and W. P. A. construction. Presence of yellow-faced stop

sign and matching hydrant at the end of the smooth blackness. A thoroughfare hems in the quiet obscurity of mansard roofs and square yards.

Impenetrable breath of civilization — enveloping odor of smog pushes heavily, crowds the sensations until taste and smell become interchangeable. Sharpness of winter air and sound is deadened by its omnipresence — breath of civilization . . .

The thoroughfare is a pattern in parallel and perpendicular. Scarred woodenness of telephone poles supports the commonplace regularity of wires. Below, the lines of railing lie stolid and substantial. But of the blur — a distant box-car shape looms . . . replica of a candle-lighted shoe-box drawn along the curbing by small children on summer evenings, mimeographed face shapes at the cut outs. Nearing song of steel on steel . . . humming crescendo along the rails. The shoe-box passes.

Decrescendo.

Slight lifting of fog curtain . . . day draining the ugly glass bulbs of their puny electric glow.

MOTHERHOOD

MARY ELLEN SHIRLEY

As she lay in the midst of dirt and squalor she seemed in utter oblivion. To her the cobwebby walls, the cockroaches, the plush chair with springs uncovered, and the filthy blanket were unimportant, because for once in her life, the young colored girl had captured the spotlight.

She was the center of interest in that room; of secondary interest was the baby — her baby — in the next room.

It was a half-insolent and half-scared look she gave the doctor as he moved about taking her temperature, checking her pulse, asking questions, and prescribing medicine.