

## AN ORDINARY DAY

JoAnn Gocking

It was raining, slowly and steadily, as she drove to work. It was cold too, and the water began to freeze on the pavement. A yellow van had slid into the back of a Lincoln on the inbound ramp, and the traffic was snarled for three miles.

When she got to the office, forty minutes late, the new secretary had managed to misdirect only three of her calls. Tony was throwing a tantrum because he couldn't find her sketches of the St. Louis job. As usual, they were right under his nose.

The morning ran on schedule, more or less. There were only two letters from irate clients, and three meetings with confused young salesmen. There was also a call from the office in L.A. They were having their monthly minor crisis, and needed someone to fly out and clear things up.

Because of the meetings with the salesmen, she missed her coffee break, and lunch couldn't have come too soon. She had tomato soup, and chicken salad she'd intended to throw out. And she spilled tea on her white poplin pantsuit. She knew she shouldn't have worn that summer thing in November, anyway.

It was still raining at five-fifteen, and the parking lot at Kroger's was a jungle. She stood in the express lane for twenty minutes, listening to a little old lady with blue-tinted hair complain about the price of lima beans.

When she finally reached the checker, the acne-faced boxboy with the purple tie put the tomatoes in the bottom of the bag and squashed them with a can of peas.

It took her only seven minutes to squeeze the car in between the landlord's Chevy and Mrs. Kilpatrick's chrysanthemums. But by the time she'd fumbled with her keys, and then dropped the mail, it was half past six. She knew he would be grouchy. He always was when she was late getting home.

But then she noticed. His car wasn't sitting at the curb. The windows were all dark, the cat was still out, and the door had not been unlocked. She was like that. She always managed to forget the things that hurt. And it hurt when she remembered he was gone.