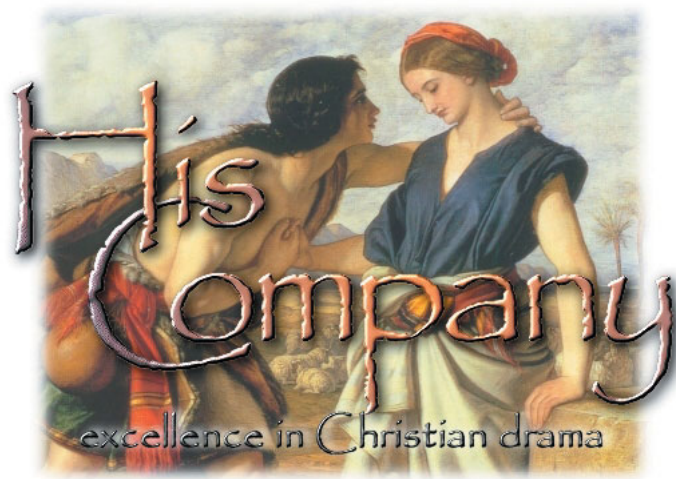


# SOMEONE STRONGER

FROM *THE REINHART DIALOGUES*

by  
David S. Lampel



IN HEAV'NLY LOVE ABIDING,  
NO CHANGE MY HEART SHALL FEAR;  
AND SAFE IS SUCH CONFIDING,  
FOR NOTHING CHANGES HERE.  
THE STORM MAY ROAR WITHOUT ME,  
MY HEART MAY LOW BE LAID,  
BUT GOD IS ROUND ABOUT ME,  
AND CAN I BE DISMAYED?  
(ANNA LAETTITIA WARING)

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## AUTHOR'S NOTES TO THE DIRECTOR

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### Scenes

5 While this play does not have multiple "scenes," per se, the dialogue is broken up into several segments that could, depending on the capabilities of the venue, be separated by various mechanical (i.e., lights, sound) means: It would work to have very little separation at all—little more than a pause in the conversation, or a piece of blocking business to move a character about for a few seconds. Or, to show passage of time, the stage could dim to black, with a moment of program music inserted.

10 Ideally, a combination of program music and set lighting would be used to suggest the passage of time. The setting is an older church sanctuary; if the play opens in the late afternoon, there would be still-bright colored light streaming through the church's stained glass windows, spilling across the old wooden pews. As the day, and conversation, wears on, the light would gradually fade and grow warmer. So the transitional spaces between the segments could be used to suggest the passage of time by bringing up some program music while the colored light (as if through stained glass windows)—as well as the light on the actors—dims to a lower level.

15 To facilitate this latter idea, descriptive text has been inserted in the script at these breaks to suggest the texture and mood of the scene. These breaks may, as well, be used by the director as convenient rehearsal divisions.

### Blocking

20 This script is, ostensibly, a conversation between two people sitting in a pew, but don't leave them there. Get them up once in a while. Let Reinhart get up and move to punctuate his lines (and display his troubled heart). And remember, Edna Mae may be old, but she is not infirm. Although she certainly should show her age, she, too, can get up at key points. Give her a bit of business—a *reason* to be getting up, such as to get a drink of water, or to fetch a necessary item across the room. Use the whole stage, and the play will be more interesting for the audience.

### Properties

25 No props are necessary for Reinhart, but Edna Mae would have a purse, and maybe a walker or cane. Props may be added in at the director's discretion to round out the scene and work with blocking.

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## CHARACTERS

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30 **Reinhart** - a man in his late-twenties or thirties, dressed casually. Reinhart was raised in the church, accepted Christ as his Savior at a young age. But as it is with many Christians, in his adult life he has taken a few wrong turns—some of which have taken him away from God.

**Edna Mae** - an elderly woman in her early- to mid-eighties, dressed as if she has just come from a funeral (not necessarily black, but at least Sunday-go-to-meeting). [See Reinhart's opening monologue for a description.]

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## SCENE

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35 *The Time: Present day*  
*The Place: an older local church sanctuary*

40 *House lights down.*  
*Stage lights up on Reinhart only.*

*Reinhart enters. He has not yet entered the "scene," but addresses the audience from a detached perspective. After Reinhart enters, as he begins describing the scene, stage lights gradually come up, dim, revealing the stage set of pews, Edna Mae, etc.*

45 *Reinhart begins his monologue describing something that has already taken place. Near the end of the monologue, however, he then steps into the scene—as if rejoining the historical event.*

**Reinhart**

50 *(to the audience)*

There was about the place that heavy old-wood stillness peculiar to an empty church. The only light came through the colors of stained glass, spilling across the tops of the empty pews. The odor was familiar: new dust scattered across old wood, cracked varnish mingled with fresh paint, and carpet that had known too many church socials.

55

*(pause)*

She was sitting near the back of the room. I would have missed her, but I caught the reflection of colored light off her glasses. She said nothing, wasn't praying, just silently stared toward the front of the room where the preacher preached and the choir sat respectfully behind. I tried to check my breathing but that only made it louder. She knew I was there, but made no move or gesture. She spoke no word.

60

*(pause)*

You see, she was listening to her God. And from her face I could see He was saying something important to her. The old woman shared a singular relationship with her God: others might spend much time praying, but Edna Mae spent much time listening.

65

She had been there from the beginning, before the church building had even stood, before there were even people to buff the seats of the pews. She had grown old with grace and dignity, and had, over time, become the matriarch of the congregation.

70

*(struggling for a way to describe this unique person)*

Edna Mae gave—as an unrequested favor—a quiet strength to everyone around her. She couldn't abide self-importance—either in others or herself. Without design, it was her humility that made her great.

75

80 And her God was her friend. Not her pal—she wouldn't cheapen Him  
 so—but her friend. She knew Him as she had known her husband for so  
 many years: reliably, intimately. As with the best of friends, I imagine  
 there were no secrets between them. She spoke of the Lord with a  
 familiar respect—as one would speak of a revered uncle who had taken  
 over the raising of a nephew or niece—and had done a good job of it.

*(pause)*

85 But now her husband had gone to meet the Lord in person, and I  
 wondered what would now change about her. Would the loss diminish  
 her affection for God? Would she be drawn even closer to the one who  
 now shared company with her Harold, or would she nurse a new-found  
 animosity toward the one who had taken him away? Frankly, I couldn't  
 imagine anything, no matter how traumatic, coming between Edna Mae  
 and her God.

90 *(pause; Edna Mae glances toward Reinhart and smiles softly)*

I didn't want to bother her, to intrude on this communion, but she turned  
 her head and smiled at me in a way that said it was okay.

95 *Lights transition from Reinhart to Edna Mae, as he joins her.*

**Reinhart**

*(to Edna Mae, as he sits near her)*

Where are the roses?

**Edna Mae**

*(brightening)*

100 They were extra special, weren't they? I took them out to the hospital after  
 lunch. Gladys Endicott is in for gall bladder, you know.

**Reinhart**

I heard. But I thought you might like to take them out to the cemetery.

105

**Edna Mae**

Oh my, those people take good care of things out there. Don't think they need my help.

110

**Reinhart***(protesting)*

But the memorial—

**Edna Mae***(firmly)*

115

—is brightening the room of a sick friend. Poor Gladys, surrounded by all that chrome and plastic and rubber Jell-O. She needed a piece of God's garden in there. I expect that Harold's got plenty of the real thing now.

120

*Reinhart studies his friend's face, one lined with so many memories, so many trials and pieces of well-earned wisdom. Passing this face on the street it would just blend in with all the rest. Just another old lady to be ignored. But seeing it painted by the soft, pastel light of the sanctuary, gazing at the person deep within those radiant eyes, he sees the proof that some people know a deeper, more personal relationship with their God than do others—not through any special dispensation from Him, but because of the character of their own heart.*

125

**Reinhart***(warmly)*

How have you been, Edna?

130

*(concerned)*

Has it been a long week for you?

**Edna Mae***(with a sigh)*

135

You know, Reinhart, I keep telling myself it doesn't matter. He was here for a time—now he's with the Lord. And it won't do my heart any good to count the days.

*(a little ashamed)*

But I have. I just can't keep my brain from ticking off every one of the days since Harold went.

140

**Reinhart**

That just keeps his memory alive.

**Edna Mae**

*(foolish boy; good-naturedly)*

145 I don't need a calendar to remember Harold.

*(tapping her hand upon her chest)*

Practically everything he was is still alive in here. No, I shouldn't be doing it. Harold always told me: "Edna Mae," he'd say, "whoever's left shouldn't cry over the first to go. Just remember the good times and think about the ones to come."

150

**Reinhart**

But I suppose it's not as easy as that.

**Edna Mae**

*(shaking her head)*

155 I keep thinking about that passage early on where it says that a man and wife will become one flesh. When that does happen—when two people become as close as God intended—it's a hard price to pay for the one left behind.

160 *Edna stares into the distance, out the colored-glass window that filters the harsh sunlight into the tranquility of the sanctuary, as she sifts through the pages of memories, her many years with her husband.*

**Edna Mae**

*(after a while)*

165

Where have you been, Reinhart? It's been a long time.

**Reinhart**

*(thinking she already knew it)*

California. I've been living in California.

170

**Edna Mae***(after refreshing her memory for a moment)*

175

Ah yes. Now I remember. You married the Wellison girl, didn't you. Oh, she was a pretty little thing.

*(good naturedly; with a twinkle)*

Never could figure her settling for you. Always thought she could do better.

**Reinhart**

180

*(wryly)*

Thanks, Edna. Apparently she thought so too.

**Edna***(taken aback)*

You don't mean—

185

**Reinhart**

Yeah. Last year. One day a cop pulled her over for making an illegal left-hand turn. They got to talking, swapped phone numbers, and a month later I'm eating TV dinners in a studio apartment.

190

*Edna silently mulls over this turn of events before speaking.***Edna Mae**

How long have you been back?

**Reinhart**

195

Three months.

**Edna Mae***(with surprise)*

And I haven't seen you in church?

200

*Not only is this an uncomfortable topic for Reinhart, but the day of her husband's burial is no time to be airing all the dirty laundry from his own failed marriage and presently miserable life.*

**Reinhart**

205 You don't want to hear all this, Edna. This isn't the time.

**Edna Mae**

*(irritated; sternly)*

Don't go telling me what it is I want, young man.

210 *Part of Reinhart wants to get up and leave. The better part, however, wants to spill his  
guts to maybe the only person he knows who can listen with the right blend of sympathy  
and stern good sense. For him, the last nine months have seemed an eternity. He feels as  
if he has been stumbling through his days like the living dead: bloodless, disemboweled,  
215 lobotomized—yet still breathing—leaving him feeling as if he is wrapped in cotton, his  
body numb.*

**Reinhart**

*(after a pause)*

220 I was angry at first. No—that's not right. First I was hurt. All that trust  
invested in someone who had been living a lie.

**Edna Mae**

Maybe not. People change.

**Reinhart**

225 If she had meant the things she said and did all those years, it wouldn't  
have been so easy for her to betray me. It was so easy for her.

*(angry, yet deflated by the realization that he sounds like a whining school boy  
who has just had his ball taken away)*

Anyway, I came back home to escape the memories.

**Edna Mae**

230 *(unblinkingly direct)*

And have you?

**Reinhart**

No. Of course not. I just carried them back with me.

235



**Edna Mae**

*(matter-of-factly)*

Let it go, Reinhart. The anger will burn you up—and she won't know anyway.

240

**Reinhart**

*(sharply)*

The anger isn't for her.

**Edna Mae**

*(understanding; after a beat; quietly)*

245

Ah. Yes.

*Interlude: Colored shadows move across the rows of wooden pews as the sun outside descends with the day. Purples and reds and soft greens pass over the old woman and younger man, tinting everything in their path, until true color has become only a thin recollection.*

250

**Edna Mae**

Harold and I got married during the Depression, don't you know. A lot of people said it'd never last—

255

*(recalling the hard life; softer)*

—so many troubles in our lives back then. Life was hard—the real thing—and we knew goin' in that starting a marriage in the middle of all that would be tough. We were young—I mean real young. We didn't have money for a house, naturally, no furniture or much of anything else. All we had was Harold's beat-up Chevy and

260

*(confidentially, but with an amused twinkle in her eye)*

enough love to keep us warm at night.

**Reinhart**

So your love was enough back then.

265

**Edna Mae**

*(quickly; seriously)*

Love is never enough, Reinhart.

(pause)

270 During the Depression a lot of people thought that starting something like  
marriage—that was supposed to be permanent—in a time of uncertainty,  
was just compounding troubles. A lot of people, instead, struck out on  
their own, stayed away from others, ran away from their troubles and  
responsibilities. Men and women both rode the rails, looking for a life  
without sorrow. But everywhere they went, they just brought their old  
275 sorrows along with them.

(pause)

I won't throw any stones. When your babies are hungry, when you have  
to walk the streets looking for a job until you feel the pavement through  
your shoes, when you stand in soup lines until your legs ache—it all piles  
280 up on you, and does something to your reason. Makes you a little crazy in  
the head—like the sky itself is closing in around you.

**Reinhart**

But why weren't you and Harold like that?

**Edna Mae**

(pausing to work out the answer for herself)

285 I guess we didn't see things that way. Getting married to each other was  
our lifeline out of our troubles. We didn't want to run away from life, but  
to join together to meet it head-on! The troubles were still there, of course,  
but through it all we had each other—to lean on, to cling to.

290 *The idea of such a life—two people meeting life together—appeals to Reinhart. It is a  
pattern built into him by his parents, by the slow-paced ways of a Midwestern hometown,  
by years of Sunday School lessons and sermons. It is a comfortable ideal. But, by its very  
nature, it takes two—it takes two people mutually agreed, and now he has joined the  
295 ranks of those for whom that ideal has broken down. The two that had become one, were  
now back to being two—which meant, in his opinion, that they probably were never one  
to begin with!*

300

**Reinhart***(nostalgically)*

305 Before I was married, I was an optimist. I could imagine anything,  
because everything was still possible. Everything was wide open, there  
was free passage in all directions. Marriage was supposed to be a part of  
that.

*(becoming frustrated)*

310 Now the world snickers at marriage, makes it sound like a prison. But I  
saw it as just part of the same journey. Others describe it as a lack of  
personal freedom; I saw it as empowerment. And for awhile that's what it  
was. Life with Andrea was all that and more. We were two individuals  
made stronger by uniting as one. There were no bars or chains, only  
wider windows and doors.

315

**Edna Mae***(not intentionally replying)*

People today think life should have a straight path. They think you begin  
at point A and go straight on to point B, without any detours or delays.  
And heaven forbid any show up along the way. Then all bets are off. They  
320 expect it all, and if they can't have it all—all bets are off.

**Reinhart**

Were people really so different back when you got married?

**Edna Mae***(struggling to speak through her surprised laughter)*

325 Gracious no! There were just as many fools back then—maybe more.  
People left each other right and left because of the hardships. Men would  
tell their family they were heading out to California to find work, then  
begin a new life with a new wife and kids. Young wives would have a  
little security flashed in their face, and leave everything for a pipe dream.

330

**Reinhart**

So what made you two different?

*Edna Mae thinks about it for a moment, running back through the pages of her married life, before answering.*

335

**Edna Mae**

I don't know, maybe we were more willing to trust.

**Reinhart**

Trust in what?

**Edna Mae**

340

Just about anything. There's both sides of it: The same trust that leads you to a good thing, can lead you to a bad thing.

*(thinking back)*

345

Those days, everyone trusted in Roosevelt to get us out of the fix we were in. And he pretty much did—though some say the war did more for that than any of FDR's new programs. That trust in Roosevelt was a good thing, I suppose—at the time. But then I noticed that people got used to trusting in government for just about everything. They lost some of their own good sense waiting for Washington to bail them out. Their own strength atrophied—just withered up and shrank, like a broken arm never used again. And that was a bad thing.

350

*(pausing to recall again)*

From the very beginning Harold and I weren't afraid to trust each other. You don't see much of that today. I mean real trust.

**Reinhart**

355

*(defending himself)*

But it takes two!

**Edna Mae***(quickly agreeing)*

Sure does—and that's the scary part.

360

*Interlude: As the colors stretch further across the room, across the orderly rows of wooden pews, Reinhart's sour mood deepens. Over the last few months he has been trying to shake his anger at Andrea, and the depression her leaving had created in him.*

365 *Visiting old haunts around his hometown had been refreshing after being away for so long, and the youthful memories they dredged up seemed to edge him away from the painful reality of his life.*

*But now the cold weight of reality was once again pressing down on him. The conversation with Edna Mae was pulling Reinhart back into emotions he had been almost ready to forget. Maybe she had had the perfect marriage, but the truth was that he had not—and no rosy-hued recollections would change that. He had trusted in another human being, and in return she had ripped out his heart. Maybe there was someone new out there who would be worthy of his trust, but he wasn't sure if it would be worth the effort.*

375 *To pull himself out of his funk, Reinhart gazes at his old friend. Edna Mae is quite a remarkable woman. Earlier in the day she buried her husband of somewhere around sixty years, and now here she is wasting her time talking to the likes of him. A more normal person would have been home feeling sorry for herself, tending her own aching heart. Instead, she was here tending someone else's.*

**Reinhart**

380 You're reminding me of King David, Edna.

*Edna Mae says nothing, but turns a quizzical expression to Reinhart. Once again he is left with the impression that he has just interrupted another moment of communion between Edna and God. But since he already has, he continues.*

385

**Reinhart**

*(referring to Edna's behavior after burying her husband)*

I was just thinking about what David did after Bathsheba's child died. His servants expected him to continue mourning, but instead, he got up and washed, and went into the temple to worship.

390

**Edna Mae**

*(smiling softly, as if drawing comfort from a pleasant thought)*

To be honest, Reinhart, I don't know if how I'm feeling is right, or proper. I only know it's how it is.

395

*(seriously)*

Maybe I should be mourning; heaven knows I've lost the best part of my life. Harold and I had something precious—and rare.

*(brightening slightly)*

But even with that, it feels as if I've lost only one of my two husbands.

400

*Reinhart reacts with good-natured alarm, so Edna Mae quickly continues.*

**Edna Mae**

405 Now, don't look at me like that. I only mean that I've lost my earthly  
husband, but I still have my heavenly one. It takes nothing away from  
Harold to take comfort in Jesus—and, having Jesus means that I haven't  
really lost Harold!

*(pause)*

410 I don't know all that waits for me in heaven, but I'm sure hoping to see  
Harold when I get there, because I know that's where he's at.

*Edna Mae drifts back into her thoughts again—then reveals some of them to her friend.*

**Edna Mae**

415 I sometimes wonder, Reinhart, if, as we get older, we seem to slide closer  
to heaven—which, I suppose, means that we slide further away from  
things here on earth.

**Reinhart**

Do you think that's why you aren't, well, mourning for Harold very much?

**Edna Mae**

420 I honestly don't know.

*(after a beat; working through a new thought)*

425 It's as if there are tides in the body that have an ebb and flow—like the  
ocean's tides. Through most of our lives they go up and down, just like  
the ocean. Sometimes we're drawn closer to God; sometimes closer to  
people here, and things on earth. But as we grow older, the tides change.  
You don't notice it at first, but then one day you realize that you care  
more about the life after, than life now. The Spirit seems to work you  
steadily along toward God, until you eventually reach a point where He  
becomes more important than anything—or anyone—else. Maybe I've  
430 reached the point where things here on earth—even important things like  
friendships and family—have now become secondary to things of God.

**Reinhart**

Is that where you're finding your comfort?

**Edna Mae**

*(with a shrug)*

435

It's just the way it is. I've reached the point where I don't need so much comfort. The Spirit of God has become such a part of me that I no longer feel the need to reach out to Him for help.

*(with intensity; explaining an admittedly odd concept)*

440

He's in my veins, moving through every part of me.

**Reinhart**

*(after a pause; philosophically)*

445

When you're younger, you seem to lurch forward in life from one crisis to another. Living seems to consist of survival—surviving between the peaks and valleys. In the valleys, you reach out to God for help; on the peaks, you think you don't need Him.

**Edna Mae**

*(excitedly)*

450

And what I'm saying, is that some people who live with God for a long time reach a point where the peaks and valleys level out to a consistent, higher place. Not even more righteous or good, just steadily closer to God.

*(pause)*

455

Don't get me wrong, Reinhart. I miss Harold terribly. I'd give just about anything to have him back with me.

**Reinhart**

I believe you. I knew him.

**Edna Mae**

*(perhaps for the first time displaying obvious regret)*

460

Better than having him back, I wish I'd gone with him. How perfect it would have been to enter our rest together.

465 *Interlude: As she finishes, Edna's face is painted with the warm glow from the windows—as if she is already stepping through the portals of heaven. There is about her a warm aura of eternal light. And it is contagious. Reinhart is jealous of what she has; without even knowing it, for a long time he has been looking for just the kind of peace she describes.*

470 *The light in the church sanctuary fades to that awkward level where one either has to flip on a light or leave. The window colors deepen, and are absorbed into the heavier shadows of the room.*

*Even though it has been a long day for Edna Mae, and she is weary from both the physical and emotional strain of the funeral and burial, she is content to stay. Her presence in the room is as organic and natural as the pulpit and baptistery. She belongs here.*

475 *Regarding his own presence, however, Reinhart isn't so sure. He doesn't know where or when it happened, but at some point the confines of God's house have become uncomfortable to him. Somewhere along the journey he has lost his connection to this place—and the God it was built to worship. He certainly hasn't lost his salvation; the Spirit is still somewhere, buried deep inside. But it is as if he has lost the Father's phone number: God is still living in the same place; Reinhart is still living in the same place, but he has mislaid that slip of paper that tells him how to reach his God.*

480 *Reinhart longs to be as Edna—so firmly rooted into this place that he would not only know the number to call, but the line is always held open, ready for immediate communication. He longs for God's house to be more familiar to him than the other dwellings of his world—houses, cars, stadiums. He longs for her kind of faith, one that grows only stronger over time, more intimate with its Author.*

**Edna Mae**

*(staring at her friend)*

490 I'm worried about you, Reinhart.

**Reinhart**

*(with a shrug)*

Aw, I'll make it all right.

**Edna Mae**

*(skeptical)*

495 You sure?

**Reinhart**

*(he never could lie to her)*

500 No.



**Edna Mae**

I've never understood your generation. I wish they—I wish you could learn how to depend more on something outside of yourself.

505

**Reinhart**

*(an angry retort)*

I did—and I got burned.

**Edna Mae**

510

I don't mean other people—though that's necessary too. No one ever makes it on their own; we need other people to hold us up. And I don't mean like the people in the thirties came to think they couldn't do anything without the government's help. I don't mean that. People who go through life refusing to reach out to anyone turn into dried up prunes who hate the whole world: Grumpy old men who sit on their porches throwing rocks at dogs and yelling at kids who run across the corner of their lawn; sour, long-faced women hunched over their wheelchairs in nursing homes—friendless, angry, and out of their heads. I don't want you to end up like that, Reinhart.

515

**Reinhart**

520

Listen, I'll get through this. I've learned a lot from having Andrea leave me. Maybe I'll do better the next time. Besides—

*(chuckling with a little too much effort)*

—I love dogs.

525

*Edna takes Reinhart's hand in hers. Her gaze is intense, piercing through to his very soul.*

**Edna Mae**

*(a warning)*

530

Reinhart, trust Him again. You won't come through it on your own. I understand your anger, but you can't be mad at God.

**Reinhart***(exploding; indignantly)*

Why not? I thought He was supposed to be on my side.

535

**Edna Mae***(in kind)*

Don't you think I want to be angry at Him over Harold? He's just taken half of my life away! Don't you think I have the right?

**Reinhart**

540

Yes! And you just sit there taking it!

*He is immediately sorry for his last remark. Edna turns back to face the front of the church, and Reinhart isn't sure whether she does so to turn back to God—or to turn away from him. They sit there, both staring forward in the dim stillness of the room, silent with their own thoughts.*

545

**Edna Mae***(after a long pause; in a quiet voice)*

When I was a very little girl, one day our family visited some cousins out on their farm. I was a city girl, you see, and it was all so new and fascinating to me.

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*(reliving her girlish fascination)*

The pens of hogs, the cows out in the pasture, the huge barn with its loft filled with hay, the shiny-red well pump sitting in the middle of the farmyard—I thought it was the most wondrous thing I could imagine. I spent the whole day running here and there, discovering new and wonderful things.

555

*(more soberly)*

Near the end of the day, about the time we were to leave, I discovered an old abandoned well out behind the house. I thought it was charming—just like in the storybooks—made of old stones arranged in a high circle, an old wooden crank to raise and lower the bucket.

560

Somehow I worked myself up on top of those stones, so I could look down into the well.

565

*(recoiling with horror)*

Oh, it was a frightful thing! Below me was this bottomless black hole. I couldn't imagine anything more horrible. It seemed to be living, breathing, ready to suck me down into itself.

*(breathlessly)*

570

I was so afraid—almost petrified with fear. I turned to jump down off the edge of the well—but somehow my foot slipped, and I fell backwards, down into the well. It all happened so fast! I can't tell you how, but somehow I was able to grab onto a tree root that had grown through the wall of the well, just at ground level. And I hung there, dangling over that blackness, screaming my head off.

575

My father heard me. It seemed an eternity at the time, but I'm sure he was there in mere seconds. I was so scared. I couldn't move. But I heard him call my name. He kept telling me to look up at him. "I'm right here, Edna. I'm right here, honey," he kept saying over and over. I was too scared to move, but I forced myself to look up at him. Oh, I was never so glad to see anyone in my life! But he seemed so far away. He was hanging over the stone wall, reaching his arm down toward me, but he still seemed so far away. He couldn't quite reach me.

580

*(excitedly)*

585

"Take my hand, Edna. Just take my hand," he told me, but I was petrified. I was gripping that tree root so tightly, I couldn't let go. And after playing all day, I was so tired—my arms were so tired. His big hand was just inches above mine, within easy reach. I could see his strong, sunburned arm, and I knew that if I could just take hold of him, I'd be safe. But I also knew that I needed both hands to hold me up. I just knew that if I released one hand to reach up to my father, I'd slip off that tree root, and fall back into the pit. So I didn't dare let go! I was stuck, and didn't know what to do.

590

But then my father spoke once more. With a calm, reassuring voice, he said, "Edna Mae, look up at me." I did—I looked up into his face, his eyes.

595

They were warm, and comforting, and seemed to lift me up by their power. I loved my father so much, and I just knew he would take care of me. “Now Edna,” he said, again in a controlled voice, “I want you to take my hand. Don’t think about anything else. Just take my hand.”

600 I did what he said. Without another thought I let go of the tree root and reached for my father’s hand. In an instant my small hand was taken into his powerful hand, and before I knew it, I was up and out of that pit, cradled in his strong arms and crying my heart out.

*(pause; with intensity)*

605 Reinhart, that’s how my heavenly Father takes care of me. He really isn’t interested in all my excuses, my small fears—even the foolish things I’ve done that got me into trouble. He doesn’t want me to worry about all the things that might happen to me. He just wants me to look up into His face, let go of every earthly crutch—and in total trust, take His hand.

610 **Reinhart**

*(still with some residual anger)*

I don’t know how to take the hand of an invisible God.

**Edna Mae**

*(quickly)*

615 But He’s not invisible. He can be more real than other people—

**Reinhart**

But—

**Edna Mae**

—and certainly more dependable.

620 **Reinhart**

*(wearily)*

I’m not arguing with you, Edna. I know what you say is true. I want to live like that—to take God’s hand and never let go.

*(his heart aching from the internal pressure of his emotions)*

625 But distrust builds a shell of its own, a hard crust to blunt the  
disappointment and pain. The smart thing may be to live trusting  
someone stronger than yourself, but, at the time, it seems easier—and  
smarter—to just build the shell.

**Edna Mae**

630 The problem is, the shell keeps out the good along with the bad.

**Reinhart**

*(grimly agreeing)*

And there are days when it seems even God's voice can't break through.

**Edna Mae**

635 When you live for so long like that, hope is answered only by the one  
living inside. Your world just gets smaller and smaller—

**Reinhart**

—until nothing seems to exist outside the shell.

*(resignedly)*

640 I've run dry. I've used up everything I had.

**Edna Mae**

*(after a pause)*

645 You keep asking how Harold and I did it. Well, that's what it boils down  
to: we both held onto the hand of someone stronger than ourselves—  
even stronger than the two of us together. No marriage can live long on its  
own strength. There's only so much to go around, and eventually it runs  
out. And that's what makes two people into one: each one holding onto  
the same stronger hand.

**Reinhart**

650 God's.

**Edna Mae**

*(quietly agreeing)*

God's.

*(pause)*

655 You see, Reinhart, in this world I've lost my Harold. But, really, we are both still holding onto God's hand. Neither of us have let go, so we're still connected.

*(pause)*

660 It's true that you lost some of your earthly strength when you lost Andrea. But your heavenly Father is still reaching down, waiting for you to grab hold of His hand.

**Reinhart**

It still seems a long ways off.

**Edna Mae**

665 It's within reach—you just have to let go.

**Reinhart**

*(after a long pause; looking around)*

670 I have to tell you, this place felt mighty strange when I came in. It's the place of my childhood. I grew up in this church. I know it like I know my own house.

*(sadly)*

But I guess I had become a stranger to it. This sanctuary had become something dark and intimidating—pretty much like that well you fell into.

**Edna Mae**

675 It's just a room.

**Reinhart**

680 No, it's more than that. At least for me. In a life of TVs and cell phones and fast cars, it stands for God's constancy. I know it's just a building; I know He doesn't live here any more than He lives anywhere. But for some of us living in a world made of images, this is as close as we can get to the image of Him. It's a place without cell phones and TVs.

*(turning to Edna Mae)*

And right now, Edna, it's about the only place where I can even see His hand reaching down to me.

685

**Edna Mae***(nodding her head with satisfaction; simply)*

Okay.

*(taking her purse and preparing to leave; as she gets up)*

Then I'll be seeing you this Sunday?

690

**Reinhart***(with a soft, small smile as he helps her up)*

Perhaps.

*Reinhart helps her for a few steps toward the exit. Then Edna Mae stops him.*

695

**Edna Mae***(pulling away from his helping hand)*I'm old, Reinhart, not broken-down. I've still got two good legs.**Reinhart***(with admiration)*

700

You've got a lot more than that.

**Edna Mae***(stopping; turning toward him)*

So have you, my boy. So have you.

705

*Edna continues out, while Reinhart stands watching her. Once she exits, Reinhart returns to where he had been sitting. He sits down and leans against the back of the pew, looking straight out. As the lights slowly dim, he slowly raises his gaze skyward, and smiles.**Lights fade slowly to black.*

710

*Green pastures are before me,  
 Which yet I have not seen;  
 Bright skies will soon be o'er me,  
 Where darkest clouds have been.  
 My hope I cannot measure;  
 My path to life is free;  
 My Savior has my treasure,  
 And He will walk with me.*

*(A. L. Waring)*

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