Lovereading.co.uk
Helping you choose your next book

You loved your last book...but what are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

The Glass Cell

Written by Patricia Highsmith

Published by Virago

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

THE GLASS CELL

Patricia Highsmith

Introduced by Joan Schenkar

virago

VIRAGO

This paperback edition published in 2014 by Virago Press
First published in Great Britain in 1965 by William Heinemann Ltd
First published in the USA in 1964 by Doubleday

Copyright © Patricia Highsmith, 1964
Introduction copyright © Joan Schenkar, 2014

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

All characters and events in this publication, other than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

All rights reserved.
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-0-349-00495-2

Typeset in Goudy by M Rules
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Papers used by Virago are from well-managed forests
and other responsible sources.

MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC® C104740

Virago Press
An imprint of
Little, Brown Book Group
100 Victoria Embankment
London EC4Y 0DY

An Hachette UK Company
www.hachette.co.uk

www.virago.co.uk

I

It was 3.35 p.m., Tuesday afternoon, in the State Penitentiary, and the inmates were returning from the workshops. Men in unpressed, flesh-coloured uniforms, each with a number on the back, streamed through the long corridor of A-block, and a low hum of voices rose from them, though none of the men seemed to be talking to anyone near by. It was a strange, unmusical chorus, and it had frightened Carter on the first day – he had actually been green enough to think that a riot might be in the offing – but he accepted it now as a peculiarity of the State Penitentiary or perhaps of all prisons. Cell doors stood open, and into certain cells along the ground floor and along the four tiers above, certain men vanished, until the corridor was nearly empty. There would be twenty-five minutes now in which to wash up at the basin in the cell, change a shirt if one cared to or had a clean one, to write a letter or listen with the earphones to the disc-jockey programme that was always on at this time. The bell for supper rang at 4.

Philip Carter was walking slowly, dreading the sight and the company of his cellmate Hanky. Hanky was a short, chunky fellow, in for thirty years for armed robbery ('bargaining') and murder, and seemingly rather proud of it. Hanky didn't like Carter

and called him a snob. There had been several minor tiffs in the ninety days Carter had spent with him. Hanky had noticed, for instance, that Carter disliked using the single seatless and exposed toilet in the cell in his presence, so Hanky made his own use of the toilet as noisy and vulgar as possible. Carter had taken this with good-natured indifference at first, but ten days ago, when the joke had become rather old, Carter had said, 'Oh, for God's sake, Hanky, cut it out,' and Hanky had become angry and called Carter a worse name than snob. They had stood up to each other with fists clenched for a moment, but a guard had seen them and broken it up. After that, Carter had kept a polite and cool distance between himself and Hanky, handing him the single pair of earphones, if he was nearer to them, handing Hanky his towel or whatever. The cell with its two bunks was too narrow for one man to pass another comfortably, and, by tacit agreement, if one man was up, the other took to his bunk. But this week Carter had had a piece of bad news from his lawyer Tutting. There was to be no re-trial, and, since ninety days had passed, a pardon was out of the question also. Carter faced the fact that he was going to be in the cell with Hanky for some time to come, and that he should perhaps not be so hostile and aloof. The atmosphere between them was not pleasant, and what did it accomplish? Hanky had sprained his ankle last Friday, jumping off the truck that took the inmates back and forth to farm work. He might at least ask Hanky how his ankle was.

Hanky was sitting on the edge of his lower bunk, fondling his incomplete deck of dirty playing cards.

Carter nodded to him and glanced at his bandaged ankle. 'How's your foot today?' He unbuttoned his shirt and headed straight for the basin.

'Oh, so-so. Still can't walk on it.'

Hanky lifted the bedding at the foot of his bunk, and produced two packs of Camels that he had been hiding there.

This Carter saw as he straightened up, drying himself with his small rough towel. Hanky didn't smoke. The ration was four packs a week, which the inmates bought with their own money. The inmate's salary was fourteen cents a day, the cigarettes twenty-two cents a pack. Hanky saved up his own ration and sold it at a profit to other inmates. The guards knew about Hanky's sideline and winked at it, because Hanky occasionally gave them a pack or even gave them a dollar.

'Do me a favour, Cart? Take these to number thirteen down here and number forty-eight third tier. One to each. I don't feel like walking that far. They're paid for.'

'Sure.' Carter took them in one hand and started out, buttoning his shirt with his other hand.

Number thirteen was only two cells away from his and Hanky's cell.

An old Negro with white hair sat on the lower bunk.

'Cigarettes?' Carter asked.

The Negro rolled sideways on one fleshless hip and pulled a small piece of paper out of his pocket. With stiff, black fingers, the Negro pushed Hanky's receipt into Carter's hand.

Carter stuffed it into his pocket, tossed a package of Camels on the bunk, and went out. He walked towards the end of the corridor, where the stairs were. The guard called Moony – a nickname for Moonan – quickened his slow walk and frowned as he came towards Carter. Carter had the other pack of cigarettes in his hand. He saw that Moony saw it.

'Deliverin' cigarettes?' Moony's long, thin face scowled harder. 'You gonna start deliverin' milk and newspapers, too?'

'I'm taking them for Hanky. He's got a sprained ankle.'

'Let's have y'hands.' Moony took his handcuffs off the clasp of his belt.

'I didn't steal the cigarettes. Ask Hanky.'

'Y'hands!'

Carter held out his hands.

Moony clicked the handcuffs on his wrists. At the same instant, two toilets near by flushed simultaneously, and simultaneously Carter saw over Moony's shoulder a pimply-faced, pudgy inmate smirking slightly with vague pleasure as he watched. A few seconds before, Carter had thought Moony might be joking. He had seen Moony and Hanky joking a few times, Moony even swinging his stick playfully at Hanky. Now he knew Moony was not joking. Moony didn't like him. Moony called him 'the professor'.

'Walk to the end of the block,' Moony said.

Moony's voice was loud. While Moony had been talking to Carter, a silence had fallen in the two or three cells in either side of the block which could observe them, and it was spreading over the whole ground floor. Carter walked, with Moony behind him. At the end of the corridor were two stairways going up to the second tier, the elevator's barred doors that Carter had only twice seen open for hospital cases on their way up, and two plain doors, their fronts flush with the stone wall, with large round locks in them. One led to the next cell block, B-block, the other to the Hole. Moony stepped in advance of Carter and swung off his big ring of keys from his belt.

Carter heard a soft, collective groan from the men watching, a hum as anonymous as a wind.

'What's the matter, Moony?' asked a voice, so self-assured Carter knew before he glanced behind him that it was a guard's.

'Got the great engineer here deliverin' cigarettes,' Moony said, and opened the door. 'Step down,' he said to Carter.

The stairs went down. This was the Hole.

Carter paused after a couple of steps. He had heard about the Hole. Even if the inmates exaggerated, and he was sure they did exaggerate, it was a torture chamber. 'Listen, an offence like this – doing a favour for Hanky – it's just a few demerits, isn't it?'

Moony and Cherniver, who was coming along too, chuckled superiorly, as if at the remark of a half-wit.

'Git goin',' Moony said. 'You already got more demerits than I can count or you either.' Moony shoved him.

Carter kept his balance, then descended the steps, watching his footing carefully; for if he fell, he could not easily save himself with manacled hands. He had taken a fall the day he was put into prison, and at that time his handcuffs had been shackled to a heavy leather belt. It was true that he had a lot of demerits, but they were mostly due to the fact he did not yet know everything he could and could not do. You got demerits for not keeping in step in a line marching to the mess hall, for saying 'Excuse me' or saying anything on the way to the workshops (but not on the way back), for flicking a comb through your hair at certain times, for looking too long at a visitor (a stranger, perhaps, man or woman) through the double-barred wall at the end of A-block; and four times, due to demerits, Carter had been unable to see his wife on Sunday afternoons. This was doubly infuriating, because on each occasion the two letters per week that he was permitted to write had been sent to Hazel too early to tell her that if she came that Sunday he could not see her. There was no list of regulations anywhere that an inmate could read and so avoid committing misdemeanours. Carter had asked some inmates for all the ways of incurring demerits, and he had listened to thirty or forty, and then one inmate had said with a reconciled smile, 'Ah, there must be about a thousand of 'em. Gives the screws somethin' to do.' Carter supposed now that he was due for twenty-four or forty-eight hours of solitary in the dark. He took a deep breath and tried to be philosophical about it: it wasn't going to last for ever, and what were three or six missed meals of the lousy food they served here? He regretted only missing his daily letter from Hazel, which would be brought to his cell around 5.30 p.m.

Carter's feet found level stone. There was an unfamiliar dampness in the air and a familiar smell of stale urine.

Moony had a flashlight, but he used it to guide his and Cherniver's steps behind him, while Carter went ahead into darkness. Now on right and left Carter could see the small doors of the cells he had heard about, tiny black holes that a man could not stand up in, big step-ups at the doors so one had to crawl into them. The prison had been built in 1869, Carter remembered, and these must have been part of the original prison, the part beyond improvement. The rest of the prison was said to have been improved at one time.

'. . . the hose?' Cherniver asked in a low voice.

'Somepin' stronger. Here we are. Stop! Go on in.'

They were beside a cell with no door at all, a cell with a very high open doorway. As Carter walked in, he heard from another cell a groan or a grunt and the snuffle of a nose. There was at least one other person down here. It was comforting. The cell was huge compared to the one Carter shared with Hanky, but there was no bunk or chair or toilet in it, only a small round drain in the centre of the floor. The walls were of metal, not stone, black-grey and red from rust. Then Carter noticed hanging from the ceiling a pair of chains that ended in black loops.

'Gimme y'hands,' said Moony.

Carter extended his hands.

Moony removed the handcuffs. 'Cherny, ol' pal, can you git me a stool from sommers?'

'Yes, *sir*,' said Cherniver and went out, drawing his own flashlight from a pocket.

Cherniver returned with a square wooden stool like a small table, which he set down below the chains.

'Step up,' said Moony.

Carter stepped up, and Moony after him. Carter raised his hands before he was ordered to. The straps were leather with a rubber lining, and they buckled.

'Thumbs,' said Moony.

Obediently Carter turned up his thumbs, then realized with a shock what Moony intended. Moony fixed the straps between the first and second joints of his thumbs, then buckled them tightly. The straps had holes every half inch and all along their length.

Moony stepped down. 'Kick the stool away.'

Carter was strung so high, he was on tiptoe and could not kick it away.

Moony gave the stool a kick that sent it a couple of yards in front of Carter and turned it over. Carter swung. The first stab of pain prolonged itself. Blood rushed to the tips of his thumbs. His back was to the guards, and he expected a blow.

Moony laughed, and then one of them kicked him in the thigh and he began to swing back and forth, twisting a little. Then a push in the small of his back. Carter suppressed a groan. He held his breath. Now sweat trickled in front of his ears, down his jaw. Carter's ears were ringing loudly. He smelt cigarette smoke. Carter wondered if they had a time limit, vaguely a time limit, such as an hour, two hours? How much time had passed already? Three minutes? Fifteen? Carter was afraid he would scream in another few seconds. Don't scream, he told himself. The screws would love that. Muscles down his back began to flutter. It was hard to breathe. He had a brief fantasy that he was drowning, that he was in water instead of air. Then the ringing in his ears drowned out the guards' voices.

Something struck him in the back. Water hissed over the stone floor in front of him, and a bucket bounced and clattered. Everything seemed in slow motion. He felt much heavier, and he imagined that the two guards were hanging on to his legs.

'Oh, Hazel,' Carter mumbled.

'Hazel?' a guard said.

'That's his wife. Gets letters from her every day.'

'Not today, he won't.'

Carter felt his eyes were bulging from their sockets. He tried to

blink. His eyes felt dry and huge. He had a vision of Hazel walking nervously up and down in his cell, wringing her hands, glancing at him now and then, saying something that he could not hear.

The scene shifted to the trial. Wallace Palmer. Wallace Palmer was dead. *Then what do you think he did with the money? . . . Come now, Mr Carter, you're an intelligent man, a college graduate, an engineer, a sophisticated New Yorker.* (Your honour, that is irrelevant.) *You don't sign papers not knowing what you're signing!* I knew what I was signing. Receipts, invoices. It wasn't my job to know the exact price of things. Palmer was the contractor. The prices could've been raised on the receipts after I'd signed them, raised by Palmer . . . I did not know our material was second-rate and I told him so. *Where is the money, Mr Carter? Where is the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars?* And then Hazel was on the stand, saying in her clear voice, My husband and I have always had a joint bank account . . . We've never had any secrets about anything to do with money . . . with money . . . with money . . .

'Hazel!' Carter cried, and that was the end of it.

Several buckets of water sluiced over him.

Behind him, voices seemed to be chanting. There was chanting and laughter. They faded and he was alone again. He realized the chanting was the pulsing of his own blood in his ears. He imagined his thumbs two feet long now from the pulling. He was not dead. Wallace Palmer was dead. Palmer who could be made to talk, if he were not dead. Palmer had fallen from the third floor scaffolding down to the ground beside a cement mixer. Now the school building was finished. Carter saw it, dark red and four stories high. It was shaped like a wide U, like a boomerang. An American flag waved on top of it. It stood, but it was made of bad materials. The cement was no good, the plumbing didn't work, the plaster had started cracking before the building was completed. Carter had spoken to Gawill and to Palmer about the

materials, but Palmer had said that was okay, that was what they wanted, the school board was cutting corners and it wasn't their concern if the building materials were bad. Then the word got around, and the safety board or whatever they called it said that children ought not to be allowed to set foot in it, that it all might fall on their heads, and the school board had not been cutting corners, they had paid for the best, and who, who was responsible? Wallace Palmer was responsible, and maybe a few others in Triumph had got a share of the $250,000 – Gawill could hardly have been blind to what was going on, for instance – but Philip Carter was the chief engineer, worked closest with the contractor Palmer, was an out-of-towner, a New Yorker, a wise guy, a man out to feather his nest at the expense of the South, a professional man who had betrayed the honour and trust of his calling, and the State was going to have his blood. 'Let the school stand empty, until the next hard wind blows it down,' said the prosecuting attorney, 'a disgrace and an expensive disgrace for all the State to look at!'

Two men came and took him down. Carter's head cracked against the stone floor. Clumsy attempts to carry him. Curses. They left him crumpled on the floor while they went away again. Carter retched, but nothing came up. The men returned with a stretcher. The journey was a long one, down corridors that Carter barely saw through partly opened eyes. Up stairs after stairs they went, Moony and somebody else – what was his name, the one of last night? Or when? Up they went, nearly sliding him backwards and head first off the stretcher. Then along corridors, narrowish ones, where inmates – Carter knew from their flesh-coloured clothes – and a few Negroes in blue overalls, also inmates, stared in silence as they passed by. Then the smell of iodine and disinfectant. They were going into the hospital ward. He lay on the stretcher on a hard table. A voice was murmuring angrily. It was a nice voice, Carter thought.

Moony's voice replied, 'He's out of order all the time . . . He's out of order. What're you gonna do with guys like him? . . . You should have my job, mister . . . All right, speak to the warden. I'll tell him a thing or two myself.'

The doctor spoke again, lifting Carter's wrist. 'Look at this!'

'Ah, I've seen worse,' said Moony.

'How long was he hung up?'

'I don't know. I didn't string him up.'

'You didn't? Who did?'

'I don't know.'

'Would you mind finding out? – Would you mind finding out?'

A man with round, horn-rimmed glasses and a white jacket washed Carter's face with a large wet cloth, and squeezed some drops from it on to his tongue.

'. . . Morphine, Pete,' said the doctor. 'A whole half grain.'

They rolled his sleeve higher and gave him a needle. Pain began to ebb quickly, like a flood receding, like an ocean drying up. Like heaven. A pleasant, sleepy tingling invaded his head, lightly dancing, like gentle music. They began to work on his hands, and he fell asleep during it.

2

When Carter awakened, he was lying in a firm white bed on his back, his head on a pillow. His arms lay outside the covers and his thumbs were huge lumps of gauze as big as the rest of his hands. He looked to right and left. The left bed was empty, the right held a sleeping Negro with a bandaged head. Pain seeped back into his thumbs, and he realized that it was the pain that had awakened him. It was growing worse, and it frightened him.

He looked at the approaching doctor, wide-eyed with fear, and, realizing that he looked afraid, Carter blinked his eyes. The doctor smiled. He was a small dark man of about forty.

'How are you feeling?' asked the doctor.

'My thumbs hurt.'

The doctor nodded, still faintly smiling. 'They took some punishment. You'll need another shot.' He looked at his wristwatch, frowned slightly, and went away.

When he came back with the needle, Carter asked, 'What time is it?'

'Six thirty. You had a good sleep.' The needle went in, stayed a few seconds. 'How about something to eat – before this puts you to sleep again?'

Carter did not answer. He knew from the light at the window that it was 6.30 in the evening. 'What day is it?'

'Thursday. Scrambled eggs? Milk toast? I think that's all you'd better try – Ice-cream? Does that appeal to you?'

Carter's brain turned tiredly over the fact that this was the kindest voice he had heard since entering the prison. 'Scrambled.'

Carter was in the ward for two days before they removed the bandages, and then his thumbs looked enormous to him and they were bright pink. They did not look as if they belonged to him or to his own hands. The thumbnail was tiny in the mass of flesh. And they still hurt. The morphine shots came every four hours, and Carter wished they were more often. The doctor tried to be reassuring, but Carter could see that he was worried because the pain did not diminish. His name was Dr Stephen Cassini.

On Sunday, Carter was allowed no visitors, whatever the state of his demerits, because he was in the ward.

At 1.30 p.m. on Sunday, when the visiting period began, Carter imagined Hazel in the big grey-green lobby downstairs protesting that she had come to see her husband and that she was not going to leave until she had seen him. Dr Cassini had written a letter to her which Carter had dictated, saying that he would not be able to see her, and the letter had been smuggled out some time on Friday, but Carter was not sure Hazel had received it by Saturday. Carter knew that, if she had, she would come anyway, because he had said his hands were 'slightly injured', but he also knew that the double gates of grey bars in the lobby, the officials in uniforms who examined identifications of visitors and checked on inmates' status would defeat Hazel at last, and he writhed in his bed and pressed his face into his hard pillow.

He got her last two letters from under his pillow and re-read them, holding them with two fingers.

. . . Darling, Timmie is bearing up pretty well, so don't worry about him. I lecture him daily, though I try not to make it sound like a lecture. The kids are picking on him at school, of course, and I suppose human nature wouldn't be human nature if they didn't . . .

And in the last letter:

Darling Phil,

Have just spent over an hour with Mr Magran, the lawyer David has recommended all along over Tutting, you know, and I like him very much. He talks sense, is optimistic but not so optimistic (like Tutting) that you start to get suspicious. Anyway, Tutting has now said there is 'nothing more' he can do. As if there weren't the Supreme Court, but I wouldn't even want Tutting handling that. I have paid Tutting off, that is, the last $500 of his fee, so if you're quite agreed, Magran can take over. Magran said it will cost $3,000 to have a transcript of the trial typed up for the Supreme Court, but you know we can afford that. He wants to see you as soon as possible, of course. Oh, dammit darling, those idiotic regulations I'm greeted with every Sunday: 37765's demerits do not permit him to have visitors this week. And for being out of step in a cafeteria line, you said. For goodness sake, darling, do your best to conform to their stupid rules.

Magran is also writing to the Governor direct. He will send you a copy of the letter. You must not worry. Like you, I know this cannot go on for ever, or even very long. Six to twelve years! It won't even be six months . . .

Magran's fee would be at least $3,000, Carter thought, and the $3,000 for the transcript besides would just about clean out their

ready cash. Every figure seemed astronomical. $75,000 for his bail, for instance, which of course they hadn't been able to raise, and Carter had not wanted to ask his Aunt Edna for it. Their $15,000 house was mortgaged, their Olds was worth $1,800, but Hazel needed it for marketing and also for driving the twenty-seven miles on Sundays to see him, or try to.

And now his thumbs were out of joint. That was the final absurd fact. The doctor called it something else, but essentially that was what it was, and an operation, according to Dr Cassini, would be of very dubious value. The prison – in which Carter had thought a couple of weeks would not be unbearable, not even a serious episode in his life – had now branded him for ever. He would never have much articulation in the second joints, and a sort of hollow would remain below them. He would have funny-looking thumbs and he would not have much strength in them. Imaginative people, seeing them, might guess what had caused the deformation. He wouldn't be able to deal a hand of bridge so adroitly, or whittle a bow and arrow for Timmie, and, by the time he got out, Timmie might not be interested in bows and arrows, anyway. He had written to Hazel within a couple of hours after the removal of the bandages that day, Sunday, holding the pen in a wobbling fashion between his index and middle fingers, and he had had to tell her what had happened, ghoulish as the story was, to account for his strange writing, but he minimized it and said it had been for several hours instead of nearly forty-eight. His thumbs were permanently deformed because a man called Hanky for some strange reason had it in for him. Why? Because he hadn't shown Hanky the picture of Hazel? 'You got a wife? . . . You got her picture? . . . Let's see it,' Hanky had said the first afternoon of their acquaintance. Carter had said as amiably as he could, 'Oh, some other time.' 'You ain't got her picture.' That had been his opportunity, perhaps, to show it and appease Hanky, but he had muffed it. The picture he carried in his wallet of Hazel was

cut out of an enlargement of a colour photograph in which she was standing in the snow in front of their New York apartment on East Fifty-seventh Street, hatless, her dark hair blowing, laughing, a wonderful, typical expression on her face, which was why Carter preferred the picture, and what possible pleasure could a pig like Hanky get from looking at a picture of a woman with the beaver collar of her coat pulled up to her chin?

Sunday afternoon around 4, Dr Cassini came in and made his rounds of the forty-odd patients in the ward. When he came to Carter, he said:

'Well, Carter, want to try taking a few steps?'

'Absolutely,' Carter said, sitting up. Pain streaked down his back, but he did not let it show in his face. He staggered at the foot of the bed and had to catch his balance on the doctor's extended hand.

Dr Cassini smiled and shook his head. 'You keep worrying about your thumbs. Do you know those knots in your legs were shutting off the circulation and you could have got gangrene? Do you know only yesterday morning you were running a temperature of a hundred and three and I thought you might be in for pneumonia?'

Carter was glad to sit. He felt faint. 'When is this going to go out of my legs?'

'The knots? With time. And massage. Walk around the foot of the bed, if you like, but don't try anything more,' Dr Cassini said, and moved on to the next patient.

Carter sat there breathing as if he had been running. He remembered what Dr Cassini had said yesterday, that he was after all thirty and couldn't recuperate from an experience such as his as quickly as a nineteen-year-old. Dr Cassini had a cheerful, matter-of-fact way of talking about the Hole, and victims of it whom he had treated, that gave Carter an eerie feeling that he was in a madhouse instead of a prison, a madhouse in which the

caretakers were the madmen, as in the old cliché. Dr Cassini seemed to pass no judgement on what happened in the prison. Or was that quite true? Dr Cassini had asked him yesterday what he was in for, and Carter had told him. 'Most fellows, I don't bother asking why they're in,' Dr Cassini had said. 'I know already, breaking and entering, bargaining, car-stealings, but you're not like the most of them.' Dr Cassini had asked what school he had gone to – Carter had gone to Cornell – and then why he had come south. Carter wished he had asked himself that, eight months ago, when he and Hazel had decided to come. Carter had come because the offer from Triumph Builders had sounded very good, $15,000 a year plus various perquisites. 'What did Palmer do with the money, do you think?' Dr Cassini had asked, and Carter had said, 'Well, he had a girl friend in New York and one in Memphis. He saw one or other of them every weekend. He was always flying off somewhere on Fridays. He bought them cars and things.' And Dr Cassini had nodded and said, 'Oh, I see,' and he did, and he believed it, Carter thought. It was true. But it had not been believed by the Court of Quarter Sessions. Even when the girls were brought down and questioned, it hadn't been believed that Palmer could spend $250,000 in about a year on two women, and that the two women between them had nothing more to show for it than one mink coat worth about $5,000 and one diamond bracelet worth about $8,000. Nobody seemed to know or care that Palmer could eat and drink about $500 worth a month, and did, or that his airline tickets cost him anything, or that both girls had got rid of expensive automobiles just before they came down for the trial, or that Palmer might have salted some away in Brazil.

Carter crept back into bed. While he had been sitting on the edge of the bed, the Negro with the bandaged head had stared at him unblinking, as if he watched a boring movie. Carter had tried to talk to him a couple of times, but had got no response, and Dr

Cassini this morning had told him that the Negro had abscesses in both ears, had had a series of them, and that he did not expect to preserve much, if anything, of his hearing.

He re-read Hazel's last four letters, one that he had had in his pocket when they strung him up and the three that had been delivered since. Carter held them between his fingers while his fat thumbs throbbed in unison like silent drums between his eyes and the pages. Hazel had put a drop of her perfume on her last letter, which was the most cheerful of the four. The male nurse Pete came with the morphine needle and silently prepared it. Pete had only one eye, the other was a sunken hollow, whether the result of disease or injury, Carter could not guess. The needle slid into his arm. In silence, Pete went away, and Carter lifted his letters again. As the morphine stole through his blood, he began to hear Hazel's voice reading her own words, and he read all the letters as if they were brand-new. He heard also Timmie's voice interrupting her, and Hazel saying, 'Just a minute, sweetie, can't you see I'm writing to Daddy? – Oh, all right, your catcher's mitt. Why, it's right there in front of you. On the sofa. That's a fine place for it, anyway, can't you take it up to your room?' Timmie socked a small fist into the undersized mitt. 'When's Daddy coming home?' 'Just as soon as . . .' 'When's Daddy coming *home*?' . . .When's Daddy coming home? . . .' Carter changed his position in bed and forced himself away from that vision, lay passive with his eyes on Hazel's writing until another vision swam into its place. He saw their bedroom. Hazel stood by her dressing-table, brushing her hair for the night. He was in his pyjamas. As he moved towards her, she smiled at him in the mirror. They kissed, a long kiss. With the morphine to enhance memory, it was almost as if Hazel lay beside him in the hard bed.

Carter could watch his visions as if they took place on a stage. No one was in the theatre but him. He was the sole spectator. No one had ever seen the show before. Nobody ever would, but him.

Here the voices of the inmates were shut out. At least for his ruined thumbs he had been granted a few days of quiet, more or less. A groan of pain from someone, the clatter of bedpans were like music compared to the excretory sounds of 6.30 a.m. in the cell block, or the insane titters in the night, like women's laughter, and the other no less deranging sounds of men who sought relief by themselves. Who was mad, Carter wondered. Which ones of them? Which jurors and which judges out of the thousands who had sent these six thousand men here?