

RICK. What are those?

TANSY. Just our traditional appetizer—garbanzos and rusks.

RICK. Oh. (*He takes a rusk, then spoons a garbanzo or two onto it. He lifts it, but the garbanzos roll off onto his saucer. He tries again, balancing them precariously.*) They kinda roll around on there, don't they? (*They drop off again.*) Here. Wait a minute. (*He takes a second rusk; then, with a rusk in each hand, he pounces on the errant garbanzos, trapping them between improvised rusk-jaws.*) There we go. (*He takes a bite.*) Not bad. (*Wisely.*) That's really true, though. Food really tastes better when you catch it yourself, y'know? That's what my father always said. Departed father, I should say.

TANSY. (*Suddenly ashamed.*) Oh, Rick. When did he die?

RICK. (*Doesn't she have ears?*) He didn't die. He just departed.

TANSY. Oh. . . .

RICK. Yeah, I woke up one morneen', and he was gone. I still remember, 'cause it was the day after I got my tambourine.

TANSY. Uh-huh. . . .

AXEL. Yeah. . . .

WILLUM. (*Crossing to Axel for more tea. Between his teeth.*) What now, Ax?

AXEL. (*Smiling, pouring.*) Oh, something a little stronger, I think.

WILLUM. All right.

RICK. This is great.

WILLUM. Yeah.

RICK. Good old Terre Haute.

WILLUM. Right.

RICK. I can hardly wait till it gets winter, so we can shoot some planes and stuff some sheep!

WILLUM. Ax—.

AXEL. Right. Oh—Old Man Winter. Whew! (*To Rick.*) I hope you brought your gear.

RICK. Huh?

AXEL. You know—parkas, space heaters. Mukluks.

RICK. What?

AXEL. Well, we'll get you some, don't worry.

WILLUM. (*Catching on.*) Oh! Oh, sure.

AXEL. 'Cause it's gonna get pret-ty mean out there, starting—(*Checks watch.*) well, about now, really.

WILLUM. Oh, it's not that bad. A few months of howling, bleak nothingness. But—there's no reason you shouldn't—survive. *We did.*

TANSY. Sure. *We've been lucky.* (*Her expression changes.*) Well, luckier than—the others.

RICK. What? Others?

TANSY. Oh, Rick.

AXEL. This house used to be *filled* with people.

TANSY. Yes. . . .

AXEL. Gone, now.

WILLUM. They couldn't take the winter.

RICK. Who couldn't?

WILLUM. *You* know. The old.

AXEL. The young.

TANSY. The sick.

AXEL. (*To Tansy.*) Who do you miss the most?

TANSY. The sick, I guess.

AXEL. Yeah.

WILLUM. (*To Rick.*) Oh, Rick. You should have been here.

TANSY. This house used to ring with the laughter of the sick.

WILLUM. No more.

TANSY. No. . . .

WILLUM. No more.

RICK. What happened?

WILLUM. Oh—starvation.

TANSY. Marauding savages from Indianapolis.

WILLUM. Yes. . . . And forest beasts, on the prowl—desperate for food for their hibernating young.

RICKE. Are you kiddeen'? Some *beasts*?

WILLUM. Oh, yes.

RICK. What did you do when there was *beasts* comeen' around?

AXEL. Well, if all else failed, one of the sick would go out there, and offer himself up.

RICK. Huh.

AXEL. How are you feeling?

RICK. Fine.

AXEL. Yeah?

RICK. What kind of beasts are they?

WILLUM. Oh. . . . what. Coyotes.

AXEL. Wolverines.

TANSY. Mastodons. (*Axel and Willum look at her.*) Sometimes.

RICK. Oh, yeah. We got those.

WILLUM. You do? *Mastodons?*

RICK. Yeah, I think. Don't they have, like, real hairy palms, or somethin'?

WILLUM. I'm not sure.

RICK. Any pigs?

WILLUM. What? Pigs?

RICK. Yeah.

WILLUM. No. Listen, we're talking about—.

RICK. Good. 'Cause those are the ones I hate. Whenever I see a pig, like, in a movie or somethin'? Forget it. I'm outta there. I can't take those suckers.

AXEL. Well, we do get *some* pigs.

WILLUM. Quite a few, really.

TANSY. Big, giant—.

AXEL. Mutant pigs.

WILLUM. They'd as soon kill you as look at you.

RICK. Really?

TANSY. Big, hairy things. (*The kitchen timer sounds again.*)

Woop! Dinner time! (*She exits.*)