

A neutral Voice cuts off the above scene with:)

Implied Consent.

As an individual operating a motor vehicle in the state of Maryland, you must abide by "Implied Consent." If you do not consent to take the blood alcohol content test, there may be severe penalties: a suspension of license, a fine, community service and a possible jail sentence.

(The Voice shifts tone.)

Idling in the Neutral Gear.

MALE GREEK CHORUS. *(Announcing.)* Aunt Mary on behalf of her husband. *(Female Greek Chorus checks her appearance, and with dignity comes to the front of the stage and sits down to talk to the audience.)*

FEMALE GREEK CHORUS. *(As Aunt Mary.)* My husband was such a good man — is. Is such a good man. Every night, he does the dishes. The second he comes home, he's taking out the garbage, or doing yard work, lifting the heavy things I can't. Everyone in the neighborhood borrows Peck — it's true — women with husbands of their own, men who just don't have Peck's abilities — there's always a knock on our door for a jump start on cold mornings, when anyone needs a ride, or help shoveling the sidewalk — I look out, and there Peck is, without a coat, pitching in.

I know I'm lucky. The man works from dawn to dusk. And the overtime he does every year — my poor sister. She sits every Christmas when I come to dinner with a new stole, or diamonds, or with the tickets to Bermuda.

I know he has troubles. And we don't talk about them. I wonder, sometimes, what happened to him during the war. The men who fought World War II didn't have "rap sessions" to talk about their feelings. Men in his generation were expected to be quiet about it and get on with their lives. And sometimes I can feel him just fighting the trouble — whatever has burrowed deeper than the scar tissue — and we don't talk about it. I know he's having a bad spell because he comes looking for me in the house, and just hangs around me until it passes. And I keep my banter light — I discuss a new recipe, or sales, or gossip — because I think domesticity can be a balm

for men when they're lost. We sit in the house and listen to the peace of the clock ticking in his well-ordered living room, until it passes.

(Sharply.) I'm not a fool. I know what's going on. I wish you could feel how hard Peck fights against it — he's swimming against the tide, and what he needs is to see me on the shore, believing in him, knowing he won't go under, he won't give up —

And I want to say this about my niece. She's a sly one, that one is. She knows exactly what she's doing; she's twisted Peck around her little finger and thinks it's all a big secret. Yet another one who's borrowing my husband until it doesn't suit her anymore.

Well. I'm counting the days until she goes away to school. And she manipulates someone else. And then he'll come back again, and sit in the kitchen while I bake, or beside me on the sofa when I sew in the evenings. I'm a very patient woman. But I'd like my husband back.

I am counting the days.

(A Voice repeats:)

You and the Reverse Gear.

MALE GREEK CHORUS. Li'l Bit's Thirteenth Christmas. Uncle Peck Does the Dishes. Christmas 1964. *(Peck stands in a dress shirt and tie, nice pants, with an apron. He is washing dishes. He's in a mood we haven't seen. Quiet, brooding. Li'l Bit watches him a moment before seeking him out.)*

LI'L BIT. Uncle Peck? *(He does not answer. He continues to work on the pots.)* I didn't know where you'd gone to. *(He nods. She takes this as a sign to come in.)* Don't you want to sit with us for a while?

PECK. No. I'd rather do the dishes. *(Pause. Li'l Bit watches him.)*

LI'L BIT. You're the only man I know who does dishes. *(Peck says nothing.)* I think it's really nice.

PECK. My wife has been on her feet all day. So's your grandmother and your mother.

LI'L BIT. I know. *(Beat.)* Do you want some help?

PECK. No. *(He softens a bit towards her.)* You can help by just talking to me.