

Miss Temptation (1956)

Interpreted By Morgan Torpey

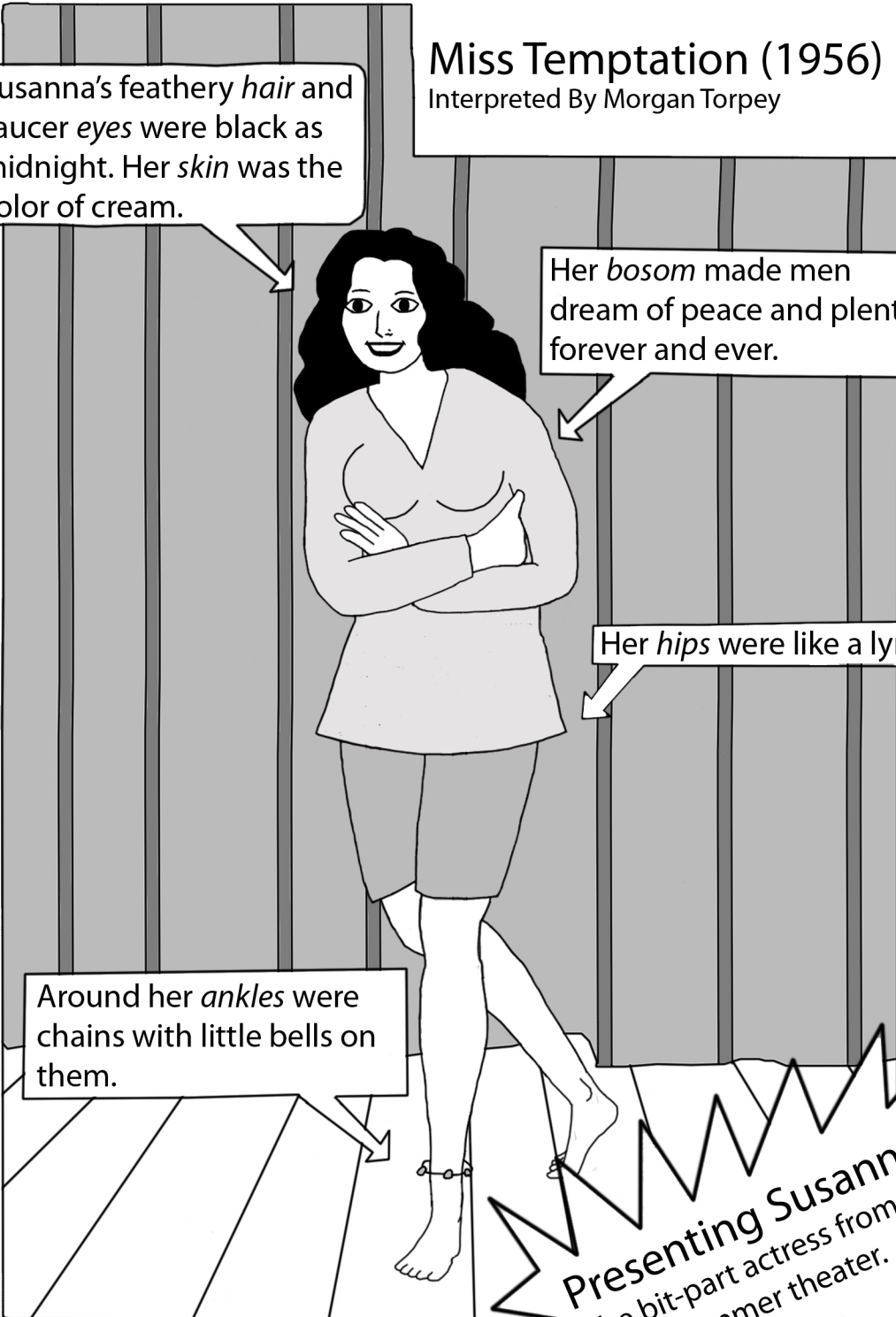
Susanna's feathery *hair* and saucer eyes were black as midnight. Her *skin* was the color of cream.

Her *bosom* made men dream of peace and plenty forever and ever.

Her *hips* were like a lyre.

Around her *ankles* were chains with little bells on them.

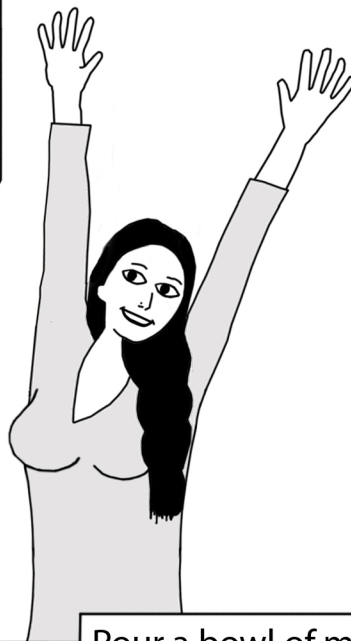
Presenting Susanna!
The bit-part actress from the summer theater.



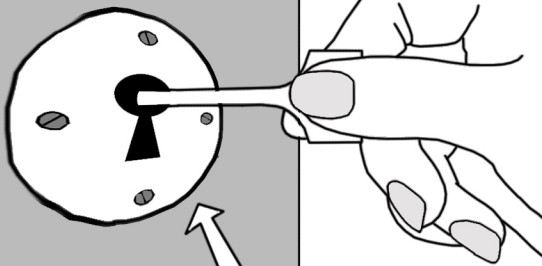


She went barefoot and slept until noon everyday. And, as noon drew near, the villagers on the main street would grow as restless as beagles with a thunderstorm on the way.

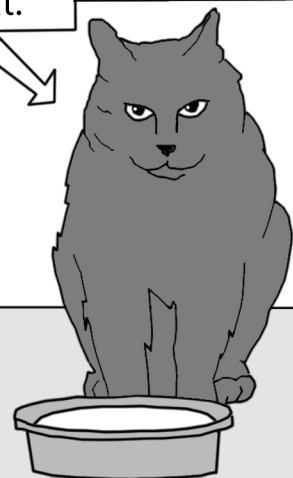
At noon, Susanna would appear on the porch outside her room. She would stretch languidly.

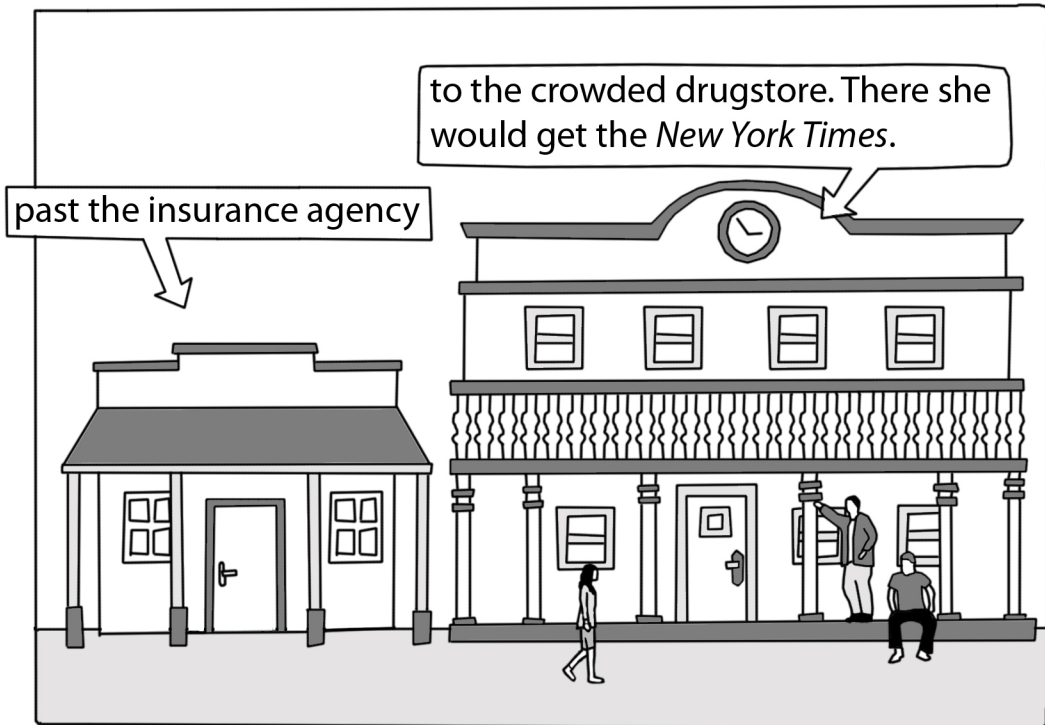
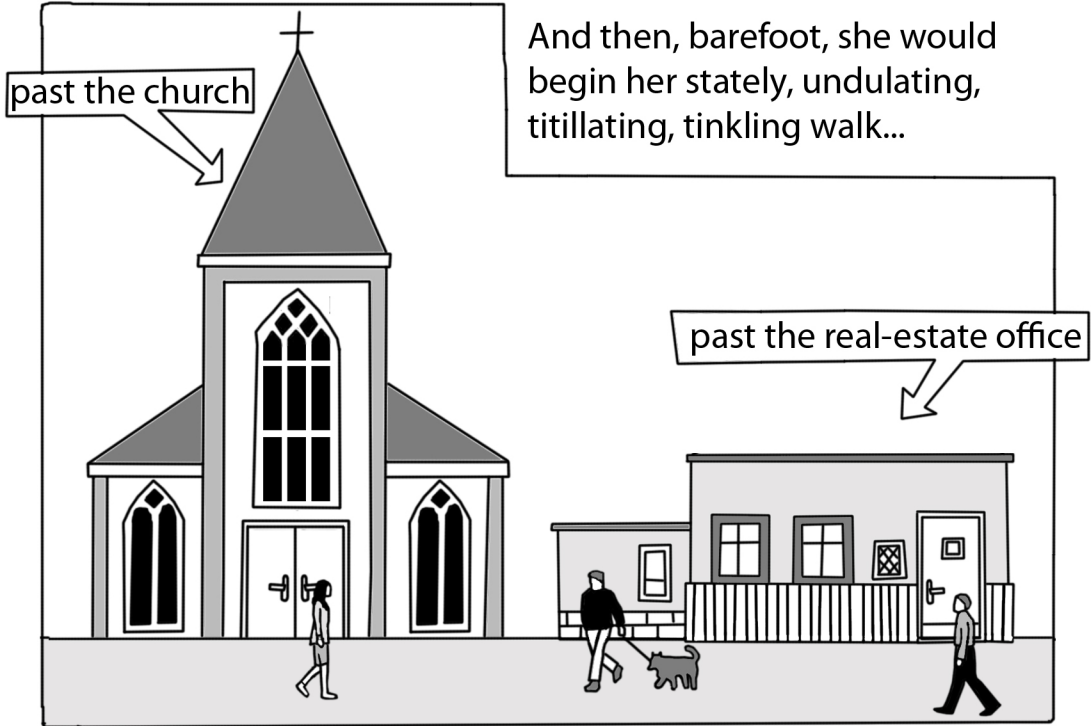


Pour a bowl of milk for her black cat.

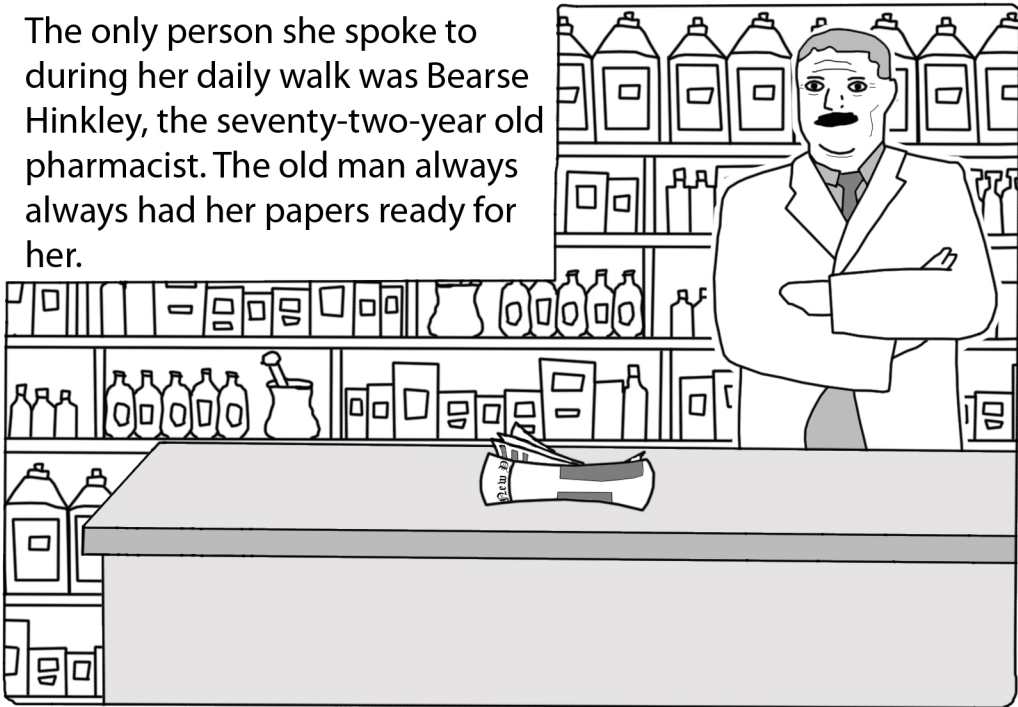


Lock her door.





The only person she spoke to during her daily walk was Bears Hinkley, the seventy-two-year old pharmacist. The old man always always had her papers ready for her.



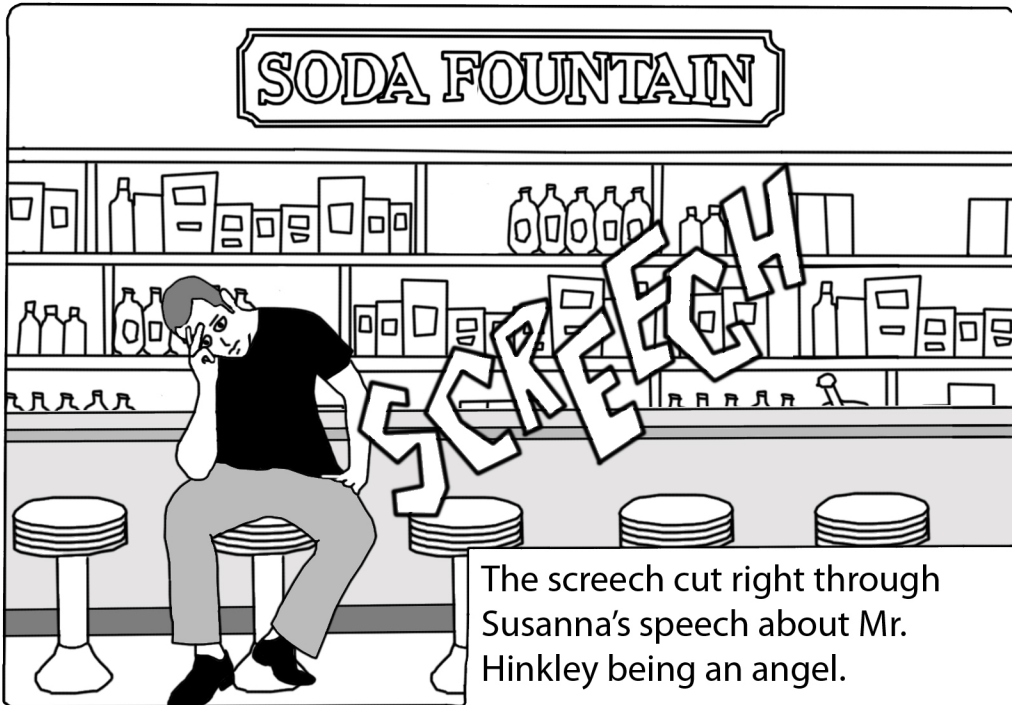
Thank you, Mr. Hinkley.

You're an angel.

Now, let's see what's going on back in civilization.



The one-girl pageant had a ritual sameness until one day toward the end of summer when the air of the drugstore was cut by a cruel, sustained screech from a dry bearing in a revolving soda-fountain stool.



The screech had been made by the stool of Corporal Norman Fuller, just home from eighteen bleak months in Korea. He hadn't consciously meant to make a scene. He turned slowly to look at Susanna. Time had stopped. Fuller explained the expression on his face.

His lips moved, and he heard the words come out.



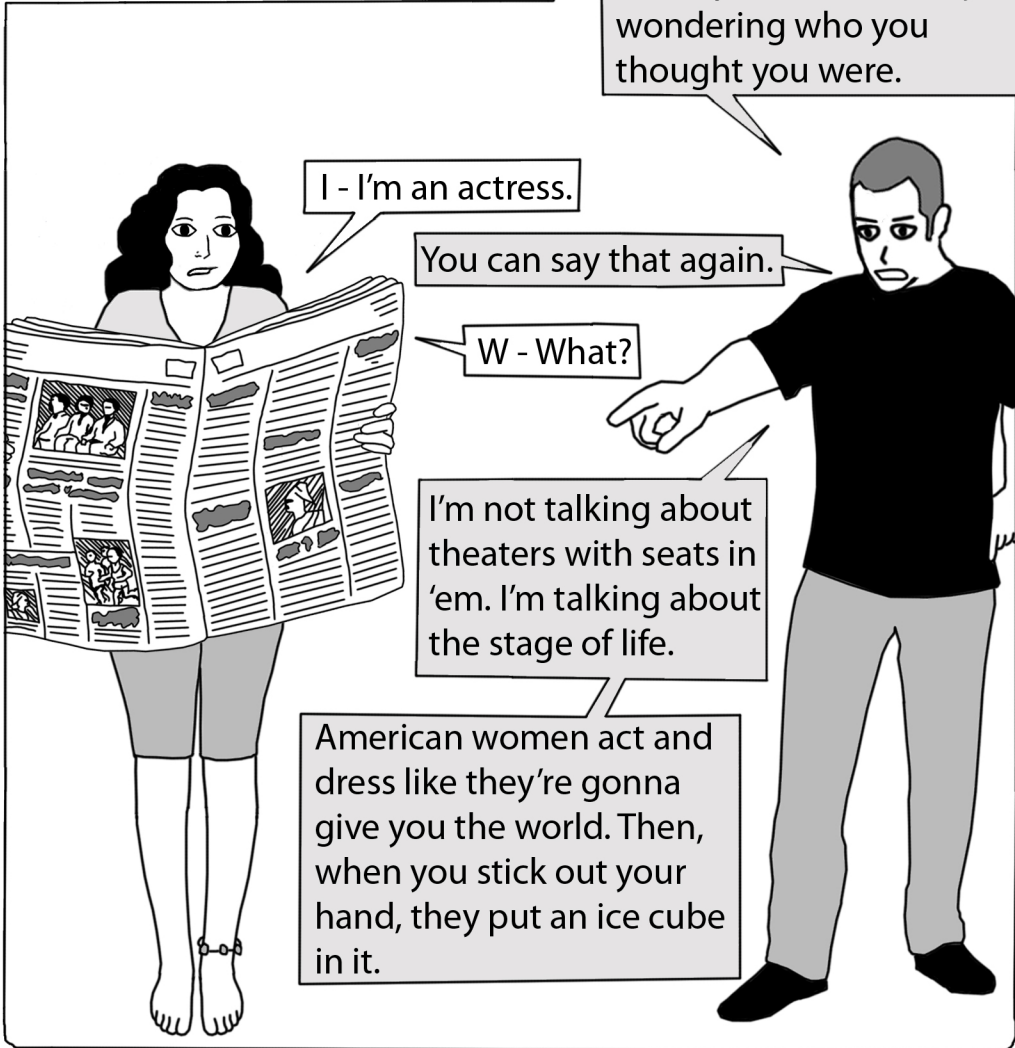
I beg your pardon?

Who do you think you are?



Susanna blushed gloriously and drew her newspaper about herself protectively.

I saw you come down the street like you were a circus parade and was just wondering who you thought you were.



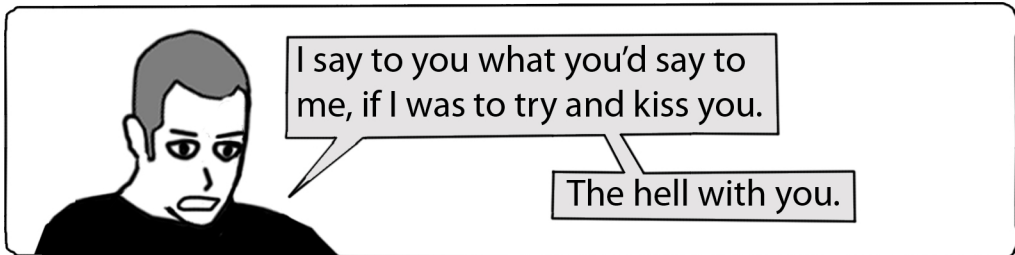
I - I'm an actress.

You can say that again.

W - What?

I'm not talking about theaters with seats in 'em. I'm talking about the stage of life.

American women act and dress like they're gonna give you the world. Then, when you stick out your hand, they put an ice cube in it.

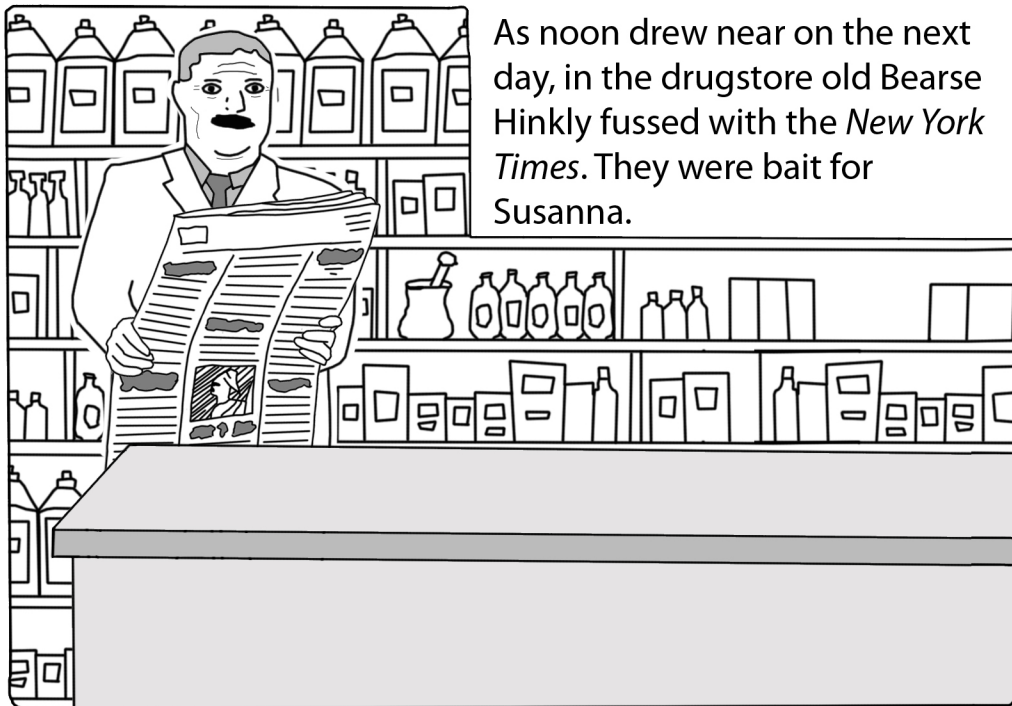
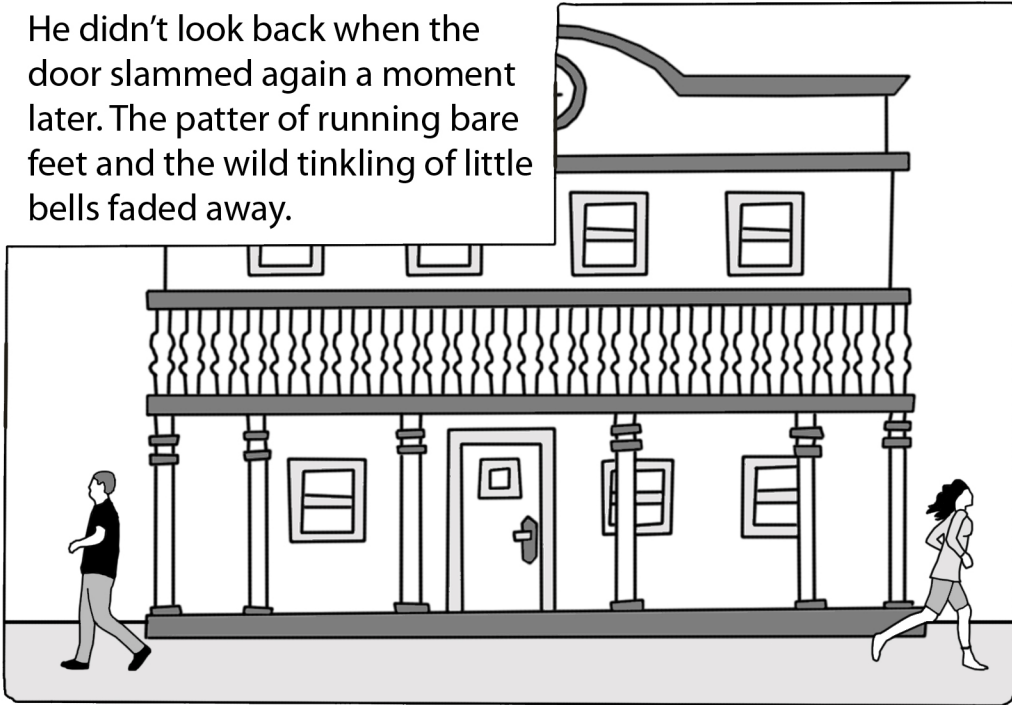


I say to you what you'd say to me, if I was to try and kiss you.

The hell with you.

Fuller left, slamming the door of the drug store behind him.

He didn't look back when the door slammed again a moment later. The patter of running bare feet and the wild tinkling of little bells faded away.



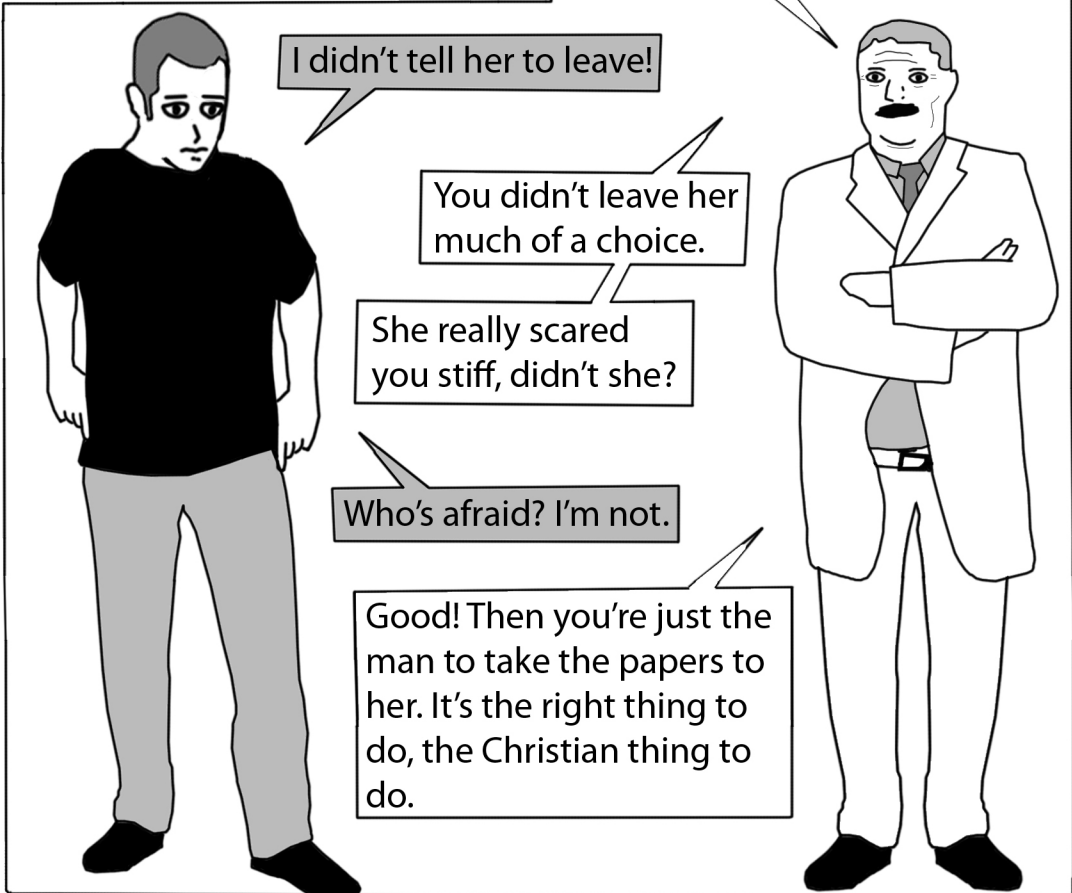
As noon drew near on the next day, in the drugstore old Bears Hinkly fussed with the *New York Times*. They were bait for Susanna.



Moments before noon, Corporal Fuller, the vandal himself, came into the drugstore. On his face was a mixture of guilt and soreheadedness. He found the stool that had screeched so loudly the day before and sat down.

The clock struck noon. The drugstore was deathly still. A few moments passed and Mr. Hinkley gazed out the window in the direction of Susanna's apartment. He looked at Fuller.

Satisfied Corporal? I can see the moving trucks from here.



I didn't tell her to leave!

You didn't leave her much of a choice.

She really scared you stiff, didn't she?

Who's afraid? I'm not.

Good! Then you're just the man to take the papers to her. It's the right thing to do, the Christian thing to do.

As Fuller approached Susanna's door, he was spastic in his efforts to seem casual. Susanna's door was unlatched. When Fuller knocked on it, it swung open. He walked in.



P - Papers. Hinkley sent them.

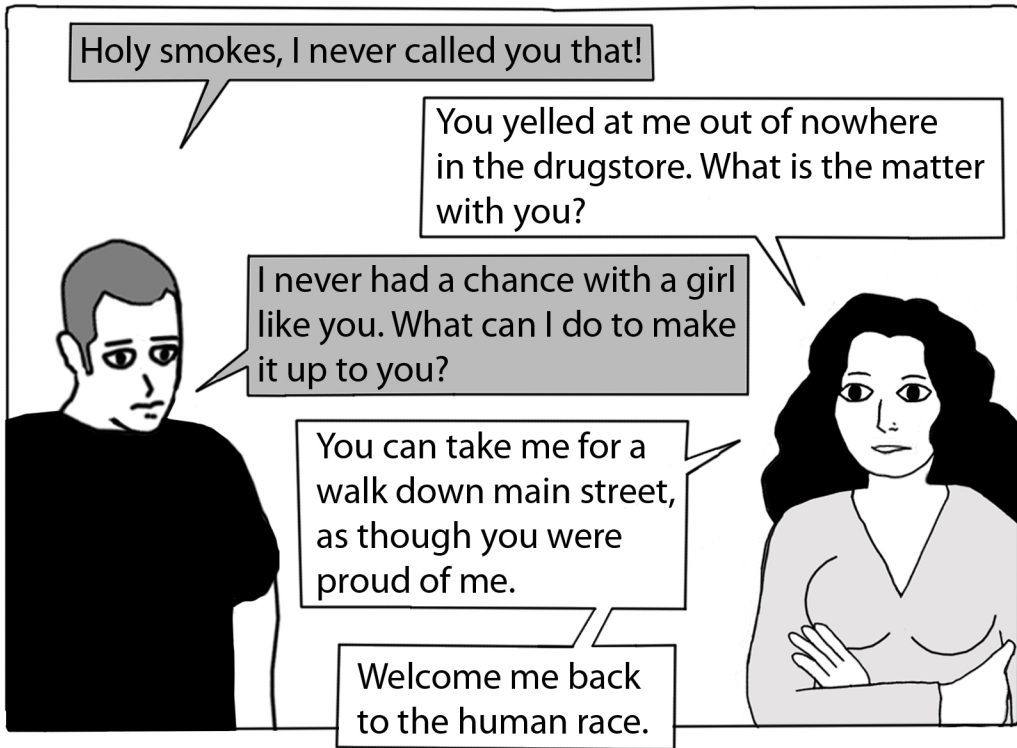
No words came out. Susanna recognized him. She pursed her lips and her small nose reddened.

Is that all you've got to say?

I'm - I - I didn't mean to make you leave.

You suggest I stay? After I've been denounced in public as a scarlet woman?





Holding Fuller's hand lightly, Susanna led him down to the street, past the church, the real-estate office, to the crowded drugstore.

