

If you want to relax and have a think about life, there's nothing better than stretching out in a bathtub full of good hot water. Showerstalls may bring you closer to godliness, but for reflection and rumination on the joys and pains of life, it's the tub for you. Particularly when you want to mull over the pains. They're there, of course, practically at your fingertips, and you can't just ignore them or pretend you don't feel them; but they're

Before Your Eyes not so bad that you can't let your mind wander. Let yourself

go. Stretch out and relax. Be lulled by the water, by the warmth. Just lie back and dream.

But *drip...drip* intrudes from a leaky faucet. Reproachful sound. Have to tighten the handle with your toes. Yes, always could do wonders with your toes: turn doorknobs, pick up coins from the floor, even toss a whole deck of playing cards—one by one—into a hat. But you can't keep this lousy faucet from leaking. No sir, not this cheap rundown faucet in this none too clean bathtub in this all around lousy little out-of-the-way edge-of-town *Psycho*-type motel.

That dribbling faucet could drive a person psycho. *Drip drip dribble* it goes: the sound of the third degree. *Dribbety drip drip drip*: a truly censorious noise. Distantly, a toilet flushes.

How long do you suppose this is supposed to take? Neck's going to start aching soon, lying up to your chin in this none too clean bathtub. And if you have to lie here all night—still, there's not that much pain. Strange how little pain there is. Not at all what you'd imagine.

And you don't feel drowsy or sedated but very much alert, very much on edge—tingling, in fact. Stinging. Like when they were prepping you that second time. "You're beginning to get sleepy, aren't you?" the nurse asked, or rather announced, leaving no doubt about it. But you weren't; you felt all too tenterhooked. And *God!* you thought, suppose they don't believe you? Suppose they go right ahead, put you under the knife like this? You'll have to endure it all—nobody will believe you aren't out, not even if you shout at them or scream in their masked faces and flail about.