

No; they'll just get you down, dig their knees into your stomach, cut away, hack away, anyway.

But of course you did go under after all. "Under" snuck up on your blind side, got you when you weren't looking; sandbagged you. Out like a light. And you went through with it, all three blankety-assed hours of it, which didn't do you a bit of good when all was over and done with.

Not to worry even so, they said; "You can still lead a fairly normal life," they said. *Fairly* normal. Not to worry! What do they know about it? *You* know about it; have known, since earliest childhood. Could never sleep soundly without a nightlight nearby. Victim of an overactive imagination, no doubt. When the darkness comes it's never empty; imagination fills it with the worst sorts of unseen things. Unspeakable but always there, all the time, in dark rooms, in dark moods, waiting—waiting for you to grit your teeth, ready or not, and *look* at them—

—and then they get you, bang-and-slash, *Potemkin*-style: endless bespectacled old bourgeois women with their glasses smashed in.

Like certain pictures in certain books. Mere lines on blank paper, these pictures; but add darkness and they come stepping off their pages, they seize you and possess you and dig their needly knees into your stomach, hack fiendishly away at your brain. Pictures you take great care to skip over, when you look at those certain books.

Except that you'll never be looking at those books again. Never again. As for those pictures—don't kid yourself, friend, you'll see *them* all right; just knowing they're there, you can't help but see them. Even as you used to see them behind scrunched-shut eyelids, in the days when that meant something meaningful...

They say your whole life is supposed to flash in front of your eyes about now. So much for what blankety-asses say—there's nothing; you see nothing. Open those eyes and make sure, now, open them wide: nothing. Not even the darkness, yet...

Of course there's always cremation to look forward to. Flames bright and dazzling, flames leaping up to greet you, to make you warm and welcome: ashes to dust. Urn to put them in, wind to scatter them to. No conqueror

worms need apply here, buster. Cremation, should have mentioned it in your, in your whatever; could have if you'd thought of it. Too late now, of course; feeling kind of giddy. Yes, definitely giddy, lightheaded at last, and by God about time too...

Say: suppose somebody comes in about now and finds you here like this, some maid probably, pushing a trolley full of mops and Comet—oldish bourgeois woman maybe, weak heart, might faint at the sight of you, fall and smash her whatsit in...godawful mess for somebody else to clean up then. Well, her own damn fault, working for an all around *Psycho*-type motel like this...barging into other people's private lives like this, disrupting their ends; disgusting...

And suppose, suppose Norman Bate's mother were to creep in too, knife held high, *EEK EEK EEK!*...only to find you here, all Maratlike. Rub-a-dub-dub, Ma: mission already accomplished...your work already cut out for you, ha ha...strange, how little pain there is. Just like a couple of paper clips—clips? cuts...deep, very deep...nothing to it. Again the distant whatsit flushes. *Dribbety drip drip*: that's your life, pal, there it goes, swirling counterclockety down the, down the... dammit! You're entitled to see your life flash before your eyes...a few years, anyway, a few *months*...stupid ideas anyway, doesn't matter anymore, your life's not worth flashing before anybody's eyes...and your eyes, get this, aren't fit for anybody's life flashing before...fit for nothing, now, except the darkness...