

Eugene sits, sets the clipboard on the table, loosens his collar.

Eleanor hands him a napkin. He wipes his neck.

START →

(Dry, controlled.) So what's to be done?

EUGENE: Done?

There's a sweetness to Eugene, but he's not the sharpest crayon in the box.

Eleanor pushes the clipboard toward him with her fan.

Oh — Well, I guess that all depends on what you're wantin' to report.

ELEANOR: I hired a handyman to renovate my rental house, gave him an advance for materials, and haven't seen him since.

EUGENE: Well — twenty-four hours, anyhow.

ELEANOR: More than twenty-four hours. I hired him on Tuesday, he started on Wednesday, I gave him the advance after supper that night, and today is Friday. More than twenty-four hours.

EUGENE: *(Smiling uneasily.)* I remember you were kind of a stickler for details, Miss Bannister. *(Receiving no response.)* So you're reporting a missing person.

ELEANOR: *(Standing.)* I'm reporting a robbery. Robbery and fraud. Details are important, Eugene.

Eleanor gets a pitcher of lemonade from the refrigerator.

EUGENE: Your kitchen looks a lot nicer somehow than when I was here on Tuesday.

ELEANOR: I got rid of some old things since then.

EUGENE: And your porch is cleared off. Mr. Brown help you with that?

ELEANOR: Before he disappeared with my money, yes.

Eleanor refills Eugene's glass.

EUGENE: The "old things" —

ELEANOR: Went to the charity sale. He didn't take any of that. I boxed it all myself.
(*Stone cold.*) I was in a charitable mood.

Eleanor sets the pitcher on the table.

EUGENE: I still just don't know, Miss Bannister. I crossed paths with Abel quite a few times since he's been in town. Had a nice talk with him right here at this table. Never got a sense that he was up to no good. And he left the note, after all.

ELEANOR: (*Opening a note she's held crumpled in her hand, reading.*) "Something came up. See you later." That's not a note. That's not even a sentence.

EUGENE: Why would he do that if he was skipping out? Just wasn't the sense I got.

ELEANOR: What was the sense you got, Eugene?

EUGENE: (*Momentarily thrown.*) That was funny. I just had the feeling I was back in school — the way you said "Eugene." (*Receiving no response.*) The sense I got — Well — I don't know. Not a bad one. Fact is, everyone in town kind'a took to Abel Brown. I think Miss Grimley has a little crush, to hear her talk about him.

ELEANOR: Miss Grimley?

EUGENE: He fixed the gutters and the broken window at the library — good as new.

ELEANOR: Is that right. Did Miss Grimley give him two thousand dollars as well?

This quiets Eugene. Eleanor goes to the window looking out on her property.

EUGENE: You gave Abel Brown two thousand dollars?

Eleanor considers for a beat, faces Eugene.

ELEANOR: You seem to think you got to know Abel Brown. What exactly do you know?

EUGENE: Well. *(Checking his notes and memory.)* No outstanding warrants. One traffic ticket last year in California — for driving too slow. Nice trailer. Clean. Worked at Right Way Market over in Paleyville for a day, bagging groceries and stocking shelves — but quit. Seemed to like you. Said you thought he was a con man. Liked Groverdell.

ELEANOR: I'm sure he did.

EUGENE: Said it was close enough to family, yet far enough away.

Eleanor takes a moment.

ELEANOR: Family.

EUGENE: Wife and daughter up in Oklahoma. Little rocky, from the way it sounded. Mentioned a granddaughter, though — said he missed her.

Eleanor takes this in, walks to the refrigerator, opens the freezer, sticks her head in, breathing deeply.

END

→ You all right?

~~*Eleanor raises an index finger, takes another moment, takes her head out, closes the freezer, faces Eugene.*~~

ELEANOR: I'm fine, Eugene. Thank you.

EUGENE: About the two thousand dollars —

~~*Eleanor is calm now — steady, certain. She takes a moment before speaking.*~~