

Her skin -for this was her sixth month with child-had acquired a wonderful translucent quality...

She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man...

...she sat very still through it all, watching him with a kind of dazed horror as he went further and further away from her with each word.

It wasn't till then that she began to get frightened.

"Of course I'll give you money and see you're looked after. But there needn't really be any fuss..."

All right then, they would have lamb for supper.

She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.

Did they kill them both - mother and child?

Both the smile and the voice were coming out better now. She rehearsed it several times more.

Do everything right and natural. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for any acting at all.

"It's the old story," he said. "Get the weapon, and you've got the man."

The woman stayed where she was, listening to them speaking among themselves, their voices thick and sloppy because their mouths were full of meat.

"That's a hell of a big club the gut must've used to hit poor Patrick," one of them was saying.

And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle.

She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him as he came in. "Hullo darling," she said.

Her first instinct was not to believe any of it, to reject it all. It occurred to her that perhaps he hadn't even spoken, that she herself had imagined the whole thing.

She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.

"I don't much like cooking it frozen, Sam, but I'm taking a chance on it this time. You think it'll be all right?"

She knew that there were other policemen in the garden all around the house.

"We usually go out Thursdays, you know, and now he's caught me without any vegetables in the house."