

NORMAN. But, you've already filled the buckets.

ETHEL. Don't move. *(He doesn't. She exits into the kitchen. The sound of a motorboat can be heard. Norman looks to the lake.)*

NORMAN. Here comes whatshisname. He'll be bringing the paper, you know. I wouldn't want to miss any career opportunities just because I'm out looking for strawberries.

ETHEL. *(Coming back with an empty bucket.)* I'll pay you, Norman. It could be the beginning of something big. You may become a major strawberry picker.

NORMAN. Not if I have to be bending over all the time. I think you're trying to kill me.

ETHEL. I've thought about it.

NORMAN. You needn't bother. I'm on borrowed time as it is.

ETHEL. Would you please take your cheery personality and get out of here?

NORMAN. Maybe I could lie down to pick the berries.

ETHEL. Would you go on?

NORMAN. Where did you say these strawberries were? Other than on the ground I mean?

ETHEL. On the old town road. Just up from the meadow. *(He exits. Ethel watches him go. There's a look in her eyes, partly concern, partly pleasure at making old Norman get moving. She closes the door and crosses the room, tidies the pile of newspapers. The motor is very loud now. Ethel steps up onto the platform and looks down at the lake. She opens the wooden door and calls through the screen.)* Yoo hoo! Charlie! Hey! *(The motor stops.)* Good morning. Got some coffee on, if you'd like. Come on up, you can take five minutes off. I'll write you a note and you can send it to the Postmaster General. *(She steps quickly to the kitchen where she can be heard banging about. After a moment Charlie Martin appears on the porch. He's a big, round, blond-haired man, weather beaten face, smiling eyes, strong Maine accent. He is indeed a laugher, but not exactly "deficient." In his rustic, simple, thoughtful way, he is actually quite charming. He carries a small package, a rolled newspaper, and several letters. He peers through the screen door.)*

CHARLIE. Morning, Ethel.

ETHEL. *(Opening the kitchen door and leaning out.)* Come in, Charlie, and have a seat. Like a biscuit?

CHARLIE. Sure. *(She goes back inside. Charlie pulls the screen door. It falls back over on him. He wrestles with it and it slams down onto the porch.)* Uh oh. *(Ethel comes back out, having heard the noise.)* I

think I broke your door.

ETHEL. Oh, no. It's been that way for a month now. I should have warned you. Norman is supposed to fix it. It's not high on his list of priorities. I'm afraid.

CHARLIE. *(He sets down the mail and leans the door up against the wall.)* I could give it a try. It's just missing its little thing-amabobbers, that's all.

ETHEL. No, better let Norman get to it. Come in and let's close the big door before every mosquito in the county finds its way in here. *(He steps in, laughing, leaving the mail outside.)*

CHARLIE. Pretty bad this year, huh?

ETHEL. Worse than ever. Sit down. How's your brother? We haven't seen him at all this season.

CHARLIE. You mean Tom?

ETHEL. That's the only brother you have, isn't it?

CHARLIE. Yes. He's fine. He's just come back up from Portland. Got stopped twice for speeding. Once down and once up. *(He laughs.)* By the same policeman. *(He laughs. Ethel comes in with a coffee carafe.)* You should have seen his face.

ETHEL. I love your laugh, Charlie.

CHARLIE. Thank you. *(He laughs.)* Tom wasn't too happy to hear it yesterday. I don't know, it just struck me as awfully funny that he could be stupid enough to be stopped twice by the same cop. When he told me, I couldn't stop laughing. *(He laughs. He stops.)* Tom's not speaking to me anymore now. *(He helps himself to his coffee and grabs a biscuit. Ethel smiles at him.)* Where's Norman?

ETHEL. Norman is off picking strawberries. I threw him out. *(Charlie laughs.)* Don't laugh. *(Charlie stops.)* Norman is restless this year. I don't know what's got into him. How's your mother?

CHARLIE. My mother?

ETHEL. Yes.

CHARLIE. She's holding her own. *(He laughs and laughs.)* She fell down, you know, a couple of months ago.

ETHEL. I didn't know that.

CHARLIE. Yuh, a couple of months ago, right on her rump, when she was out helping clean up the town common with the Ladies' Auxiliary. She was having a tug-a-war with a dead juniper bush, and she won, or lost, depending on how you look at it. *(He laughs.)* She hasn't been normal since. *(He laughs.)* She walks all right, and sleeps and everything. She just can't sit. *(He snickers.)* It's taken a little adjustment. *(He laughs and laughs. Ethel smiles.)* If

Ethel, Charlie