

FRANNY

Comentarios por Roberto Wong

THOUGH brilliantly sunny, Saturday morning was overcoat weather again, not just topcoat weather, as it had been all week and as everyone had hoped it would stay for the big weekend— the weekend of the Yale game¹.

Of the twenty-some young men who were waiting at the station for their dates to arrive on the ten-fifty-two, no more than six or seven were out on the cold, open platform. The rest were standing around in hatless, smoky little groups of twos and threes and fours inside the heated waiting room, talking in voices that, almost without exception, sounded collegiately dogmatic, as though each young man, in his strident, conversational turn, was clearing up, once and for all, some highly controversial issue, one that the outside, non-matriculating world had been bungling, provocatively or not, for centuries.

Lane Coutell, in a Burberry raincoat that apparently had a wool liner buttoned into it, was one of the six or seven boys out on the open platform. Or, rather, he was and he wasn't one of them². For ten minutes or more, he had deliberately been standing just out of conversation range of the other boys, his back against the free Christian Science literature rack, his ungloved hands in his coat pockets. He was wearing a maroon cashmere muffler which had hiked up on his neck, giving him next to no protection against the cold.

Abruptly, and rather absently, he took his right hand out of his coat pocket and started to adjust the muffler, but before it was adjusted, he changed his mind and used the same hand to reach inside his coat and take out a letter from the inside pocket of his jacket. He began to read it immediately, with his mouth not quite closed.

The letter was written—typewritten—on pale-blue notepaper. It had a handled, unfresh look, as if it had been taken out of its envelope and read several times before:

¹ Salinger abre el cuento con dos detalles: el clima (una mañana brillante, pero fría, descrita a partir de la diferencia entre dos prendas: el *overcoat*, que vendría a ser el abrigo, contra el *topcoat*, sin traducción precisa al español pero que podría ser descrita como un abrigo ligero) y una expectativa: buen clima y la llegada del juego de Yale. Hay cierta esperanza reflejada en ese primer párrafo, pero también, una premonición.

² Tan solo el detalle de la gabardina de Lane Coutell sirve para situarlo ya dentro de cierto estereotipo. Sobre él, Salinger resalta: *es, y no, uno de ellos*. Empatizamos con su espera solitaria, con la poca protección que tiene del frío, con el poco interés que tiene de participar en las conversaciones de los otros.

Tuesday I think

DEAREST LANE,

I have no idea if you will be able to decipher this as the noise in the dorm is absolutely incredible tonight and I can hardly hear myself think. So if I spell anything wrong kindly have the kindness to overlook it. Incidentally I've taken your advice and resorted to the dictionary a lot lately, so if it cramps my style your to blame. Anyway I just got your beautiful letter and I love you to pieces, distraction, etc., and can hardly wait for the weekend. It's too bad about not being able to get me in Croft House, but I don't actually care where I stay as long as it's warm and no bugs and I see you occasionally, i.e. every single minute. I've been going i.e. crazy lately. I absolutely adore your letter, especially the part about Eliot. I think I'm beginning to look down on all poets except Sappho. I've been reading her like mad, and no vulgar remarks, please. I may even do my term thing on her if I decide to go out for honors and if I can get the moron they assigned me as an advisor to let me. "Delicate Adonis is dying, Cytherea, what shall we do? Beat your breasts, maidens, and rend your tunics." Isn't that marvellous? She keeps doing that, too. Do you love me? You didn't say once in your horrible letter. I hate you when your being hopelessly super-male and retiscent (sp.?). Not really hate you but am constitutionally against strong, silent men. Not that you aren't strong but you know what I mean. It's getting so noisy in here I can hardly hear myself think. Anyway I love you and want to get this off special delivery so you can get it in plenty of time if I can find a stamp in this madhouse. I love you I love you I love you. Do you actually know I've only danced with you twice in eleven months? Not counting that time at the Vanguard when you were so tight. I'll probably be hopelessly selfconscious. Incidentally I'll kill you if there's a receiving line at this thing. Till Saturday, my flower!!

All my love,

FRANNY

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

P.S. Daddy got his X-rays back from the hospital and we're all so relieved. It's a growth but it isn't malignant. I spoke to Mother on the phone last night. Incidentally she sent her regards to you, so you can relax about that Friday night. I don't even think they heard us come in.

P.P.S. I sound so unintelligent and dimwitted when I write to you. Why? I give you my permission to analyze it. Let's just try to have a marvellous time this weekend. I mean not try to analyze everything to death for once, if possible, especially me. I love you.

FRANCES (her mark)³

Lane was about halfway through this particular reading of the letter when he was interrupted—intruded upon, trespassed upon—by a burly-set young man named Ray Sorenson, who wanted to know if Lane knew what this bastard Rilke was all about. Lane and Sorenson were both in Modern European Literature 251 (open to seniors and graduate students only) and had been assigned the Fourth of Rilke's "Duino Elegies" for Monday. Lane, who knew Sorenson only slightly but had a vague, categorical aversion to his face and manner, put away his letter and said that he didn't know but that he thought he'd understood most of it. "You're lucky," Sorenson said. "You're a fortunate man." His voice carried with a minimum of vitality, as though he had come over to speak to Lane out of boredom or restiveness, not for any sort of human discourse. "Christ, it's cold," he said, and took a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket. Lane noticed a faded but distracting enough lipstick streak on the lapel of Sorenson's camel's-hair coat. It looked as though it had been there for weeks, maybe months, but he didn't know Sorenson well enough to mention it, nor, for that matter, did he give a damn. Besides, the train was arriving. Both boys turned a sort of half left to face the incoming engine. Almost at the same time, the door to the waiting room banged open, and the boys who had been keeping themselves warm began to come out to meet the train, most of them giving the impression of having at least three lighted cigarettes in each hand.

Lane himself lit a cigarette as the train pulled in. Then, like so many people, who, perhaps, ought to be issued only a very probational pass to meet trains, he tried to empty his face of all expression that might quite simply, perhaps even beautifully, reveal how he felt about the arriving person.

Franny was among the first of the girls to get off the train, from a car at the far, northern end of the platform. Lane spotted her immediately, and despite whatever it was he was trying to do with his face, his arm that shot up into the air was the whole truth. Franny saw it, and him, and waved extravagantly

³ La carta requiere especial atención, pues establece varias claves para entender el relato:

- Las emociones fluctuantes de Frances. Pasa de amar la carta de Elan a detestarla, de alabar su carácter a recriminarlo.
- La poesía. Hay una nota casi banal sobre Sappho y la postura de Frances con respecto al resto de los poetas. Cita, para empezar, a una de las pocas poetisas griegas conocidas por sobre nombres que, tal vez, reconoceríamos más fácil: Homero o Hesíodo.
- La relación con Elan. Frances escribe: "he seguido tu aviso y he consultado el diccionario frecuentemente". La que parece una simple e inocente sugerencia es una pista sobre la forma de Elan de controlarla. Irónicamente, la sugerencia parece haber tenido poco éxito: a lo largo de la carta abundan errores ortográficos. Finalmente, Frances da 'permiso' a Elan de analizar la carta, sugiriendo que esto ha sucedido en el pasado—"tratemos de pasarla bien este fin de semana".

back. She was wearing a sheared raccoon coat, and Lane, walking toward her quickly but with a slow face, reasoned to himself, with suppressed excitement, that he was the only one on the platform who really knew Franny's coat. He remembered that once, in a borrowed car, after kissing Franny for a half hour or so, he had kissed her coat lapel, as though it were a perfectly desirable, organic extension of the person herself⁴.

"Lane!" Franny greeted him pleasurably—and she was not one for emptying her face of expression. She threw her arms around him and kissed him. It was a station-platform kiss—spontaneous enough to begin with, but rather inhibited in the follow-through, and with somewhat of a forehead-bumping aspect. "Did you get my letter?" she asked, and added, almost in the same breath, "You look almost frozen, you poor man. Why didn't you wait inside? Did you get my letter?"

"Which letter?" Lane said, picking up her suitcase. It was navy blue with white leather binding, like half a dozen other suitcases that had just been carried off the train.

"You didn't get it? I mailed it Wednesday. Oh, God! I even took it down to the post—"

"Oh, that one. Yes. This all the bags you brought? What's the book?"

Franny looked down at her left hand. She had a small pea-green clothbound book in it. "This? Oh, just something," she said⁵.

She opened her handbag and stuffed the book into it, and followed Lane down the long platform toward the taxi stand. She put her arm through his, and did most of the talking, if not all of it. There was something, first, about a dress in her bag that had to be ironed. She said she'd bought a really darling little iron that looked like it went with a doll house, but had forgotten to bring it. She said she didn't think she'd known more than three girls on the train—Martha Farrar, Tippie Tibbett, and Eleanor somebody, whom she'd met years ago, in her boarding-school days, at Exeter or someplace. Everybody else on the train, Franny said, looked very Smith, except for two absolutely Vassar types and one absolutely Bennington or Sarah Lawrence type⁶. The Bennington-Sarah Lawrence type looked like she'd spent the whole train ride

⁴ De la conversación con Sorenson y el posterior encuentro con Franny se conectan dos imágenes: el abrigo del primero con la marca de un beso impresa en la solapa y aquel día en un coche prestado —el primero como una epifanía del segundo.

⁵ Suceden, aquí, dos cosas. Leane, por una parte, se muestra distraído con respecto a la carta que hasta hace unos minutos leyó por enésima vez —recordemos el detalle que Salinger ofrece: "una apariencia poco fresca, manoseada, como si hubiera sido leída muchas veces". Por otra parte, Franny minimiza el libro que tiene en la mano: "solo es algo". Sobre ese 'algo' transcurrirá el resto del texto.

⁶ Al criticar los estereotipos de las escuelas de la Ivy League —la élite universitaria de los Estados Unidos— critica, a su vez, la homogeneización de la experiencia. Esta es la primer pista del conflicto interno que aqueja a Franny: lo plano de la existencia y la posibilidad de escapar a este destino.

in the John, sculpting or painting or something, or as though she had a leotard on under her dress. Lane, walking rather too fast, said he was sorry he hadn't been able to get her into Croft House—that was hopeless, of course—but that he'd got her into this very nice, cozy place. Small, but clean and all that. She'd like it, he said, and Franny immediately had a vision of a white clapboard rooming house. Three girls who didn't know each other in one room. Whoever got there first would get the lumpy day bed to herself, and the other two would share a double bed with an absolutely fantastic mattress. "Lovely," she said with enthusiasm. Sometimes it was hell to conceal her impatience over the male of the species' general ineptness, and Lane's in particular⁷. It reminded her of a rainy night in New York, just after theatre, when Lane, with a suspicious excess of curbside charity, had let that really horrible man in the dinner jacket take that taxi away from him. She hadn't especially minded that—that is, God, it would be awful to have to be a man and have to get taxis in the rain—but she remembered Lane's really horrible, hostile look at her as he reported back to the curb. Now, feeling oddly guilty as she thought about that and other things, she gave Lane's arm a special little pressure of simulated affection. The two of them got into a cab. The navy-blue bag with the white leather binding went up front with the driver.

"We'll drop your bag and stuff where you're staying—just chuck them in the door— and then we'll go get some lunch," Lane said. "I'm starved." He leaned forward and gave an address to the driver.

"Oh, it's lovely to see you!" Franny said as the cab moved off. "I've missed you." The words were no sooner out than she realized that she didn't mean them at all. Again with guilt, she took Lane's hand and tightly, warmly laced fingers with him⁸.

ABOUT an hour later, the two were sitting at a comparatively isolated table in a restaurant called Sickler's, downtown, a highly favored place among, chiefly, the intellectual fringe of students at the college—the same students, more or less, who, had they been Yale or Harvard men, might rather too casually have steered their dates away from Mory's or Cronin's. Sickler's, it might be said, was the only restaurant in town where the steaks weren't "that thick"— thumb and index finger held an inch apart.

⁷ Pese a que el narrador comenzó el relato con Lean en la estación de tren, se ha trasladado ahora a Franny y sus pensamientos. Este detalle, en apariencia insignificante, es interesante: si el cuento lleva por título el nombre de Franny e, incluso, nos ofrece a momentos sus pensamientos más íntimos, ¿por qué no comenzó la narración con ella? ¿Por qué no comenzamos la lectura, por ejemplo, con Franny llegando a la estación o, incluso, con ella a bordo del tren mirando el paisaje? Por otro lado, la anécdota de Nueva York es un ejemplo de esa "impaciencia sobre la ineptitud de los hombres" y el primer signo de un sentimiento que se irá desarrollando a lo largo del relato.

⁸ Parece claro, en este último párrafo, que la historia se desenvolverá hacia un fin de semana fallido: la derrota del amor, la imposibilidad de la comunicación.

Sickler's was Snails. Sickler's was where a student and his date either both ordered salad or, usually, neither of them did, because of the garlic seasoning. Franny and Lane were both having Martinis. When the drinks had first been served to them, ten or fifteen minutes earlier, Lane had sampled his, then sat back and briefly looked around the room with an almost palpable sense of well-being at finding himself (he must have been sure no one could dispute) in the right place with an unimpeachably right-looking girl—a girl who was not only extraordinarily pretty but, so much the better, not too categorically cashmere sweater and flannel skirt. Franny had seen this momentary little exposure, and had taken it in for what it was, neither more nor less. But by some old, standing arrangement with her psyche, she elected to feel guilty for having seen it, caught it, and sentenced herself to listen to Lane's ensuing conversation with a special semblance of absorption.

Lane was speaking now as someone does who has been monopolizing conversation for a good quarter of an hour or so and who believes he has just hit a stride where his voice can do absolutely no wrong. "I mean, to put it crudely," he was saying, "the thing you could say he lacks is testicularity. Know what I mean?" He was slouched rhetorically forward, toward Franny, his receptive audience, a supporting forearm on either side of his Martini.

"Lacks what?" Franny said. She had had to clear her throat before speaking, it had been so long since she had said anything at all.

Lane hesitated. "Masculinity," he said.

"I heard you the first time."

"Anyway, that was the motif of the thing, so to speak—what I was trying to bring out in a fairly subtle way," Lane said, very closely following the trend of his own conversation. "I mean, God. I honestly thought it was going to go over like a goddam lead balloon, and when I got it back with this goddam 'A' on it in letters about six feet high, I swear I nearly keeled over."

Franny again cleared her throat. Apparently her self-imposed sentence of unadulterated good-listenership had been fully served. "Why?" she asked.

Lane looked faintly interrupted. "Why what?"

"Why'd you think it was going to go over like a lead balloon?"

"I just told you. I just got through saying. This guy Brughman is a big Flaubert man. Or at least I thought he was."

"Oh," Franny said. She smiled. She sipped her Martini. "This is marvellous," she said, looking at the glass. "I'm so glad it's not about twenty to one. I hate it when they're absolutely all gin."

Lane nodded. "Anyway, I think I've got the goddam paper in my room. If we get a chance over the weekend, I'll read it to you."

"Marvellous. I'd love to hear it."

Lane nodded again. "I mean I didn't say anything too goddam world-shaking or anything like that." He shifted his position in the chair. "But—I don't know—I think the emphasis I put on why he was so neurotically attracted to the *mot juste* wasn't too bad. I mean in the light of what we know today. Not just psychoanalysis and all that crap, but certainly to a certain extent. You know what I mean. I'm no Freudian man or anything like that, but certain things you can't just pass over as capital-F Freudian and let them go at that. I mean to a certain extent I think I was perfectly justified to point out that none of the really good boys—Tolstoy, Dostoevski, Shakespeare, for Chrissake—were such goddam word-squeezers. They just wrote. Know what I mean?" Lane looked at Franny somewhat expectantly. She seemed to him to have been listening with extra-special intentness.

"You going to eat your olive, or what?"

Lane gave his Martini glass a brief glance, then looked back at Franny. "No," he said coldly. "You want it?"

"If you don't," Franny said. She knew from Lane's expression that she had asked the wrong question. What was worse, she suddenly didn't want the olive at all and wondered why she had even asked for it. There was nothing to do, though, when Lane extended his Martini glass to her but to accept the olive and consume it with apparent relish. She then took a cigarette from Lane's pack on the table, and he lit it for her and one for himself⁹.

After the interruption of the olive, a short silence came over the table. When Lane broke it, it was because he was not one to keep a punch line to himself for any length of time. "This guy Brughman thinks I ought to publish the goddam paper somewhere," he said abruptly. "I don't know, though." Then, as though he had suddenly become exhausted — or, rather, depleted by the demands made on him by a world greedy for the fruit of his intellect—he began to massage the side of his face with the flat of his hand, removing, with unconscious crassness, a bit of sleep from one eye. "I mean critical essays on Flaubert and those boys are a goddam dime a dozen." He reflected, looking a trifle morose. "As a matter of fact, I don't think there've been any really incisive jobs done on him in the last—"

"You're talking like a section man. But exactly."

"I beg your pardon?" Lane said with measured quietness.

⁹ Franny: la mujer "extremadamente bonita" a la que Lane le gusta presumir en un lugar público como lo es el merendero de Sickler. Desde el primer momento que vio a Lane comenzó a sentirse culpable: por sus pensamientos sobre él, por decir que lo extrañó cuando esto no es así, por darse cuenta del rol decorativo que tiene en ese lugar y en ese momento. Lane, además, monopoliza la conversación: el carácter académico de su escrito se contrapondrá con todo lo que tenga que decir Franny más adelante. Desmotivada, sus participaciones continuamente desvían la charla hacia asuntos banales y culminan con el episodio de la aceituna. La tensión crece.

"You're talking exactly like a section man. I'm sorry, but you are. You really are."

"I am? How does a section man talk, may I ask?"

Franny saw that he was irritated, and to what extent, but, for the moment, with equal parts of self-disapproval and malice, she felt like speaking her mind. "Well, I don't know what they are around here, but where I come from, a section man's a person that takes over a class when the professor isn't there or is busy having a nervous breakdown or is at the dentist or something. He's usually a graduate student or something. Anyway, if it's a course in Russian Literature, say, he comes in, in his little button-down-collar shirt and striped tie, and starts knocking Turgenev for about a half hour. Then, when he's finished, when he's completely ruined Turgenev for you, he starts talking about Stendhal or somebody he wrote his thesis for his M.A. on. Where I go, the English Department has about ten little section men running around ruining things for people, and they're all so brilliant they can hardly open their mouths—pardon the contradiction. I mean if you get into an argument with them, all they do is get this terribly benign expression on their—"

"You've got a goddam bug today—you know that? What the hell's the matter with you anyway?"

Franny quickly tipped her cigarette ash, then brought the ashtray an inch closer to her side of the table. "I'm sorry. I'm awful," she said. "I've just felt so destructive all week. It's awful, I'm horrible."

"Your letter didn't sound so goddam destructive."

Franny nodded solemnly. She was looking at a little warm blotch of sunshine, about the size of a poker chip, on the tablecloth. "I had to strain to write it," she said.

Lane started to say something to that, but the waiter was suddenly there to take away the empty Martini glasses. "You want another one?" Lane asked Franny.

He didn't get an answer. Franny was staring at the little blotch of sunshine with a special intensity, as if she were considering lying down in it.

"Franny," Lane said patiently, for the waiter's benefit. "Would you like another Martini, or what?" She looked up. "I'm sorry." She looked at the removed, empty glasses in the waiter's hand. "No. Yes. I don't know."

Lane gave a laugh, looking at the waiter. "Which is it?" he said.

"Yes, please." She looked more alert.

The waiter left. Lane watched him leave the room, then looked back at Franny. She was shaping her cigarette ash on the side of the fresh ashtray the waiter had brought, her mouth not quite closed. Lane watched her for a moment with mounting irritation. Quite probably, he resented and feared any signs of detachment in a girl he was seriously dating. In any case, he surely was concerned over the possibility that this bug Franny had might bitch up the whole weekend. He suddenly leaned forward, putting his arms on the table, as though to get this thing ironed out, by God, but Franny spoke up before he did.

"I'm lousy today," she said. "I'm just way off today." She found herself looking at Lane as if he were a stranger, or a poster advertising a brand of linoleum, across the aisle of a subway car. Again she felt the trickle of disloyalty and guilt, which seemed to be the order of the day, and reacted to it by reaching over to cover Lane's hand with her own.

She withdrew her hand almost immediately and used it to pick her cigarette out of the ashtray. "I'll snap out of this in a minute," she said. "I absolutely promise." She smiled at Lane—in a sense, genuinely—and at that moment a smile in return might at least have mitigated to some small extent certain events that were to follow, but Lane was busy affecting a brand of detachment of his own, and chose not to smile back. Franny dragged on her cigarette. "If it weren't so late and everything," she said, "and if I hadn't decided like a fool to go out for honors, I think I'd drop English. I don't know." She tipped her ashes. "I'm just so sick of pedants and conceited little tearer-downers I could scream."

She looked at Lane. "I'm sorry. I'll stop. I give you my word. . . . It's just that if I'd had any guts at all, I wouldn't have gone back to college at all this year. I don't know. I mean it's all the most incredible farce."

"Brilliant. That's really brilliant."

Franny took the sarcasm as her due. "I'm sorry," she said.

"Stop saying you're sorry—do you mind? I don't suppose it's occurred to you that you're making one helluva sweeping generalization. If all English Department people were such great little tearer-downers, it would be an altogether different—"

Franny interrupted him, but almost inaudibly. She was looking over his charcoal flannel shoulder at some abstraction across the dining room.

"What?" Lane asked.

"I said I know. You're right. I'm just off, that's all. Don't pay any attention to me."

But Lane couldn't let a controversy drop until it had been resolved in his favor. "I mean, hell," he said. "There are incompetent people in all walks of life. I mean that's basic. Let's drop the goddam section men for a minute." He looked at Franny. "You listening to me, or what?"

"Yes."

"You've got two of the best men in the country in your goddam English Department. Manlius. Esposito. God, I wish we had them here. At least, they're poets, for Chrissake."

"They're not," Franny said. "That's partly what's so awful. I mean they're not real poets. They're just people that write poems that get published and anthologized all over the place, but they're not poets." She stopped, self-consciously, and put out her cigarette.

For several minutes now, she had seemed to be losing color in her face. Suddenly, even her lipstick seemed a shade or two lighter, as though she had just blotted it with a leaf of Kleenex. "Let's not

talk about it," she said, almost listlessly, squashing her cigarette stub in the ashtray. "I'm way off. I'll just ruin the whole weekend. Maybe there's a trapdoor under my chair, and I'll just disappear."

The waiter came forward very briefly, and left a second Martini in front of each of them.

Lane put his fingers—which were slender and long, and usually not far out of sight—around the stem of his glass. "You're not ruining anything," he said quietly. "I'm just interested in finding out what the hell goes. I mean do you have to be a goddam bohemian type, or dead, for Chrissake, to be a real poet? What do you want—some bastard with wavy hair?"

"No. Can't we let it go? Please. I'm feeling absolutely lousy, and I'm getting a terrible—"

"I'd be very happy to drop the whole subject—I'd be delighted. Just tell me first what a real poet is, if you don't mind. I'd appreciate it. I really would."

There was a faint glisten of perspiration high on Franny's forehead. It might only have meant that the room was too warm, or that her stomach was upset, or that the Martinis were too potent; in any case, Lane didn't seem to notice it.

"I don't know what a real poet is. I wish you'd stop it, Lane. I'm serious. I'm feeling very peculiar and funny, and I can't—"

"All right, all right—O.K. Relax," Lane said. "I was only trying—"

"I know this much, is all," Franny said. "If you're a poet, you do something beautiful. I mean you're supposed to leave something beautiful after you get off the page and everything. The ones you're talking about don't leave a single, solitary thing beautiful. All that maybe the slightly better ones do is sort of get inside your head and leave something there, but just because they do, just because they know how to leave something, it doesn't have to be a poem, for heaven's sake. It may just be some kind of terribly fascinating, syntaxy droppings—excuse the expression. Like Manlius and Esposito and all those poor men."¹⁰

¹⁰ Por un lado tenemos a Lane, dominante y agresivo, y por el otro a Franny, arrinconada entre sus culpas y sus opiniones. Los personajes, sin embargo, se desmarcan el uno del otro: la complejidad y dimensiones que muestra Franny la separan de Lane rápidamente. La discusión sobre la poesía es una continuación de la nota inicial en la carta de Franny – *"I think I'm beginning to look down on all poets except Sappho"*. Funciona, también, como un símbolo: un acto de rebeldía ante la dominación masculina –no por nada Sappho es una de las pocas poetas femeninas que destaca de la época clásica griega. Hay un viraje, a partir de este momento, en la actitud y personalidad de Franny: otro registro aparece, derivado probablemente de los últimos meses en la universidad. Algo ha cambiado en ella, algo que tampoco puede articular.

Lane took time to light a cigarette for himself before he said anything. Then: "I thought you liked Manlius. As a matter of fact, about a month ago, if I remember correctly, you said he was darling, and that you—"

"I do like him. I'm sick of just liking people. I wish to God I could meet somebody I could respect. . . . Would you excuse me for just a minute?" Franny was suddenly on her feet, with her handbag in her hand. She was very pale.

Lane got up, pushing back his chair, his mouth somewhat open. "What's the matter?" he asked. "You feel all right? Anything wrong, or what?"

"I'll be back in just a second."

She left the room without asking directions, as though she knew from former lunches at Sick-ler's just where to go.

Lane, alone at the table, sat smoking and taking conservative drinks from his Martini to make it last till Franny got back. It was very clear that the sense of well-being he had felt, a half hour earlier, at being in the right place with the right, or right-looking, girl was now totally gone. He looked over at the sheared-raccoon coat, which lay somewhat askew over the back of Franny's vacant chair—the same coat that had excited him at the station, by virtue of his singular familiarity with it—and he examined it now with all but unqualified disaffection. The wrinkles in the silk lining seemed, for some reason, to annoy him. He stopped looking at it and began to stare at the stem of his Martini glass, looking worried and vaguely, unfairly conspired against. One thing was sure. The weekend was certainly getting off to a goddam peculiar start. At that moment, though, he chanced to look up from the table and see someone he knew across the room—a classmate, with a date. Lane sat up a bit in his chair and adjusted his expression from that of all-round apprehension and discontent to that of a man whose date has merely gone to the John, leaving him, as dates do, with nothing to do in the meantime but smoke and look bored, preferably attractively bored¹¹.

THE ladies' room at Sickler's was almost as large as the dining room proper, and, in a special sense, appeared to be hardly less commodious. It was unattended and apparently unoccupied when Franny came in. She stood for a moment—rather as though it were a rendezvous point of some kind—in the middle of the tiled floor. Her brow was beaded with perspiration now, her mouth was slackly open, and she was still paler than she had been in the dining room. Abruptly, then, and very quickly, she went into the farthest and most anonymous-looking of the seven or eight enclosures—which, by luck, didn't require a coin for entrance—closed the door behind her, and, with some little difficulty, manipulated the bolt to a locked position. Without any apparent regard to the suchness of her environment, she sat down. She brought her

¹¹ Las apariencias, las convenciones sociales: la ruina de Franny.

knees together very firmly, as if to make herself a smaller, more compact unit. Then she placed her hands, vertically, over her eyes and pressed the heels hard, as though to paralyze the optic nerve and drown all images into a voidlike black. Her extended fingers, though trembling, or because they were trembling, looked oddly graceful and pretty. She held that tense, almost fetal position for a suspensory moment—then broke down. She cried for fully five minutes. She cried without trying to suppress any of the noisier manifestations of grief and confusion, with all the convulsive throat sounds that a hysterical child makes when the breath is trying to get up through a partly closed epiglottis. And yet, when finally she stopped, she merely stopped, without the painful, knifelike intakes of breath that usually follow a violent outburst-inburst. When she stopped, it was as though some momentous change of polarity had taken place inside her mind, one that had an immediate, pacifying effect on her body.

Her face tear-streaked but quite expressionless, almost vacuous, she picked up her handbag from the floor, opened it, and took out the small pea-green clothbound book¹². She put it on her lap—on her knees, rather—and looked down at it, gazed down at it, as if that were the best of all places for a small pea-green clothbound book to be. After a moment, she picked up the book, raised it chest-high, and pressed it to her—firmly, and quite briefly. Then she put it back into the handbag, stood up, and came out of the enclosure. She washed her face with cold water, dried it with a towel from an overhead rack, applied fresh lipstick, combed her hair, and left the room.

She looked quite stunning as she walked across the dining room to the table, not at all unlike a girl on the qui vive appropriate to a big college weekend. As she came briskly, smiling, to her chair, Lane slowly got up, a napkin in his left hand.

"God. I'm sorry," Franny said. "Did you think I'd died? "

"I didn't think you'd died," Lane said. He drew her chair for her. "I didn't know what the hell happened." He went around to his own chair. "We don't have any too goddam much time, you know." He sat down. "You all right? Your eyes are a little bloodshot." He looked at her more closely. "You O.K., or what?"¹³

¹² La descripción del llanto de Franny es perturbadora: parece cortar el papel y llegar directamente hasta nosotros. Los espasmos, la posición fetal, los movimientos de la epiglotis: todo contribuye a demostrar que sus lágrimas no son una mera rabieta. Hay algo más: un rompimiento. Entonces sucede: Franny saca el libro que, durante el episodio en la estación de tren minimizó, y lo presiona contra su pecho.

¹³ Podríamos situar una segunda parte del cuento a partir de este momento. Hemos visto ya una evolución del personaje: de su inicial represión hasta el momento catártico del baño. Lane, por su parte, no se entera de nada. El detalle de los ojos parece confirmar algo que nos ha dicho el narrador hace poco: una preocupación sobre las apariencias, solamente.

Franny lit a cigarette. "I'm marvellous now. I just never felt so fantastically rocky in my entire life. Did you order?"

"I waited for you," Lane said, still looking at her closely. "What was the matter anyway? Your stomach?"

"No. Yes and no. I don't know," Franny said. She looked down at the menu on her plate, and consulted it without picking it up. "All I want's a chicken sandwich. And maybe a glass of milk. ... You order what you want and all, though. I mean, take snails and octopuses and things. Octopi. I'm really not at all hungry."

Lane looked at her, then exhaled a thin, overly expressive stream of smoke down at his plate. "This is going to be a real little doll of a weekend," he said. "A chicken sandwich, for God's sake."

Franny was annoyed. "I'm not hungry, Lane —I'm sorry. My gosh. Now, please. You order what you want, why don't you, and I'll eat while you're eating. But I can't just work up an appetite because you want me to."

"All right, all right." Lane craned his neck and caught the waiter's attention. A moment later, he ordered the chicken sandwich and the glass of milk for Franny, and snails, frogs' legs, and a salad for himself. He looked at his wrist-watch when the waiter had gone, and said, "We're supposed to be up at Tenbridge at one-fifteen, one-thirty, incidentally. No later. I told Wally we'd probably stop off for a drink and then maybe we'd all go out to the stadium together in his car. You mind? You like Wally."

"I don't even know who he is."

"You've met him about twenty times, for God's sake. Wally Campbell. Jesus. If you've met him once, you've met him—"

"Oh. I remember. . . . Listen, don't hate me because I can't remember some person immediately. Especially when they look like everybody else, and talk and dress and act like everybody else." Franny made her voice stop. It sounded to her cavilling and bitchy, and she felt a wave of self-hatred that, quite literally, made her forehead begin to perspire again. But her voice picked up again, in spite of herself. "I don't mean there's anything horrible about him or anything like that. It's just that for four solid years I've kept seeing Wally Campbells wherever I go¹⁴. I know when they're going to be charming, I know when they're going to start telling you some really nasty gossip about some girl that lives in your dorm, I know when they're going to ask me what I did over the summer, I know when they're going to pull up a chair and straddle it backward and start bragging in a terribly, terribly quiet voice—or name-dropping in a terribly quiet, casual voice. There's an unwritten law that people in a certain social or financial bracket

¹⁴ A partir de este momento comienza el asalto de Franny contra los convencionalismos de su vida, contra los estereotipos que su grupo social se encarga de repetir. Al final, esto no es sino un reproche a su propia vida.

can name-drop as much as they like just as long as they say something terribly disparaging about the person as soon as they've dropped his name—that he's a bastard or a nymphomaniac or takes dope all the time, or something horrible."

She broke off again. She was quiet for a moment, turning the ashtray in her fingers and being careful not to look up and see Lane's expression. "I'm sorry," she said. "It isn't just Wally Campbell. I'm just picking on him because you mentioned him. And because he just looks like somebody that spent the summer in Italy or someplace."

"He was in France last summer, for your information," Lane stated. "I know what you mean," he added quickly, "but you're being goddam un—"

"All right," Franny said wearily. "France." She took a cigarette out of the pack on the table. "It isn't just Wally. It could be a girl, for goodness' sake. I mean if he were a girl—somebody in my dorm, for example—he'd have been painting scenery in some stock company all summer. Or bicycled through Wales. Or taken an apartment in New York and worked for a magazine or an advertising company. It's everybody, I mean. Everything everybody does is so—I don't know—not wrong, or even mean, or even stupid necessarily. But just so tiny and meaningless and sad-making. And the worst part is, if you go bohemian or something crazy like that, you're conforming just as much as everybody else, only in a different way.¹⁵" She stopped. She shook her head briefly, her face quite white, and for just a fractional moment she felt her forehead with her hand—less, it seemed, to find out whether she was perspiring than to check to see, as if she were her own parent, whether she had a fever. "I feel so funny," she said. "I think I'm going crazy. Maybe I'm already crazy."

Lane was looking at her with genuine concern—more concern than curiosity.

"You're pale as hell. You're really pale—you know that?" he asked.

Franny shook her head. "I'm fine. I'll be fine in a minute." She looked up as the waiter came forward with their orders. "Oh, your snails look beautiful." She had just brought her cigarette to her lips, but it had gone out. "What'd you do with the matches?" she asked.

¹⁵ Albert Camus dijo que la pregunta fundamental de la filosofía debiera ser preguntarnos si la vida vale la pena ser vivida o no. El absurdo de vivir desborda y se manifiesta en la tensión de Franny. Claramente, aquí reside el centro de su malestar, es la razón misma por la que ya no le interesa la universidad, ni las clases de teatro. Sus preguntas, además, reflejan una clara preocupación post-guerra: la homogeneización de la experiencia (Lukács), es decir, la reducción de las posibilidades humanas a un cúmulo de experiencias prefabricadas –Italia o Francia, da igual. Al día de hoy, estos procesos se aceleran a una velocidad dramática a partir de la globalización y la estandarización de los patrones de consumo.

Lane gave her a light when the waiter had gone. "You smoke too much," he said. He picked up the small fork beside his plate of snails, but looked at Franny again before he used it. "I'm worried about you. I'm serious. What the hell's happened to you in the last couple of weeks?"

Franny looked at him, then simultaneously shrugged and shook her head. "Nothing. Absolutely nothing," she said. "Eat. Eat them snails. They're terrible if they're cold."

"You eat."

Franny nodded and looked down at her chicken sandwich. She felt a faint wave of nausea, and looked up immediately and dragged on her cigarette.

"How's the play?" Lane asked, attending to his snails.

"I don't know. I'm not in it. I quit."

"You quit?" Lane looked up. "I thought you were so mad about the part. What happened? They give it to somebody else?"

"No, they did not. It was all mine. That's nasty. Oh, that's nasty."

"Well, what happened? You didn't quit the whole department, did you?"

Franny nodded, and took a sip of her milk. Lane waited till he had chewed and swallowed, then said, "Why, for God's sake? I thought the goddam theatre was your passion. It's about the only thing I've ever heard you—"

"I just quit, that's all," Franny said. "It started embarrassing me. I began to feel like such a nasty little egomaniac." She reflected. "I don't know. It seemed like such poor taste, sort of, to want to act in the first place. I mean all the ego. And I used to hate myself so, when I was in a play, to be backstage after the play was over. All those egos running around feeling terribly charitable and warm. Kissing everybody and wearing their makeup all over the place, and then trying to be horribly natural and friendly when your friends came backstage to see you. I just hated myself. . . . And the worst part was I was usually sort of ashamed to be in the plays I was in. Especially in summer stock." She looked at Lane. "And I had good parts, so don't look at me that way. It wasn't that. It was just that I would've been ashamed if, say, anybody I respected—my brothers, for example—came and heard me deliver some of the lines I had to say. I used to write certain people and tell them not to come." She reflected again. "Except Pegeen in 'Playboy,' last summer. I mean that could have been really nice, only the goon that played the Playboy spoiled any fun it might have been. He was so lyrical—God, was he lyrical!"

Lane had finished his snails. He sat looking deliberately expressionless. "He got terrific reviews," he said. "You sent me the reviews, if you recall."

Franny sighed. "All right. O.K., Lane."

"No, I mean you've been talking for a half hour as though you're the only person in the world that's got any goddam sense, any critical ability. I mean if some of the best critics thought this man was

terrific in the play, maybe he was, maybe you're wrong. That ever occur to you? You know, you haven't exactly reached the ripe, old—"

"He was terrific for somebody that just has talent. If you're going to play the Playboy right, you have to be a genius. You do, that's all—I can't help it," Franny said. She arched her back a trifle, and, with her mouth a trifle open, she put her hand on top of her head. "I feel so woozy and funny. I don't know what's the matter with me."

"You think you're a genius?"

Franny took her hand down from her head. "Aw, Lane. Please. Don't do that to me."

"I'm not doing any—"

"All I know is I'm losing my mind," Franny said. "I'm just sick of ego, ego, ego. My own and everybody else's. I'm sick of everybody that wants to get somewhere, do something distinguished and all, be somebody interesting. It's disgusting—it is, it is. I don't care what anybody says."

Lane raised his eyebrows at that, and sat back, the better to make his point.

"You sure you're just not afraid of competing?" he asked with studied quietness. "I don't know too much about it, but I'd lay odds a good psychoanalyst—I mean a really competent one—would probably take that statement—"

"I'm not afraid to compete. It's just the opposite. Don't you see that? I'm afraid I will compete—that's what scares me. That's why I quit the Theatre Department. Just because I'm so horribly conditioned to accept everybody else's values, and just because I like applause and people to rave about me, doesn't make it right. I'm ashamed of it. I'm sick of it. I'm sick of not having the courage to be an absolute nobody. I'm sick of myself and everybody else that wants to make some kind of a splash." She paused, and suddenly picked up her glass of milk and brought it to her lips. "I knew it," she said, setting it down. "That's something new. My teeth go funny on me. They're chattering¹⁶. I nearly bit through a glass the day before yesterday. Maybe I'm stark, staring mad and don't know it." The waiter had come forward to serve Lane's frogs' legs and salad, and Franny looked up at him. He, in turn, looked down at her untouched chicken sandwich. He asked if the young lady would perhaps like to change her order. Franny thanked him, and said no.

"I'm just very slow," she said. The waiter, who was not a young man, seemed to look for an instant at her pallor and damp brow, then bowed and left.

"You want to use this a second?" Lane said abruptly. He was holding out a folded, white handkerchief. His voice sounded sympathetic, kind, in spite of some perverse attempt to make it sound matter-of-fact.

¹⁶ Para acentuar el efecto, la ansiedad adquiere una dimensión física.

"Why? Do I need it?"

"You're sweating. Not sweating, but I mean your forehead's perspiring quite a bit."¹⁷

"It is? How horrible! I'm sorry. . . ." Franny brought her handbag up to table level, opened it, and began to rummage through it. "I have some Kleenex somewhere."

"Use my handkerchief, for God's sake. What the hell's the difference?"

"Wo—I love that handkerchief and I'm not going to get it all perspiry," Franny said. Her handbag was a crowded one. To see better, she began to unload a few things and place them on the tablecloth, just to the left of her untasted sandwich. "Here it is," she said. She used a compact mirror and quickly, lightly blotted her brow with a leaf of Kleenex. "God. I look like a ghost. How can you stand me?"

"What's the book?" Lane asked¹⁸.

FRANNY literally jumped. She looked down at the disorderly little pile of handbag freight on the tablecloth. "What book?" she said. "This, you mean?" She picked up the little clothbound book and put it back into her handbag. "Just something I brought to look at on the train."

"Let's have a look. What is it?"

Franny didn't seem to hear him. She opened her compact again and took another quick glance into the mirror. "God," she said. Then she cleared everything—compact, billfold, laundry bill, toothbrush, a tin of aspirins, and a gold-plated swizzle stick—back into her handbag. "I don't know why I carry that crazy gold swizzle stick around," she said. "A very corny boy gave it to me when I was a sophomore, for my birthday. He thought it was such a beautiful and inspired gift, and he kept watching my face while I opened the package. I keep trying to throw it away, but I simply can't do it. I'll go to my grave with it." She reflected. "He kept grinning at me and telling me I'd always have good luck if I kept it with me at all times."

Lane had started in on his frogs' legs. "What was the book, anyway? Or is it a goddam secret or something?" he asked.

"The little book in my bag?" Franny said. She watched him disjoint a pair of frogs' legs. Then she took a cigarette from the pack on the table and lit it herself. "Oh, I don't know," she said. "It's something called 'The Way of a Pilgrim.'¹⁹ " She watched Lane eat for a moment. "I got it out of the library. This

¹⁷ Idem. Pareciera que la súbita consciencia de su cuerpo regresa a Franny a su estado anterior —como por un acto de magia, se disculpa con Lane y abre su bolso para mirarse en el espejo.

¹⁸ El libro, de nueva cuenta, aparece. J.D. Salinger revela, de esta manera, que los detalles importan. Todo está premeditado.

¹⁹ [Más sobre este libro puede ser leído aquí.](#)

man that teaches this Religion Survey thing I'm taking this term mentioned it." She dragged on her cigarette.

"I've had it out for weeks. I keep forgetting to return it."

"Who wrote it?"

"I don't know," Franny said casually. "Some Russian peasant, apparently." She went on watching Lane eat his frogs' legs. "He never gives his name. You never know his name the whole time he's telling the story. He just tells you he's a peasant and that he's thirty-three years old and that he's got a withered arm. And that his wife is dead. It's all in the eighteen-hundreds."

Lane had just shifted his attention from the frogs' legs to the salad. "Any good?" he said. "What's it about?"²⁰

"I don't know. It's peculiar. I mean it's primarily a religious book. In a way, I suppose you could say it's terribly fanatical, but in a way it isn't. I mean it starts out with this peasant—the pilgrim—wanting to find out what it means in the Bible when it says you should pray incessantly. You know. Without stopping. In Thessalonians or someplace.

So he starts out walking all over Russia, looking for somebody who can tell him how to pray incessantly. And what you should say if you do." Franny seemed intensely interested in the way Lane was dismembering his frogs' legs. Her eyes remained fixed on his plate as she spoke. "All he carries with him is this knapsack filled with bread and salt. Then he meets this person called a starets—some sort of terribly advanced religious person—and the starets tells him about a book called the Thilokalia.' "Which apparently was written by a group of terribly advanced monks who sort of advocated this really incredible method of praying."

"Hold still," Lane said to a pair of frogs' legs.

"Anyway, so the pilgrim learns how to pray the way these very mystical persons say you should—I mean he keeps at it till he's perfected it and everything. Then he goes on walking all over

²⁰ Piglia apunta, en su "Tesis del cuento", que el problema del cuento reside en contar una historia mientras se está contando otra. "La versión moderna del cuento", dice Piglia, "trabaja la tensión entre las dos historias sin resolverla nunca". En este caso, sin embargo, Franny toma el papel del narrador, contando una historia dentro de la historia, sin aparente relación entre sí. El proceso, sin embargo, subvierte el punto de atención e, inconscientemente, nos ofrece más información de Franny y Lane de lo que ellos mismos han podido decir. Como alegoría, dicho momento en una síntesis del choque entre el idealismo y el materialismo. El contraste es claro: mientras que Franny dedica toda su atención a la historia del monje, Lane se enfoca en comer las ancas de rana y hablar de su aliento. Resulta forzoso que veamos cómo, mientras Franny intenta alejarse del mundo, Lane la retiene en la realidad material del momento, en lo mundano del olor y textura de su comida.

Russia, meeting all kinds of absolutely marvellous people and telling them how to pray by this incredible method. I mean that's really the whole book."

"I hate to mention it, but I'm going to reek of garlic," Lane said.

"He meets this one married couple, on one of his journeys, that I love more than anybody I ever read about in my entire life," Franny said. "He's walking down a road somewhere in the country, with his knapsack on his back, when these two tiny little children run after him, shouting, 'Dear little beggar! Dear little beggar! You must come home to Mummy. She likes beggars.' So he goes home with the children, and this really lovely person, the children's mother, comes out of the house all in a bustle and insists on helping him take off his dirty old boots and giving him a cup of tea. Then the father comes home, and apparently he loves beggars and pilgrims, too, and they all sit down to dinner. And while they're at dinner, the pilgrim wants to know who all the ladies are that are sitting around the table, and the husband tells him that they're all servants but that they always sit down to eat with him and his wife because they're sisters in Christ."

Franny suddenly sat up a trifle straighter in her seat, self-consciously. "I mean I loved the pilgrim wanting to know who all the ladies were." She watched Lane butter a piece of bread. "Anyway, after that, the pilgrim stays overnight, and he and the husband sit up till late talking about this method of praying without ceasing. The pilgrim tells him how to do it. Then he leaves in the morning and starts out on some more adventures. He meets all kinds of people—I mean that's the whole book, really—and he tells all of them how to pray by this special way. "

Lane nodded. He cut into his salad with his fork. "I hope to God we get time over the weekend so that you can take a quick look at this goddam paper I told you about," he said. "I don't know. I may not do a damn thing with it —I mean try to publish it or what have you— but I'd like you to sort of glance through it while you're here."

"I'd love to," Franny said. She watched him butter another piece of bread. "You might like this book," she said suddenly. "It's so simple, I mean."

"Sounds interesting. You don't want your butter, do you?"

"No, take it. I can't lend it to you, because it's way overdue already, but you could probably get it at the library here. I'm positive you could."

"You haven't touched your goddam sandwich," Lane said suddenly. "You know that?" Franny looked down at her plate as if it had just been placed before her. "I will in a minute," she said. She sat still for a moment, holding her cigarette, but without dragging on it, in her left hand, and with her right hand fixed tensely around the base of the glass of milk. "Do you want to hear what the special method of praying was that the starets told him about?" she asked. "It's really sort of interesting, in a way."

Lane cut into his last pair of frogs' legs. He nodded. "Sure," he said. "Sure."

"Well, as I said, the pilgrim—this simple peasant—started the whole pilgrimage to find out what it means in the Bible when it says you're supposed to pray without ceasing. And then he meets this starets—this very advanced religious person I mentioned, the one who'd been studying the Thilokalia' for years and years and years." Franny stopped suddenly to reflect, to organize. "Well, the starets tells him about the Jesus Prayer first of all. 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.' I mean that's what it is. And he explains to him that those are the best words to use when you pray. Especially the word 'mercy,' because it's such a really enormous word and can mean so many things²¹. I mean it doesn't just have to mean mercy." Franny paused to reflect again. She was no longer looking at Lane's plate but over his shoulder. "Anyway," she went on, "the starets tells the pilgrim that if you keep saying that prayer over and over again—you only have to just do it with your lips at first—then eventually what happens, the prayer becomes self-active.

Something happens after a while. I don't know what, but something happens, and the words get synchronized with the person's heartbeats, and then you're actually praying without ceasing. Which has a really tremendous, mystical effect on your whole outlook. I mean that's the whole point of it, more or less. I mean you do it to purify your whole outlook and get an absolutely new conception of what everything's about."

Lane had finished eating. Now, as Franny paused again, he sat back and lit a cigarette and watched her face. She was still looking abstractedly ahead of her, past his shoulder, and seemed scarcely aware of his presence.

"But the thing is, the marvellous thing is, when you first start doing it, you don't even have to have faith in what you're doing. I mean even if you're terribly embarrassed about the whole thing, it's perfectly all right. I mean you're not insulting anybody or anything.

In other words, nobody asks you to believe a single thing when you first start out. You don't even have to think about what you're saying, the starets said. All you have to have in the beginning is quantity. Then, later on, it becomes quality by itself. On its own power or something. He says that any name of God—any name at all—has this peculiar, selfactive power of its own, and it starts working after you've sort of started it up."

Lane sat rather slouched in his chair, smoking, his eyes narrowed attentively at Franny's face. Her face was still pale, but it had been paler at other moments since the two had been in Sickler's.

²¹ La traducción literal en español es "misericordia", pero entre los significados que tiene en inglés están: compasión, bendición divina, suerte o circunstancia afortunada, trato compasivo en situación de aflicción o angustia.

"As a matter of fact, that makes absolute sense," Franny said, "because in the Nembutsu sects of Buddhism, people keep saying 'Namu Amida Butsu' over and over again—which means 'Praises to the Buddha' or something like that—and the same thing happens. The exact same—"

"Easy. Take it easy," Lane interrupted. "In the first place, you're going to burn your fingers any second."

Franny gave a minimal glance down at her left hand, and dropped the stub of her still-burning cigarette into the ashtray. "The same thing happens in 'The Cloud of Unknowing,' too. Just with the word 'God.' I mean you just keep saying the word 'God.' "

She looked at Lane more directly than she had in several minutes. "I mean the point is did you ever hear anything so fascinating in your life, in a way? I mean it's so hard to just say it's absolute coincidence and then just let it go at that—that's what's so fascinating to me.

At least, that's what's so terribly—" She broke off. Lane was shifting restively in his chair, and there was an expression on his face—a matter of raised eyebrows, chiefly—that she knew very well. "What's the matter?" she asked.

"You actually believe that stuff, or what?"²²

Franny reached for the pack of cigarettes and took one out. "I didn't say I believed it or I didn't believe it,"²³ she said, and scanned the table for the folder of matches. "I said it was fascinating." She accepted a light from Lane. "I just think it's a terribly peculiar coincidence," she said, exhaling smoke, "that you keep running into that kind of advice— I mean all these really advanced and absolutely unbogus

²² Lane intenta controlar una vez más a Franny, pero ella ha alcanzado su registro más alto: ya no le importa lo que piense, ni intenta complacerlo. Parece que, ante la crisis de la existencia que atraviesa, existe todavía una oportunidad: ver a Dios.

²³ En el cuento *Zooey* se discute, de nueva cuenta, la ruta de salvación que persigue Franny:

"Me estás diciendo que quiero algo de la Oración de Jesús, y, por lo tanto, en realidad soy tan ambiciosa, por usar la misma palabra que tú, como la persona que quiere un abrigo de martas, o ser famosa, o estar nadando en un absurdo prestigio. ¡Ya sé todo eso! Dios mío, ¿Qué clase de imbécil crees que soy? El temblor de su voz había aumentado hasta ser casi un impedimento. — Está bien, tranquilízate, tranquilízate —¡No puedo tranquilizarme! ¡Me pones frenética! ¿Qué crees que estoy haciendo en esta habitación, perdiendo peso sin parar, preocupando terriblemente a Bessie y a Les (sus padres), trastornando la casa y todo eso? ¿No crees que tengo suficiente sentido común para que me preocupen mis motivos para rezar la Oración de Jesús? Eso es exactamente lo que me angustia. El hecho de que sea más exigente respecto a lo que deseo, en este caso lucidez, o paz, en lugar de dinero o prestigio o fama o cualquiera de esas cosas, no significa que no sea tan egoísta y egocéntrica como los demás. ¡En todo caso, más! ¡No necesito que el famoso Zachary Glass me lo diga!"

religious persons that keep telling you if you repeat the name of God incessantly, something happens, Even in India.

In India, they tell you to meditate on the 'Om,' which means the same thing, really, and the exact same result is supposed to happen. So I mean you can't just rationalize it away without even—"

"What is the result?" Lane said shortly.

"What?"

"I mean what is the result that's supposed to follow? All this synchronization business and mumbo-jumbo. You get heart trouble? I don't know if you know it, but you could do yourself, somebody could do himself a great deal of real—"

"You get to see God. Something happens in some absolutely nonphysical part of the heart—where the Hindus say that Atman resides, if you ever took any Religion—and you see God, that's all." She flicked her cigarette ash self-consciously, just missing the ashtray. She picked up the ash with her fingers and put it in. "And don't ask me who or what God is. I mean I don't even know if He exists. When I was little, I used to think—"

She stopped. The waiter had come to take away the dishes and redistribute menus.

"You want some dessert, or coffee?" Lane asked.

"I think I'll just finish my milk. But you have some," Franny said. The waiter had just taken away her plate with the untouched chicken sandwich. She didn't dare to look up at him.

Lane looked at his wristwatch. "God. We don't have time. We're lucky if we get to the game on time." He looked up at the waiter. "Just coffee for me, please." He watched the waiter leave, then leaned forward, arms on the table, thoroughly relaxed, stomach full, coffee due to arrive momentarily, and said, "Well, it's interesting, anyway. All that stuff... I don't think you leave any margin for the most elementary psychology. I mean I think all those religious experiences have a very obvious psychological background—you know what I mean. . . . It's interesting, though. I mean you can't deny that." He looked over at Franny and smiled at her. "Anyway. Just in case I forgot to mention it. I love you. Did I get around to mentioning that?"

"Lane, would you excuse me again for just a second?" Franny said. She had got up before the question was completely out.

Lane got up, too, slowly, looking at her. "You all right?" he asked. "You feel sick again, or what?"

"Just funny. I'll be right back."

She walked briskly through the dining room, taking the same route she had taken earlier. But she stopped quite short at the small cocktail bar at the far end of the room.

The bartender, who was wiping a sherry glass dry, looked at her. She put her right hand on the bar, then lowered her head—bowed it—and put her left hand to her forehead, just touching it with the fingertips. She weaved a trifle, then fainted, collapsing to the floor.

IT was nearly five minutes before Franny came thoroughly to. She was on a couch in the manager's office, and Lane was sitting beside her. His face, suspended anxiously over hers, had a remarkable pallor of its own now.

"How are ya?" he said, in a rather hospital-room voice. "You feel any better?"

Franny nodded. She closed her eyes for a second against the overhead light, then reopened them.

"Am I supposed to say 'Where am I?'" she said. "Where am I?"

Lane laughed. "You're in the manager's office. They're all running around looking for spirits of ammonia and doctors and things to bring you to. They'd just run out of ammonia, apparently. How do you feel? No kidding."

"Fine. Stupid, but fine. Did I honestly faint?"

"And how. You really conked out," Lane said. He took her hand in his. "What do you think's the matter with you anyway? I mean you sounded so—you know—so perfect when I talked to you on the phone last week. Didn't you eat any breakfast, or what?"

Franny shrugged. Her eyes looked around the room. "It's so embarrassing," she said.

"Did somebody have to carry me in here?"

"The bartender and I. We sort of hoisted you in. You scared the hell out of me, I'm not kidding."

Franny looked thoughtfully, without blinking, at the ceiling while her hand was held. Then she turned and, with her free hand, made a gesture as though to push back the cuff of Lane's sleeve. "What time is it?" she asked.

"Never mind that," Lane said. "We're in no hurry."

"You wanted to go to that cocktail party."

"The hell with it."

"Is it too late for the game, too?" Franny asked.

"Listen, I said the hell with it. You're going to go back to your room at whosis—Blue Shutters—and get some rest, that's the important thing," Lane said. He sat a trifle closer to her and bent down and kissed her, briefly. He turned and looked over at the door, then back at Franny. "You're just going to rest this afternoon. That's all you're going to do."

He stroked her arm for a moment. "Then maybe after a while, if you get any decent rest, I can get upstairs somehow. I think there's a goddam back staircase. I can find out."

Franny didn't say anything. She looked at the ceiling.

"You know how long it's been?" Lane said. "When was that Friday night? Way the hell early last month, wasn't it?" He shook his head. "That's no good. Too goddam long between drinks. To put it crassly." He looked down at Franny more closely. "You really feel better?"

She nodded. She turned her head toward him. "I'm terribly thirsty, that's all. Do you think I could have some water? Would it be too much trouble?"

"Hell, no! Will you be all right if I leave you for a second? You know what I think I'll do?"

Franny shook her head to the second question.

"I'll get somebody to bring you some water. Then I'll get the headwaiter and call off the spirits of ammonia—and, incidentally, pay the check. Then I'll get a cab all ready, so we won't have to hunt all around for one. It may take a few minutes, because most of them will be cruising around for people going out to the game." He let go Franny's hand and got up. "O.K.?" he said.

"Fine."

"O.K., I'll be right back. Don't move." He left the room.

Alone, Franny lay quite still, looking at the ceiling. Her lips began to move, forming soundless words, and they continued to move²⁴.

²⁴ Los labios que se mueven no son otra cosa que esa oración en silencio que Franny está repitiendo desde hace, tal vez, semanas. Las convencionalidades de la clase alta de Estados Unidos se presentan con una fuerza brutal que parece romper en dos a Franny. Ante la homogeneización de la vida, la única alternativa que encuentra es el misticismo de ese libro. Su regreso, después del episodio del baño, refleja su transformación y su lucha interna contra todo lo mundano. Ha sobrevivido, pero el abismo que ha mirado es la vida misma y la única alternativa posible es problemática por definición: el ostracismo del peregrino.

Se ha criticado, bajo el argumento de que es poco convincente, el interés de Salinger de conciliar cierta crítica materialista con el misticismo cristiano. El intercambio, se ha dicho, es casi trivial. Esto, sin embargo, no es un argumento contundente: sabemos que los dos personajes son triviales, no son sino un par de jóvenes universitarios privilegiados. Lo relevante, entonces, es el conflicto y la posibilidad de escape. Otros han elegido otros caminos: la autopista, las drogas, las ciudades imaginadas, los libros; todas mentiras dentro de una mentira más grande que llamamos vida.