

Forces · Sarah Getty

POLLY MAYNARD WAS A SAINT, I always said so. It's been a year since she died, so she must be getting used to heaven by now. I wonder whether the saints know everything, the way God does. I mean, does Polly look down at me and say to herself, "Now, what is Grace up to? I thought she was going to marry Jack!" Jack is Polly's husband, or used to be. I was the widow next door, and it's true that I had designs on him. But things don't always happen the way we think they will. There are forces at work.

I started studying these forces last year, when Polly was still with us. She hardly ever got up; she lay most of the day on the couch by the patio doors. I was reading about the streams of energy that flow along certain lines on the earth, and I was glad to see that Polly's couch was oriented North and South, because that is the way anyone's bed should be in order to get the benefit of the forces. After all, think of the hours you spend lying there, even if you're well. With the bed aligned right, the forces can run through you while you rest and clear out the negative energy and so on.

Now you're probably saying to yourself, "This is one of those kooks from California talking," but I assure you I am *not* from California. I didn't even want to move out here when Stanley retired from the U., but his heart was set on it. I am a perfectly lucid old lady from Ames, Iowa. I read Jane Austen and I attend St. Barbara's Episcopal Church down on El Camino. However, I have lived long enough to know that there are more things in heaven and earth than our philosophy has dreamed of.

I used to visit Polly every Wednesday afternoon after square-dancing and every Sunday after church. Actually, I saw her just about every day, but on Wednesday and Sunday we'd have a real visit. I had a strict rule about that. For a time, on Sundays, I would just ride home with Jack after church, but I gave that up the week I realized that during church I had been praying for Polly's death. There are certain things a Christian simply is not allowed. I told Jack I needed the exercise, and, though I can drive myself, I walked to church and back even if it was raining. It was my penance.

I was so in love with Jack I couldn't see straight. I had hoped that Polly didn't know it, but she wasn't one of those simple-minded saints. One

Wednesday I was sitting with her—the patio doors were open and that heavenly air was bringing in the smell of Jack’s roses and just a hint of the ocean off on the horizon. I was telling her about the square-dancing maneuvers: not the dos-a-dos, but the wiles of the widows. Those girls will do anything to get attention. I described how Matty Waterhouse, brazenly pretending she had a blister, held onto Jack’s arm and leaned over and showed her bosom to all and sundry while she took off her shoe. Maybe I embroidered the tale a bit—I do like to tell an amusing story and besides, Matty, who dolls herself up like the Mother of Frankenstein’s Bride, used to make me ragged with jealousy.

I remember how Polly laughed, carefully, as if it might hurt her. Then she looked straight at me. Her blue eyes were so bright those last weeks—I never knew whether it was from the pain or the pain-killers. “I’m sorry she was holding onto Jack when she did it, Grace,” she said. “That must have irked you, feeling about him the way you do.”

Well. Though I knew Polly loved me like a sister, it was hard to know just how to answer that. I blushed until my eyes watered, and finally said something like “I just can’t stand it when some birdbrain like Matty goes after him.”

“Grace,” she said, “I want to say this.” Her face took on that lit-up look, like a shell with the sun on it, that made me certain she was leaving us. “I’m glad you love Jack. It comforts me to think of the two of you . . . together.”

She was too tactful, you see, to say “after I’m dead,” or even “when I’m gone.” She wouldn’t call attention to herself like that. Nevertheless, I was so flustered I blurted out, “But Jack doesn’t think of me that way!” I don’t know, really, whether I was defending his virtue or complaining. But it was true: although I have always attracted my share of compliments, he never gave me a look that wasn’t on the up-and-up.

“Oh, don’t be *modest*,” she said. Like many saints, she was lukewarm on the conventional virtues. “Jack’s preoccupied now,” she went on. She looked down at her thin little hands. She even pushed a sleeve up to look at her wrist, which was like a bone. “But he thinks the world of you. You’ll be a great comfort to him. I like to think of that.”

“Well, good,” was all I could manage. It didn’t seem right to deny anything, in light of what she’d said. In my embarrassment I fell to straightening the shawl that covered her—a gorgeous embroidered thing I got for

her when Stanley and I went to Spain in 1978. Then, just to make my agony complete, Jack came in with a bunch of yellow roses. He is a tall man with a beautiful head of white hair, and as for the state of his body—let’s just say that in jeans and a cowboy shirt Jack makes Ronald Reagan look like Willard Scott. He has that “Let me handle this” style that some Western men carry off so well. As soon as he came in and stood there, with the roses glowing in his hands, you could feel the energy coming out of him, filling up the room.

“Polly Ann,” he said. “What do you think that tank’s for—a door-stop?” He hardly saw me, which was a mercy. He went straight over to the couch, handing me the roses as he went by. “Could you find a vase for those, Gracie?” Then he was fiddling with Polly’s breathing tube. “Oxygen’s not doing you any good inside the tank, woman!”

Polly said, “Darling, I don’t really need it when I’m not even sitting up. I can breathe okay.”

“Okay’s not good enough. You need pure oxygen for your red cells. You can’t fight this thing without red cells.”

He kept trying to stick the tube into her nose and she kept moving her head. That didn’t seem like something you should watch, so I got up quickly and went into the kitchen with the flowers. “Let me do it *myself*,” she said, and when I came back with the roses in a Monterey Jade bowl she was lying there with the tube taped to her cheek. Jack looked grimly satisfied, like John Wayne after he’s cleared out a nest of varmints.

“Doc Kraler says breathe oxygen, you breathe oxygen. Problem and solution, simple as that.” Polly patted his hand and sneaked a little look at me. Jack knew how bad she was, but he couldn’t always admit it. He was used to being the one who made things happen. And when you were with him you felt he could do it—just shrivel the cancer with his will power.

I put the flowers on the coffee table and Polly exclaimed as if she hadn’t ever seen a rose before. Jack told her there were plenty more where those came from. Then he noticed me. “So, Amazing Grace,” he said. Jack isn’t one to let an old joke die peacefully. “Feet recovered yet?”

I explained to Polly, “I was complaining to Jack about the number of *ways* men manage to hurt my feet when we’re dancing. Charlie Phillips steps on you—you remember—and Ralph sort of abrades the side of your foot when you swing, and Howard what’s-his-name *kicks* my instep every time. If I could draw I’d make an illustrated catalogue. A Kama-Sutra of foot abuse.”

Polly chuckled at that, and Jack squinted at me and went “huh” the way he does when he doesn’t know what you’re talking about. Jack can’t stand to be on the outside of anything but, bless his soul, he’s just not the best *read* man you’ve ever met.

Polly said, “Poor Grace. I hope you got to dance with Ernie McIntyre today. I don’t think his feet even touch the ground. Like dancing with Fred Astaire, I always thought.”

“Oh, Ernie,” I said. “Isn’t he a cupcake? He was my partner twice. But the trouble with square-dancing is that you keep switching around. I just wanted to drag him out of the square and make him waltz with me.”

Polly was patting Jack’s hand again, to make up for our praising another man. But that’s the way people always talk about Ernie: he’s just a man that everybody loves. And he’s short enough to match up when you take hold of him; I don’t care for dancing with my nose on somebody’s middle shirt button. Ernie and his wife, Laura, were the President of the Square Dance Club. You should have seen them together, like a pair of little dolls. And dance! They once won second prize, I believe it was, in a West Coast Ballroom Championship. With your glasses off you might take them for college kids, they were so trim and peppy.

“Huh,” said Jack. “If Ernie stepped on your foot, you wouldn’t even feel it. Little runt can’t weigh more than eighty pounds.” But he was just pretending to be jealous, flirting with us.

Just then we heard a siren, an ambulance coming down El Camino, turning into the entrance to the Village, and starting to wind around the hill. The place is laid out in concentric levels, like Dante’s Paradise; our two houses—the Maynards’ and mine, a unit with a common wall—are right at the top. We sat there and followed the wailing sound. I seemed almost to *see* the ambulance climbing—I have these flashes sometimes, like second sight. It’s quite a common gift, actually. But when the siren stopped on the level below us, I couldn’t quite tell where it was.

“O’Malleys’?” guessed Polly. “Cora Kneeland?” I said. “Maybe Fred Primack’s heart,” said Jack, and that seemed to settle it. Polly put her hand on the phone, but Jack stopped her. “Leave it to the grapevine, honey. We’ll hear soon enough.”

Suddenly the situation was too much for me—the implications, if you know what I mean. You hear sirens around here night and day; you might even get used to them. But sitting there with Polly, I was afraid I might

break down and disturb the positive energy that Jack was giving out.

“Goodness!” I said, getting up, “It’s time for my yoga program!” I gave Polly a kiss, and then I had to kiss Jack. It was something I went through every visit. That time it was worse than usual, with Polly watching and our conversation still running in my head. His cheek smelled of a shaving lotion unfortunately named “Chaps,” which I had learned almost to like for his sake.

During my yoga program I microwaved a leftover chimichanga from Taco Bell and had my dinner. It isn’t true that you have to *do* the yoga exercises while the show is on. The main thing is to absorb the energy that Liliias, the teacher, or Yogin, projects through the TV. I always sit right up close to the set and eat while I’m watching. It only stands to reason that the energy is penetrating the food, too, so that I get a double dose. There is nothing about this that a Christian can’t recognize and respect. I stand firmly with those who believe that all religions are tapping into the same great set of forces.

Now, if you’re of a scientific turn of mind you will no doubt discount everything I say about the forces, because no one has weighed one yet. Jack, for instance, would have said “baloney” if I tried to explain them. But doubt has no effect on facts. The forces exist, and I hope that, in time, you will become more broad-minded, as I have. For Jack, I fear, it is too late. He is a product of his time, when people were afraid of “crazy notions.” But nowadays these ideas are becoming quite common. One of my granddaughters even gave me a sweatshirt last Christmas that says, “The Force Be With You” on it. I wear it sometimes when I’m gardening and also when I do my yoga exercises. I *do* do my yoga, you see, but not when Liliias’ program is on. That seems quite straightforward to me, although some people find it hard to understand.

While I ate, I could also see out into the yard, and into Jack’s patio, where he was talking to Jorge, the head yardman, about his roses. I was sitting behind my big split-leaf philodendron, so I wasn’t afraid that he could see me watching. Jorge was measuring out fertilizer, and Jack hung right over his shoulder while he mixed it up and fed it to the plants. He pretended he was just being friendly, but I knew, and Jorge knew, that Jack was there to make sure he did it right. Jack got fanatical about those roses last year; it was like he was trying to force them into bloom.

During the evening news, I got a phone call. It was Laura, Ernie McIn-

tyre's wife, calling about refreshments for the next week's square-dancing. I said of course I'd bring something, as long as I didn't have to bake it, and then she asked if I had heard about Fred Primack.

"Oh, no!" I said, "Is that who the ambulance was for?"

"Yes, but it's not so bad as they thought. Marie said he's feeling fine now and they're just going to keep him in the hospital over night. He had a little chest pain, and she didn't even wait for his pill to act before she called them. She's so nervous, you know."

"Well, better safe than sorry, Laura." I was remembering Stanley's last heart attack, three years before, and my chimichanga was sitting poorly. I steadied myself by staring at the Hopi God's-eye on the wall above my sink. "We have to look after these menfolks." *Menfolks* is a word I would never use on my own, but you develop certain ways of talking in a place like this.

After we hung up it occurred to me that Laura would make a fine wife for Jack after Polly died. She had a lot of backbone. She was healthy, except for a little blood pressure, and she was well organized; Jack would like that. Of course, the trouble was, she was married, and Ernie had the constitution of a pack mule. It was silly even to think of it, but I had a way of doing that: running down lists of women Jack might marry and thinking what I'd do if he did. If he married Elizabeth Cunningham, for instance, I'd simply have to dig up my hibiscus and move. If he married Matty Waterhouse I'd kill him. I wouldn't kill her, though; I'd make her live on and on, tormented by grief and desire.

Before I went to bed that night, I went out to the edge of my yard, where the hill falls away to the next level in a steep bank covered with ice-plant. I looked down over the roofs of Buena Vista Village, and across the valley and way out to the ocean. I could actually see it, a fragment of glass reflecting moonlight out on the horizon. I liked to think of all that was going on there—the whales singing to each other and the dolphins quoting Plato and even the sharks, who can't help it if they're hungry. I looked at the Maynards' house. The moon was full enough to show the different colors of the roses along the patio. There was one light on in the house, in the bedroom. I couldn't help wondering what they did—whether Polly was strong enough to make love at all. She had said to me once that she was getting too sick to be a woman. That would be the worst, I think, to lose your husband that way, while you were still alive.

Some people imagine it's the normal thing, but don't you believe it.

So I went to my own bed, missing Stanley terribly, but filled with longing for Jack. We had had twin beds, and after Stanley died I had his moved out to the porch, as an extra for when my children visit. But my bed should have been shifted too. It was aligned exactly wrong, with the head to the East wall, under my collection of Japanese fans, and the foot to the West. I sometimes indulged myself, at bedtime, in a fantasy about how I would get it turned around. I would ask Jack to help me move it. Then when we were grappling with the bed I would—well, the details varied from one time to another, but I'm sure you can guess the outcome.

These were not mere airy fancies, you understand. They were my entire sex life, except for the occasional fantasy featuring one of the yardmen. Having been an avid reader since the age of six, I'm quite skilled at bringing imaginary scenes to life. Afterwards, of course, I felt guilty about Polly. Waiting for someone's wife to die is bad enough, but one sees so much of it around here; it's Nature's way, I suppose. Wanting to have Jack right now, rehearsing it in my mind, was another matter. Before I slept, I would say a prayer asking God to forgive me and to make Polly go into a miraculous remission.

That night I lay there for a long time waiting for sleep. I could feel the lines of force running crosswise through the room; it was like lying in a canoe being bumped and jostled by sideways waves. Even in my sleep I was uncomfortable: I kept coming half-awake and thinking, "I must get this boat turned tomorrow" and dropping off again. And there was a siren. It seemed to go on a long time, winding around and around our hill. I thought I was probably dreaming it. I also dreamed about Jack. He was with me in the boat, strapping Polly's oxygen tank to my back; he wanted me to go scuba diving off the long pier on Mariposa Beach. He said there were beautiful flowers down there, hidden among the rocks, and I should bring some up for Polly. I kept telling him that the tank was too heavy, it would pull me down and drown me. But he wouldn't listen, and then I was cold and sinking, with the weight on my back like a stone. . . .

The phone woke me before eight the next morning—too early to be anything but bad news. My heart was beating hard even before I heard Polly's voice saying, "Grace, I have something sad to tell you. Very sad. Are you sitting down?"

"Lying," I said. I thought my God, something's happened to Jack, this is my punishment.

“Ann Brentano just called us. You know—the McIntyres’ neighbor. Laura had a stroke during the night, maybe you heard the ambulance? She died at four this morning. I knew you’d want to know.”

“Laura McIntyre? But I just talked to her last night!”

“Yes, apparently she was fine when she went to bed. It was just—sudden. It’s hard to believe.”

But I could tell that Polly believed it easily. She spoke patiently, like a grown-up talking to a child. And she was right. Living here in Buena Vista is like waiting in a big airline terminal with a crowd of people on standby. We should be prepared, but every sudden departure is a shock.

I got dressed and went out to feel the sun warm up the morning. Dew-drops, tiny rainbow flashes in the grass, winked and dried away while I stood there. I could almost hear Jack’s roses opening, popping like fireworks, pinwheels and puffs of color. It was clear to me that the world must be full of positive forces, to counteract whatever could erase Laura McIntyre overnight. I said a little prayer for Laura and asked God to sustain Ernie in his loss. Then I had a quick breakfast and went on down to the McIntyres’ house.

As I expected, there were widows everywhere. Elizabeth Cunningham arrived when I did, carrying a casserole. Ann Brentano came to the door and let us in. Cora Reynolds and the unbearable Matty Waterhouse were in the kitchen, and Violet Pfeifer was in the living room on the phone. Poor Ernie wasn’t home, he was somewhere dealing with “arrangements.”

I went into the kitchen, where Cora and Matty were arguing about which casserole to freeze and which to put into the fridge. The counter top—the yellow and blue tiles that Laura had picked out herself at the factory in Oaxaca—was covered with food. Cakes, pies, casseroles, Tupperware, baking pans wrapped in foil. Every one an offering from a widow. You might wonder how they got that cooking done so early in the day, but believe me, they have their ways. You see, a retirement community is like a medieval manor: there are three distinct social classes. At the top are the widowers, the pampered few. In the middle are the couples, the doughty villagers. At the bottom are the widows, the serfs. Excellent women in their own right, but desperate. And when someone as popular and healthy as Ernie is suddenly elevated to widower status, there is a stampede not unlike the opening up of Oklahoma to homesteaders in April of 1889.

And am I not a widow myself, I hear you asking. Well, yes, but I always exempted myself from the wars because of Jack. Nobody else could hold my interest. And I cook just as little as I can, so I wasn't about to show up on Ernie's doorstep with paella.

"My Hacienda cheese-and-chili casserole *cannot* be frozen," Matty was saying. "It would decompose. I'll heat it up for Ernie tonight and he can finish it for lunch tomorrow." I noticed that her hair had changed color since the day before; instead of blue, it had a sort of pinkish cast, like old-fashioned peach ice cream.

"But Matty," Cora remonstrated. "He'll need something more substantial tonight. And chilies are terribly hard on a person's stomach who's under stress. He should have something, oh, like a nice lamb stew." She put her plump little hand, with all its turquoise rings, on the Tupperware container labeled "Cora Reynolds." The label, you understand, was just so Ernie could return the container to the right person.

The two of them gave me a glance, then went back to their argument, like two major powers ignoring a third world country. And they were right, I had no status in the kitchen. I went back into the hall and down to the bedroom, by way of the linen closet. It was too early to clear out Laura's clothes; that would have to wait for Ernie's permission. But I have a little service I perform on these occasions: I change the sheets. It helps to distance the memory of that last awful night. And a fresh pillow case, to my mind, is always a promise of better things to come.

I must admit it satisfied my curiosity to see the McIntyres' bedroom (I suspect that everyone who reads a lot is, at heart, a snoop). Their bed was huge; you could imagine them having to search for each other, like the couple in that limerick who ended up foot to head. The headboard had a built-in bookcase, with Laura's mysteries and Ernie's "real books," the kind he says they don't write any more. On the walls were some Mexican hangings and the usual pictures of grandchildren. Laura's dresser was rather a mess—drawers left open and scarves and bracelets and lipsticks jumbled about. I straightened it up and dusted it with a kleenex, hoping someone would do the same for me if I went suddenly and other women descended on my house.

The sheets I had chosen were a nice, soothing blue. I hoped they would remind Ernie of the sky—the infinite, in the light of which our sorrows are so small. Laura's pillowcase smelled nicely of some cologne or night

cream. It made me pause, but then I went ahead and stripped it off. As far as I could figure out, the bed was oriented diagonally to the lines of force. I decided to speak to Ernie about it at some more appropriate time.

As I loaded the bed linen into the washing machine, I could hear Matty insisting in the kitchen, “The chilies are *very* mild, and cheese is an excellent source of protein.” I thought I might become rude if I saw her again, so I sneaked out of the house by the utility room door. Let some other widow get points for transferring the wet sheets to the dryer.

It was the same at the funeral two days later: widows, dressed to the teeth, trampling each other in the attempt to stand near Ernie. At one point, just when Father Snyder was saying, “Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts,” it looked like Matty was going to get jostled right into the grave. But alas, she only swayed and regained her balance.

I turned to Jack then, just to see if he had noticed, and saw something rather shocking. He wasn’t looking at Matty in particular, but at the whole crowd of women around Ernie. And the look on his face was — not jealous, exactly. Intrigued. Eager. Shrewd. In fairness, I knew that it had nothing to do with his devotion to Polly. It was just his natural ambition, his sense of what he had coming to him.

When it was all over, and Jack and I were walking to the car, Ernie caught up with us and thanked me for doing the flowers in the church — not those stiff things from the florist, but the real flowers, which I had arranged in silver bowls up on the altar. Matty was trailing after him, sniffing and dabbing at her face, as if she ever cared a thing about Laura.

“The roses were beautiful,” Ernie said. He looked like he hadn’t slept since Laura died, but there he was, just like Ernie, taking the trouble to thank me for the roses.

“You should thank Jack, actually,” I said. “I took them from his yard.”

It was a sort of confession, for Jack hadn’t been too pleased with me when he saw the state of his rose bushes that morning. I explained to him that there are priorities, and that the earth yields her increase for the good of all, but he couldn’t see it. Now he was walking along next to Matty, giving her his handkerchief, asking if she had a ride back to the Village.

“Why, how sweet of you,” she bleated. “I’m so upset I didn’t even think about how I’d get back.” It was a blatant lie, but I didn’t much mind, she looked such a fright with her mascara dripping down into her wrinkles.

Jack helped Matty into his long white Lincoln as if *she* were the be-reaved one. While he walked around to the driver's side she got out her compact and went to work on her face. I gave Ernie's hand a squeeze and got into the back seat. He waved as we pulled away; I could see that he was relieved that the funeral was over. He would probably feel unburdened and a little numb for a few days, wading in the shallows of grief. Next week, or the next, the breakers would come crashing in.

I thought of him, alone in his big bed, and I wished I had put on other sheets, not that cold blue. Then I had the most amazing flash—I saw the bedroom, and the bed, and Ernie, and *myself*, right in there with him. And I knew that I wasn't just imagining it, because the sheets were different. They were sheets I've never seen before, sheets from the future, with a zigzag pattern in earth tones, like a mountain range. You could have knocked me over with a feather.

I realized then that Jack was talking, reminding me about Polly's radiation treatment. He was taking her to the hospital that afternoon, and she would stay over night. As usual, we'd arranged that I would make his dinner.

"Why, Jack, you should have told me," Matty said. "I have an extra casserole at home, and you know Grace just *hates* to cook."

"Oh, well"—Jack gave his Shucks, Ma'am chuckle. "She cooks for *me*. I mean, she's no fancy chef, but she's reliable, aren't you Gracie?" This meant he'd forgiven me about the roses, but somehow I didn't warm to it.

"So, Grace," Jack laid his arm along the top of the seat and talked slant-wise back at me. "I figure I'll be home from the hospital about 6:15, ready to put on the feedbag. OK?"

Well, I just felt like laughing. But I didn't. I said, "Certainly." I have always prided myself on my good manners. Then I sat back and gave my attention to the passing scene, for I felt as if scales had fallen from my eyes. We passed the Taco Bell, the Mission Bank with its blazing pyracantha, two boys in "Gang Green" tee-shirts riding skateboards. After a minute Matty said, "Then you must let me give you brunch tomorrow, Jack, before you pick up Polly. There's nothing worse than having breakfast alone, when you're not—"she took a touching little breath—"used to it."

"Why, thanks, Matty. That's real kind of you. But, say—a gal like you should be able to have company for any old breakfast she chooses." There was that cowboy grin, and Matty smiled back at him, her mourning for

Laura quite forgotten. They both looked extremely handsome, I must say, like contest winners: America's Senior Sweethearts.

After Jack dropped me off, I went right to my bedroom. I needed a nap in the worst way. But before I could rest, I had to get things straight. I squatted down at the end of the bed and took hold of the footboard. I only had to lift it enough to slide my little Persian prayer rug under one foot, then the other foot. Then I just pulled on the rug, duck-walking backwards, using my leg muscles and not straining my back, the way Liliias tells us. In the middle I had to straighten up and move the night stand and the wastebasket out of the way and push a bit on the headboard. A few minutes later I had a North-South bed, stretched right along the wall. It made the room so much bigger, there was almost enough space to form up a square and dance.

I got into bed, lined myself up and did my yoga relaxation exercise. Soon I could feel it—the energy was coming in at the top of my head and running right through my body and out my toes. It was like those little rivers that cut across the beach, the fresh water gliding so clear, flowing and flowing into the sea but never running out.

To me a nap means an hour, but that afternoon I slept on and on. When I woke up a shaft of late sunlight was shining from the living room window right into my bedroom door. I lay there a while just looking at the dust motes dancing in the air. I felt fine—I could tell that the forces had cleared out some of my negative energy already.

When I made myself look at the clock, it said five-thirty. I put on my jeans and sneakers and my “The Force Be With You” sweatshirt. I got a Celeste Pizza for One out of the freezer and took the key to Jack's house off the hook by the door. The air outside was like a margarita—cool and sweet with that little rim of salt. I went in the back way, past the roses. They looked like they had been strung with Christmas bulbs glowing red, yellow, and orange. But those were the buds; I left a lot of them on every bush.

The Maynards' house was hot—they always kept the thermostat up for Polly. She had folded the Spanish shawl at the foot of her couch. An empty oxygen tank was lying there like a faithful dog, waiting for someone who might never return.

I put the pizza on top of the stove with a note: “Dear Jack, Hope all went well at the hospital. I've turned on the oven. Take this out of the

box and heat it for twelve minutes. You should think about getting a microwave, they're awfully handy. Love to Polly." I signed it Grace, like what you say before dinner. Then I drove down to the Villa Napoli for a really good Italian meal. Naturally, I had to pass Ernie's house as I wound my way down the hill. But I didn't stop. I knew I could leave things to forces larger than my own.