(The line is too bitter even for him and he hauls chair out and around and sits down.)

RUTH. Oh, Walter – *(softly)* Honey, why can't you stop fighting me?

WALTER. *(without thinking)* Who's fighting you? Who even cares about you – !

(This line begins the retardation of this mood.)

RUTH. Well –

(She waits a long time and then with resignation starts to put away the laundry.)

I guess I might as well go on to bed – *(more or less to herself)* I don't know where we lost it – but we have – *(then to him as she crosses above sofa to center)* I – I'm sorry about this new baby, Walter – I guess maybe I better go on and do what I started – I guess I just didn't realize how bad things was with us – *(crosses right front of sofa)* I guess I just didn't realize –

(She picks up laundry basket and starts for right bedroom, then stops.)

You want some hot milk?

WALTER. Hot milk?

RUTH. Yes – hot milk.

WALTER. Why hot milk?

RUTH. 'Cause after all that liquor you ought to have something hot in your stomach.

WALTER. I don't want no milk.

RUTH. You want some coffee then?

WALTER. No, I don't want no coffee. I don't want nothing hot to drink, *(almost plaintively)* Why you always trying to give me something to eat!?

RUTH. *(erupting in hurt and anger)* What *else* can I give you, Walter Lee Younger?

*(***RUTH** *crosses into bedroom, flings down the basket and stands facing us.)*

*(***WALTER** *lifts his head in a new mood which began to emerge when he asked her "Who cares about you?")*

WALTER. Baby, it's been rough, ain't it?

(She hears and turns.)

I guess between two people there ain't never as much understanding as folks generally thinks there is.

(She comes to doorway.)

I mean like between me and you –

(She turns to face him.)

How we gets to the place where we scared to talk softness to each other. *(He waits, thinking hard himself.)* Why you think it got to be like that? *(He is thoughtful, almost as a child would be.)* Ruth, what is it gets into people ought to be close?

RUTH. I don't know, honey. I think about it a lot.

WALTER. On account of you and me, you mean. The way something's come down between us.

RUTH. There ain't so much between us, Walter – Not when you come to me and try to talk to me. Try to be with me – a little, even.

WALTER. Sometimes – sometimes – I don't even know how to try.

RUTH. *(crossing slowly toward him)* Walter –

WALTER. Yes – ?

*(***RUTH** *coming to him, gently and with misgiving, but coming to him)*

RUTH. Honey – life don't have to be like this. I mean sometimes people can do things so that things are better –

(She comes up behind him, stroking his head, groping for the words.)

You remember how we used to talk when Travis was born – About the way we were going to live – the kind of house… *(She reaches into his shirt.)* Well, it's all starting to slip away from us…