

## Sunday Morning

The *Sunday Times* arrived, all three pounds of it, and was hauled upstairs to the living room and splayed out upon the coffee table. The great corseted figure of the Doctor's sister bent with difficulty over the table and selected Section 2 and the Magazine Section. She established herself in her upholstered wing chair by an end table with an ashtray and a fresh pack of Pall Malls. She placed the Magazine Section carefully on the arm of the chair, face up, and commenced reading Section 2.

The Doctor sat in his big leather armchair, already content with Section 1 and the headlines of world and national news.

There was a continuous soft flap and flutter of newspaper as the Doctor and his sister turned and folded the large sheets expertly to facilitate reading without crumpling them or rubbing ink on their clothing.

On the love seat, the Doctor's wife sat with her hands in her lap. She thought about the paper for a while, gazing at the remaining sections on the coffee table, and wondered which section she would read first. As it happened, none of the remaining sections interested her, nor did those already being read. She had not yet discovered baseball and horticulture was of no interest to life in the city. Nor were the Metro Section or the Finance Section, although she had worked for a while in a bank, for a banker, who directed her in various numerical pastimes of moderate value to the bank. Finally, in lieu of a clear preference, the Doctor's wife stood up, bent over the coffee table, flipped a few sections open and closed, selected the Fashion Section, and returned to the love seat where she began the same expert page folding and sheet management that her husband and her sister-in-law were engaged in.

The Sunday sun shone through the windows and their fiberglass curtains. The city was relatively quiet. Occasionally a car horn could be heard, but nothing to compete with the continuing rustle and slide of newsprint, pages of fine text that slowly transferred themselves to the thirty fingers of the people reading in the living room.

After half an hour or more, the sister-in-law, some 55 years of age, one year older than the Doctor, announced, "I think I need another cup of coffee." With some effort she hauled herself up from the wing chair and, knees clicking, disappeared down the long central hallway into the kitchen.

The Doctor's wife, having ignored her sister-in-law's statement, decided that she too needed a cup of coffee, and she stood, placing her Fashion Section carefully on the love seat, mindful that the inked pages not press against the fabric, and followed the other woman down the long hall into the kitchen.

The Doctor continued reading. He had proceeded below the fold on page 3.

A murmur of conversation could be heard from the kitchen, and after a few minutes the Doctor's wife and his sister returned with their coffee, his wife carrying carrying two cups and her sister-in-law one. The wife put one cup down next to her husband, who hadn't had any coffee yet, and proceeded on to the love seat, placing her cup on the end table to her right and resuming her exploration of the Fashion Section.

Her husband lowered his paper for a moment and glanced at the coffee cup on his end table. There was no ash tray; he had never smoked. He considered drinking the coffee. He had high blood pressure, and as a doctor he suspected that it might be exacerbated by caffeine. In fact, it probably wasn't, but he was unwilling to take the risk. He took a very small sip of the coffee, which was satisfyingly hot and reasonably savory, and moved on to the top of page 4.

Across from him, near one window where the summer Sunday light streamed into the room through fiberglass curtains not yet known to be toxic, his older sister by one year read on below the fold on page 1 of the Entertainment Section.

Between them on the love seat, his wife continued looking at the Fashion Section, turning the pages more rapidly than either of the others because there wasn't much to read and she wasn't interested in fashion.

After another half hour passed, the Doctor's sister said, "I don't think I've ever seen that opera." No one spoke. She rustled her paper and considered turning the page, but another paragraph in the story about the Metropolitan Opera caught her eye and she continued reading.

Some time later, her younger brother by one year lowered his paper, glanced at his coffee cup, did not take a sip, and said, "What opera?"

His wife looked up from the Fashion Section and looked at her sister-in-law.

Her sister-in-law continued reading to the end of the paragraph and lowered the paper and glanced across the room at the other two people. "Well, like I said," she said, "It's *Fidelio*."

"You didn't say *Fidelio*," said the Doctor's wife.

The Doctor glanced at her and then then at his coffee, and took a very small sip. It wasn't very hot, but it was still sufficiently savory.

His sister glanced at her sister-in-law and said, "Well of course I did."

The Doctor's wife looked down at the Fashion Section, which now lay in her lap. Then she looked at her husband. Then she looked back down at her lap. Then she said, "No you didn't. You never said which opera it was."

After a few minutes without discernible movement, the woman in the wing chair emitted a long private sigh and raised her paper as if to read, hesitated, and then folded Section 2 and tossed it over onto the coffee table. She picked up the Magazine Section, which had been balanced on the arm of her wing chair for some time now, opened it, and began reading.

The Doctor's wife watched, her eyes lingering on the arm of the wing chair to see if ink from the Magazine Section had rubbed off on it. To her discerning gaze it seemed obvious that every Sunday a small additional amount of ink contributed to a very faint dark sheen that was beginning to appear on the arm of the chair.

The Doctor continued reading below the fold on page 4. To his left, on a footstool which had been moved alongside the chair, was a stack of magazines he was planning to read.

The summer sun shone through the fiberglass curtains and cast a bright patch of light on the tan wall-to-wall carpeting. The smell of Sunday newspaper and morning coffee filled the room.