

you haven't got. I'm cutting Levi's trousers tonight. Tomorrow he's got to have them."

"Momma, but last night you promised . . ."

"I promised . . . but that was yesterday. Today's another day."

And now? Buildings, machines, workers. Siemert Road a grey dream. Nobody promised you anything. You did it yourself . . .

9 o'clock and the travelling salesmen begin to queue. Weighted by suitcases . . . hugging their satchels. Textiles, buttons, belts and trimmings.

"It's no use, your price is dead out . . . as dead as the market."

"Listen . . . I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll cable an offer."

"We've already had an offer of one seven and a half."

"O.K. what's good enough for them is good enough for us" . . . (The boss'll never do it . . . already he's grumbling about cable expenses)

Swatch cards spill over tables and desks . . . their colours lost in the drab offices. England, America, Italy, Japan; the world and its products, countries and markets. Import. Export.

"What's the minimum quantity?"

"How much can you let us have?"

"A special price for the lot."

Shipment, January, February, March, April, May, June, July. Time cabled away. The future becomes the present and yesterday so much dead inventory swaying listlessly on dress racks. A special price for yesterday; a sliding scale today; and what can we get for tomorrow?

10 o'clock in the basement and Drobnik remembers its time to take inventory. The harsh light limns his high cheek bones and pale green skin.

"Last season's woollens and the season's before and before. It never comes to an end." The dust makes him sneeze. A rat scampers away.

"Never enough hands. How should a person measure hundreds, perhaps thousands . . . maybe even more yards without help. Measuring, cutting; running upstairs, downstairs for that illiterate who never reads a book in his life. He's forgotten how it feels to be a worker. Even a proper yiddish he doesn't speak any more."

"Calling Mr. Liebling, please take a call . . . calling Mr. Rosenblatt . . . please take a call . . . calling Mr. Goldman . . . calling Mr. Drobnik . . ."

"Hello . . . yes . . . this is Drobnik . . . well what about the Herringbone? I'm doing it now . . . about 5,000 yards . . . what d'you mean what do I mean ABOUT? I'm telling you I'm measuring it now. What's that? How can I tell you how long it'll take if they've laid all my hands off? How should I do it alone? What d'you think I am . . . an octopus?"

11 a.m. and Isadore quickly swallows a capsule. "God knows how I stand it . . . a lifetime of books and figures, bills and cheques."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Edelstein, you've had three extensions. We wrote to you last month. Unless we have

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