

grateful; and his final sigh of repletion would be as eloquent to her as the aspiration of a full heart. HIS  
MOTHER

She would have to tell him all the gossip of the neighborhood—where she knew everybody's troubles, because everybody came to her to borrow a little assistance in bearing them. ("Yuh can have annything I've got to spare," she would tell them. "Many's the time when I had nothin', I wisht I c'u'd borry it meself.") And he would read the newspapers and listen to her talk—both at the one time—and if there was anyone happier than Mrs. Regan then, it was some one who had no right to be. She was sure of that.

"He's late," she said. "I wonder—there now!"  
It was he.

She did not wait to wave him a greeting. She ran to the kitchen and caught up her towel, all her anxieties forgotten on the instant. And it was with no resentful impatience that she cried, "Is that yarself?" when she heard the door open.

"Sure," he answered. "How've you been?"

She looked back quickly over her shoulder as she measured her drawing of tea. (She said afterward: "As soon as he opened his mouth, I knowed there was somethin' wrong.") She heard him coming down the little hall to her; and he should have gone to wash. "Dinnar's ready," she assured him.

He said: "So'm I."

He had a parcel in his hand. He tossed it upon the kitchen table.

"What's that?" she asked.

He answered: "Open it and see."

She was not only mystified; she was naturally somewhat alarmed. And his casual explanation, as she untied the string, did not reassure her. (He had seen "it" on the street. A push-cart peddler had had it. He had thought she might like it.)

It was a white crocheted "umbrella" shawl.

She spread it out, half-flattered, uneasy, touched by his thought for her, but uncertain how to take it.