

search for the light. When she found it, the jet was clogged, and it whistled and danced as if animate, piping a march to their entrance.

The room was incredibly small, one wall being reduced to less than the height of a man by the sharp slope of the roof: and there was only one window. It was a vivid moment, even to the stout woman, who did not understand it at all. To Imrie, who thought he understood it, but did not, the background of the play was burned into his memory never to be erased.

He was keenly cognisant of the places where the wood floor showed through the dingy carpet, and the black spots on the iron bedstead from which the paint had chipped off. He saw, too, the serrated edges of the water pitcher, and the discoloured marble top of the rickety wash basin. The poverty of the little room, intensified by its very neatness, struck him with a clarity which hurt.

But most of all, he noticed the books. They were everywhere, for the most part ancient in appearance, but with the subtle difference between the age of use and that merely of years. There was a set of shelves, with its flimsy boards bending under them. They were piled under the bed, in corners, on the mantel . . . he stopped when he reached the mantel, partly from Judith's half-uttered cry, partly from what he saw.