

windows. . . Swatter is on hook near icebox.'

"Get cigarettes for St. Luke's Adolescent Addiction Center.' That's written on the back of a torn envelope.

"Reminder. . . Unless the rent is paid in three days, disposes proceeding will begin.' D-i-s-p-o-s-e-s. I don't think that's right. I get one of these every month.

"A bank in California has a hundred dollars of mine.

"Papini's.' That reminds me of World War Two in Florence. What's the name of that old bridge?

"My God, I never saw these, did I? Baby pictures of someone else's baby.

"Here's a paper duck that says 'Hubert des Forges.'

"Call Joe.' I don't dare throw anything out.

"Ben St. George. Call for money.'

"Here's a psychiatrist who keeps suing me. I'm always afraid I'm going to throw out something important.

"All of my divorce stuff, none of which worked out. I mean, I got the divorce but not the money.

"Goodell for Senator.' That goes back a way."

Janet reached down to a deeper layer of papers. "I always throw the bills away, and I save all the things in my handwriting, which I can't read," she said. "At least, I ought to fill one trash basket. How about this stuff?" She put a pile of papers in her lap and studied the top one.

"I'm going to throw out a Massequa timetable.

"Oh-oh. 'Please inspect these docu-

ments. Guard these documents to prevent forgeries.' I've lost the documents, I think.

"A card: 'Peace and Happiness.' Oh, this is that lady I picked up on a train with two little kids. I found her a hotel. She sent me a peace-and-happiness card."

Janet gasped. We leaned forward.

"September 27, 1974," she said. "I have a doctor's appointment at 1 P.M. Things are written on the back. A phone number. Who do you suppose that is? Should I throw it out?"

Janet put the appointment card on the floor and surveyed the room.

"If I'm going to end my life here, I'm going to change the color of the walls," she said.

She picked up another piece of paper.

"Please renew subscription.' I tried selling eighty old magazines for ten cents each. The man said he didn't want them, so I gave them to him for nothing. "How about this?" Janet asked, and she began to recite:

I had a part of him she thought,
Her eyes grew misty dim
A part of him is not enough
She thought the hell with him.

"Should be a comma," she muttered. "Or 'For he had all there was of her, She only part of him.'

"It's the worst poem I ever read or wrote," Janet said, sticking the poem under her right knee.

"This is a letter of recommendation so I wouldn't be fired. Listen to this: 'She brought a sense of order. . . ' I think he went too far.

"This is a box full of very important

. . . I had these things in a lot of bags, and I thought if I put it all in boxes and threw out the empty bags I would . . . This is one of several boxes. Eight bags and two boxes, and there's a barrel outside. What do you do with things like this?" Janet held up a used manila envelope.

We tried to think of an answer.

"I threw a little card away just now," Janet said. "It said 'Leather' on it.

"Here's another bunch of poems. I've been looking for these. What happened to the one where. . . Well, I'm so glad I found these." Janet put the poems on a pile behind her and returned to the box.

"Bunch of hymns," she said.

"Natural carpentry—the people's carpenter," she said. "That's good. I'm going to have something built.

"Oh. 'Janet, Darling.' Here's a letter from my ex-husband before we were married. He was crazy about me in 1952."

Janet stood up abruptly and headed for the door, carrying a small straw wastebasket loosely filled with crumpled papers.

"What I should do is keep this trash basket and throw out the box," she said.

Dave's

AT four o'clock on a windy morning last week, on lower Broadway, a yellow sign saying "The Fabric Warehouse" was swinging and screeching crazily; at first, we thought somebody was playing a soprano saxophone, but nobody was around. The neighborhood was apparently deserted. It turned out, however, that everybody who was ambulatory was inside Dave's Corner, a luncheonette a few doors away from the warehouse, on the corner of Canal Street and Broadway. Dave's was brightly lit on the outside, with red, blue, and green neon signs advertising "Dave's Improved Egg Cream," "Dave's Lime Rickey," and other special features; indoors, three horseshoe-shaped lunch counters were lined with customers, and there was a good deal of action at the cigar counter, too. (Near the cash register was a sign saying, "You Ring/We Bring. CA 6-8361.") We sat down at one of the counters, and ordered breakfast from a cheerful red-haired young woman in a white skirt and a blue top. The people around us were



"I'm glad you two are friends again. I hate to see gifted people fight."

dressed in a broad spectrum of styles—Basic Taxi-Driver, Laborer, Long-Haul Trucker (cap and heavy jacket), and White Collar, plus one man in a black suit, a white shirt, and a black tie, presumably All-Night Mortician. The talk was fairly constant, rippling around the room from the counters to the open kitchen (two cooks were keeping busy) and on to the cigar counter and back again. At the same time, smaller conversations—two or three people—were taking place.

"I'm going to Long Beach."

"I'm going to Springfield, Mass."

"You in Newark, ain't you?"

"North Bergen."

"Yeah." To the waitress, who is getting coffee-to-go: "No bag."

Groups formed, broke up, reformed. A young man sat down next to a couple of older men.

Older man, looking at him: "You a cash customer?"

Young man: "No, I'm a credit man."

He was made welcome.

Two men shout across the counter to a red-faced man who is eating alone.

"Hi, Jimmy!"

"How ya feel, Jimmy?"

Jimmy looks up from his scrambled and fries. "Good!" he says, grinning.

Under the conversations ("He makes a living . . .") are a steady rattle of dishes, the hollow clatter of a tray of coffee cups, the sound of the grill being scraped, and the calling out of orders.

A man behind the cigar counter is giving directions to a customer: "You go up about two blocks and turn right on Kenmare Street. Whataya got? A truck?"

The customer nods.

We ask the waitress if Dave himself is here.

She nods, smiling, and says, "That's Dave," pointing to a short elderly man with an extraordinarily benign expression.

Dave has been participating in a



majority of the conversations, punctuating them with a big staccato laugh; the rest of the time, he has been strolling around with his hands in his pockets, looking pleased with everything, like a beaming grandfather of the bride at a really nice wedding. Dave is wearing a red-and-blue tie, a shirt with subtly harmonious blue stripes, a dark-blue wool sweater-vest, and tartan trousers, fundamentally but not exclusively red. He is debating the merits of automobile tires with one of the cooks. "No good!" he yells, agreeably.

He turns to the cigar counter, where a man asks him, "You got razor blades?"

"Yeah," says Dave cheerfully. "Who are you?"

To another man he says, "How's your wife?"

"A little better," says the man.

Dave sits down at the counter by his coffee cup, but he sits sidewise, so as not to miss anything. Soon he is engaged in another conversation. Dave has a fairly thick Russian-Yiddish accent, so he is difficult to understand in a conversation that is taking place several yards away, what with the other noises going on, but he is crystal-clear when he shouts, which is

quite often. A customer hears Dave saying, rather confidentially, "She's a very nice little girl," and he boldly calls to Dave, "Who are you talking about?"

Dave gives the customer a Look. "The girl we're talking about," he explains.

A man in a polo coat, a pink shirt, and a red vest turns to a man in construction-worker clothes. "I meant to ask you, Ed. The Elevated structure at Gun Hill Road—is that all down now?"

"Yeah," replies Ed.

The man in the polo coat shakes his head. "I used to love to ride the Third Avenue 'L,'" he says.

A deliveryman comes in pushing a dolly with six cases of Simplot crinkle-cut frozen French-fried potatoes and one box of Bimbo lettuce; he and Dave have quite a few laughs as Dave signs the receipt.

We finish breakfast, and as we leave we ask Dave how long he's been at Broadway and Canal.

"I been here thirty-five years," Dave says proudly. "I got people coming thirty years."

"They all seem to be friends," we say.

"Why not?" says Dave.