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My mother was an invalid for ten years before her death in 1931. Some of her habits caught up with her. Her kidneys were shot. Just disintegrated. She died of uremic poisoning in a nursing home. She had not had the best medical care in the small town where she lived, a few miles from where B. and I lived. Her doctor, a GP, was a far-gone alcoholic. They compared notes. He later spread the word around that she had been an alcoholic years before. My father, when about 70, was found wandering aimlessly on the street in a state of senile confusion. Police took him to Bellevue where doctors decided he ought to be committed to a mental institution because of his state of senile confusion. I was called. I signed the papers. He died in the institution in 1934, after a succession of strokes. I visited him. He was extremely deaf, feeble, pathetic. I did not love him, but was sorry for him. He had neither friends nor relatives. He had had two sisters on whom he had lavished considerable amounts before his marriage. He had sent them abroad for education in music and art. One became a concert singer, the other married a well-known scientist at the American Museum of Natural History. He was there when I was, but we did not meet. I was too shy. Both of his sisters broke with him for reasons I never learned. Neither would have anything to do with me because I was his daughter. All now dead.

You can understand why I felt a kinship with you when you wrote about yourself.

With respect to my marriage, I discovered immediately that I had made a terrible mistake. Immediately! I’ll never forget that B. said on the morning after we were married that if I should ever have a child we could board it out so that I could go on working. Not that anything had happened that would have been likely to result in my having a child. Later, one of his pet remarks was that he wouldn’t take a million for the children he had (3), but wouldn’t want another for a million.

Bob, I told you there were two intolerable situations in my life. I said I wouldn’t tell you what they were. I suppose you thought that all you had to do was sit back and wait for me to weaken. You’re darned tootin right! I am ashamed of myself. Why should I talk now after having been so tight-lipped so long?

I am embarrassed. Several years ago, I don’t really remember when, B. started to beat me up in his fits of temper. For some years he has enjoyed sawing and chopping wood and has developed a really remarkable muscle tone in his right arm. So, what he did was to make a fist, when angry, and hit me as hard as he could on my head, or nose, or face, generally. And he would pull my hair as hard as he could. My hair is naturally curly and I’ve never had a permanent, so my hair lies rather long and soft on my head. Easy to grab. He also likes to make a hard, hammer-like forearm and hit me very hard on the forearm or upper arm. He raises welts and long black-and-blue lines on my arms. At Virginia Beach [on ‘vacation’] he hit me so hard on my head that I had a headache for five days – half my time there. I never have headaches. Well, I sat in a steamer chair waiting for my head to stop aching. It was a Hell of a vacation. I knew then I would never go to Florida [to retire to a trailer home] with him. Why should I pillory myself?

Sometimes he loses his temper when I am driving. He starts to beat me up right when I’m in heavy traffic.

I could protect myself, of course. I’m much stronger than he is and I weight about 40 lb. more. That’s not the point. I’m afraid I’ll hurt him. He’s frail. If I knocked him down, as I could easily, his skull might be fractured, or he might break some bones. He’s essentially frail. And very thin.

I’m very agile; light on my feet. If he catches me at the head of the stairs to the lower level and threatens to throw me downstairs, I just skip lightly down – and out. He’s all right when he isn’t angry or frustrated. But his fits of uncontrol anger sure make life difficult.

I would not attempt to bring any kind of charges against him. He’s been like this for years. But it’s only in the last three or four that he’s directed his ire against me. I couldn’t care less. He has no regard for my work hours. I cannot escape him. He has abandoned his lower office floor and landed in right on top of my work area. I must have access to my books. He sits right by the books. He talks, he scuffs back and forth till I could jump right out of my skin as I’m trying to concentrate. He wanders from room, scuffing. I try to think. And, indeed, I do. Self discipline. I’ll be damned if I’ll let anything in my environment EVER control my inner life.