

BLUES FOR MISS HATTIE

When they held the auction at Miss Hattie's place, I swung back and forth on the picket gate and watched the blue denim men lug all her things out onto the dog-eared lawn. I guess they pried into every nook and cranny of her big square house because when they got done, everything from a porcelain chamberpot to a big brass double bed sat in the crab grass and Jimson weeds. They had taken down all the curtains too, and I could see right in the naked windows of Miss Hattie's bedroom. While I swung back and forth on the picket gate, a big purple thunderhead sprouted up over the back of the house and the people went past carrying painted china lamps, wax flowers, a mandolin, some old feather boas, a cockatoo's cage, and jars and jars of strawberry preserves. And all the time, Miss Hattie sat stiffly on the edge of the big brass double bed, looking at her lap. Pretty soon the moving van pulled up under the honey locust, and the blue denim men began loading the heavy stuff. They were just jamming one of those fancy curved love seats into the back of the van when the big drops began to splash on the sidewalk and I had to light out for home. The last I saw of Miss Hattie, she had just put up a peppermint striped parasol and was sitting in the middle of the big brass double bed in the slanting rain.

James C. Waugh