

1948

## Waiting for Stella

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## WAITING FOR STELLA

Morris at five back from the office, pushing  
The sixth-floor button, fitting the notched key,  
And settled in at length with a cup of jasmine  
Tea in a damasked chair built for his bones,

Knows not whether to be in a fret with Stella  
Making him wait, or just let peace soak in  
From these exclusions and discreet inclusions.  
A long wall glows with books. Over the mantel

The one abstraction out of a million suited  
Least to rile his clear fastidious soul.  
Who could imagine, lost in a howling desert  
Of brute commodities and senseless brick,

This . . . coral-hushed lagoon, this cell against  
Contagion sealed? Here you can sit and watch  
Through thinnest glass the stupid monster heave  
His sparkling coils and hear him stertorously

Breathing, safe this side from the idiocies  
And daily-swallowed indignities, the gross  
Chatter of monkeys that have learned to walk  
And talk and cry but not to feel. O draw

Thick curtains, open the Misanthrope, or take  
A stiff shot of Aurelius, and be still!  
. . . No good, Morris! Wisdom will not lay  
This heap of jangled nerves. Only that step,

That voice can now confirm the dream and close  
This circle round you. Drum on the table, man,  
Your furious and childish SOS  
And crack your knuckles until Stella comes.

JOSEPH WARREN BEACH