Miss Harper was going home, although the night was wet and nasty. Miss Harper disliked traveling at any time, and she particularly disliked traveling on this dirty small bus, which was her only way of getting home; she had frequently complained to the bus company about their service, because it seemed that no matter where she wanted to go, they had no respectable bus to carry her. Getting away from home was bad enough, Miss Harper was fond of pointing out to the bus company, but getting home seemed very close to impossible. Tonight Miss Harper had no choice: If she did not go home by this particular bus, she could not go for another day. Annoyed, tired, depressed, she tapped irritably on the counter of the little tobacco store which served also as the bus station. Sir, she was thinking, beginning her letter of complaint, Although I am an elderly lady of modest circumstances and must curtail my fondness for travel, let me point out that your bus service falls far...

Outside, the bus stirred noisily, clearly started, because she was rocked and subdued by sleep, she tapped irritably on the counter of the little tobacco store which served also as the bus station. Sir, she was thinking, beginning her letter of complaint, Although I am an elderly lady of modest circumstances and must curtail my fondness for travel, let me point out that your bus service falls far...

The rain was beating down, and Miss Harper hurried the few exposed steps below...
The bus, the driver said behind her, and Miss Harper stepped onto the ground. Suitcase, pocketbook, gloves, hat—she had them all. She had barely taken stock when the bus started with a jerk, almost throwing her backward, and Miss Harper, for the first time in her life, wanted to run and shake her fist at someone. I'll report him, she thought; I'll see that he loses his job. And then she realized that she was in the wrong place.

Standing quite still in the rain and the darkness, Miss Harper became aware that she was not at the bus corner of her town, where the bus should have left her. She was on an empty crossroads in the rain. There were no stores, no lights, no taxis, no people. There was nothing, in fact, but a wet dirt road under her feet and a signpost where two roads came together. Don't panic, Miss Harper told herself, almost whispering, don't panic; it's all right. It's all right, you'll see that it's all right, don't be frightened.

She took a few steps in the direction the bus had gone, but it was out of sight, and when Miss Harper called faintly, "Come back," and "Help," there was no answer to the shocking sound of her own voice except the steady drive of the rain. I sound old, she thought, but I will not panic. She turned in a circle, her suitcase in her hand, and told herself: Don't panic, it's all right. I've come to Ricket's Landing and I'll just throw it in the back," he said, and turned and tossed the suitcase into the back of the truck. Miss Harper heard the sudden thud of its landing, and wondered what things would look like when she unpacked. My bottle of cologne, she thought despairingly. "Get in," the young man said, and, "My God, you're wet."

Miss Harper had never climbed up into a truck before, and her skirt was tight and her gloves were slippery from the rain. Without help from the young man, she put one knee on the high step and somehow hoisted herself in. This cannot be happening to me, she thought clearly. The young man pulled away fastidiously as Miss Harper slid onto the seat next to him.

"You are pretty wet," the driver said, leaning over the wheel to look around at Miss Harper. "Why were you out in the rain like that?"

"The bus driver," Miss Harper began to peel off her gloves; somehow she had to make an attempt to dry herself. "He told me it was my stop."

I'm going to report him," Miss Harper said. There was a little silence in the truck, and then the driver said, "Johnny's a good guy. He means all right."

He's a bad bus driver," Miss Harper said sharply.

The truck did not move. "You don't want to report old Johnny," the driver said.

I most certainly do," Miss Harper began, and then stopped. Where am I? I thought. What is happening to me? "No," she said at last, "I won't report old Johnny."

The driver started the truck, and they moved slowly down the road, through the mud and the rain. The windshield wipers swept back and forth hypnotically, there was a narrow line of light ahead from their headlights, and Miss Harper thought, What is happening to me? We're going down to the old lady's, the driver said. She'll know what to do.

"What old lady?" Miss Harper did not dare to move, even to turn her head. "Is there any kind of a bus station? Or even a taxi?"
"You could," the driver said consideringly, "you could wait and catch that same bus tomorrow night when it goes through. Johnny’ll be driving her."

"I just want to get home as soon as possible," Miss Harper said. The truck seat was dreadfully uncomfortable, she felt clammy and sticky and chilled through, and home seemed so far away that perhaps it did not exist at all.

"Just down the road a mile or so," the driver said reassuringly.

"I've never heard of Ricket's Landing," Miss Harper said. "I can't imagine how he can't get through."

"Maybe somebody else was supposed to get off there and he thought it was you by mistake." This deduction seemed to tax the young man's mind a great deal, and the ultimat, because he said, "See, someone else might've been supposed to get off instead of you."

"Then he's still on the bus," said the driver, and they were both silent, appalled.

Ahead of them a light flickered, showing dimly through the rain, and the driver pointed at a group of houses, that was where they were going. As they came closer, Miss Harper was aware of a growing dismay. The light belonged to what seemed to be a roadside tavern, Miss Harper had never been inside a roadside house in her life. The house itself was only a dim shape looming in the darkness, and the single light over the side door illuminated a sign, hanging crooked, which read

BEER BAR & GRILL

"Is there anywhere else I could go?" Miss Harper asked timidly, clutching her pocketbook, "I'm not at all sure, that I ought —"

"Not many people here tonight," the driver said, turning the truck into the driveway and pulling up in the parking lot, which had once, Miss Harper was said to see, been a garden. "The rain, probably."

Peering through the window and the rain, Miss Harper thought, there was a warm stir of recognition, of welcome.

It's the house, she thought; why, of course, the house is lovely. It had clearly been an old mansion once, solidly and handsomely built to last in a style that belonged to a good house of an older time. "Why?" Miss Harper asked, wanting to know why such a good house should have a lighted door on the side door, and a sign hanging crooked but saying Beer Bar & Grill. "Why?" asked Miss Harper, but the driver said, "This is where you wanted to go. . . . Get her suitcase," he told the other young man.

"In here?" asked Miss Harper, feeling a kind of instinctive dislike to the old house. "Into this saloon?"

"Why, I used to live in a house like this," she thought; what are they doing to our old houses?

The driver laughed. "You'll be safe," he said.

Carrying her suitcase and her pocketbook, Miss Harper followed the two young men to the lighted door and passed under the crooked sign. Shameful, she thought; they haven't even bothered to take care of the place; it needs paint and tightening all around and probably a new roof. And then the driver said, "Come on, come on," and pushed open the heavy door.

"I used to live in a house like this," Miss Harper said, and the young men laughed.

"I bet you did," one of them said, and Miss Harper stopped in the doorway, staring, and realized how strange she must have sounded. Where there had certainly once been comfortable rooms, high-ceilinged and square, with tall doors and polished floors, there was now one large dirty room, with a counter running along one side and half a dozen battered tables; there was a jukebox in a corner, and torn linoleum on the floor. "Oh, no," Miss Harper said. The room smelled unpleasant, and the rain slapped against the bare windows.

Sitting around the tables and standing around the jukebox were perhaps a dozen young men and a woman, all of whom would probably be at the barn tomorrow night when it goes. The two who had brought Miss Harper here, all looking oddly alike, all talking and laughing quietly. Miss Harper leaned back against the door; for a minute she thought they were laughing about her. She was wet and disheartened, and these noisy people did not belong at all in the old house. Then the driver turned and gestured to her. "Come and meet the old lady," he said; and then, to the room at large: "Look, we brought company."

"Please," Miss Harper said, but no one had given her more than a glance. She followed the two young men across to the counter; her suitcase bumped against her legs and she thought: I must not fall down.

"Belle, Belle," the driver said, "look at the stray cat we found."

An enormous woman swung around in her seat at the end of the counter and looked at Miss Harper. Looking up and down, looking at the suitcase and Miss Harper's wad and hat and wet shoes, looking, as Miss Harper's pocketbook and gloves squeezed in her hand, the woman seemed hardly to move her eyes. It was almost as though she absorbed Miss Harper—without any particular effort.

"Hell you say," the woman said at last. Her voice was surprisingly soft. "Hell you say."

"She's wet," the second young man said. The two young men stood one on either side of Miss Harper, presenting her. "Please," Miss Harper said; here was a woman, at least—someone who might understand and sympathize, "please, they put me off my bus at the wrong stop and I can't seem to find my way home. Please.

"Hell you say," the woman said, and laughed, a gentle laugh. "She's wet," she said.

"You'll take care of her?" the driver asked. He turned and smiled down at Miss Harper, obviously waiting, and, remembering, Miss Harper fumbled in her pocketbook for her wallet. How much? she was wondering, not wanting to ask; it was such a short ride, but if they hadn't come I might have gotten through. I have all those doctor bills; I have caught cold, she thought with great clarity, and she took two five-dollar bills from her wallet. They can't argue over five dollars each, she thought, and sneezed. The two young men and the large woman were watching her with great interest, and all of them saw that after Miss Harper took out the two five-dollar bills there were a single and two tens left in the wallet. The money was not wet. I suppose I'll be grateful for that, Miss Harper thought, moving slowly. She handed a five-dollar bill to each young man and felt that they glanced at each other over their heads.

"Thank you," the driver said. I could have gotten away with a dollar each, Miss Harper thought. "Thanks," the driver said again, and the other young man said, "Say, thanks."

"Thank you," Miss Harper said formally.

"I'll put you up for the night," the woman said. "You can sleep here. Go tomorrow." She looked Miss Harper up and down again. "Dry off a little," she said.

"Is there anywhere else?" Then, afraid that this might seem ungracious, Miss Harper said, "I mean, is there any way of going on tonight? I don't want to impose."

"We got rooms for rent."

"I hope they're not figuring on going under the North Pole!"

In 1938 Shirley Jackson published a short story called THE LOTTERY, a harrowing examination of the nature of mass cruelty that probably excelled as much comment as any story published in this century. Since then her work has appeared in a variety of magazines, and she has written several novels, the most recent of them We Have Always Lived in the Castle. She lives in North Bennington, Vermont, where she raises a family, writes, paints, and continues her study of the art of black magic. She's leaving me bus fare home, Miss Harper thought; I suppose I should be grateful. 'I'll better guess,' she said, taking out her wallet again. 'I mean, thank you.'

The woman accepted the bill. "Upstairs. One person, please."

"No one's around," she glanced sideways at Miss Harper. "I'll see you get a cup of coffee in the morning."

Thank you," Miss Harper knew where the staircase would be, and she turned and, carrying her suitcase and her pocketbook, went to what had once been the bar. There was a staircase, so lovely in its proportions that she caught her breath. She turned back and saw the large woman staring at her. "I used to live in a house like this. Built about the same time, I guess. One of those good old houses that were made to stand forever, and where people -"

"Hell she is the woman said, and turned back to the counter.

The young people scattered around the big room were talking; in one corner, the two men had brought Miss Harper, and now and then they laughed. Miss Harper was touched with a little sadness now, looking at them in the little room which had once been so beautiful. It would be nice, she thought, to speak to these young people, perhaps even become one of them, to have them to come with them; perhaps they might like to know that this spot where they came together had been a lady's drawing room. Hesitating a little, Miss Harper thought, I would be grateful for that, Miss Harper thought, moving slowly. She handed a five-dollar bill to each young man and felt that they glanced at each other over their heads.

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"We got rooms for rent."

"I hope they're not figuring on going under the North Pole!"

Half turned back to the counter. "Cost you ten for the night."

She's leaving me bus fare home, Miss Harper thought; I suppose I should be grateful. 'I'd better guess,' she said, taking out her wallet again. 'I mean, thank you.'

The woman accepted the bill. "Upstairs. One person, please."

"No one's around," she glanced sideways at Miss Harper. "I'll see you get a cup of coffee in the morning."

Thank you," Miss Harper thought, how they did put them together; there must
be a thousand houses all over the country built exactly like this. The closet, however, was on the wrong side. Some oddness of construction had set the closet to Miss Harper's right as she sat on the bed, when it ought really to have been on her left; when she was a girl the big closet had been her playhouse and her hiding place, but it had been on the left.

The bathroom was wrong, too, but that was less important. Miss Harper had thought wistfully of a hot tub before bed, but a glance at the bathtub discouraged her; she could wait until she got home. She washed her face and hands, and the warm water comforted her. She was further comforted to find that her bottle of cologne had not broken in her suitcase and that nothing inside had got wet. At least she could sleep in a dry nightgown, although in a cold bed.

She shivered once in the cold sheets, remembering a child's bed. She lay in the darkness with her eyes open, wondering where she was and how she had got there: first the bus and then the truck; and now she lay in the darkness, and no one knew where she was or what was to become of her. She had only her suitcase, and a little money in her pocketbook. She was very tired, and she thought that perhaps the sleeping pill she had taken much earlier had still not quite worn off; perhaps the sleeping pill had been affecting all her actions, since she had been following docilely wherever she was taken. In the morning, she told herself sleepily, I'll show them I can make decisions for myself.

The jukebox noise downstairs faded softly into a distant melody. Her mother is singing in the drawing room, Miss Harper thought, and the company is sitting on the stiff little chairs, listening; my father is playing the piano. She could not quite distinguish the song, but it was one she had heard her mother sing many times. I could creep out to the top of the stairs and listen, she thought, and then she became aware that there was a rustling in the closet, but the closet was on the wrong side, on the right instead of the left. It is more a rattling than a rustling, Miss Harper thought, wanting to listen to her mother singing; it is as though something wooden were being shaken around. Shall I get out of bed and quiet it so I can hear the singing? Am I too warm and comfortable; am I too sleepy?

The closet was on the wrong side, but the rattling continued, just loud enough to be irritating, and at last, knowing she would never sleep until it stopped, Miss Harper swung her legs over the side of the bed and, sleepily, padded barefoot over to the closet door.

"What are you doing in there?" she asked aloud, and opened the door. There was just enough light for her to see that it was a wooden snake, head lifted, staring and rattling itself against the other toys. Miss Harper laughed. "It's my snake," she said aloud, "it's my old snake, and it's come alive." In the back of the closet she could see her old toy clown, bright and cheerful, and as she watched, enchanted, the toy clown flopped languidly forward and back, coming alive. Then Miss Harper saw the big beautiful doll sitting on a small chair, the doll with long golden curls and wide blue eyes and a stiff organdy party dress. As Miss Harper held out her hands in joy, the doll opened her eyes and stood up.

"Rosabelle," Miss Harper cried out, "Rosabelle, it's me."

The doll turned, looking widely at her, smile painted on. The red lips opened and the doll quacked, outrageously, a fiat, slapping voice coming out of that fair mouth. "Go away, old lady," the doll said, "go away, old lady, go away."

Miss Harper backed away, staring. She slammed the closet door and leaned against it. Behind her, the doll's voice went on and on. Crying out, Miss Harper turned and fled. "Mommy," she screamed, "Mommy, Mommy."

Screaming, she fled, past the bed, out the door, to the stair case. "Mommy," she cried, and fell, going down and down into darkness, turning, trying to catch onto something solid and real, crying.

"Look, lady," the bus driver said. "I'm not an alarm clock. Wake up and get off the bus."

"You'll be sorry," Miss Harper said distinctly.

"Wake up," he said, "wake up and get off the bus."

"I intend to report you," Miss Harper said. Pocketbook, gloves, hat, suitcase.

"I'll certainly report you," she said, almost crying.

"This is as far as you go," the driver said.

The bus lurched, moved, and Miss Harper almost stumbled in the driving rain, her suitcase at her feet, under the sign reading RICKET'S LANDING.

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**The word is light.**

The cigarette is Carlton.

A milder cigarette than you'd ever imagine.

Higher in smoking pleasure than you'd ever expect.

On the pack, in the smoke—Carlton says it all.

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Carlton...lightest smoke of all.