

For many months, when I lived at the Pickwick Arms, I went out each night at 9:30 to a newsstand on the corner of 2nd Avenue to get the next day's *Times* and when I got back to the hotel's dirty, red-carpeted lobby, I would sit there and read the apartment listings. If the paper came out on time or a little early, I would have 15 minutes to skim the ads with a red El Marko! marker and then phone people from the pay phones in the lobby, and make an appointment for first thing the next morning. And in that way, after losing a dozen or so apartments I had never seen, I finally found my first apartment: a share with an elderly German couple, the Mölls, in what was then Yorkville but which has now become just another species of white suburbia on the Upper East Side. I lived and slept for months in their beige bedroom while they lived in their white-carpeted living room. I paid \$225 a month, which was less than the \$700 a month I paid at the Pickwick Arms. Mr. Möll was a retired baker for *Kleine Konditorei* and Mrs. Möll was a housewife who I think must have worked as a beautician since one of the first things she offered me was to cut my hair on Sunday mornings. I thought at the time this was very kind and I still do but I now think she thought my hair was too long and didn't suit the look of the apartment. A 50s kitchen with a beautiful German oven, I think it was a Küppersbusch, separated their section of the apartment from mine and also gave me a simultaneous route to the front door and the bathroom, both of which we shared. My own family—my mother, my father and my sister, who were living in Athens, Ohio, and in New Haven, Connecticut—never came to visit me at this apartment. What is that something in a story that keeps waiting to direct the story beyond itself,

