The storm pulls a crowd into the tiny theater with gold embossed walls. Wanting sorcery, the Orient, and snakes thrown onstage, they would enjoy, from time to time, to see a woman be cut with a sword, to take the red silk of a scarf as blood spilled from her throat.

At the mirror backstage the girl changes wigs and thinks of Nebraska. She paints a layer of red on her lips and smokes gray shadow in the corners of her eyes. She will vanish, be stabbed, get shot through the neck, have her hands eaten by tigers, and her heart pulled out by someone loud and wet with rain, someone with waving arms at the edge of a deep velvet seat.

Tonight it is Pearl who sucks in her stomach; who holds up the hanged man and smiles in the light, who loves New York City and the eyes of the crowd. She will tell the Ladies' Auxiliary how the magician sweated into his dark tuxedo how she wore her green paisley dress and ornate amber necklace, and how a child in black tights ran onstage holding a beefsteak.

When the curtain falls the girl clutches the meat and laughs thinking how she left home with the need to live headed for a place where she dies every evening.