

.....No one greeted him at the gate -- the dark walls of the kitchen enclosed him like a smothering grave. Anna did not raise her head. In the other room the baby kept squalling and squalling and Ben was piping an out-of-tune song to quiet her. There was a sour smell of wet diapers and burned pots in the air.

"Dinner ready?" he asked heavily.

"No, not yet."

Silence. Not a word from either.

"Say, can't you stop that damn brat's squallin? A guy wants a little rest once in a while."

No answer.

"Aw, this kitchen stinks. I'm going out on the porch. And shut that brat up, she's driving me nuts, you hear?"

You hear, he reiterated to himself, stumbling down the steps, you hear, you hear. Driving me nuts.

-- Tillie Olsen, *Yonnondio*