Chapter 4 Modifiers and Complements

Adjectives and Adjective Phrases

Structure

An adjective phrase consists of an adjective and all of its modifiers and complements. The smallest possible adjective phrase therefore consists of just an adjective.

Notice that in the sentence like *Olive wants a <u>really big car</u>*, there is an adjective phrase *really big*, but not an adjective phrase *big*. The head of *really big* is *big* and its modifier is *really*. Since an adjective phrase is an adjective head and all its modifiers, and since *really* is a modifier of *big*, any adjective phrase that contains *big* must contain *really*.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Noun- or pronoun-modifying adjective phrases do NOT include the nouns or pronouns they modify, so the noun phrase *my older brother* contains an adjective phrase *older* (NOT *older brother*). A modifier never includes the thing that it modifies -- remember that modifying is a structural relationship between the modifier and something outside the modifier -- the word or phrase being modified.

Function

Adjectives are always the heads of adjective phrases (or conjuncts in the coordination of two or more adjectives -- this will be discussed later when we talk about conjunction). Adjective phrases function within a NP¹ to modify a head noun or pronoun or directly in a predicate² to predicate something about the subject or object.

Noun/Pronoun Modifying Adjective Phrases

Adjective phrases that appear within the NP can either precede or follow the head. If the head is an indefinite pronoun, then any adjective phrases that modify it must follow the head, as in

1. *Somebody clever* could turn that thing into *something quite useful*.

In (1) there are two NPs (in italics) with indefinite pronouns as heads and adjective phrases (underlined) modifying those indefinite pronouns. These adjective phrases are postmodifying or postpositive. A postpositive modifier or a postmodifier is a one which follows the head it modifies within the same phrase. In this case, a postpositive or postmodifying adjective phrase comes after the head and inside the NP.

Usually when adjective phrases modify nouns, they are attributive; that is, they appear before the

¹ Remember that a noun phrase is a noun or pronoun head and all of its modifiers.

² A predicate is a verb phrase and all its modifiers, complements and objects. Typically a predicate is everything in the clause except the subject.

noun and after the predeterminer and determiner (if they appear in the NP). So, compare (1) where the heads of the italicized NPs are indefinite pronouns with (2) where the heads of the italicized NPs are nouns.

2. *Some <u>clever person</u>* could turn that thing into *a <u>quite useful</u> thing*.

Nouns can have postmodifying adjective phrases if the adjective phrase is heavy enough -- so *any person clever is no good, but any person really clever and talented is okay.

Predicate Adjective Phrases

Adjective phrases can also function directly in the predicate: predicate adjective phrases describe or qualify a NP in the clause. If a predicate adjective phrase is about the subject, then that adjective phrase is a **subject complement**, as in (3) - (5) where the subject complement adjective phrase is italicized and the subject is underlined.

- 3. That person seems *really talented*.
- 4. Sharon is clever.
- 5. The medicine tasted *nasty*.

If the adjective phrase qualifies or describes the direct object, then the adjective phrase is an **object complement**, as in (6)-(8) where the object complement adjective phrase is italicized and the direct object is underlined.

- 6. They called <u>me</u> *stupid*.
- 7. Charley considers Sharon *clever*.
- 8. I found the medicine *nasty*.

Structural Constraints on Adjectives

Adjective phrases with certain heads (in certain meanings) are typically or always postpositive: For example, *elect* as in *the president elect*, or *proper* as in *Pullman proper* are never used attributively in these senses.

Some adjectives only appear as heads of attributive adjective phrases: For example, *late* in the sense of "dead" or "former holder the role" can occur as the head of an attributive adjective phrase, as in (9),

9. The *late* king of France liked toads.

but not as the head of a postmodifying adjective phrase, as in *Someone <u>late</u> liked toads and not as the head of either kind of predicate adjective phrase, as in *The king of France is <u>late</u> or *I consider the king of France <u>late</u>. Some adjective can be the heads of postpositive or predicate adjective phrases, but not of attributive adjective phrases, for example, afraid and present, as in

10. The children *present* watched the accident in horror.

(but not (10') **The present children watched the accident in horror* which would mean something entirely different—with *present* meaning something like current as opposed to past or future..)

11. The small children were *afraid*.

(but not (11') *The *afraid* children were small.)

Adjective phrases which contain complements (which appear after the adjective head) or postmodifiers typically are not used attributively. So, *frightened of bears* is okay as a postpositive adjective phrase (as in *People frightened of bears* shouldn't visit Yellowstone) or as a predicate adjective phrase (as in *Those people seem frightened of bears*, *Their horrible experience left them frightened of bears*.)

Noun/Pronoun Modifier		Predicate Adjective Phrase			
Attributive	Postmodifying	Subject Complement	Object Complement		
occurs before the head it modifies and after any predeterminers and determiners within the NP before the head it modifies <i>A</i> very large cat bit the frightened dog.	occurs immediately after the head it modifies; adjective phrases which modify indefinite pronouns most be postmodifying; postmodifying adjective phrases that modify nouns must be "heavy" (except in certain fixed constructions) Nobody wise would do that.	occurs after a copular ("linking") verb and provides information about the subject. He was asleep. The bell sounded flat. The food tasted utterly horrible.	occurs after a direct object noun phrase preceded by a complex transitive verb and provides information about the direct object. I left him asleep. He called the bell flat. We considered the food utterly horrible.		
cannot contain adjective complements *We must take care of those dependent on our help children	can contain adjective complements We must take care of those children dependent on our help. Those children are dependent on our help. The doctor considered the children dependent on our help.				
Some adjectives can only head attributive adjective phrases: only, late, former, The former president was an only child. Compare *An afraid child ran away with A frightened child ran away	Some adjectives can only a attributive: asleep, afraid T child is afraid. It made the only child. *The president w	hat man ridiculously child afraid. *The pro	afraid ran away. That esident former was an		

Practice Identifying Adjective Phrases

Identify the adjective phrases in the sentences below and to determine what the function of each adjective phrase each is.

- (1) The first time I saw the thing, I found its appearance quite surprising. (2) The strange, spotted top attached to the colorfully striped trunk made me dizzy. (3) It was incredibly badly designed. (4) Who could have considered purple, blue and red suitable colors for a lectern? (5)
- (5) Moreover, the ugly thing was unstable. (6) The designer blind to both form and function had created a hideous monstrosity.

Adverb and Adverb Phrases

Structure

An adverb phrase consists of an adverb head and all its modifiers; only adverb phrases can modify adverbs. A substantial number of adverbs are derived from adjectives by suffixing -ly to the adjective, so, for example, the adverbs frivolously, amazingly, enormously, largely, literally, and abundantly are derived from the adjectives frivolous, amazing, enormous, large, literal, and abundant. Not all adverbs are derived from adjectives however. Some are simply basic adverbs like then, yet, still, thus, ever, just, only, here, there, and again; others are more internally complex, but not derived from adjectives, like however, moreover, therefore, and hereafter. A number of adjectives and adverbs have the same form (i.e., are homonyms), like early, fast, and hard. In the (a) versions of the examples below the underlined words are adjectives and in the (b) version they are adverbs,

12. a. The early bird catches the worm.

b. The bird rose early to catch the worm.

13. a. I want a fast car.

b. My car should go fast.

14. a. Mary finished the <u>hard</u> problem

b. Mary worked <u>hard</u> on the problem.

Notice that if you replace these forms with adjective/adverb pairs that aren't homonyms, only one will fit in each case so suppose you replace *fast* with *rapid* or *rapidly*. Only *rapid* will fit in (13a) and only *rapidly* will fit in (13b). Similarly if you replace *hard* with *intensive* or *intensively*, only the adjective will fit in (14a) and the adverb in (14b).

Function

Adverbs are always the heads of adverb phrases (or conjuncts in the coordination of two or more adverbs -- this will be discussed later when we talk about conjunction). Adverb phrases have three possible functions -- two well-defined and one a kind of grab-bag. Adverb phrases can modify adjectives, they can modify other adverbs and they can be adverbial. This last function is the most complicated so it is typically easier to see if an adverb phrase is functioning as an adjective- or adverb- modifier first, before you consider whether it is an adverbial.

Adjective Modifier

An adjective-modifying adverb phrase is inside the adjective phrase with the adjective head and modifying a head adjective (inside the adjective phrase with the head).

- 15. The <u>very</u> small children should stand in the front.
- 16. Mary is <u>remarkably</u> bright.

It is worthwhile noticing that while an adjective-modifying adverb phrase typically precedes the adjective it modifies as in (15) and (16), some adverb phrases regularly follow what they modify, so *enough* as in (17) and (18) typically follows the adjective head it modifies.

- 17. Harry is a good enough parent.
- 18. Those children aren't sleepy enough yet.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Adjective-modifying adverb phrases do NOT include the adjectives they modify, so the adjective phrase *amazingly tall* contains an adverb phrase *amazingly* (NOT *amazingly tall*). A modifier never includes the thing that it modifies -- remember that modifying is a structural relationship between the modifier and something outside the modifier -- the word or phrase being modified.

Adverb Modifier

Just as adverb phrases can modify adjectives, they can also modify adverbs (and therefore appear within another adverb phrase) as in (19) and (20).

- 19. The children played <u>very</u> carefully.
- 20. Those jockeys are quite amazingly tall.

Notice this means that in a sentence like (20) there are two adverb phrases: quite amazingly and quite. The head of quite amazingly is amazingly and its modifier is quite. The adverbmodifying adverb phrase is quite and its head is quite. Notice that amazingly is NOT an adverb phrase here. Since an adverb phrase is an adverb head and all its modifiers, and since quite is a modifier of amazingly, any adverb phrase that contains amazingly must contain quite. The same is not true of quite -- since amazingly does not modify quite, there can (in fact, must) be an adverb phrase which contains quite, but not amazingly. Since, in fact, nothing modifies quite, there is an adverb phrase that consists of just quite.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Adverb-modifying adverb phrases do NOT include the adverbs they

modify, so the adjective phrase *quite amazingly* contains an adverb-modifying adverb phrase *quite*. A modifier never includes the thing that it modifies -- remember that modifying is a structural relationship between the modifier and something outside the modifier -- the word or phrase being modified.

Adverbial

Structures serving as adverbials do a range of things: they may modify a verb, a verb phrase, a predicate, or the whole rest of the clause; they may focus on some chunk of structure: a noun phrase, an adjective phrase, a verb phrase, a prepositional phrase, a predicate, or another clause. It may express a transition between one clause and another. In other words, this is a more or less miscellaneous category. The adverbial role can be filled by a range of structures. The structure we're primarily concerned with here is the adverb phrase, as in

- 21. He turned carefully.
- 22. Everybody left very early.
- 23. The students left just before dinner.

The similar roles can be filled by prepositional phrases, as in

- 24. He turned with great care.
- 25. Everybody left before dawn.

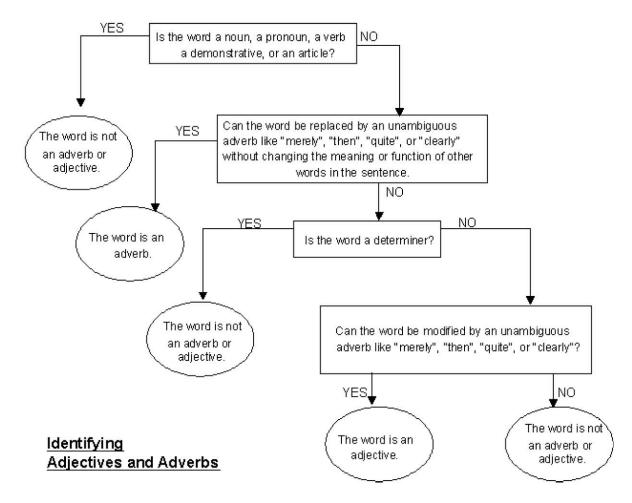
and noun phrases, as in

- 26. He turned that way.
- 27. Everybody left the next day.

and subordinate clauses, as in

- 28. Everybody left when I arrived.
- 29. He turned to see Mary.

Identifying Adjectives and Adverbs



Example: Oscar can work hard at the really efficient factory.

- (1) Oscar, can, work can all be demonstrated to be nouns or verbs.
- (2) *hard* is not a noun, pronoun, verb, demonstrative, or article. It can replaced by an unambiguous adverb: *Oscar worked amazingly at the really efficient factory*. Therefore, *hard* is an adverb.
- (3) at is not a noun, pronoun, verb, demonstrative, or article. It cannot be replaced by an unambiguous adverb: *Oscar worked hard merely/then/quite/clearly the factory. It cannot be modified by an unambiguous adverb (though the whole PP can be). Therefore, at is neither an adverb nor an adjective.
- (4) the is an article; therefore, it is neither an adjective nor an adverb.
- (5) *really* is not a noun, pronoun, verb, demonstrative, or article. It can be replaced by an unambiguous adverb: *Oscar can work hard at the merely/quite/clearly efficient factory. really*, therefore, is an adverb.

(6) *efficient* is not a noun, pronoun, verb, demonstrative, or article. It cannot be replaced by an adverb: *Oscar worked hard at the really merely/quite/clearly/then efficient factory. It can be and is, however, modified by an adverb (really) and is therefore an adjective.

Practice Identifying Adverb Phrases

Identify the adverb phrases in the sentences below and to determine what the function of each adverb phrase each is.

(1) Ferociously the amazingly strong child threw his teacher through a window. (2) He was angry at his teacher again and he found the entire school increasingly unbearable. (3) The teacher's careful answer to his very difficult question left him quite furious. (4) A more sensible student would just have gone to the ombudsman with a complaint. (5) He would really not have thrown his hapless teacher out of the classroom. (6) Quite predictably, the slightly injured teacher was furious at the child's violent treatment of him. (7) He demanded that the insane child be more appropriately punished for his utterly outrageous conduct. (8) Suspension was a completely insufficient penalty for this violent offence.

Prepositional Phrases

Structure

A prepositional phrase (PP) consists minimally of a preposition and its object. The object of a preposition is typically a noun phrase or a gerund subordinate clause (we'll discuss these when we talk about complex sentences). Usually the object of the preposition (OP) immediately follows the preposition as in

- 30. I talked [about_{PREP} [the answers]_{OP}].
- 31. [After_{PREP} [dinner]_{OP}] the people [in_{PREP} [the dining room]_{OP}] rose [from_{PREP} [the tables]_{OP}] and went [into_{PREP} [the garden]_{OP}].

Under certain circumstances the preposition and its object might not be adjacent to each other. If the object of the preposition is a *wh*-proform or a phrase containing a *wh*-proform, then the phrase with the *wh*- word can appear at the beginning of the sentence (or of the appropriate clause) with the preposition appearing where you might expect to find the entire PP.

- 32. Who are you talking to? (I am talking to Bill.)
- 33. I built the stage which you are standing on. (You are standing on the stage.)

- 34. What I rely on is the truth.
- 35. What a jerk I ran into!

In some of these sentences, it is possible to put the preposition before the *wh*- word in the front, as in

- 36. To whom are you talking?
- 37. I built the stage on which you are standing.

but not others, as in

- 38. *On what I rely is the truth.
- 39. *Into what a jerk I ran!

In some cases the OP is missing, but it is always recoverable in context (that means you can always figure out what the OP would be if it were present).

- 40. I know the man you are talking about.
- 41. The man is hard to talk to.

(Notice that (40) can be paraphrased as *I know the man about whom you are talking* -- in which *whom* is the object of *about* and (41) can be paraphrases as *It is hard to talk to the man* -- in which *the man* is the object of *to*.)

If the sentence is a pseudo-passive (a passive in which the subject is the same as the OP in the active), then the preposition is let without an object, as in

42. That bed was slept in by George Washington. (= Active: *George Washington slept in that bed*)

Function

Prepositional phrases can serve as noun modifiers, as adverbials, and as complements to verbs or adjectives.

Noun Modifier

We've seen other noun modifiers -- determiners, predeterminers, and adjective phrases. Now we see that prepositional phrases can modify nouns and pronouns in much the same way. PPs as noun/pronoun modifiers are always postmodifying, as in

43. The man in the blue dress is talking to someone in a bright pink hat.

You can stack PP modifiers just as you can stack adjective phrase modifiers -- unlike determiners and predeterminers which are limited to one per head modified.

44. The man in the orange dress with red hair at that table looks perfectly awful.

One way to tell that the PPs modify the noun or pronoun head is to replace that NP with a personal or demonstrative pronoun which typically are not modified by PPs, so

- 45. *He in the orange dress with red hair at that table looks perfectly awful.
- 46. He looks perfectly awful.
- 47. I want this book about Spain.
- 48. I want this.
- 49. *I want this about Spain.

Passive Agent

As we discussed when we considered passive clauses, the NP that is the same as the subject of the active paraphrase of the clause appears as the object of the preposition by in the passive.

50. That child was bitten by a yippy little dog. (= Active: A yippy little dog bit that child.)

The subject of an active clause can only be conveyed in a passive clause in a prepositional phrase with the preposition *by*.

Adverbial

Just like adverb phrases, PPs can serve as adverbials. Time adverbials and place adverbials are very typically expressed as PPs, as in

51. On Thursday I am going to Spain

In fact however a substantial range of adverbial roles can be filled by

Verb Complement

Some verbs may be limited to certain prepositions to appear with. Sometimes the verb requires the presence of the PP, as in

52. I will rely on your discretion

Verbs like *rely* and *depend* and *deprive* require the presence of a PP -- a PP with a particular set of prepositions. You can only *rely* or *depend on* or *upon* something or someone,

- 53. *I will rely.
- 54. *I will rely on top of your discretion.
- 55. *I will rely from your discretion.

Similarly you can only *deprive* someone *of* something, as in

56. Olive deprived us of our just reward.

- 57. *Olive deprived us from our just reward.
- 58. *Olive deprived us out of our just reward.

Often, a good dictionary identifies the verbs that take verb complements by identifying the verb + preposition set and its meaning since typically the fact that they are fixed and what the meaning is not necessarily transparent.

Other verbs take optional complements. So *call* can take a prepositional phrase complement, using the preposition *on*, to mean 'visit' as in

59. Since Harry is at home now, we should call on him.

or 'choose', as in

60. If you raise your hand, I will call on you.

Adjective Complement

Like verbs, adjectives also limit the prepositions that appear in their prepositional phrase complements.

61. I am fond of them.

Notice that while you can be *happy with your grade*, you can't be *glad or *joyous with your grade. So happy selects a prepositional phrase with a preposition with, while glad and joyous (which mean approximately the same thing) do not. Some adjectives like happy appear commonly without any prepositional phrase complements, as in

62. Are you happy?

or with other prepositions, as in

63. Are you happy for/with your family?

Notice that while you can be *glad for someone*, you cannot be *joyous for someone*. Again different adjectives, even in the same semantic area, go with different prepositions.

Prepositions vs. Particles

As it happens, a subset of the prepositions in English are also particles. A particle differs from a preposition in that it does not (and cannot) take an object. Particles can, like prepositions, come right after the verb and before a noun phrase. Particles, however, are distributed differently from prepositions. How so? Well, while the *up*'s in (64a) and (b) look similar, consider that in (65b) you can move the *up* after the NP without changing the meaning, but in (65a) moving the *up* produces an ungrammatical string.

Preposition	Particle
64. a. I climbed up the pole.	b. I put up the pole.
65. a. *I climbed the pole up	b. I put the pole up.

66. a. I climbed up it.

b. *I put up it

67. a. *I climbed it up.

b. I put it up.

68. a. I climbed slowly up the pole.

b. *I put slowly up the pole.

In fact, if the NP is a personal pronoun, you must move the particle after it, as in (67b) (notice that (66b) is ungrammatical because the personal pronoun follows the particle), but you still can't move a preposition after its object (so (66a) is fine -- but (67a) is ungrammatical). Similarly nothing can come between a verb and its particle except the object of the verb (as in (65b) -- but (68b) is ungrammatical because what intervenes between the verb and the particle is an adverbial), but, for example, adverbials can come between a verb and a prepositional phrase (as in (68a)).

Consider *I looked up the street* and *Mary looked over the rock*. These two sentences are ambiguous. Each has a reading in which *up* or *over* is a preposition and one in which it is a particle. What are the two meanings for each sentence and which structure goes with which meaning?

Many Prepositions

The following list contains many, though not all, English prepositions. Notice that many of these words belong to other categories as well: so *around*, for example, is also an adverb; *but* is also a coordinating conjunction; *up* is also a verbal particle; *after* is also a subordinating conjunction; *excluding* is also a verb (an *-ing* participle or gerund); *inside* is also a noun; *like* is also a verb, etc. So you must look at the use in a particular sentence to determine whether the word is a preposition. Consider these sentences:

69a. Mary is	depending	on	our	help.
(LV+Prep)				

b. <u>Depending</u> on the cost, we'll either drive or fly. (Preposition)

70a. *I'll just walk* around. (Adverb)

b. *I'll just walk around the house.* (Preposition)

71a. Will you stand <u>up</u>? (Particle)

b. Will you climb <u>up</u> that tree? (Preposition)

72a. *The <u>inside</u> of that building is awful* (Noun)

b. He is staying inside the house. (Preposition)

73a. *The <u>following</u> data must be fully analyzed*. (Adjective)

b. Following the first set of data is our first appoximation of an analysis. (Preposition)

As should be evident, you can't determine whether a word is a preposition just be checking a list. Since words which are preposition can be the same as words which belong to other categories—verbs, adverbs, particles, among others. The list below is not complete—new prepositions are derived (not as commonly or easily as new open class words like nouns or lexical verbs or adjectives or adverbs), but more commonly than new articles or auxiliary verbs. This list, for example, includes a number of cases of prepositions derived from adjectives or verbs or nouns compounded with more basic prepositions.

aboard bevond in search of plus about but inside preparatory to above bν inside of prior to according to by means of in spite of rather than across by way of instead of regarding in support of regardless of across from circa after close to in the light of relative to round against concerning into ahead of in touch with considering save along in view of save for contrary to irrespective of alongside depending on since along with despite like subject to than amidst down minus thanks to during among near through amongst except next to notwithstanding till anti except for apart from of excepting to around excluding off together with toward following as on as for for on account of towards aside from forward of on behalf of under on board underneath as opposed to from unlike as to in on the part of astride in addition to until onto in accordance with on top of as well as ир in between at opposite up against away from in charge of opposite to upon bar in conjunction with other than up to in connection with out of barring up until because of outside in contrast to versus before outside of including via behind in favour of over vis-à-vis below in front of owing to with beneath in lieu of with regard to past beside in line with within pending besides in relation to per without between plus in response to

More Practice with Adjective, Adverb and Prepositional Phrases Identify all the adjective phrases, adverb phrases and prepositional phrases in the texts below.

- (1) Circle the entire phrase.
- (2) Underline the adjective head, adverb head, or preposition.
- (3) Label each phrase you have circled with its structure (adjective phrase, adverb phrase or prepositional phrase).
- (4) Label each phrase you have circled with its function (adjective phrase: attributive, postmodifying, subject complement, object complement; adverb phrase: adjective modifier, adverb modifier, adverbial; and prepositional phrase: noun modifier, adjective complement, verb complement, adverbial, passive agent.)

Marianne was amused by the absolute presumption of the man in front of her. His sense of entitlement was breathtaking. He was almost preening. He practically glowed with his belief in his own attractiveness. From Marianne's point of view, he was not merely overestimating the effects of his appearance; he was completely wrong about any effect he might have on her. Anyone so obviously full of himself was actively ugly in her eyes.

"Hey baby, call me Bill. What's your name? he asked with complete assurance and continued, "What are you drinking?"

"Sorry," she replied politely, "I'm waiting for someone." After all, he had done nothing unacceptable in a bar like this one. His approach was utterly standard for this kind of establishment. Courtesy was called for in her refusal, but nothing in the relatively odd etiquette of these places required her to accept his invitation.

"Ah, come on," he said and grabbed her arm.

"Please let go of me," she said, still courteously, "I am waiting for someone else."

The polite lie should have been sufficient; he could walk away now without any loss of face.

A man with any sense of appropriate behavior would have released her immediately. However, that kind of man would never have touched a stranger without invitation anyway. Her polite resistance made him even more overbearing. He simply refused to believe that any woman

would refuse his attentions.

"Don't be shy," he insisted.

"I'm not shy, just otherwise occupied," she answered. "Even if I were not waiting for someone else," she continued, "I choose my own company. Take your hand off me."

"Who'll make me?" he said and looked around the crowded room of strangers who were ignoring their byplay.

Marianne repeated, "Please let go of me."

He laughed and tightened his hold on her arm. At this point, instead of amusement, Marianne's primary feeling was annoyance. She had apparently underestimated his feelings of entitlement. She reached over, seized the smallest finger on his offending hand and bent it back until he released her arm.

"You bitch," he snarled as he pulled back his hand in a fist as though he would hit her.

She stepped to one side and pulled a barstool between them. He knocked it out of the way and moved toward her. By this point, a number of the other customers could not pretend that they did not notice what was happening. A large man came up behind Bill and seized his arm, saying "Forget her. Let's get a drink."

"No," he said and shook off the other man's hold. He turned back toward where Marianne had been standing, saying "I don't take ...", but by the time he had turned, she was gone. During the momentary interruption, she had slipped away.

"Where is she?" he demanded of everyone close to him as he looked wildly around the room.

As Marianne walked down the street, she sighed quietly. She was simply grateful that she had not had to hurt anything except her would-be Romeo's overweaning pride.