Both were to remember later that it was an amazing entrance. An entrance on cue, significant and portentous.

Neither of the men—middle-aged, gray-templed Dr. Frank Overby, nor dark, thirtyish Bob Sessions, the newsman, claimed clairvoyance in any form, nor ability to read character or to detect background from face, figure or manner, yet they turned to watch Maury Carter's long and purring striding as she followed the cab driver across the bus station waiting room. They commonly noted her intense eyes, brown and deep; the narrow grace of her gloved hand on the over-the-shoulder, nail-studded, brown-leather bag; the clear, inner-lighted complexion—and above all, the proud, almost defiant and arrogant thrust of her breasts, and the controlled flame of her dark, auburn hair under and beside the sweep of the gray turban.

Bob Sessions said:

"Doc, there are women whose steps are dogged by violence."

"You read that somewhere," Dr. Overby said.

"Something like it," Sessions admitted.

Dr. Overby said, "Yeah, but I think somewhere in your search tonight for more than one bottle of beer to a customer you must have picked up a strange new brand of brew. But you're right, of course. They come here from the little towns and crossroads settlements; from the 4-H clubs, the high schools—places like Grafton and Thomasville and Sapa—looking for life. And they find it, of one sort or another. And some of them wind up marrying a nice boy they met over the ten-cent store counter, or at Phillips' All-Night Grill. And some of them wind up on Kane Street in a fine mansion. A few come at last to the examining room at the city hospital, with a cop standing by—or to Dr. Corning's underground abortion clinic with nobody but a Negro nurse standing by. Any taxi driver can give them his number, or even drive them there at four o'clock in the morning. And, now and then, one of them is found dead under a river bridge or in the willows off Charles' Point."

Sessions smiled, set down his glass. Through the window, beyond the garish play of neons, he could see the red-haired girl entering a taxi.

"Sure," he said, "They wear violence like a new hat . . . or like perfume behind their ears or on a small cotton batt inside their flimsy little blouses."

Sessions' intense, blue-gray eyes watched the taxi move from the curb. He lifted his glass of beer, and drank—then turned back to face Overby. He was a lean-faced, saturnine young man with old eyes and a straight nose and jet hair that almost always needed a trim. His friends said he was half playboy, half philosopher—his enemies called him half-exhibitionist, half-Communist.

The chromium clock, set in the transportation mural on the high front wall of the waiting room, said eleven-fifteen. Its face was never free of the scanning of the multiple eyes of the crowd waiting on time and the busses to take them somewhere. Eleven-fifteen, on a night in May 1942. The night the Dutch came to the City.

Sessions and a *Daily Chronicle* photographer had already wrapped up the story for the next day's noon edition.

. . . the night in May when the Dutch and Javanese flyers and their wives and children made the city the immediate and penultimate stop, or way station, after months of fleeing down the coastline of the Netherlands Indies at night in carts and afoot before the swift clamor and crush of Japanese artillery and tanks. Then the coming out to a beach in pre-dawn darkness lighted by bomb-crashes—and the frantic helter-skelter piling into ships fated to be sunk in the harbor at dawn. And then the boarding of planes by the high-priority military; the flight to the beaches of Australia—the crash landings on the down-under continent where they began a trek toward the upper reaches of the world. And then the contact with a transported Dutch government in Canada—subsidized by the British—where there were ample funds but few fighting men—and then down to the Southern United States and Madison and a training climate less tropical than the despoiled paradise wrested from them by the Japanese.

The red-haired girl, Maury Carter—the daughter of the Reverend Newton Carter, a leader of the primitive religious sect known as the "Holy Rollers," although its church title was The Church of God's Anointed—arrived in the City the night the Dutch came to take over with their reckless and irreconcilable ways and their inflated purses that enabled them to rent the best apartments and buy the fastest convertibles which they proceeded to wreck with that same end-of-time feeling with which they destroyed United States training craft and other material of the air force. The planes they found at the Army Air Base—even the slowest—were too fast for their inexperienced hands, and so they created in a South Side cemetery a plot sacred to Holland—a plot where the red clay nurtured their bodies with the same tender care that they would have had if they had grown from it instead of the salt marshes of Holland or the brown rich loam of Java.

Dr. Overby said, "Incidentally, she is a very striking woman."

Bob Sessions smiled wryly around his cigarette. He was sitting a little forward, his elbows spread. His head lifted toward his friend's face. He then surveyed the crowded bus station with cynicism in his eyes.

He said, "There's nothing incidental about that girl. When she walked across that space beyond the arch she dominate the moment. I know, because if she could set my brain to ruminating upon violence in womankind she must have something other than just a bar door out-curve on the ball."

(What the cynical Sessions and his friend Dr. Frank Overby could not know of Maury Carter was that a Dr. Joseph Kilgore, in his cups in a Poindexter City café, once had said of the girl's stride: "Every jiggle of her beautiful and irresponsible bottom is a promissory note she not only doesn't know she's signed, but which she certainly doesn't expect to pay . . ." —nor did they know that Dr. Joseph Kilgore had shared with Maury Carter a certain violence, not generated by her loins, on a night in 1940 when a tornado had killed his only son and the girl's lover.)

Dr. Frank Overby punched out his cigarette in the glass trey before him. He said, "In my connection with the county health department I have opportunity quite often of seeing with my own

eyes what happens to many of them—these alert little females from the hinterland who come here looking for the Holy Grail, or Prince Charming—or just a man. . . . You're right, of course, about the girl not being incidental. None of them can be called incidental. Some time I wish I could write a book about one of them . . . just any one of them. About that girl we don't even know. You should write one, Bob."

Sessions said, "I just don't think fast enough. I could have suddenly thought of an assignment on red-heads. I could at least have learned her address."

"Well, you can just wait right here," said the doctor. "That taxi driver will be back."

"His cab number is twenty-two," Sessions said.

(Of Bob Sessions, a politician had once said, "He always talks to everybody like a man trying to lose an election. Like a man trying to lose as many votes as possible for an office he wouldn't have on a platter.")

Dr. Overby said, "When you finally get around to writing your book, please try to be as kind to the South as possible. You've lived here long enough to know that the truth about us is somewhere between the diatribes of the Northern press and the lavender and lace and crinoline novels about Southern hospitality and gentility."

Sessions smiled and drank the last of his glass of beer.

"That book! Six years I talk about it! Sometimes I think I am just one of those would-be writers. But I swear some day I'm going to shake myself away from this rat-race and go to some little Mississippi town and buy one of those little automatic weekly newspaper with just one damn deadline fifty-two times a year—and then I'll have time to write something that doesn't cause nausea."