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Twenty Favorite Times

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TWENTY FAVORITE TIMES

The last year of my being young the way young people mean young, I was living with a friend in Perugia, one of those Italian towns made of towers and arches and Etruscan walls. Down below was Umbria and summer was coming. Both of us were unhappy. Jean's love was in Austria and mine in Berkeley and neither of them wanted us now. Every night we sat in the kitchen at a marble table writing fine hopeless letters to get them back. His wife cooked and comforted us and went to bed about one when we began decorating the envelopes. I would finish first and take mine to the post office through the sleeping ancient city. Usually about three in the morning. Then I would go to the dark palazzo and stand looking up at Gianna's bedroom window at the top. When I got home, his pretty letter would be leaning on the sugar bowl. I would go quietly across their bedroom to my door. She would be holding him asleep in her arms, watching me as I passed through the first light of dawn.

LATE FRIDAY NIGHT IN SUMMER IOWA

A car stopped in front of
the dark sorority house
and a young woman got out.
Now, she said, trying to fix
her clothes and turning to go
in, I think I really know you.