

Petrified Man Summary

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Written by Michael Braun

In *Petrified Man*, most of the drama takes place in the dialogue between Mrs Fletcher and her beautician Leota; there is little external action. During a shampoo and set, Leota tells her customer about her new tenant and friend, Mrs Pike. At first, the two gossip politely, but as soon as Leota notices that Mrs Fletcher's hair is falling out, probably due to her pregnancy rather than the perm she got the week before, the atmosphere changes from friendly to hostile.

Suddenly, Mrs Fletcher becomes annoyed by the fact that she has become the talk of the town, and is furious when she gets to know that it was the observant Mrs Pike who noticed her belly. She also dismisses any subject that Leota brings up to distract her, such as Mr Pike, a fortuneteller, and the petrified man at a freak show next door. Moreover, she is extremely annoyed by Mrs Pike's son Billy, who roams the beauty parlor when his mother is at work. In fact, she now despises the idea of having a child of her own.

However, she brightens up a little when Leota tells her about the good luck that Mrs Pike had: Due to her excellent observation skills, she identified the man in a wanted ad in one of Leota's magazines as the petrified man at the freak show, who has raped four women. Mrs Pike getting a \$500 reward infuriates Leota because she feels the money should have been hers--after all, the ad was in a magazine in her house, and the wanted man was right next door. This time, when Billy misbehaves, it is Leota who spansks him with a brush.

In the end, Billy mischievously runs out of the beauty parlor, revealing in a sarcastic comment that the women's lives are a disappointment.