

Chopped Liver

Boil the livers for one minute. In sweet butter melt an onion, chopped fine. I'm my mother's Jewish mother. Her life melts. The good gut smell takes me by the hand to Lombard street, smoked eels dangling in windows, crated chickens screeching under awnings, waiting for the kosher killing. Never observant—of any higher power—she laughed when I said the dark-bearded hasids, jovial and hefty, looked like Santa Claus, but younger, in black clothes. I'd stare at the women in wigs. She'd whisper, "Low-class pickle-boat people."

But I lie. This happened just now, in my head, high on smell. We were so German we went to Hollins Market, over on the west side, not far from Butcher's Hill. There were chickens, but pigs were what swung obscenely in shop windows. We used to polish off a whole pink foot, paring knife in each *traife* hand, she and I. Grandmother Marie Naas, cousin of solid Hamburg burghers Rebeck and Winkleman, had to tell me she wasn't bad just because of Hitler. She said someday I'd learn to like chopped liver. I remember I believed the one but not the other. I remember it as plain as if I could remember.