

the melted butter voice who calls every day and rings the doorbell. Not to Gay's Funeral Home. Not back to Hy-Vee.



*Cut through grease: Dove. Dermassage. Debbie. Swan. Sweetheart. Ivory. Lux. Cascade. Sudsiest suds, softest hands. Palmolive: "You're soaking in it."*



She's definitely not going to the police station to tell them she's so tired sometimes, that she let those boys climb that rope. Sure, she's sorry someone's arm got broken but also, honestly, there's mostly relief it wasn't one of her three: no doctor's bill, no yelling at a boy to keep his cast dry and don't scratch. Not to the police station to tell them she sleeps way far, all the way over on her side of the bed, pretending she's asleep. Not to the police station to tell them—because why'd they care about any of these thoughts crackling through her head in a useless loop, like the tiny ants infesting the kitchen last summer and their perfect lines marching across the counter, toward the sugar bowl. She wiped them away with a wet rag, but they kept coming back, until the first hard frost killed them.

What she thinks about couldn't be important to the police or their investigation. How in high school, she played guard for the Shelby Hawkettes girls' basketball team, the first team from Shelby to win state. There was her picture on the front page of the *Des Moines Register* and inside in the Big Peach sports section. The *Shelby Journal* printed extra copies that sold out. The state tournament! They beat Ankeny! Everyone in Iowa understood what that meant. It's the greatest thing that happened to her, how she could slap the ball clean out of some poor girl's hands then bullet it over to one of the three forwards coiled and ready, one inch off the line on the other half of the court. Jump and poke and jab and fight her way to where the ball's going, then get it. The sweat-drenched mob on the court hugging and howling after the double-OT win in Des