

Read and annotate the following short story focusing on character motivation and character change throughout. Formulate/record questions as you read based on the 3 levels we have discussed in class. Write a brief synopsis/summary of that character change for future use.

VIEWFINDER

**by Raymond
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A M A N without hands came to the door to sell me a photograph of my house. Except for the chrome hooks, he was an ordinary-looking man of fifty or so.

"How did you lose your hands?" I asked after he'd said what he wanted.

"That's another story," he said. "You want this picture or not?"

"Come in," I said. "I just made coffee."

I'd just made some Jell-O, too. But I didn't tell the man I did.

"I might use your toilet," the man with no hands said. I wanted to see how he would hold a cup.

I knew how he held the camera. It was an old Polaroid, big and black. He had it fastened to leather straps that looped over his shoulders and went around his back, and it was this that secured the camera to his chest. He would stand on the sidewalk in front of your house, locate your house in the viewfinder, push down the lever with one of his hooks, and out would pop your picture. I'd been watching from the window, you see.

"Where did you say the toilet was?"

"Down there, turn right."

Bending, hunching, he let himself out of the straps. He put the camera on the sofa and straightened his jacket.

"You can look at this while I'm gone." I took the picture from him. There was a little rectangle of lawn, the driveway, the carport, front steps, bay window, and

the window I'd been watching from in the kitchen. So why would I want a photograph of this tragedy?

I looked a little closer and saw my head, *my head*, in there inside the kitchen window. It made me think, seeing myself like that. I can tell you, it makes a man think. I heard the toilet flush. He came down the hall, zipping and smiling, one hook holding his belt, the other tucking in his shirt.

"What do you think?" he said. "All right? Personally, I think it turned out fine. Don't I know what I'm doing? Let's face it, it takes a professional."

He plucked at his crotch.

"Here's coffee," I said.

He said, "You're alone, right?" He looked at the living room. He shook his head. "Hard, hard," he said.

He sat next to the camera, leaned back with a sigh, and smiled as if he knew something he wasn't going to tell me.

"Drink your coffee," I said.

I was trying to think of something to say.

"Three kids were by here wanting to paint my address on the curb. They wanted a dollar to do it. You wouldn't know anything about that, would you?"

It was a long shot. But I watched him just the same.

He leaned forward importantly, the cup balanced between his hooks.

He set it down on the table.

"I work alone," he said. "Always have, always will. What are you saying?" he said.

"I was trying to make a connection," I said. I had a headache. I know coffee's no good for it, but sometimes Jell-O helps. I picked up the picture.

"I was in the kitchen," I said. "Usually I'm in the back." "Happens all the time," he said. "So they just up and left you, right? Now you take me, I work alone. So what do you say? You want the picture?" "I'll take it," I said.

I stood up and picked up the cups.

"Sure you will," he said. "Me, I keep a room downtown. It's okay. I take a bus out, and after I've worked the neighborhoods, I go to another downtown. You see what I'm saying? Hey, I had kids once. Just like

you," he said. I waited with the cups and watched him struggle up from the sofa.

He said, "They're what gave me this." I took a good look at those hooks.

"Thanks for the coffee and the use of the toilet. I sympathize."

He raised and lowered his hooks.

"Show me," I said. "Show me how much. Take more pictures of me and my house." "It won't work," the man said. "They're not coming back." But I helped him get into his straps. "I can give you a rate," he said. "Three for a dollar." He said, "If I go any lower, I don't come out."

WE went outside. He adjusted the shutter. He told me where to stand, and we got down to it. We moved around the house. Systematic. Sometimes I'd look sideways. Sometimes I'd look straight ahead.

"Good," he'd say. "That's good," he'd say, until we'd circled the house and were back in the front again.

"That's twenty. That's enough."

"No," I said. "On the roof," I said.

"Jesus," he said. He checked up and down the block.

"Sure," he said. "Now you're talking."

I said, "The whole kit and caboodle. They cleared right out." "Look at this!" the man said, and again he held up his hooks.

I went inside and got a chair. I put it up under the carport. But it didn't reach. So I got a crate and put the crate on top of the chair.

It was okay up there on the roof.

I stood up and looked around. I waved, and the man with no hands waved back with his hooks.

It was then I saw them, the rocks. It was like a little rock nest on the screen over the chimney hole. You know kids. You know how they lob them up, thinking to sink one down your chimney.

"Ready?" I called, and I got a rock, and I waited until he had me in his viewfinder.

"Okay!" he called.

I laid back my arm and I hollered, "Now!" I threw that son of a bitch as far as I could throw it.

"I don't know," I heard him shout. "I don't do motion shots."

"Again!" I screamed, and took up another rock.