

She didn't know if it was him or the dog. It wasn't her. The dog was lying there on the living-room rug between them, she was on the sofa, and her visitor, rather tense, was sunk deep in a low armchair, and the smell, rather gentle, came into the air. She thought at first that it was him and she was surprised, because people don't pass wind in company very often, or at least not in a noticeable way. As they went on talking, she went on thinking it was him. She felt a little sorry for him, because she thought he was embarrassed and nervous to be with her and that was why he had passed wind. Then it occurred to her very suddenly that it might not have been him at all, it might have been the dog, and worse, if it had been the dog, he might think it had been her. It was true that the dog had stolen an entire loaf of bread that morning, and eaten it, and might now be passing wind, something he did not do otherwise. She wanted immediately to let him know, somehow, that at least it was not her. Of course there was a chance that he had not noticed, but he was smart and alert, and since she had noticed, he probably had, too, unless he was too nervous to have noticed. The problem was how to tell him. She could say something about the dog, to excuse it. But it might not have been the dog, it might have been him. She could not be direct and simply say, "Look, if you just farted, that's all right; I just want to be clear that it wasn't me." She could say, "The dog ate a whole loaf of bread this morning, and I think he's farting." But if it was him, and not the dog, this would embarrass him. Although maybe it wouldn't. Maybe he was already embarrassed, if it was him, and this would give him a way out of his embarrassment. But by now the smell was long gone. Maybe the dog would fart again, if it was the dog. That was the only thing she could think of — the dog would fart again, if it was the dog, and then she would simply apologize for the dog, whether or not it was the dog, and that would relieve him of his embarrassment, if it was him.