

Your main commentary should be focused on *prepositions*. Other topics may also be addressed.

A slanting rain drove against the awning, rushed in black rivulets along the curbs, glistened on the backs of cabhorses and flew from rattling wheels, worked its way down behind the awning and trickled along the restaurant window. "You can say what you like," Martin said at the window table, "but my mind is made up. Are you coming in with me or aren't you?"

"Now hold on, Martin," Dundee said. "One thing at a time. Are you sure you've thought this thing through? Do you know what you want?"

"I know what I damn well don't want," Martin said. "I don't want to become Mr. George Henning."

"Slim chance of that, Martin." Dundee slapped the table with the flat of his hand. "Don't you see what it is? They're grooming you for manager. Six years at a bet, maybe five. You could take this hotel - "

"I don't want to take it. I want to leave it." Martin heard something harsh and contemptuous in his tone and made an effort to speak evenly. "I'm cut out for something else."

"And what may that be?"

"Something" -Martin shrugged impatiently- "larger. It'll come to me. But right now: are you in with me or not?"

"I'm a hotel man, Martin. I don't aim to set up in a new line of work at this stage of the game. But this scheme of yours - I won't stand in your way."

"Then I can borrow against the business - "

"For one more lunchroom. After that I plan to sit tight, keep my money safe in the bank. Pick up a little railroad stock, maybe."

"Suit yourself." Martin looked out the window at dark streetcar rails glistening in the rain. "I was thinking of Westerhoven's rubbers. He hung them on the hat rack to dry. They dripped a puddle onto his rug. I suppose I'll miss the old place once I'm out of it for good."

"Martin!" cried Dundee. "Take the job. It's the chance of a lifetime."

Martin turned to him with a look of surprise.

As he threw himself into the adventure of his new life, Martin realized how hungry he had been for time, sheer time. Now he rose at five in

the morning to walk the still dark avenues, observing the early morning El stations, the streetcars, the opening of newsstands and streetcorner cafes, the movement of people on the sidewalks. He stood on corners of cross streets and avenues, counting the number of people who passed in ten-minute intervals, recording the numbers in a notebook, studying them over breakfast at restaurants up and down the West End, trying to work out a system. The original idea for converting the Paradise Musée into a lunchroom and billiard parlor had come out of nowhere - it had been an impulse, a whim - but he was convinced that he could now go about things in a clearheaded orderly way. Martin knew that what attracted him wasn't the actual lunchroom, for he had no passion for lunchrooms, no special fondness for them, in a sense no interest in them; his passion was for working things out, bringing things together, arranging the unarrangeable, making combinations. Even the idea for a second lunchroom resembling the first had been a kind of lucky intuition, but the advantages of a string of separate yet related establishments now struck him as immense: an ad for one was an ad for all, so that advertising costs would be far less than if it were a question of three different businesses, and the risks of newness would be diminished by the air of familiarity lent to the newest member through deliberate association with the others. At the same time, larger food orders from a combination of lunchrooms meant discounts from suppliers. Money saved in purchasing and advertising meant increased profits - and increased profits meant another lunchroom.

But first it was necessary to look more closely at the operation of the two Metropolitans. The downtown manager was a business friend of Dundee's, who had been the purchasing agent for the Vanderlyn dining rooms and had managed a lunch counter in one of the big department stores, and was grateful for the chance to manage a small business at a generous salary; he was a scrupulous and good-natured man who had the respect of his workers and provided detailed financial reports.