**EFFECT OF GAMMA RAYS ON MAN IN THE MOON MARIGOLDS**by Paul Zindel **BEATRICE**

How did I get the vegetable wagon out without him seeing me? That was easy. Every time he got home for the day he'd make us both some sandwiches--my mama had been dead for years--and then he'd take a nap on the old sofa that used to be...there! And while he was sleeping I hitched up the horses and went riding around the block waving to everyone. I had more nerve than a bear when I was a kid. Let me tell you it takes nerve to sit up on that wagon everyday yelling "Apples! Pears! Cucum...bers!" Then my father came running down the block after me and started spanking me right on top of the wagon--not hard--but it was so embarrassing. And you better believe I never did it again. You would have loved him, and gone out with him on the wagon...all over Stapleton yelling as loud as you wanted, "Apples! Pears! Cucum...bers!" My father made up for all the other men in this whole world, Ruth. If only you two could have met. He'd only be about sixty-five now, do you realize that? And I'll bet he'd still be selling vegetables around town. All that fun and then I don't ever think I really knew what hit me. Well, it was just me and Papa...and your father hanging around. And then Papa got sick...and I drove with him up to the sanatorium. And then I came home and there were the horses...And I had the horses...taken care of. And then Papa got terribly sick and he begged me to marry so that he'd be sure I'd be taken care of. (she laughs) If he knew how I was taken care of he'd turn over in his grave. AND NIGHTMARES! DO YOU WANT TO KNOW THE NIGHTMARE I USED TO HAVE? I never had nightmares over the fights with your father or the divorce. I never had nightmares over any of that. Let me tell you about my nightmare that used to come back and back: Well, I'm on Papa's wagon, but it's newer and shinier and it's being pulled by beautiful white horses, not dirty work horses--these are like--circus horses with long manes and tinsel--and the wagon is blue, shiny blue. And it's full, filled with yellow apples, grapes, and green squash. You're going to laugh when you hear this. I'm wearing a lovely gown all covered with jewels...and my hair is piled up on top of my head with a long feather in it...and bells are ringing, hug bells swinging on a gold braid strung across the back of the wagon, and they're going DONG DONG, DONG DONG, DONG DONG. And I'm yelling APPLES! PEARS! CUCUM...BERS! And then I turn down our street and all the noise stops. This long street with all the doors shut tight and everything crowded next to each other and there's not a soul around. And then I start getting afraid that the vegetables are going to spoil...and that nobody's going to buy anything, and I feel as though I shouldn't be on the wagon, and I keep trying to call out. There's not a sound. Not a single sound...Then I turn my head and I look at this house across the street...I see an upstairs window...the curtains slowly part...And I see the face of my father.