PANORAMA

(PART - I)

A Textbook of Additional/S.L.English
for First year degree students
prescribed by
Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded

PANORAMA

(PART ONE)

Additional English (S.L) Textbook prescribed by

SRTM University, Nanded as per CBCS pattern

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(Part - I)

Additional English (S.L)

A Textbook for U.G. First Year

Semester- I

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Unit-I

A) THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

-R. L. Stevenson

Introduction:

Robert Balfour Louis Stevenson (13 November 1850 - 3 December 1894) was a Scottish novelist, essayist, short story writer, travel writer and poet. He was a qualified advocate but earned his living as a writer. He was chronically afflicted with tuberculosis, and dabbled with various psychotropic drugs such as alcohol, cannabis, and opium. He is well known for his dark and sinister tales like *Markheim* (1884) *Thrawn Janet*(1881) and his five works were well received in English-speaking countries: *Treasure Island* (1883), *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*(1886), *Kidnapped* (1886), *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), and *Catriona* (1893)Interestingly enough, Stevenson later claimed that the plot of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was revealed to him in a dream.The writer had always trusted to "brownies" – meaning his daydreams and nightmares.

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is an important gothic detective fiction form and it is the prominent example of Victorian fiction. The main central theme of this novella is duality along with good and bad, pure and evil, right and wrong, joy and despair. Robert Louis Stevenson presents the view that no human has capacity to be completely good or completely bad. The novella explores how the magnificent city London becomes darker and mysterious location. The powerful city of London embodied the freedom and solitude required for the antagonist of the story, Mr. Hyde to hide his wicked behavior from the society as a whole. The names Jekyll and Hyde have become synonymous with multiple personality disorder.

Dr. Jekyll is a good man, much admired in his profession. Mr. Hyde, meanwhile, is evil. He is a murderer; a monster who tramples upon a small girl simply because she happens to be in his way. On a deeper level, however, the comparison is not merely between good and evil but between evolution and degeneration.The strangest thing about *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is that it is not strange at all. It deals with the everyday plight of ordinary temptations and the familiar effects of the sins they lead to. But though the sins may be familiar, we seldom behold them face-to-face.

The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde can be seen at various levels. As a story, it talks about the concept of good and evil that exists in all of us. At another level, it is a critique on the hypocrisy and double standards of the society. It is also an interesting study into the mind of the author and into the theories of dualism. Finally, it can be seen as a remarkable study into human psychology that presaged the structural personality theories as detailed by Freud.

Text:

STORY OF THE DOOR

MR. UTTERSON the lawyer was a man of a rugged countenance, that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary, and yet somehow lovable. At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eye; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face, but more often and loudly in the acts of his life. He was austere with himself; drank gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages; and though he enjoyed the theatre, had not crossed the doors of one for twenty years. But he had an approved tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, al-most with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds; and in any extremity inclined to help rather than to reprove.

‘I incline to, Cain’s heresy,’ he used to say. ‘I let my brother go to the devil in his quaintly: ‘own way.’ In this character, it was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down-going men. And to such as these, so long as they came about his chambers, he never marked a shade of change in his demeanor.

No doubt the feat was easy to Mr. Utterson; for he was undemonstrative at the best, and even his friendship seemed to be founded in a similar catholicity of good-nature. It is the mark of a modest man to accept his friendly circle ready-made from the hands of opportunity; and that was the lawyer’s way. His friends were those of his own blood or those whom he had known the longest; his affections, like ivy, were the growth of time, they implied no aptness in the object. Hence, no doubt, the bond that united him to Mr. Richard Enfield, his distant kinsman, the well-known man about town. It was a nut to crack for many, what these two could see in each other, or what subject they could find in common. It was reported by those who encountered them in their Sunday walks, that they said nothing, looked singularly dull, and would hail with obvious relief the appearance of a friend. For all that, the two men put the greatest store by these excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week, and not only set aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted.

It chanced on one of these rambles that their way led them down a by-street in a busy quarter of London. The street was small and what is called quiet, but it drove a thriving trade on the week- days. The inhabitants were all doing well, it seemed, and all emulously hoping to do better still, and laying out the surplus of their gains in coquetry; so that the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation, like rows of smiling saleswomen. Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighborhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters, well-polished brasses, and general cleanliness and gaiety of note, instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passenger.

Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point, a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two stories high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower story and a blind forehead of discolored wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the school-boy had tried his knife on the moldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.

Mr. Enfield and the lawyer were on the other side of the by-street; but when they came abreast of the entry, the former lifted up his cane and pointed.

‘Did you ever remark that door?’ he asked; and when his companion had replied in the affirmative, ‘It is connected in my mind,’ added he, ‘with a very odd story.’

‘Indeed?’ said Mr. Utterson, with a slight change of voice, ‘and what was that?’

‘Well, it was this way,’ returned Mr. Enfield: ‘I was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o’ clock of a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street and all the folks asleep— street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church — till at last I got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman. All at once, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastward at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross street. Well, sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the, child’s body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn’t like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut. I gave a view hallow, took to my heels, collared my gentleman, and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running. The people who had turned out were the girl’s own family; and pretty soon, the doctor, for whom she had been sent, put in his appearance. Well, the child was not much

the worse, more frightened, according to the Sawbones; and there you might have supposed would be an end to it. But there was one curious circumstance. I had taken a loathing to my gentleman at first sight. So had the child's family, which was only natural. But the doctor's case was what struck me. He was the usual cut-and-dry apothecary, of no particular age and colour, with a strong Edinburgh accent, and about as emotional as a bagpipe. Well, sir, he was like the rest of us; every time he looked at my prisoner, I saw that Sawbones turn sick and white with the desire to kill him. I knew what was in his mind, just as he knew what was in mine; and killing being out of the question, we did the next best. We told the man we could and would make such a scandal out of this, as should make his name stink from one end of London to the other. If he had any friends or any credit, we undertook that he should lose them. And all the time, as we were pitching it in red hot, we were keeping the women off him as best we could, for they were as wild as harpies. I never saw a circle of such hateful faces; and there was the man in the middle, with a kind of black, sneering coolness — frightened too, I could see that — but carrying it off, sir, really like Satan. 'If you choose to make capital out of this accident,' said he, 'I am naturally helpless. No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene,' says he. 'Name your figure.' Well, we screwed him up to a hundred pounds for the child's family; he would have clearly liked to stick out; but there was something about the lot of us that meant mischief, and at last he struck. The next thing was to get the money; and where do you think he carried us but to that place with the door? — whipped out a key, went in, and presently came back with the matter of ten pounds in gold and a cheque for the balance on Coutts's, drawn payable to bearer and signed with a name that I can't mention, though it's one of the points of my story, but it was a name at least very well known and often printed. The figure was stiff; but the signature was good for more than that, if it was only genuine. I took the liberty of pointing out to my gentleman that the whole business looked apocryphal, and that a man does not, in real life, walk into a cellar door at four in the morning and come out of it with another man's cheque for close upon a hundred pounds. But he was quite easy and sneering. 'Set your mind at rest,' says he, 'I will stay with you till the banks open and cash the cheque myself.' So we all set off, the doc-tor, and the child's father, and our friend and myself, and passed the rest of the night in my chambers; and next day, when we had breakfasted, went in a body to the bank. I gave in the check myself, and said I had every reason to believe it was a forgery. Not a bit of it. The cheque was genuine.'

'Tut-tut,' said Mr. Utterson.

'I see you feel as I do,' said Mr. Enfield. 'Yes, it's a bad story. For my man was a fellow that nobody could have to do with, a really damnable man; and the person that drew the cheque is the very pink of the proprieties, celebrated too, and (what makes it worse) one of your fellows who do what they call good. Black-mail, I suppose; an honest man paying through the nose for some of the capers of his youth. Black- Mail House is what I call that place with the door, in consequence. Though even that, you know, is far from explaining all,' he added, and with the words fell into a vein of musing.

From this he was recalled by Mr. Utterson asking rather suddenly: And you don't know if the drawer of the cheque lives there?'

'A likely place, isn't it?' returned Mr. Enfield. 'But I hap- pen to have noticed his address; he lives in some square or other.'

'And you never asked about the — place with the door?' said Mr. Utterson.

'No, sir: I had a delicacy,' was the reply. 'I feel very strongly about putting questions; it partakes too much of the style of the Day of Judgment. You start a question, and it's like starting a stone. You sit quietly on the top of a hill; and away the stone goes, starting others; and presently some bland old bird (the last you would have thought of) is knocked on the head in his own back-garden and the family has to change their name. No, sir, I make it a rule of mine: the more it looks like Queer Street, the less Iask.'

' A very good rule, too,' said the lawyer.

'But I have studied the place for myself,' continued Mr. Enfield.' It seems scarcely a house. There is no other door, and nobody goes in or out of that one but, once in a great while, the gentleman of my adventure. There are three windows looking on the court on the first floor; none below; the windows are always shut but they're clean. And then there is a chimney which is generally smoking; so somebody

must live there. And yet it's not so sure; for the buildings are so packed together about that court, that it's hard to say where one ends and another begins.'
The pair walked on again for a while in silence; and then, 'Enfield,' said Mr. Utterson, 'that's a good rule of yours.'
'Yes, I think it is,' returned Enfield.
'But for all that,' continued the lawyer, 'there's one point I want to ask: I want to ask the name of that man who walked over the child.'
'Well,' said Mr. Enfield, 'I can't see what harm it would do. It was a man of the name of Hyde.'
'H'm,' said Mr. Utterson. 'What sort of a man is he to see?'
'He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary-looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him. And it's not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment.'
Mr. Utterson again walked some way in silence and ob-viously under a weight of consideration.
'You are sure he used a key?' he inquired at last.
'My dear sir...' began Enfield, surprised out of himself.
'Yes, I know,' said Utterson; 'I know it must seem strange. The fact is, if I do not ask you the name of the other party, it is because I know it already. You see, Richard, your tale has gone home. If you have been inexact in any point, you had better correct it.'
'I think you might have warned me,' returned the other, with a touch of sullenness. 'But I have been pedantically ex-act, as you call it. The fellow had a key; and what's more, he has it still. I saw him use it, not a week ago.
Mr. Utterson sighed deeply but said never a word; and the young man presently resumed. 'Here is another lesson to say nothing,' said he. 'I am ashamed of my long tongue. Let us make a bargain never to refer to this again.'
'With all my heart,' said the lawyer. 'I shake hands on that, Richard.'

SEARCH FOR MR. HYDE

THAT evening Mr. Utterson came home to his bachelor house in somber spirits and sat down to dinner without relish. It was his custom of a Sunday, when this meal was over, to sit close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity on his reading-desk, until the clock of the neighboring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed. On this night, however, as soon as the cloth was taken away, he took up a candle and went into his business-room. There he opened his safe, took from the most private part of it a document endorsed on the envelope as Dr. Jekyll's Will, and sat down with a clouded brow to study its contents. The will was holograph, for Mr. Utterson, though he took charge of it now that it was made, had refused to lend the least assistance in the making of it; it provided not only that, in case of the decease of Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S., etc., all his possessions were to pass into the hands of his 'friend and benefactor Ed-ward Hyde,' but that in case ofDr. Jekyll's 'disappearance or unexplained absence for any period exceeding three calendar months,' the said Ed-ward Hyde should step into the said Henry Jekyll's shoes without further delay and free from any burthen or obligation, beyond the payment of a few small sums to the members of the doctor's household. This document had long been the lawyer's eyesore. It offended him both as a lawyer and as a lover of the sane and customary sides of life, to whom the fanciful was the immodest. And hitherto it was his ignorance of Mr. Hyde that had swelled his indignation; now, by a sudden turn, it was his knowledge. It was already bad enough when the name was but a name of which he could learn no more. It was worse when it began to be clothed upon with detestable attributes; and out of the shifting, insubstantial mists that had so long baffled his eye, there leaped up the sudden, definite presentment of a fiend.

‘I thought it was madness,’ he said, as he replaced the obnoxious paper in the safe, ‘and now I begin to fear it is disgrace.’

With that he blew out his candle, put on a great- coat, and set forth in the direction of Cavendish Square, that citadel of medicine, where his friend, the great Dr. Lanyon, had his house and received his crowding patients. ‘If anyone knows, it will be Lanyon,’ he had thought.

The solemn butler knew and welcomed him;he was subjected to no stage of delay, but ushered direct from the door to the dining-room where Dr. Lanyon sat alone over his wine. This was a hearty, healthy, dapper, red-faced gentleman, with a shock of hair prematurely white, and a boisterous and decided manner. At sight of Mr. Utterson, he sprang up from his chair and welcomed him with both hands. The geniality, as was the way of the man, was somewhat theatrical to the eye; but it reposed on genuine feeling. For these two were old friends, old mates both at school and college, both thorough respecters of themselves and of each other, and, what does not always follow, men who thoroughly enjoyed each other’s company.After a little rambling talk, the lawyer led up to the subject which so disagreeably pre-occupied his mind.

‘I suppose, Lanyon,’ said he ‘you and I must be the two oldest friends that Henry Jekyll has?’

‘I wish the friends were younger,’ chuckled Dr. Lanyon. ‘But I suppose we are. And what o that? I see little of him now.’

Indeed?’ said Utterson. ‘I thought you had a bond of common interest.’

‘We had,’ was the reply. ‘But it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though of course I continue to take an interest in him for old sake’s sake, as they say,I see and I have seen devilish little of the man. Such un-scientific balderdash,’ added the doctor, flushing suddenly purple, ‘would have estranged Damon and Pythias.’

This little spirit of temper was somewhat of a relief to Mr. Utterson. ‘They have only differed on some point of science,’ he thought; and being a man of no scientific passions (except in the matter of conveyancing), he even added: ‘It is nothing worse than that!’ He gave his friend a few seconds to recover his composure, and then approached the question he had come to put. ‘Did you ever come across a protégé of his — one Hyde?’ he asked.

‘Hyde?’ repeated Lanyon. ‘No. Never heard of him, Since mytime.’

That was the amount of information that the lawyer carried back with him to the great, dark bed on which he tossed to and fro, until the small hours of the morning began to grow large. It was a night of little ease to his toiling mind, toiling in mere darkness and besieged by questions.

Six o ‘clock struck on the bells of the church that was so conveniently near to Mr. Utterson’s dwelling, and still he was digging at the problem. Hitherto it had touched him on the intellectual side alone; but now his imagination also was engaged, or rather enslaved; and as he lay and tossed in the gross darkness of the night and the curtained room, Mr. Enfield’s tale went bybefore his mind in a scroll of lighted pictures. He would be aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; then of the figure of a man walking swiftly; then of a child running from the doctor’s; and then these met, and that human Juggernaut trod the child down and passed on regardless of her screams. Or else he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams; and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, the sleeper recalled, and lo! there would stand by his side a figure to whom power was given, and even at that dead hour, he must rise and do its bidding. The figure in these two phases haunted the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamplighted city, and at every street-corner crush a child and leave her screaming. And still the figure had no face by which he might knowit; even in his dreams, it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes; and thus it was that there sprang up and grew apace in the lawyer’s mind a singularly strong, almost an inordinate, curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde. If he could but once set eyes on him, he thought the mystery would lighten and perhaps roll altogether away, as was the habit of mysteriousthings when well examined. He might see a reason for his friend’s strange preference or bondage (call it which you please) and even for the startling clause of the

will. At least it would be a face worth seeing: the face of a man who was without bowels of mercy: a face which had but to show itself to raise up, in the mind of the unimpressionable Enfield, a spirit of enduring hatred.

From that time forward, Mr. Utterson began to haunt the door in the by-street of shops. In the morning before office hours, at noon when business was plenty, and time scarce, at night under the face of the fogged city moon, by all lights and at all hours of solitude or concourse, the law-yer was to be found on his chosen post.

'If he be Mr. Hyde,' he had thought, 'I shall be Mr. Seek.' And at last his patience was rewarded. It was a fine dry night; frost in the air; the streets as clean as a ballroom floor; the lamps, unshaken, by any wind, drawing a regular pattern of light and shadow. By ten o'clock, when the shops were closed, the by-street was very solitary and, in spite of the low growl of London from all round, very silent. Small sounds carried far; domestic sounds out of the houses were clearly audible on either side of the roadway; and the rumour of the approach of any passenger preceded him by a long time. Mr. Utterson had been some minutes at his post, when he wasaware of an odd, light footstep drawing near. In the course of his nightly patrols, he had long grown accustomed to the quaint effect with which the footfalls of a single per-son, while he is still a great way off, suddenly spring out distinct from the vast hum and clatter of the city. Yet his attention had never before been so sharply and decisively arrested; and it was with a strong, superstitious prevision of success that he withdrew into the entry of the court.

The steps drew swiftly nearer, and swelled out sudden-ly louder as they turned the end of the street. The lawyer, looking forth from the entry, could soon see what manner of man he had to deal with. He was small and very plainly dressed, and the look of him, even at that distance, went somehow strongly against the watcher's inclination. But he made straight for the door, crossing the roadway to save time; and as he came, he drew a key from his pocket like one approaching home.

Mr. Utterson stepped out and touched him on the shoulder as he passed.' Mr. Hyde, I think?'

Mr. Hyde shrank back with a hissing intake of the breath. But his fear was only momentary; and though he did not look the lawyer in the face, he answered coolly enough: 'That is my name. What do you want?'

'I see you are going in,' returned the lawyer. 'I am an old friend of Dr. Jekyll's — Mr. Utter-son of Gaunt Street — you must have heard my name; and meeting you so conveniently, I thought you might ad- mit me.'

'You will not find Dr. Jekyll; he is from home,' replied Mr. Hyde, blowing in the key. And then suddenly, but still without looking up, 'How did you know me?' he asked.

'On your side,' said Mr. Utterson, 'will you do me a favour?'

'With pleasure,' replied the other. 'What shall it be?' 'Will you let me see your face?' asked the lawyer.

Mr. Hyde appeared to hesitate, and then, as if upon some sudden reflection, fronted about with an air of defiance; and the pair stared at each other pretty fixedly for a few seconds. 'Now I shall know you again,' said Mr. Utterson.' It may be useful.'

'Yes,' returned Mr. Hyde, 'it is as well we have, met; and a propos, you should have my address.' And he gave a number of a street in Soho.

'Good God!' thought Mr. Utterson,' can he, too, have been thinking of the will?' But he kept his feelings to him-self and only grunted in acknowledgment of the address.

'And now,' said the other, 'how did you know me?' 'By description,' was the reply. 'Whose description?'

'We have common friends, said Mr. Utterson. 'Common friends?' echoed Mr. Hyde, a little hoarsely.' Who are they?'

'Jekyll, for instance,' said the lawyer.

He never told you,' cried Mr. Hyde, with a flush of an-ger.' I did not think you would have lied.'

‘Come,’ said Mr. Utterson, ‘that is not fitting language.’ The other snarled aloud into a savage laugh; and the nextmoment, with extraordinary quickness, he had unlocked the door and disappeared into the house.

The lawyer stood a while when Mr. Hyde had left him, the picture of disquietude. Then he began slowly to mount the street, pausing every step or two and putting his hand to his brow like a man in mental perplexity. The problem he was thus debating as he walked was one of a class that is rarely solved. Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice; all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto un-known disgust, loathing, and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him. ‘There must be some-thing else,’ said the perplexed gentleman. ‘There is some-thing more, if I could find a name for it. God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic, shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell? or Is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures, its clay continent? The last, I think; for, O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan’s signature upon a face, it Is on that of your new friend.’

Round the corner from the by-street, there was a square of ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men: map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers, and the agents of obscure enterprises. One house, however, second from the corner, was still occupied entire; and at the door of this, which wore a great air of wealth and comfort, though it was now plunged in darkness except for the fan-light, Mr. Utterson stopped and knocked. A well-dressed, elderly servant opened the door.

Is Dr. Jekyll at home, Poole?’ asked the lawyer.

‘I will see, Mr. Utterson,’ said Poole, admitting the visitor, as he spoke, into a large, low-roofed, comfortable hall, paved with flags, warmed (after the fashion of a country house) by a bright, open fire, and furnished with costly cabinets of oak. ‘Will you wait here by thefire, sir? or shall I give you a light in the dining room?’ ‘Here, thank you,’ said the lawyer, and he drew near andleaned on the tall fender. This hall, in which he was now left alone, was a pet fancy of his friend the doctor’s; and Utter-son himself was wont to speak of it as the pleasantest room in London. But to-night there was a shudder in his blood; the face of Hyde sat heavy on his memory; he felt (what was rare with him) a nausea and distaste of life; and in the gloom of his spirits, he seemed to read a menace in the flickering of the firelight on the polished cabinets and the uneasy starting of the shadow on the roof. He was ashamed of his relief, when Poole presently returned to announce that Dr. Jekyll was gone out.

‘I saw Mr. Hyde go in by the old dissecting-room door, Poole,’ he said. ‘Is that right, when Dr. Jekyll is from home?’

‘Quite right, Mr. Utterson, sir,’ replied the servant. ‘Mr. Hyde has a key.’

‘Your master seems to repose a great deal of trust in that young man, Poole,’ resumed the other musingly.

‘Yes, sir, he do indeed,’ said Poole. ‘We have all orders to obey him.’ ‘I do not think I ever met Mr. Hyde?’ asked Utterson.

O, dear no, sir. He never dines here,’ replied the butler.

‘Indeed we see very little ofhim on this side of the house; he mostly comes and goes by the laboratory.’ ‘Well, good-night, Poole.’

‘Good-night, Mr. Utterson.’ And the lawyer set out homeward with a very heavy heart.’ Poor Harry Jekyll,’ he thought, ‘my mind misgives me he is in deep waters! He was wild when he was young; a long while ago to be sure; but in the law of God, there is no statute of limitations. Ay, it must be that; the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace: punishment coming, PEDE CLAUDO, years after memory has forgotten and self-love condoned the fault.’ And the lawyer, scared by the thought, brooded a while on his own past, groping in all the corners of memory, lest by chance some Jack-in-the-Box of an old iniquity should leap to light there. His past was fairly blameless; few men could read the rolls oftheir

life with less apprehension; yet he was humbled to the dust by the many ill things he had done, and raised up again into a sober and fearful gratitude by the many that he had come so near to doing, yet avoided. And then by a return on his former subject, he conceived a spark of hope. ‘This Master Hyde, if he were studied,’ thought he, ‘must have secrets of his own; black secrets, by the look of him; secrets compared to which poor Jekyll’s worst would be like sunshine. Things cannot continue as they are. It turns me cold to think of this creature stealing like a thief to Harry’s bedside; poor Harry, what a wakening! And the danger of it; for if this Hyde suspects the existence of the will, he may grow impatient to inherit. Ay, I must put my shoulder to the wheel if Jekyll will but let me,’ he added, ‘if Jekyll will only let me.’ For once more he saw before his mind’s eye, as clear as a transparency, the strange clauses of thewill.

DR. JEKYLL WAS QUITE AT EASE

A FORTNIGHT later, by excellent good fortune, the doctor gave one of his pleasant dinners to some five or six old cronies, all intelligent, reputable men and all judges of good wine; and Mr. Utterson so contrived that he remained behind after the others had departed. This was no new arrangement, but a thing that had befallen many scores of times. Where Utterson was liked, he was liked well. Hosts loved to detain the dry lawyer, when the light-hearted and the loose-tongued had already their foot on the threshold; they liked to sit a while in his unobtrusive company, practising for solitude, sobering their minds in the man’s rich silence after the expense and strain of gaiety. To this rule, Dr. Jekyll was no exception; and as he now sat on the opposite side of the fire — a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness — you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection.

‘I have been wanting to speak to you, Jekyll,’ began the latter. ‘You know that will of yours?’

A close observer might have gathered that the topic was distasteful; but the doctor carried it off gaily. ‘My poor Utterson,’ said he, ‘you are unfortunate in such a client. I never saw a man so distressed as you were by my will; unless it were that hide-bound pedant, Lanyon, at what he called my scientific heresies. Oh, I know he’s a good fellow — you needn’t frown — an excellent fellow, and I always mean to see more of him; but a hide-bound pedant for all that; an ignorant, blatant pedant. I was never more disappointed in any man than Lanyon.’

‘You know I never approved of it,’ pursued Utterson, ruthlessly disregarding the fresh topic. ‘My will? Yes, certainly, I know that,’ said the doctor, a trifle sharply. ‘You have told me so.’

‘Well, I tell you so again,’ continued the lawyer. ‘I have been learning something of young Hyde.’

The large handsome face of Dr. Jekyll grew pale to the very lips, and there came a blackness about his eyes. ‘I do not care to hear more,’ said he. ‘This is a matter I thought we had agreed to drop.’

‘What I heard was abominable,’ said Utterson.

‘It can make no change. You do not under-stand my position,’ returned the doctor, with a certain incoherency of manner. ‘I am painfully situated, Utterson; my position is a very strange — a very strange one. It is one of those affairs that cannot be mended by talking.’

‘Jekyll,’ said Utterson, ‘you know me: I am a man to be trusted. Make a clean breast of this in confidence; and I make no doubt I can get you out of it.’

‘My good Utterson,’ said the doctor, ‘this is very good of you, this is downright good of you, and I cannot find words to thank you in. I believe you fully; I would trust you before any man alive, ay, before myself, if I could make the choice; but indeed it isn’t what you fancy; it is not so bad as that; and just to put your good heart at rest, I will tell you one thing: the moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr. Hyde. I give you my hand upon that; and I thank you again and again; and I will just add one little word, Utterson, that I’m sure you’ll take in good part: this is a private matter, and I beg of you to let it sleep.’

Utterson reflected a little, looking in the fire.

‘I have no doubt you are perfectly right,’ he said at last, getting to his feet.

‘Well, but since we have touched upon this business, and for the last time I hope,’ continued the doctor, ‘there is one point I should like you to understand. I have really a very great interest in poor Hyde. I know

you have seenhim; he told me so; and I fear he was rude. But, I do sincerely take a great, a very great interest in that young man; and if I am taken away, Utterson, I wish you to promise me that you will bear with him and get his rights for him. I think you would, if you knew all; and it would be a weight off my mind if you would promise.'

'I can't pretend that I shall ever like him,' said the lawyer.

'I don't ask that,' pleaded Jekyll, laying his hand upon the other's arm; 'I only ask for justice; I only ask you to help him for my sake, when I am no longer here.'

Utterson heaved an irrepressible sigh. 'Well,' said he, 'I promise.'

THE CAREW MURDER CASE

NEARLY a year later, in the month of October, 18 —, Lon-don was startled by a crime of singular ferocity and rendered all the more notable by the high position of the victim. The details were few and startling. A maid servant living alone in a house not far from the river, had gone up-stairs to bed about eleven. Although a fog rolled over the city in the small hours, the early part of the night was cloudless, and the lane, which the maid's window overlooked, was brilliantly lit by the full moon. It seems she was romantically given, for she sat down upon her box, which stood immediately under the window, and fell into a dream of musing. Never (she used to say, with streaming tears, when she narrated that experience), never had she felt more at peace with all men or thought more kindly of the world. And as she so sat she became aware of an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair, drawing near along the lane; and advancing to meet him, another and very small gentleman, to whom at first shepaid less attention. When they had come within speech (which was just under the maid's eyes) the older man bowed and accosted the other with a very pretty manner of politeness. It did not seem as if the subject of his address were of great importance; indeed, from his pointing, it some-times appeared as if he were only inquiring his way; but the moon shone on his face as he spoke, and the girl was pleased to watch it, it seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition, yet with something high too, as of a well-founded self- content. Presently her eye wandered to the other, and she was surprised to recognize in him a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master and for whom she had conceived a dislike. He had in his hand a heavy cane, with which he was trifling; but he answered never a word, and seemed to listen with an ill- contained impatience. And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, bran-dishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds, the maidfainted.

It was two o'clock when she came to herself and called for the police. The murderer was gone long ago; but there lay his victim in the middle of the lane, incredibly mangled. The stick with which the deed had been done, although it was of some rare and very tough and heavy wood, had broken in the middle under the stress of this insensate cruelty; and one splintered half had rolled in the neighbouring gutter— the other, without doubt, had been carried away by the murderer. A purse and a gold watch were found upon the victim: but no cards or papers, except a sealed and stamped envelope, which he had been probably carrying to the post, and which bore the name and address of Mr. Utterson.

This was brought to the lawyer the next morning, before he was out of bed; and he had no sooner seen it, and been told the circumstances, than he shot out a solemn lip. 'I shall say nothing till I have seen the body,' said he; 'this may be very serious. Have the kindness to wait while I dress.' And with the same grave countenance he hurried through his breakfast and drove to the police station, whither the body had been carried. As soon as he came into the cell, he nodded.

'Yes,' said he, 'I recognise him. I am sorry to say that this is Sir Danvers Carew.'

‘Good God, sir,’ exclaimed the officer, ‘is it possible?’ And the next moment his eyelighted up with professional ambition. ‘This will make a deal of noise,’ he said. ‘And perhaps you can help us to the man.’ And he briefly narrated what the maid had seen, and showed the broken stick.

Mr. Utterson had already quailed at the name of Hyde; but when the stick was laid before him, he could doubt no longer; broken and battered as it was, he recognised it for one that he had himself presented many years before to Henry Jekyll.

‘Is this Mr. Hyde a person of small stature?’ he inquired. ‘Particularly small and particularly wicked-looking, iswhat the maid calls him,’ said the officer.

Mr. Utterson reflected; and then, raising his head, ‘If you will come with me in my cab,’ he said, ‘I think I can take you to his house.’

It was by this time about nine in the morning, and the first fog of the season. A great chocolate-coloured pall lowered over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours; so that as the cab crawled from street to street, Mr. Utterson beheld a marvelous number of degrees and hues of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening; and there would be a glow of a rich, lurid brown, like the light of some strange conflagration; and here, for a moment, the fog would be quite broken up, and a haggard shaftof daylight would glance in between the swirling wreaths. The dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful re-invasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer’s eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare. The thoughts of his mind, besides, were of the gloomiest dye; and when he glanced at the companion of his drive, he was conscious of some touch of that terror of the law and the law’s officers, which may at times assail the most honest.

As the cab drew up before the address indicated, the fog lifted a little and showed him a dingy street, a gin palace, a low French eating-house, a shop for the retail of penny numbers and twopenny salads, many ragged children huddled in the doorways, and many women of different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to have a morning glass; and the next moment the fog settled down again upon that part, as brown as umber, and cut him off from his blackguardly surroundings. This was the home of Henry Jekyll’s favourite; of a man who was heir to a quarter of a million sterling.

An ivory-faced and silvery-haired old woman opened the door. She had an evil face, smoothed by hypocrisy; but her manners were excellent. Yes, she said, this was Mr. Hyde’s, but he was not at home; he had been in that night very late, but had gone away again in less than an hour; there was nothing strange in that; his habits were very irregular, and he was often absent; for instance, it was nearly two monthssince she had seen him till yesterday.

‘Very well, then, we wish to see his rooms,’ said the lawyer; and when the woman began to declare it was im-possible, ‘I had better tell you who this person is,’ he added. ‘This is Inspector Newcomen of Scotland Yard.’

A flash of odious joy appeared upon the woman’s face. ‘Ah!’ said she, ‘he is in trouble! What has he done?

‘Mr. Utterson and the inspector exchanged glances. ‘He don’t seem a very popular character,’ observed the latter. ‘And now, my good woman, just let me and this gentleman have a look about us.’

In the whole extent of the house, which but for the old woman remained otherwise empty, Mr. Hyde had only used a couple of rooms; but these were furnished with luxury and good taste. A closet was filled with wine; the plate was of silver, the napery elegant; a good picture hung upon the walls, a gift (as Utterson supposed) from Henry Jekyll, who was much of a connoisseur; and the carpets were of many plies and agreeable in colour. At this moment, however, the rooms bore every mark of having been recently and hurriedly ransacked; clothes lay about the floor, with their pockets inside out;lock-fast drawers stood open; and on the hearth there lay a pile of grey ashes, as though many papers had been burned. From these embers the inspector disinterred the butt-end of a green cheque-book, which had resisted the action of the fire; the other half of the stick was found behind the door. and as this clinched his suspicions, the officer

declared himself delighted. A visit to the bank, where several thousand pounds were found to be lying to the murderer's credit, completed his gratification.

'You may depend upon it, sir,' he told Mr. Utterson: 'I have him in my hand. He must have lost his head, or he never would have left the stick or, above all, burned the cheque-book. Why, money's life to the man. We have nothing to do but wait for him at the bank, and get out the handbills.'

This last, however, was not so easy of accomplishment; for Mr. Hyde had numbered few familiars — even the master of the servant-maid had only seen him twice; his family could nowhere be traced; he had never been photographed; and the few who could describe him differed widely, as common observers will. Only on one point, were they agreed; and that was the haunting sense of unexpressed deformity with which the fugitive impressed his beholders.

INCIDENT OF THE LETTER

IT was late in the afternoon, when Mr. Utterson found his way to Dr. Jekyll's door, where he was at once admitted by Poole, and carried down by the kitchen offices and across a yard which had once been a garden, to the building which was indifferently known as the laboratory or the dissecting-rooms. The doctor had bought the house from the heirs of a celebrated surgeon; and his own tastes being rather chemical than anatomical, had changed the destination of the block at the bottom of the garden. It was the first time that the lawyer had been received in that part of his friend's quarters; and he eyed the dingy, windowless structure with curios-ity, and gazed round with a distasteful sense of strangeness as he crossed the theatre, once crowded with eager students and now lying gaunt and silent, the tables laden with chemical apparatus, the floor strewn with crates and littered with packing straw, and the light falling dimly through the foggy cupola. At the further end, a flight of stairs mounted to a door covered with red baize;and through this, Mr. Utterson was at last received into the doctor's cabinet. It was a large room, fitted round with glass presses, furnished, among other things, with a cheval-glass and a business table, and looking out upon the court by three dusty windows barred with iron. A fire burned in the grate; a lamp was set lighted on the chimney shelf, for even in the houses the fog began to lie thickly; and there, close up to the warmth, sat Dr. Jekyll, looking deadly sick. He did not rise to meet his visitor, but held out a cold hand and bade him welcome in a changed voice.

'And now,' said Mr. Utterson, as soon as Poole had left them, 'you have heard the news?'

The doctor shuddered.' They were crying it in the square,' he said. 'I heard them in my dining-room.'

'One word,' said the lawyer. 'Carew was my client, but so are you, and I want to know what I am doing. You have not been mad enough to hide this fellow?'

'Utterson, I swear to God, 'cried the doctor,' I swear to God I will never set eyes on him again. I bind my honour to you that I am done with him in this world. It is all at an end. And indeed he does not want my help; you do not know him as I do; he is safe, he is quite safe; mark my words, he will never more be heard of.'

The lawyer listened gloomily; he did not like his friend's feverish manner. 'You seem prettysure of him,' said he; 'and for your sake, I hope you may be right. If it came to a trial, your name might appear.'

'I am quite sure of him,' replied Jekyll; 'I have grounds for certainty that I cannot share with anyone. But there is one thing on which you may advise me. I have — I have received a letter; and I am at a loss whether I should show it to the police. I should like to leave it in your hands, Utterson; you would judge wisely, I am sure; I have so great a trust in you.'

'You fear, I suppose, that it might lead to his detection?' asked the lawyer.

'No,' said the other.' I cannot say that I care what becomes of Hyde; I am quite done with him. I was thinking of my own character, which this hateful business has rather exposed.'

Utterson ruminated a while; he was surprised at his friend's selfishness, and yet relieved by it. 'Well,' said he, at last, 'let me see the letter.'

The letter was written in an odd, upright hand and signed 'Edward Hyde": and it signified, briefly enough, that the writer's benefactor, Dr. Jekyll, whom he had long so unworthily repaid for a thousand

generosities, need labour under no alarm for his safety, As he had means of escape on which he placed a sure dependence. The lawyer liked this letter well enough; it put a better colour on the intimacy than he had looked for; and he blamed himself for some of his past suspicions.

'Have you the envelope?' he asked.

'I burned it,' replied Jekyll,' before I thought what I was about. But it bore no postmark. The note was handed in.'

'Shall I keep this and sleep upon it?' asked Utterson.

'I wish you to judge for me entirely,' was the reply. 'I have lost confidence in myself.'

'Well, I shall consider,' returned the lawyer. 'And now one word more: it was Hyde who dictated the terms in your will about that disappearance?'

The doctor seemed seized with a qualm of faintness: he shut his mouth tight and nodded. 'I knew it,' said Utterson. 'He meant to murder you. You have had a fine escape.'

'I have had what is far more to the purpose,' returned the doctor solemnly: 'I have had a lesson — O God, Utterson, what a lesson I have had!' And he covered his face for a mo-ment with his hands.

On his way out, the lawyer stopped and had a word or two with Poole. 'By the by,' said he, 'there was a letter handed in to-day: what was the messenger like?' But Poole was positive nothing had come except by post;' and only circulars by that,' he added.

This news sent off the visitor with his fears renewed. Plainly the letter had come by the laboratory door; possibly, indeed, it had beenwritten in the cabinet; and if that were so, it must be differently judged, and handled with the more caution. The newsboys, as he went, were crying themselves hoarse along the footways: 'Special edition. Shocking murder of an M. P.' That was the funeral oration of one friend and client; and he could not help a certain apprehension lest the good name of another should be sucked down in the eddy of the scandal. It was, at least, a ticklish decision that he had to make; and self-reliant as he was by habit, he began to cherish a longing for advice. It was not to be had directly; but perhaps, he thought, it might be fished for.

Presently after, he sat on one side of his own hearth, with Mr. Guest, his head clerk, upon the other, and midway between, at a nicely calculated distance from the fire, a bottle of a particular old wine that had long dwelt unsunned in the foundations of his house. The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city, where the lamps glimmered like carbuncles; and through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind. But the room was gay with firelight. In the bottle the acids were long ago resolved; the imperial dye had softened with time, As the colour grows richer in stained windows; and the glow of hot autumn afternoons on hillside vineyards was ready to be set freeand to disperse the fogs of London. Insensibly the lawyer melted. There was no man from whom he kept fewer secrets than Mr. Guest; and he was not always sure that he kept as many as he meant. Guest had often been on business to the doctor's; he knew Poole; he could scarce have failed to hear of Mr. Hyde's familiarity about the house; he might draw conclusions: was it not as well, then, that he should see a letter which put that mystery to rights? and above all since Guest, being a great student and critic of handwriting, would consider the step natural and obliging? The clerk, besides, was a man of counsel; he would scarce read so strange a document without dropping a remark; and by that remark Mr. Utter-son might shape his futurecourse.

'This is a sad business about Sir Danvers,' he said.

'Yes, sir, indeed. It has elicited a great deal of public feeling,' returned Guest. 'The man, of course, was mad.'

'I should like to hear your views on that,' replied Utterson. 'I have a document here in his handwriting; it is between ourselves, for I scarce know what to do about it; it is an ugly business at the best. But there it is; quite in your way a murderer's autograph.'

Guest's eyes brightened, and he sat down at once and studied it with passion. 'No, sir,' he said: 'not mad; but it is an odd hand.'

'And by all accounts a very odd writer,' added the lawyer.

Just then the servant entered with a note.

'Is that from Dr. Jekyll, sir?' inquired the clerk. 'I thought I knew the writing. Anything private, Mr. Utterson?'

'Only an invitation to dinner. Why? Do you want to seeit?'

'One moment. I thank you, sir"; and the clerk laid the two sheets of paper alongside and sedulously compared their contents. 'Thank you, sir,' he said at last, returning both; 'it's a very interesting autograph.'

There was a pause, during which Mr. Utterson struggled with himself. 'Why did you compare them, Guest?' he inquired suddenly.

'Well, sir,' returned the clerk, 'there's a rather singular re-semblance; the two hands are in many points identical: only differently sloped.'

'Rather quaint,' said Utterson.

'It is, as you say, rather quaint,' returned Guest.

'I wouldn't speak of this note, you know,' said the master. 'No, sir,' said the clerk. 'I understand.'

But no sooner was Mr. Utterson alone that night than he locked the note into his safe, where it reposed from that time forward. 'What!' he thought.' Henry Jekyll forge for a murderer!' And his blood ran cold in his veins.

REMARKABLE INCIDENT OF DR. LANYON

TIME ran on; thousands of pounds were offered in reward, for the death of Sir Danvers was resented as a public injury; but Mr. Hyde had disappeared out of the ken of the police as though he had never existed. Much of his past was un-earthed, indeed, and all disreputable: tales came out of the man's cruelty, at once so callous and violent; of his vile life, of his strange associates, of the hatred that seemed to have surrounded his career; but of his present whereabouts, not a whisper. From the time he had left the house in Soho on the morning of the murder, he was simply blotted out; and gradually, as time drew on, Mr. Utterson began to recover from the hotness of his alarm, and to grow more at quiet with himself. The death of Sir Danvers was, to his way of thinking, more than paid for by the disappearance of Mr. Hyde. Now that that evil influence had been withdrawn, a new life began for Dr. Jekyll. He came out of his seclusion, renewed relations with his friends, became once more their familiar guestand entertainer; and whilst he had always been, known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion. He was busy, he was much in the open air, he did good; his face seemed to open and brighten, as if with an inward consciousness of service; and for more than two months, the doctor was atpeace.

On the 8th of January Utterson had dined at the doctor's with a small party; Lanyon had been there; and the face of the host had looked from one to the other as in the old days when the trio were inseparable friends. On the 12th, and again on the 14th, the door was shut against the lawyer. 'The doctor was confined to the house,' Poole said, 'and saw no one.' On the 15th, he tried again, and was again refused; and having now been used for the last two months to see his friend almost daily, he found this return of solitude to weigh upon his spirits. The fifth night he had in Guest to dine with him; and the sixth he betook himself to Dr. Lanyon's.

There at least he was not denied admittance; but when he came in, he was shocked at the change which had taken place in the doctor's appearance. He had his death-warrant written legibly upon his face. The rosy man had grown pale; his flesh had fallen away; he was visibly balder and older; and yet it was not so much, these tokens of a swift physical decay that arrested the lawyer's notice, as a look in the eye and quality of manner that seemed to testify tosome deep-seated terror of the mind. It was unlikely that the doctor should fear death; and yet that was what Utter-son was tempted to suspect. 'Yes,' he thought; 'he is a doctor, he must know his own state and that his days are counted; and the knowledge is more than he can bear.' And yet when Utterson remarked on his ill-looks, it was with an air of greatness that Lanyon declared himself a doomed man.

‘I have had a shock,’ he said, ‘and I shall never recover. It is a question of weeks. Well, life has been pleasant; I liked it; yes, sir, I used to like it. I sometimes think if we knew all, we should be more glad to get away.’

‘Jekyll is ill, too,’ observed Utterson. ‘Have you seen him?’

But Lanyon’s face changed, and he held up a trembling hand. ‘I wish to see or hear no more of Dr. Jekyll,’ he said in a loud, unsteady voice. ‘I am quite done with that person; and I beg that you will spare me any allusion to one whom I regard as dead.’

‘Tut-tut,’ said Mr. Utterson; and then after a considerable pause,’ Can’t I do anything?’ he inquired. ‘We are three very old friends, Lanyon; we shall not live to make others.’

‘Nothing can be done,’ returned Lanyon; ‘ask himself.’ He will not see me,’ said the lawyer.

‘I am not surprised at that,’ was the reply. ‘Some day, Utterson, after I am dead, you mayperhaps come to learn the right and wrong of this. I can-not tell you. And in the meantime, if you can sit and talk with me of other things, for God’s sake, stay and do so; but if you cannot keep clear of this accursed topic, then, in God’s name, go, for I cannot bear it.’

As soon as he got home, Utterson sat down and wrote to Jekyll, complaining of his exclusion from the house, and asking the cause of this unhappy break with Lanyon; and the next day brought him a long answer, often very pathetically worded, and sometimes darkly mysterious in drift. The quarrel with Lanyon was incurable. ‘I do not blame our old friend,’ Jekyll wrote, ‘but I share his view that we must nevermeet. I mean from henceforth to lead a life of extreme seclusion; you must not be surprised, nor must you doubt my friendship, if my door is often shut even to you. You must suffer me to go my own dark way. I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger that I cannot name. If I am the chief of sinners, I am the chief of sufferers also. I could not think that this earth contained a place for sufferings and terrors so unmanning; and you can do but one thing, Utter-son, to lighten this destiny, and that is to respect my silence.’ Utterson was amazed; the dark influence of Hyde had been withdrawn, the doctor had returned to his old tasks and amities; a week ago, the prospect had smiled with every promise of a cheerful and an honoured age;and now in a moment, friendship, and peace of mind, and the whole tenor of his life were wrecked. So great and unprepared a change pointed to madness; but in view of Lanyon’s manner and words, there must lie for it some deeper ground.

A week afterwards Dr. Lanyon took to his bed, and in something less than a fortnight he was dead. The night after the funeral, at which he had been sadly affected, Utterson locked the door of his business room, and sitting there by the light of a melancholy candle, drew out and set before him an envelope addressed by the hand and sealed with the seal of his dead friend. ‘PRIVATE: for the hands of G. J. Utterson ALONE and in case of his predecease to be destroyed unread,’ so it was emphatically super scribed; and the lawyer dreaded to behold the contents. ‘I have buried one friend to-day,’ he thought: ‘what if this should cost me another?’ And then he condemned the fear as a disloyalty, and broke the seal. Within there was another enclosure, likewise sealed, and marked upon the cover as ‘not to be opened till the death or disappearance of Dr. Henry Jekyll.’ Utterson could not trust his eyes. Yes, it was disappearance; here again, as in the mad will which he had long ago restored to its author, here again were the idea of a disappearance and the name of Henry Jekyll bracketed. But in the will, that idea had sprung from the sinister suggestion ofthe man Hyde; it was set there with a purpose all too plain and horrible. Written by the hand of Lanyon, what should it mean? A great curiosity came on the trustee, to disregard the prohibition and dive at once to the bottom of these mysteries; but professional honour and faith to his dead friend were stringent obligations; and the packet slept in the inmost corner of his private safe.

It is one thing to mortify curiosity, another to conquer it; and it may be doubted if, from that day forth, Utterson desired the society of his surviving friend with the same ea-gerness. He thought of him kindly; but his thoughts were disquieted and fearful. He went to call indeed; but he was perhaps relieved to be denied admittance; perhaps, in his heart, he preferred to speak with Poole upon the doorstep and surrounded by the air and sounds of the open city, rath-er than to be admitted into that house of voluntary

bondage, and to sit and speak with its inscrutable recluse. Poole had, indeed, no very pleasant news to communicate. The doc-tor, it appeared, now more than ever confined himself to the cabinet over the laboratory, where he would sometimes even sleep; he was out of spirits, he had grown very silent, he did not read; it seemed as if he had something on his mind. Utterson became so used to the unvarying character of these reports, that he fell off little by little in the frequency of his visits.

INCIDENT AT THE WINDOW

IT chanced on Sunday, when Mr. Utterson was on his usual walk with Mr. Enfield, that their way lay once again through the by-street; and that when they came in front of the door, both stopped to gaze on it.

'Well,' said Enfield, 'that story's at an end at least. We shall never see more of Mr. Hyde.'

'I hope not,' said Utterson. 'Did I ever tell you that I once saw him, and shared your feeling of repulsion?'

'It was impossible to do the one without the other,' re-turned Enfield. 'And by the way, what an ass you must have thought me, not to know that this was a back way to Dr. Jekyll's! It was partly your own fault that I found it out, even when I did.'

'So you found it out, did you?' said Utterson. 'But if that be so, we may step into the court and take a look at the windows. To tell you the truth, I am uneasy about poor Jekyll; and even outside, I feel as if the presence of a friend might do him good.'

The court was very cool and a little damp, and full of pre-mature twilight, although the sky, high up overhead, was still bright with sunset. The middle one of the three windows was half-way open; and sitting close beside it, taking the air with an infinite sadness of mien, like some disconsolate prisoner, Utterson saw Dr. Jekyll.

'What! Jekyll!' he cried. 'I trust you are better.'

'I am very low, Utterson,' replied the doctor, drearily, 'very low. It will not last long, thank God.'

'You stay too much indoors,' said the lawyer. 'You should be out, whipping up the circulation like Mr. Enfield and me. (This is my cousin — Mr. Enfield — Dr. Jekyll.) Come, now; get your hat and take a quick turn with us.'

'You are very good,' sighed the other. 'I should like to very much; but no, no, no, it is quite impossible; I dare not. But indeed, Utterson, I am very glad to see you; this is really a great pleasure; I would ask you and Mr. Enfield up, but the place is really not fit.'

'Why then,' said the lawyer, good-naturedly, 'the best thing we can do is to stay down here and speak with you from where we are.'

'That is just what I was about to venture to propose,' re-turned the doctor with a smite. But the words were hardly uttered, before the smile was struck out of his face and succeededby an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below. They saw it but for a glimpse, for the window was instantly thrust down; but that glimpse had been sufficient, and they turned and left the court without a word. In silence, too, they tra-versed the by-street; and it was not until they had come into a neighbouring thoroughfare, where even upon a Sunday there were still some stirrings of life, that Mr. Utterson at last turned and looked at his companion. They were both pale; and there was an answering horror in their eyes.

'God forgive us, God forgive us,' said Mr. Utterson.

But Mr. Enfield only nodded his head very seriously and walked on once more in silence.

THE LAST NIGHT

MR. UTTERSON was sitting by his fireside one evening after dinner, when he was surprised to receive a visit from Poole.

‘Bless me, Poole, what brings you here?’ he cried; and then taking a second look at him, ‘What ails you?’ he added; ‘is the doctor ill?’

‘Mr. Utterson,’ said the man,’ there is something wrong.’ Take a seat, and here is a glass of wine for you,’ said the lawyer. ‘Now, take your time, and tell me plainly what youwant.’

‘You know the doctor’s ways, sir,’ replied Poole, ‘and how he shuts himself up. Well, he’s shut up again in the cabinet; and I don’t like it, sir I wish I may die if I like it. Mr. Utter-son, sir, I’m afraid.’

‘Now, my good man,’ said the lawyer, ‘be explicit. What are you afraid of?’

‘I’ve been afraid for about a week,’ returned Poole, doggedly disregarding the question, ‘and I can bear it no more.’

The man’s appearance amply bore out hiswords; his manner was altered for the worse; and except for the moment when he had first announced his terror, he had not once looked the lawyer in the face. Even now, he sat with the glass of wine untasted on his knee, and his eyes directed to a corner of the floor. ‘I can bear it no more,’ he repeated.

‘Come,’ said the lawyer, ‘I see you have some good reason, Poole; I see there is something seriously amiss. Try to tell me what it is.’

‘I think there’s been foul play,’ said Poole, hoarsely. ‘Foul play!’ cried the lawyer, a good deal frightened andrather inclined to be irritated in consequence. ‘What foul play? What does the man mean?’

‘I daren’t say, sir’ was the answer; ‘but will you come along with me and see for yourself?’

Mr. Utterson’s only answer was to rise and get his hat and great-coat; but he observed with wonder the greatness of the relief that appeared upon the butler’s face, and per-haps with no less, that the wine was still untasted when he set it down to follow.

It was a wild, cold, seasonable night of March, with a pale moon, lying on her back as though the wind had tilted her, and a flying wrack of the most diaphanous and lawny texture. The wind made talking difficult, and flecked the blood into the face. It seemed to have swept thestreets unusually bare of passengers, besides; for Mr. Utterson thought he had never seen that part of London so deserted. He could have wished it otherwise; never in his life had he been conscious of so sharp a wish to see and touch his fellow-creatures; for struggle as he might, there was borne in upon his mind a crushing anticipation of calamity. The square, when they got there, was all full of wind and dust, and the thin trees in the garden were lashing themselves along the railing. Poole, who had kept all the way a pace or two ahead, now pulled up in the middle of the pavement, and in spite of the biting weather, took off his hat and mopped his brow with a red pocket-handkerchief. But for all the hurry of his cowing, these were not the dews of exertion that he wiped away, but the moisture of some strangling anguish; for his face was white and his voice, when he spoke, harsh and broken.

‘Well, sir,’ he said, ‘here we are, and God grant there be nothing wrong.’

‘Amen, Poole,’ said the lawyer.

Thereupon the servant knocked in a very guarded manner; the door was opened on the chain; and a voice asked from within, ‘Is that you, Poole?’

‘It’s all right,’ said Poole. ‘Open the door.’ The hall, when they entered it, was brightly lighted up; the fire was built high; and about the hearth the whole of the servants, men andwomen, stood huddled together like a flock of sheep. At the sight of Mr. Utterson, the housemaid broke into hysterical whimpering; and the cook, crying out, ‘Bless God! it’s Mr. Utterson,’ ran forward as if to take him in her arms.

‘What, what? Are you all here?’ said the lawyer peevishly. ‘Very irregular, very unseemly; your master would be far from pleased.’

‘They’re all afraid,’ said Poole.

Blank silence followed, no one protesting; only the maid lifted up her voice and now wept loudly. ‘Hold your tongue!’ Poole said to her, with a ferocity of accent that testified to his own jangled nerves; and indeed, when the girl had so suddenly raised the note of her lamentation, they had all started and turned toward the inner door with faces of dreadful expectation. ‘And now,’ continued the butler, addressing the knife-boy, ‘reach me a candle, and we’ll get this through hands at once.’ And then he begged Mr. Utterson to follow him, and led the way to the back-garden.

‘Now, sir,’ said he, ‘you come as gently as you can. I want you to hear, and I don’t want you to be heard. And see here, sir, if by any chance he was to ask you in, don’t go.’

Mr. Utterson’s nerves, at this unlooked-for termination, gave a jerk that nearly threw him from his balance; but he re-collected his courageand followed the butler into the laboratory building and through the surgical theatre, with its lumber of crates and bottles, to the foot of the stair. Here Poole motioned him to stand on one side and listen; while he himself, setting down the candle and making a great and obvious call on his resolution, mounted the steps and knocked with a somewhat uncertain hand on the red baize of the cabinet door.

‘Mr. Utterson, sir, asking to see you, ‘he called; and even as he did so, once more violently signed to the lawyer to give ear.

A voice answered from within: ‘Tell him I cannot see any one,’ it said complainingly.

‘Thank you, sir,’ said Poole, with a note of something like triumph in his voice; and taking up his candle, he led Mr. Utterson back across the yard and into the great kitchen, where the fire was out and the beetles were leaping on the floor.

‘Sir,’ he said, looking Mr. Utterson in the eyes,’ was that my master’s voice?’

‘It seems much changed,’ replied the lawyer, very pale, but giving look for look.

‘Changed? Well, yes, I think so,’ said the butler. ‘Have I been twenty years in this man’s house, to be deceived about his voice? No, sir; master’s made away with; he was made, away with eight days ago, when we heard him cry out upon the name of God; and who’s in there instead of him, and why it stays there, is a thing that cries to Heaven, Mr. Utterson!’

‘This is a very strange tale, Poole; this is rather a wild tale, my man,’ said Mr. Utterson, biting his finger. ‘Suppose it were as you suppose, supposing Dr. Jekyll to have been— well, murdered, what could induce the murderer to stay? That won’t hold water; it doesn’t commend itself to reason.’ ‘Well, Mr. Utterson, you are a hard man to satisfy, but I’ll do it yet,’ said Poole. ‘All this last week (you must know) him, or it, or whatever it is that lives in that cabinet, has been crying night and day for some sort of medicine and cannot get it to his mind. It was sometimes his way — the master’s, that is — to write his orders on a sheet of paper and throw it on the stair. We’ve had nothing else this week back; nothing but papers, and a closed door, and the very meals left there to be smuggled in when nobody was looking. Well, sir, every day, ay, and twice and thrice in the same day, there have been orders and complaints, and I have been sent flying to all the wholesale chemists in town. Every time I brought the stuff back, there would be another paper tell-ing me to return it, because it was not pure, and another order to a different firm. This drug is wanted bitter bad, sir, whatever for.’

‘Have you any of these papers?’ asked Mr. Utterson. Poole felt in his pocket and handed out a crumpled note,which the lawyer, bending nearerto the candle, carefully examined. Its contents ran thus: ‘Dr. Jekyll presents his compliments to Messrs. Maw. He assures them that their last sample is impure and quite useless for his present purpose. In the year 18 —, Dr. J. purchased a somewhat large quantity from Messrs. M. He now begs them to search with the most sedulous care, and should any of the same quality be left, to forward it to him at once. Expense is no consideration. The importance of this to Dr.

J. can hardly be exaggerated.’ So far the letter had run composedly enough, but here with a sudden splutter of the pen, the writer’s emotion had broken loose. ‘For God’s sake,’ he had added, ‘find me some of the old.’

‘This is a strange note,’ said Mr. Utterson; and then sharply, ‘How do you come to have it open?’

‘The man at Maw’s was main angry, sir, and he threw it back to me like so much dirt,’ returned Poole. ‘This is unquestionably the doctor’s hand, do you know?’ resumed the lawyer.

‘I thought it looked like it,’ said the servant rather sulkily; and then, with another voice, ‘But what matters hand-of-write? ‘ he said. ‘I’ve seen him!’

‘Seen him?’ repeated Mr. Utterson. ‘Well?’

‘That’s it!’ said Poole. ‘It was this way. I came suddenly into the theatre from thegarden. It seems he had slipped out to look for this drug or whatever it is; for the cabinet door was open, and there he was at the far end of the room digging among the crates. He looked up when I came in, gave a kind of cry, and whipped up-stairs into the cabinet. It was but for one minute that I saw him, but the hair stood upon my head like quills. Sir, if that was my master, why had he a mask upon his face? If it was my master, why did he cry out like a rat, and run from me? I have served him long enough. And then...’ The man paused and passed his hand over his face.

‘These are all very strange circumstances,’ said Mr. Ut-terson, ‘but I think I begin to see daylight. Your master, Poole, is plainly seised with one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer; hence, for aught I know, the alteration of his voice; hence the mask and the avoidance of his friends; hence his eagerness to find this drug, by means of which the poor soul retains some hope of ultimate recovery — God grant that he be not deceived! There is my explanation; it is sad enough, Poole, ay, and appalling to consider; but it is plain and natural, hangs well together, and delivers us from all exorbitant alarms.’

‘Sir,’ said the butler, turning to a sort of mottled pallor, ‘that thing was not my master, and there’s the truth. My master’ here he looked round him and began to whisper — ‘isa tall, fine build of a man, and this was more of a dwarf.’

Utterson attempted to protest. ‘O, sir,’ cried Poole, ‘do you think I do not know my master after twenty years? Do you think I do not know where his head comes to in the cabinet door, where I saw him every morning of my life? No, Sir, that thing in the mask was never Dr. Jekyll — God knows what it was, but it was never Dr. Jekyll; and it is the belief of my heart that there was murder done.’

‘Poole,’ replied the lawyer, ‘if you say that, it will become my duty to make certain. Much as I desire to spare your master’s feelings, much as I am puzzled by this note which seems to prove him to be still alive, I shall consider it my duty to break in that door.’

Ah Mr. Utterson, that’s talking!’ cried the butler.

‘And now comes the second question,’ resumed Utter-son: ‘Who Is going to do

it?’ ‘Why, you and me,’ was the undaunted reply.

‘That’s very well said,’ returned the lawyer; ‘and what-ever comes of it, I shall make it my business to see you are no loser.’

‘There is an axe in the theatre, continued Poole; ‘and you might take the kitchen poker for yourself.’

The lawyer took that rude but weighty instrument into his hand, and balanced it. ‘Do you know, Poole,’ he said, looking up, ‘thatyou and I are about to place ourselves in a position of some peril?’

‘You may say so, sir, indeed,’ returned the butler.

‘It is well, then, that we should be frank,’ said the other. ‘We both think more than we have said; let us make a clean breast. This masked figure that you saw, did you recognise it?’

‘Well, sir, it went so quick, and the creature was so doubled up, that I could hardly swear to that,’ was the answer. ‘But if you mean, was it Mr. Hyde? — why, yes, I think it was! You see, it was much of the same bigness; and it had the same quick, light way with it; and then who else could have got in by the laboratory door? You have not forgot, sir that at the time of the murder he had still the key with him? But that’s not all. I don’t know, Mr. Utterson, if ever you met this Mr. Hyde?’

‘Yes,’ said the lawyer, ‘I once spoke with him.’

‘Then you must know as well as the rest of us that there was something queer about that gentleman — something that gave a man a turn — I don’t know rightly how to say it, sir, beyond this: that you felt it in your marrow kind of cold and thin.’

‘I own I felt something of what you describe,’ said Mr.Utterson.

‘Quite so, sir,’ returned Poole. ‘Well, whenthat masked thing like a monkey jumped from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet, it went down my spine like ice. Oh, I know it’s not evidence, Mr. Utter-son. I’m book-learned enough for that; but a man has his, feelings, and I give you my Bible- word it was Mr. Hyde!’

‘Ay, ay,’ said the lawyer. ‘My fears incline to the same point. Evil, I fear, founded — evil was sure to come — of that connection. Ay, truly, I believe you; I believe poor Harry is killed; and I believe his murderer (for what purpose, God alone can tell) is still lurking in his victim’s room. Well, let our name be vengeance. Call Bradshaw.’

The footman came at the summons, very white and nervous.

Pull yourself together, Bradshaw,’ said the lawyer. ‘This suspense, I know, is telling upon all of you; but it is now our intention to make an end of it. Poole, here, and I are going to force our way into the cabinet. If all is well, my shoulders are broad enough to bear the blame. Meanwhile, lest anything should really be amiss, or any malefactor seek to escape by the back, you and the boy must go round the corner with a pair of good sticks and take your post at the laboratory door. We give you ten minutes to get to your stations.’

As Bradshaw left, the lawyer looked at his watch. ‘And now, Poole, let us get to ours,’he said; and taking the poker under his arm, led the way into the yard. The scud had banked over the moon, and it was now quite dark. The wind, which only broke in puffs and draughts into that deep well of building, tossed the light of the candle to and fro about their steps, until they came into the shelter of the theatre, where they sat down silently to wait. London hummed solemnly all around; but nearer at hand, the stillness was only broken by the sounds of a footfall moving to and fro along the cabinet floor.

‘So it will walk all day, Sir,’ whispered Poole; ‘ay, and the better part of the night. Only when a new sample comes from the chemist, there’s a bit of a break. Ah, it’s an ill con-science that’s such an enemy to rest! Ah, sir, there’s blood foully shed in every step of it! But hark again, a little closer— put your heart in your ears, Mr. Utterson, and tell me, is that the doctor’s foot?’

The steps fell lightly and oddly, with a certain swing, for all they went so slowly; it was different indeed from the heavy creaking tread of Henry Jekyll. Utterson sighed. ‘Is there never anything else?’ he asked.

Poole nodded. ‘Once,’ he said. ‘Once I heard it weeping!’ ‘Weeping? how that?’ said the lawyer, conscious of a sudden chill of horror.

‘Weeping like a woman or a lost soul,’ saidthe butler. ‘I came away with that upon my heart that I could have wept too.’

But now the ten minutes drew to an end. Poole disinterred the axe from under a stack of packing straw; the candle was set upon the nearest table to light them to the attack; and they drew near with bated breath to where that patient foot was still going up and down, up and down, in the quiet of the night.

‘Jekyll,’ cried Utterson, with a loud voice, ‘I demand to see you.’ He paused a moment, but there came no reply. ‘I give you fair warning, our suspicions are aroused, and I must and shall see you,’ he resumed; ‘if not by fair means, then by foul! if not of your consent, then by brute force!’

‘Utterson,’ said the voice, ‘for God’s sake, have mercy!’ Ah, that’s not Jekyll’s voice — it’s Hyde’s!’ cried Utterson.

‘Down with the door, Poole!’

Poole swung the axe over his shoulder; the blow shook the building, and the red baise door leaped against the lock and hinges. A dismal screech, as of mere animal terror, rang from the cabinet. Up went the axe again, and again the panels crashed and the frame bounded; four times the blow fell; but the wood was tough and the fittings were of excellent workmanship; and it was not until the fifth, that the lock burst in sunder and the wreck of the door fell inwards on the carpet.

The besiegers, appalled by their own riot and the stillness that had succeeded, stood back a little and peered in. There lay the cabinet before their eyes in the quiet lamplight, a good fire glowing and chattering on the hearth, the kettle singing its thin strain, a drawer or two open, papers neat-ly set forth on

the business-table, and nearer the fire, the things laid out for tea: the quietest room, you would have said, and, but for the glazed presses full of chemicals, the most commonplace that night in London.

Right in the midst there lay the body of a man sorely contorted and still twitching. They drew near on tiptoe, turned it on its back and beheld the face of Edward Hyde. He was dressed in clothes far too large for him, clothes of the doctor's bigness; the cords of his face still moved with a semblance of life, but life was quite gone; and by the crushed phial in the hand and the strong smell of kernels that hung upon the air, Utterson knew that he was looking on the body of a self-destroyer.

'We have come too late,' he said sternly, 'whether to save or punish. Hyde is gone to his account; and it only remains for us to find the body of your master.'

The far greater proportion of the building was occupied by the theatre, which filled almost the whole ground sto- ry and was lighted from above, and by the cabinet, which formed an upper story at one end and looked upon thecourt. A corridor joined the theatre to the door on the by-street; and with this the cabinet communicated separately by a second flight of stairs. There were besides a few dark closets and a spacious cellar. All these they now thoroughly examined. Each closet needed but a glance, for all were empty, and all, by the dust that fell from their doors, had stood long unopened. The cellar, indeed, was filled with crazy lumber, mostly dating from the times of the surgeon who was Jekyll's predecessor; but even as they opened the door they were advertised of the uselessness of further search, by the fall of a perfect mat of cobweb which had for years sealed up the entrance. Nowhere was there any trace of Henry Jekyll, dead or alive.

Poole stamped on the flags of the corridor. ' He must be buried here,' he said, hearkening to the sound. 'Or he may have fled,' said Utterson, and he turned to examine the door in the by-street. It was locked;

and lying nearby on the flags, they found the key, already stained with

rust. 'This does not look like use,' observed the lawyer.

'Use!' echoed Poole. 'Do you not see, sir, it is broken? much as if a man had stamped on it.'

'Ay,' continued Utterson,' and the fractures, too, are rusty.' The two men looked at each other with a scare. 'This is beyond me,

Poole,' said the lawyer. 'Let us go back to the cabinet.' They mounted the stair in silence, and still with an occasional awe-struck glance at the dead body, proceeded more thoroughly to examine the contents of the cabinet. At one table, there were traces of chemical work, various measured heaps of some white salt being laid on glass saucers, as though for an experiment in which the unhappy man had been prevented.

'That is the same drug that I was always bringing him,' said Poole; and even as he spoke, the kettle with a startling noise boiled over.

This brought them to the fireside, where the easy-chair was drawn cozily up, and the tea things stood ready to the sitter's elbow, the very sugar in the cup. There were several books on a shelf; one lay beside the tea-things open, and Utterson was amazed to find it a copy of a pious work, for which Jekyll had several times expressed a great esteem, an-notated, in his own hand, with startling blasphemies.

Next, in the course of their review of the chamber, the searchers came to the cheval glass, into whose depths they looked with an involuntary horror. But it was so turned as to show them nothing but the rosy glow playing on the roof, the fire sparkling in a hundred repetitions along the glazed front of the presses, and their own pale and fearful countenances stooping to look in.

'This glass have seen some strange things, sir,' whispered Poole.

'And surely none stranger than itself,' echoed the lawyer in the same tones. 'For what did Jekyll' — he caught himself up at the word with a start, and then conquering the weakness — 'what could Jekyll want with it?' he said.

'You may say that!' said Poole. Next they turned to the business-table. On the desk among the neat array of papers, a large envelope was uppermost, and bore, in the doctor's hand, the name of Mr. Utterson. The lawyer unsealed it, and several enclosures fell to the floor. The first was a will, drawn in the same eccentric terms as the one which he had returned six months before, to serve as a testament in case of death and as a deed of gift in case of disappearance; but, in place of the name of Edward Hyde, the

lawyer, with in-describable amazement, read the name of Gabriel John Utterson. He looked at Poole, and then back at the paper, and last of all at the dead malefactor stretched upon the car-pet.

'My head goes round,' he said. 'He has been all these days in possession; he had no cause to like me; he must have raged to see himself displaced; and he has not destroyed this document.'

He caught up the next paper; it was a brief note in the doctor's hand and dated at the top.

'O Poole!' the lawyer cried, 'he was alive and here this day. He cannot have been disposed of in so short a space, he must be still alive, he must have fled! And then, why fled? and how? and in that case, can we venture to declare this suicide? Oh, we must be careful. I foresee that we may yet involve your master in some dire catastrophe.'

'Why don't you read it, sir?' asked Poole.

'Because I fear,' replied the lawyer solemnly. 'God grant I have no cause for it!' And with that he brought the paper to his eyes and read as follows:

'MY DEAR UTTERSON, — When this shall fall into your hands, I shall have disappeared, under what circum-stances I have not the penetration to foresee, but my instinct and all the circumstances of my nameless situation tell me that the end is sure and must be early. Go then, and first read the narrative which Lanyon warned me he was to place in your hands; and if you care to hear more, turn to the confession of Your unworthy and unhappy friend, HENRY JEKYLL.'

'There was a third enclosure?' asked Utterson.

'Here, sir,' said Poole, and gave into his hands a consider-able packet sealed in several places.

The lawyer put it in his pocket. 'I would say nothing of this paper. If your master has fled or is dead, we may at least save his credit. It is now ten; I must go home and read these documents in quiet; but I shall be back before midnight, when we shall send for the police.'

They went out, locking the door of the theatre behind them; and Utterson, once more leaving the servants gathered about the fire in the hall, trudged back to his office to read the two narratives in which this mystery was now to be explained.

DR. LANYON'S NARRATIVE

ON the ninth of January, now four days ago, I received by the evening delivery a registered envelope, addressed in the hand of my colleague and old school-companion, Henry Jekyll. I was a good deal surprised by this; for we were by no means in the habit of correspondence; I had seen the man, dined with him, indeed, the night before; and I could imagine nothing in our intercourse that should justify formality of registration. The contents increased my wonder; for this is how the letter ran:

'10th December, 18 —'DEAR LANYON, You are one of my oldest friends; and although we may have differed at times on scientific questions, I cannot remember, at least on my side, any break in our affection. There was never a day when, if you had said to me, 'Jekyll, my life, my honour, my reason, depend upon you,' I would not have sacrificed my left hand to help you. Lanyon, my life, my honour my reason, are all at your mercy;if you fail me to -night I am lost. You might suppose, after this preface, that I am going to ask you for something dishonorable to grant. Judge foryourself.

'I want you to postpone all other engagements for tonight — ay, even if you were summoned to the bedside of an emperor; to take a cab, unless your carriage should be actually at the door; and with this letter in your hand for consultation, to drive straight to my house. Poole, my butler, has his orders; you will find, him waiting your arrival with a locksmith. The door of my cabinet is then to be forced: and you are to go in alone; to open the glazed press (letter E) on the left hand, breaking the lock if it be shut; and to draw out, with all its contents as they stand, the fourth drawer from the top or (which is the same thing) the third from the bot-tom. In my extreme distress of wind, I have a morbid fear of misdirecting you; but even if I am in error, you may know the right drawer by its contents: some powders, a phial and a paper book. This drawer I beg of you to carry back with you to Cavendish Square exactly as it stands.

'That is the first part of the service: now for the second. You should be back, if you set out at once on the receipt of this, long before midnight; but I will leave you that amount of margin, not only in the fear

of one of those obstacles that can neither be prevented nor foreseen, but because an hour when your servants are in bed is to be preferred for what will then remain to do. At midnight, then, I have to ask you to be alone in your consulting-room, to admit with your own hand into the house a man who will present himself in my name, and to place in his hands the drawer that you will have brought with you from my cabinet. Then you will have played your part and earned my gratitude completely. Five minutes afterwards, if you insist upon an explanation, you will have understood that these arrangements are of capital importance; and that by the neglect of one of them, fantastic as they must appear, you might have charged your conscience with my death or the shipwreck of my reason.

'Confident as I am that you will not trifle with this ap-peal, my heart sinks and my hand trembles at the bare thought of such a possibility. Think of me at this hour, in a strange place, labouring under a blackness of distress that no fancy can exaggerate, and yet well aware that, if you will but punctually serve me, my troubles will roll away like a story that is told. Serve me, my dear Lanyon, and save Your friend, H. J.'

'P. S. I had already sealed this up when a fresh terror struck upon my soul. It is possible that the postoffice may fail me, and this letternot come into your hands until to-morrow morning. In that case, dear Lanyon, do my errand when it shall be most convenient for you in the course of the day; and once more expect my messenger at midnight. It may then already be too late; and if that night passes without event, you will know that you have seen the last of Henry Jekyll.'

Upon the reading of this letter, I made sure my colleague was insane; but till that was proved beyond the possibility of doubt, I felt bound to do as he requested. The less I understood of this farrago, the less I was in a position to judge of its importance; and an appeal so worded could not be set aside without a grave responsibility. I rose accordingly from table, got into a hansom and drove straight to Jekyll's house. The butler was awaiting my arrival; he had received by the same post as mine a registered letter of instruction, and had sent at once for a locksmith and a carpenter. The tradesmen came while we were yet speaking; and we moved in a body to old Dr. Denman's surgical theatre, from which (as you are doubtless aware) Jekyll's private cabinet is most conveniently entered. The door was very strong, the lock excellent; the carpenter avowed he would have great trouble and have to do much damage, if force were to be used; and the locksmith was near despair. But this last was a handy fellow,and after two hours' work, the door stood open. The press marked E was unlocked; and I took out the drawer, had it filled up with straw and tied in a sheet, and returned with it to Cavendish Square.

Here I proceeded to examine its contents. The powders were neatly enough made up, but not with the nicety of the dispensing chemist; so that it was plain they were of Jekyll's private manufacture; and when I opened one of the wrappers I found what seemed to me a simple crystalline salt of a white colour. The phial, to which I next turned my attention, might have been about half-full of a blood-red liquor, which was highly pungent to the sense of smell and seemed to me to contain phosphorus and some volatile ether. At the other ingredients I could make no guess. The book was an ordinary version-book and contained little but a series of dates. These covered a period of many years, but I observed that the entries ceased nearly a year ago and quite abrupt-ly. Here and there a brief remark was appended to a date, usually no more than a single word: 'double' occurring per-haps six times in a total of several hundred entries; and once very early in the list and followed by several marks of exclamation, 'total failure!!!' All this, though it whetted my curiosity, told me little that was definite. Here were a phial of some tincture, a paper of some salt, and the record of a series of experiments that had led (like too many of Jekyll's investigations) to no end of practical usefulness. How could the presence of these articles in my house affect either the honour, the sanity, or the life of my flighty colleague? If his messenger could go to one place, why could he not go to another? And even granting some impediment, why was this gentleman to be received by me in secret? The more I reflected the more convinced I grew that I was dealing with a case of cerebral disease: and though I dismissed my servants to bed, I loaded an old revolver, that I might be found in some posture of self-defence.

Twelve o'clock had scarce rung out over London, ere the knocker sounded very gently on the door. I went myself at the summons, and found a small man crouching against the pillars of the portico.

‘Are you come from Dr. Jekyll?’ I asked.

He told me ‘yes’ by a constrained gesture; and when I had bidden him enter, he did not obey me without a searching backward glance into the darkness of the square. There was a policeman not far off, advancing with his bull’s eye open; and at the sight, I thought my visitor started and made greater haste. These particulars struck me, I confess, disagreeably; and as I followed him into the bright light of the consulting-room, I kept my hand ready on my weapon. Here, at last, I had achance of clearly seeing him. I had never set eyes on him before, so much was certain. He was small, as I have said; I was struck besides with the shocking expression of his face, with his remarkable combination of great muscular activity and great apparent debility of constitution, and — last but not least — with the odd, subjective disturbance caused by his neighbourhood. This bore some resemblance to incipient rigour, and was accompanied by a marked sinking of the pulse. At the time, I set it down to some idiosyncratic, personal distaste, and merely wondered at the acuteness of the symptoms; but I have since had reason to believe the cause to lie much deeper in the nature of man, and to turn on some nobler hinge than the principle of hatred.

This person (who had thus, from the first moment of his entrance, struck in me what I can only describe as a disgustful curiosity) was dressed in a fashion that would have made an ordinary person laughable; his clothes, that is to say, al-though they were of rich and sober fabric, were enormously too large for him in every measurement — the trousers hanging on his legs and rolled up to keep them from the ground, the waist of the coat below his haunches, and the collar sprawling wide upon his shoulders. Strange to re-late, this ludicrous accoutrement was far from moving me to laughter. Rather, as there was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature that now faced me — something seizing, surprising, and revolting — this fresh disparity seemed but to fit in with and to reinforce it; so that to my interest in the man’s nature and character, there was added a curiosity as to his origin, his life, his for-tune and status in the world.

These observations, though they have taken so great a space to be set down in, were yet the work of a few seconds. My visitor was, indeed, on fire with sombre excitement.

‘Have you got it?’ he cried. ‘Have you got it?’ And so lively was his impatience that he even laid his hand upon my arm and sought to shake me.

I put him back, conscious at his touch of a certain icy pang along my blood. ‘Come, sir,’ said I. ‘You forget that I have not yet the pleasure of your acquaintance. Be seated, if you please.’ And I showed him an example, and sat down myself in my customary seat and with as fair an imitation of my ordinary manner to a patient, as the lateness of the hour, the nature of my pre-occupations, and the horror I had of my visitor, would suffer me to muster.

‘I beg your pardon, Dr. Lanyon,’ he replied civilly enough. ‘What you say is very well founded; and my impatience has shown its heels to my politeness. I come here at the instance of your colleague, Dr. Henry Jekyll, on a piece of business of some moment; and I understood...’ He paused and put his hand to his throat, and I could see, in spite of his collected manner, that he was wrestling against the approaches of the hysteria — ‘I under-stood, a drawer..’

But here I took pity on my visitor’s suspense, and some perhaps on my own growing curiosity.

‘There it is, sir,’ said I, pointing to the drawer, where it lay on the floor behind a table and still covered with the sheet. He sprang to it, and then paused, and laid his hand upon his heart: I could hear his teeth grate with the convulsive action of his jaws; and his face was so ghastly to see than Igrew alarmed both for his life and reason.

‘Compose yourself,’ said I.

He turned a dreadful smile to me, and as if with the decision of despair, plucked away the sheet. At sight of the contents, he uttered one loud sob of such immense relief that I sat petrified. And the next moment, in a voice that was already fairly well under control, ‘Have you a graduated glass?’ he asked.

I rose from my place with something of an effort and gave him what he asked.

He thanked me with a smiling nod, measured out a few minims of the red tincture and added one of the powders. The mixture, which was at first of a reddish hue, began, in proportion as the crystals melted, to brighten in colour, to effervesce audibly, and to throw off smallfumes of vapour. Suddenly and at the

same moment, the ebullition ceased and the compound changed to a dark purple, which faded again more slowly to a watery green. My visitor, who had watched these metamorphoses with a keen eye, smiled, set down the glass upon the table, and then turned and looked upon me with an air of scrutiny.

'And now,' said he, 'to settle what remains. Will you be wise? will you be guided? will you suffer me to take this glass in my hand and to go forth from your house with-out further parley? or has the greed of curiosity too much command of you? Think before you answer, for it shall be done as you decide. As you decide, you shall be left as you were before, and neither richer nor wiser, unless the sense of service rendered to a man in mortal distress may be counted as a kind of riches of the soul. Or, if you shall so prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues to fame and power shall be laid open to you, here, in this room, upon the instant; and your sight shall be blasted by a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of Satan.'

'Sir,' said I, affecting a coolness that I was far from truly possessing,' you speak enigmas, and you will perhaps not wonder that I hear you with no very strong impression of belief. But I have gone too far in the way of inexplicable ser-vices to pause before I see the end.'

'It is well,' replied my visitor. 'Lanyon,you remember your vows: what follows is under the seal of our profession. And now, you who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors — behold!'

He put the glass to his lips and drank at one gulp. A cry followed; he reeled, staggered, clutched at the table and held on, staring with injected eyes, gasping with open mouth; and as I looked there came, I thought, a change — he seemed to swell — his face became suddenly black and the features seemed to melt and alter — and the next moment, I had sprung to my feet and leaped back against the wall, my arm raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror.

'O God!' I screamed, and 'O God!' again and again; for there before my eyes — pale and shaken, and half-fainting, and groping before him with his hands, like a man restored from death — there stood Henry Jekyll!

What he told me in the next hour, I cannot bring my mind to set on paper. I saw what I saw, I heard what I heard, and my soul sickened at it; and yet now when that sight has faded from my eyes, I ask myself if I believe it, and I cannot answer. My life is shaken to its roots; sleep has left me; the deadliest terror sits by me at all hours of the day and night; I feel that my days are numbered, and that I must die; and yet I shall die incredulous. As for the moral turpitude that man unveiled to me, even with tears of penitence, I cannot, even in memory, dwell on it without a start of horror. I will say but one thing, Utterson, and that (if you can bring your mind to credit it) will be more than enough. The creature who crept into my house that night was, on Jekyll's own confession, known by the name of Hyde and hunted for in every corner of the land as the murderer of Carew. HASTIE LANYON.

HENRY JEKYLL'S FULL STATEMENT OF THE CASE

I WAS born in the year 18 — to a large fortune, endowed besides with excellent parts, inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow-men, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honourable and distinguished future. And indeed the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. It was thus rather the exactingnature of my aspirations than any particular degradation in my faults, that made me what I was and, with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and

compound man's dual nature. In this case, I was driven to reflect deeply and inveterately on that hard law of life, which lies at the root of religion and is one of the most plentiful springs of distress. Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering. And it chanced that the direction of my scientific studies, which led wholly toward the mystic and the transcendental, re-acted and shed a strong light on this consciousness of the perennial war among my members. With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, in-congruous, and independent denizens. I, for mypart, from the nature of my life, advanced infallibly in one direction and in one direction only. It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun tosuggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved day-dream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust de-livered from the aspirations might go his way, and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous fagots were thus bound together that in the agonised womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling. How, then, were theydissociated?

I was so far in my reflections when, as I have said, a side-light began to shine upon the subject from the laboratory table. I began to perceivemore deeply than it has ever yet been stated, the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired. Certain agents I found to have the power to shake and to pluck back that fleshly vestment, even as a wind might toss the curtains of a pavilion. For two good reasons, I will not enter deeply into this scientific branch of my confession. First, because I have been made to learn that the doom and burthen of our life is bound for ever on man's shoulders, and when the attempt is made to cast it off, it but returns upon us with more un- familiar and more awful pressure. Second, because, as my narrative will make, alas! too evident, my discoveries were incomplete. Enough, then, that I not only recognised my natural body for the mere aura and effulgence of certain of the powers that made up my spirit, but managed to com-pound a drug by which these powers should be dethroned from their supremacy, and a second form and countenance substituted, none the less natural to me because they were the expression, and bore the stamp, of lower elements in my soul.

I hesitated long before I put this theory to the test of practice. I knew well that I risked death; for any drug that so potently controlled and shook the very fortress of identity, might by the least scruple of an overdose or at the least inopportunity in the moment of exhibition, utterly blot out that immaterial tabernacle which Ilooked to it to change. But the temptation of a discovery so singular and profound, at last overcame the suggestions of alarm. I had long since prepared my tincture; I purchased at once, from a firm of wholesale chemists, a large quantity of a particular salt which I knew, from my experiments, to be the last ingredient required; and late one accursed night, I compounded the elements, watched them boil and smoke together in the glass, and when the ebullition had subsided, with a strong glow of courage, drank off the potion.

The most racking pangs succeeded: a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that can-not be exceeded at the hour of birth or death. Then these agonies began swiftly to subside, and I came to myself as if out of a great sickness. There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, hap-pier in body;

within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a mill- race in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine. I stretched out my hands, exulting in the freshness of these sensations; and in the act, I was suddenly aware that I had lost in stature.

There was no mirror, at that date, in my room; that which stands beside me as I write, was brought there later on and for the very purpose of these transformations. The night, however, was far gone into the morning — the morning, black as it was, was nearly ripe for the conception of the day— the inmates of my house were locked in the most rigorous hours of slumber; and I determined, flushed as I was with hope and triumph, to venture in my new shape as far as to my bedroom. I crossed the yard, wherein the constellations looked down upon me, I could have thought, with wonder, the first creature of that sort that their unsleeping vigilance had yet disclosed to them; I stole through the corridors, a stranger in my own house; and coming to my room, I saw for the first time the appearance of Edward Hyde.

I must here speak by theory alone, saying not that which I know, but that which I suppose to be most probable. The evil side of my nature, to which I had now transferred the stamping efficacy, was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed. Again, in the course of my life, which had been, after all, nine-tenths a life of effort, virtue, and control, it had been much less exercised and much less exhausted. And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller,slighter, and younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides (which I must still believe to be the lethal side of man) had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human. In my eyes it bore a livelier image of the spirit, it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine. And in so far I was doubtless right. I have observed that when I wore the semblance of Edward Hyde, none could come near to me at first without a visible misgiving of the flesh. This, as I take it, was because all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil: and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil.

I lingered but a moment at the mirror: the second and conclusive experiment had yet to be attempted; it yet remained to be seen if I had lost my identity beyond redemption and must flee before daylight from a house that was no longer mine; and hurrying back to my cabinet, I once more pre-pared and drank the cup, once more suffered the pangs ofdissolution, and came to myself once more with the character, the stature, and the face of Henry Jekyll.

That night I had come to the fatal cross-roads. Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations, all must have been otherwise, and from these agonies of death and birth, I had come forth an angel instead of a fiend. The drug had no discriminating action; it was neither diabolical nor divine; it but shook the doors of the prison-house of my disposition; and like the captives of Philippi, that which stood within ran forth. At that time my virtue slumbered; my evil, kept awake by ambition, was alert and swift to seize the occasion; and the thing that was projected was Edward Hyde. Hence, although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair. The movement was thus wholly toward the worse.

Even at that time, I had not yet conquered my aversion to the dryness of a life of study. I would still be merrily disposed at times; and as my pleasures were (to say the least) undignified, and I was not only well known and highly considered, but growing toward the elderly man, this incoherency of my life was daily growing more unwelcome. It was on this side that my new power tempted me until I fell in slavery. I had but to drink the cup, to doff at once the bodyof the noted professor, and to assume, like a thick cloak, that of Edward Hyde. I smiled at the notion; it seemed to me at the time to be humorous; and I made my

preparations with the most studious care. I took and furnished that house in Soho, to which Hyde was tracked by the police; and engaged as housekeeper a creature whom I well knew to be silent and unscrupulous. On the other side, I announced to my servants that a Mr. Hyde (whom I described) was to have full liberty and power about my house in the square; and to parry mishaps, I even called and made myself a familiar object, in my second character. I next drew up that will to which you so much objected; so that if anything be-fell me in the person of Dr. Jekyll, I could enter on that of Edward Hyde without pecuniary loss. And thus fortified, as I supposed, on every side, I began to profit by the strange immunities of my position.

Men have before hired bravos to transact their crimes, while their own person and reputation sat under shelter. I was the first that ever did so for his pleasures. I was the first that could thus plod in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and in a moment, like a schoolboy, strip off these lendings and spring headlong into the sea of liberty. But for me, in my impenetrable mantle, the safety was complete. Think of it — I did not even exist! Let me but escape into my laboratory door, give me but a second ortwo to mix and swallow the draught that I had always standing ready; and whatever he had done, Edward Hyde would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror; and there in his stead, quietly at home, trimming the midnight lamp in his study, a man who could afford to laugh at suspicion, would be Henry Jekyll.

The pleasures which I made haste to seek in my disguise were, as I have said, undignified; I would scarce use a harder term. But in the hands of Edward Hyde, they soon began to turn toward the monstrous. When I would come back from these excursions, I was often plunged into a kind of wonder at my vicarious depravity. This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centred on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone. Henry Jekyll stood at times aghast before the acts of Edward Hyde; but the situation was apart from ordinary laws, and insidiously relaxed the grasp of conscience. It was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone, that was guilty. Jekyll was no worse; he woke again to his good qualities seemingly unimpaired; he would even make haste, where it was possible, to undo the evil done by Hyde. And thus his conscience slumbered.

Into the details of the infamy at which I thusconnived (for even now I can scarce grant that I committed it) I have no design of entering; I mean but to point out the warnings and the successive steps with which my chastisement approached. I met with one accident which, as it brought on no consequence, I shall no more than mention. An act of cruelty to a child aroused against me the anger of a passer-by, whom I recognised the other day in the person of your kinsman; the doctor and the child's family joined him; there were moments when I feared for my life; and at last, in order to pacify their too just resentment, Ed- ward Hyde had to bring them to the door, and pay them in a cheque drawn in the name of Henry Jekyll. But this danger was easily eliminated from the future, by opening an account at another bank in the name of Edward Hyde him-self; and when, by sloping my own hand backward, I had supplied my double with a signature, I thought I sat beyond the reach of fate.

Some two months before the murder of Sir Danvers, I had been out for one of my adventures, had returned at a late hour, and woke the next day in bed with somewhat odd sensations. It was in vain I looked about me; in vain I saw the decent furniture and tall proportions of my room in the square; in vain that I recognised the pattern of the bed-curtains and the design of the mahogany frame; something still kept insisting that I was not where I was,that I had not wakened where I seemed to be, but in the little room in Soho where I was accustomed to sleep in the body of Edward Hyde. I smiled to myself, and, in my psychological way began lazily to inquire into the elements of this illusion, occasionally, even as I did so, dropping back into a comfortable morning doze. I was still so engaged when, in one of my more wakeful moments, my eyes fell upon my hand. Now the hand of Henry Jekyll (as you have often remarked) was professional in shape and size: it was large, firm, white, and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough, in the yellow light of a mid-London morning, lying half shut on the bed- clothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde.

I must have stared upon it for near half a minute, sunk as I was in the mere stupidity of wonder, before terror woke up in my breast as sudden and startling as the crash of cymbals; and bounding from my bed, I rushed to the mirror. At the sight that met my eyes, my blood was changed into some-thing exquisitely thin and icy. Yes, I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde. How was this to be explained? I asked myself, and then, with another bound of terror — how was it to be remedied? It was well on in the morning; the servants were up; all my drugs were in thecabinet — a long journey down two pairs of stairs, through the back passage, across the open court and through the anatomical theatre, from where I was then standing horror-struck. It might indeed be possible to cover my face; but of what use was that, when I was un-able to conceal the alteration in my stature? And then with an overpowering sweetness of relief, it came back upon my mind that the servants were already used to the coming and going of my second self. I had soon dressed, as well as I was able, in clothes of my own size: had soon passed through the house, where Bradshaw stared and drew back at seeing Mr. Hyde at such an hour and in such a strange array; and ten minutes later, Dr. Jekyll had returned to his own shape and was sitting down, with a darkened brow, to make a feint of breakfasting.

Small indeed was my appetite. This inexplicable incident, this reversal of my previous experience, seemed, like the Babylonian finger on the wall, to be spelling out the letters of my judgment; and I began to reflect more seriously than ever before on the issues and possibilities of my double existence. That part of me which I had the power of projecting, had lately been much exercised and nourished; it had seemed to me of late as though the body of Edward Hyde had grown in stature, as though (when I wore that form) I were conscious of a more generous tide of blood; and I began to spy a danger that,if this were much prolonged, the balance of my nature might be permanently overthrown, the power of voluntary change be forfeited, and the character of Edward Hyde be-come irrevocably mine. The power of the drug had not been always equally displayed. Once, very early in my career, it had totally failed me; since then I had been obliged on more than one occasion to double, and once, with infinite risk of death, to treble the amount; and these rare uncertain-ties had cast hitherto the sole shadow on my contentment. Now, however, and in the light of that morning's accident, I was led to remark that whereas, in the beginning, the difficulty had been to throw off the body of Jekyll, it had of late gradually but decidedly transferred itself to the other side. All things therefore seemed to point to this: that I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse.

Between these two, I now felt I had to choose. My two natures had memory in common, but all other faculties were most unequally shared between them. Jekyll (who was composite) now with the most sensitive apprehensions, now with a greedy gusto, projected and shared in the pleasures and adventures of Hyde; but Hyde was indifferent to Jekyll, or but remembered him as the mountain bandit remembers the cavern in which he conceals himself from pursuit. Jekyll had more than a father's interest; Hydehad more than a son's indifference. To cast in my lot with Jekyll, was to die to those appetites which I had long secretly indulged and had of late begun to pamper. To cast it in with Hyde, was to die to a thousand interests and aspirations, and to become, at a blow and forever, despised and friend-less. The bargain might appear unequal; but there was still another consideration in the scales; for while Jekyll would suffer smartingly in the fires of abstinence, Hyde would be not even conscious of all that he had lost. Strange as my circumstances were, the terms of this debate are as old and commonplace as man; much the same inducements and alarms cast the die for any tempted and trembling sinner; and it fell out with me, as it falls with so vast a majority of my fellows, that I chose the better part and was found wanting in the strength to keep to it.

Yes, I preferred the elderly and discontented doctor, surrounded by friends and cherishing honest hopes; and bade a resolute farewell to the liberty, the comparative youth, the light step, leaping impulses and secret pleasures, that I had enjoyed in the disguise of Hyde. I made this choice perhaps with some unconscious reservation, for I neither gave up the house in Soho, nor destroyed the clothes of Edward Hyde, which still lay ready in my cabinet. For two months, however, I was true to my determination; for two months I led a life of suchseverity as I had never before attained to, and enjoyed the compensations of an approving conscience. But time began at last to obliterate the freshness of my alarm; the praises of

conscience began to grow into a thing of course; I began to be tortured with throes and longings, as of Hyde struggling after freedom; and at last, in an hour of moral weakness, I once again compounded and swallowed the transforming draught.

I do not suppose that, when a drunkard reasons with himself upon his vice, he is once out of five hundred times affected by the dangers that he runs through his brutish, physical insensibility; neither had I, long as I had considered my position, made enough allowance for the complete moral insensibility and insensate readiness to evil, which were the leading characters of Edward Hyde. Yet it was by these that I was punished. My devil had been long caged, he came out roaring. I was conscious, even when I took the draught, of a more unbridled, a more furious propensity to ill. It must have been this, I suppose, that stirred in my soul that tempest of impatience with which I listened to the civilities of my unhappy victim; I declare, at least, before God, no man morally sane could have been guilty of that crime upon so pitiful a provocation; and that I struck in no more reasonable spirit than that in which a sick child may break a plaything. But I had voluntarily stripped myself of all those balancing instinctsby which even the worst of us continues to walk with some degree of steadiness among temptations; and in my case, to be tempted, however slightly, was to fall.

Instantly the spirit of hell awoke in me and raged. With a transport of glee, I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow; and it was not till weariness had begun to succeed, that I was suddenly, in the top fit of my delirium, struck through the heart by a cold thrill of terror. A mist dispersed; I saw my life to be forfeit; and fled from the scene of these excesses, at once glorying and trembling, my lust of evil gratified and stimulated, my love of life screwed to the topmost peg. I ran to the house in Soho, and (to make assurance doubly sure) destroyed my papers; thence I set out through the lamplit streets, in the same divided ecstasy of mind, gloating on my crime, light-headedly devising others in the future, and yet still hastening and still hearkening in my wake for the steps of the avenger. Hyde had a song upon his lips as he compounded the draught, and as he drank it, pledged the dead man. The pangs of transformation had not done tearing him, before Henry Jekyll, with streaming tears of gratitude and remorse, had fallen upon his knees and lifted his clasped hands to God. The veil of self-indulgence was rent from head to foot, I saw my life as a whole: I followed it up from the days of childhood, when I had walkedwith my father's hand, and through the self-denying toils of my professional life, to arrive again and again, with the same sense of unreality, at the damned horrors of the evening. I could have screamed aloud; I sought with tears and prayers to smother down the crowd of hideous images and sounds with which my memory swarmed against me; and still, between the petitions, the ugly face of my iniquity stared into my soul. As the acuteness of this remorse began to die away, it was succeeded by a sense of joy. Theproblem of my conduct was solved. Hyde was thenceforth impossible; whether I would or not, I was now confined to the better part of my existence; and oh, how I rejoiced to think it! with what willing humility, I embraced anew the restrictions of natural life! with what sincere renunciation, I locked the door by which I had so often gone and come, and ground the key under myheel!

The next day, came the news that the murder had been overlooked, that the guilt of Hyde was patent to the world, and that the victim was a man high in public estimation. It was not only a crime, it had been a tragic folly. I think I was glad to know it; I think I was glad to have my better impulses thus buttressed and guarded by the terrors of the scaffold. Jekyll was now my city of refuge; let but Hyde peep out an instant, and the hands of all men would be raised to take and slay him.

I resolved in my future conduct to redeem the past; and I can say with honesty that my resolve was fruitful of some good. You know yourself how earnestly in the last months of last year, I laboured to relieve suffering; you know that much was done for others, and that the days passed quietly, almost happily for myself. Nor can I truly say that I wearied of this beneficent and innocent life; I think instead that I daily enjoyed it more completely; but I was still cursed with my duality of purpose; and as the first edge of my penitence wore off, the lower side of me, so long indulged, so recently chained down, began to growl for licence. Not that I dreamed of resuscitating Hyde; the bare idea of that would startle me to frenzy: no, it was in my own person, that I was once more tempted to trifle with my conscience; and it was as an ordinary secret sinner, that I at last fell before the assaults oftemptation.

There comes an end to all things; the most capacious measure is filled at last; and this brief condescension to evil finally destroyed the balance of my soul. And yet I was not alarmed; the fall seemed natural, like a return to the old days before I had made discovery. It was a fine, clear, January day, wet under foot where the frost had melted, but cloudless overhead; and the Regent's Park was full of winter chirrupings and sweet with spring odours. I sat in the sun on a bench; the animal within me licking thechops of memory; the spiritual side a little, drowsed, promising subsequent penitence, but not yet moved to be-gin. After all, I reflected, I was like my neighbours; and then I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active goodwill with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the very moment of that vain-glorious thought, a qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and the most deadly shuddering. These passed away, and left me faint; and then as in its turn the faintness subsided, I began to be aware of a change in the temper of my thoughts, a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation. I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knee was corded and hairy. I was once more Edward Hyde. A moment before I had been safe of all men's respect, wealthy, beloved — the cloth lay-ing for me in the dining-room at home; and now I was the common quarry of mankind, hunted, houseless, a known murderer, thrall to the gallows.

My reason wavered, but it did not fail me utterly. I have more than once observed that, in my second character, my faculties seemed sharpened to a point and my spirits more tensely elastic; thus it came about that, where Jekyll perhaps might have succumbed, Hyde rose to the importance of the moment. My drugs were in one of the presses of my cabinet; how was Ito reach them? That was the problem that (crushing my temples in my hands) I set myself to solve. The laboratory door I had closed. If I sought to enter by the house, my own servants would consign me to the gallows. I saw I must employ another hand, and thought of Lanyon. How was he to be reached? how persuaded? Supposing that I escaped capture in the streets, how was I to make my way into his presence? and how should I, an unknown and displeasing visitor, prevail on the famous physician to rifle the study of his colleague, Dr. Jekyll? Then I remembered that of my original character, one part remained to me: I could write my own hand; and once I had conceived that kindling spark, the way that I must follow became lighted up from end toend.

Thereupon, I arranged my clothes as best I could, and summoning a passing hansom, drove to an hotel in Port-land Street, the name of which I chanced to remember. At my appearance (which was indeed comical enough, how-ever tragic a fate these garments covered) the driver could not conceal his mirth. I gnashed my teeth upon him with a gust of devilish fury; and the smile withered from his face— happily for him — yet more happily for myself, for in an-other instant I had certainly dragged him from his perch. At the inn, as I entered, I looked about me with so black a countenance as made the attendants tremble; not a look did they exchange in mypresence; but obsequiously took my orders, led me to a private room, and brought me wherewithal to write. Hyde in danger of his life was a creature new to me; shaken with inordinate anger, strung to the pitch of murder, lusting to inflict pain. Yet the creature was astute; mastered his fury with a great effort of the will; composed his two important letters, one to Lanyon and one to Poole; and that he might receive actual evidence of their being posted, sent them out with directions that they should be registered.

Thenceforward, he sat all day over the fire in the private room, gnawing his nails; there he dined, sitting alone with his fears, the waiter visibly quailing before his eye; and thence, when the night was fully come, he set forth in the corner of a closed cab, and was driven to and fro about the streets of the city. He, I say — I cannot say, I. That child of Hell had nothing human; nothing lived in him but fear and hatred. And when at last, thinking the driver had begun to grow suspicious, he discharged the cab and ventured on foot, attired in his misfitting clothes, an object marked out for observation, into the midst of the nocturnal passengers, these two base passions raged within him like a tempest. He walked fast, hunted by his fears, chattering to himself, skulking through the less-frequented thoroughfares, counting the minutes that still divided him from midnight. Once a woman spoke to him, offering, I think, a box of lights. He smote her in the face, and she fled.

When I came to myself at Lanyon's, the horror of my old friend perhaps affected me somewhat: I do not know; it was at least but a drop in the sea to the abhorrence with which I looked back upon these

hours. A change had come over me. It was no longer the fear of the gallows, it was the horror of being Hyde that racked me. I received Lanyon's condemnation partly in a dream; it was partly in a dream that I came home to my own house and got into bed. I slept after the prostration of the day, with a stringent and profound slumber which not even the nightmares that wrung me could avail to break. I awoke in the morning shaken, weakened, but refreshed. I still hated and feared the thought of the brute that slept within me, and I had not of course forgotten the appalling dangers of the day before; but I was once more at home, in my own house and close to my drugs; and gratitude for my escape shone so strong in my soul that it almost rivaled the brightness of hope.

I was stepping leisurely across the court after break-fast, drinking the chill of the air with pleasure, when I was seized again with those indescribable sensations that heralded the change; and I had but the time to gain the shelter of my cabinet, before I was once again raging and freezing with the passions of Hyde. It took on this occasion a double dose to recall me tomyself; and alas! Six hours after, as I sat looking sadly in the fire, the pangs returned, and the drug had to be re-ad- ministered. In short, from that day forth it seemed only by a great effort as of gymnastics, and only under the immediate stimulation of the drug, that I was able to wear the countenance of Jekyll. At all hours of the day and night, I would be taken with the premonitory shudder; above all, if I slept, or even dozed for a moment in my chair, it was always as Hyde that I awakened. Under the strain of this continually-impending doom and by the sleeplessness to which I now condemned myself, ay, even beyond what I had thought possible to man, I became, in my own person, a creature eaten up and emptied by fever, languidly weak both in body and mind, and solely occupied by one thought: the horror of my other self. But when I slept, or when the virtue of the medicine wore off, I would leap almost without transition (for the pangs of transformation grew daily less marked) into the possession of a fancy brimming with images of terror, a soul boiling with causeless hatreds, and a body that seemed not strong enough to contain the raging energies of life. The powers of Hyde seemed to have grown with the sickliness of Jekyll. And certainly the hate that now divided them was equal on each side. With Jekyll, it was a thing of vital instinct. He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena ofconsciousness, and was co-heir with him to death: and beyond these links of community, which in themselves made the most poignant part of his distress, he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. And this again, that that insurgent horror was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye; lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born; and at every hour of weakness, and in the confidence of slumber, prevailed against him and deposed him out of life. The hatred of Hyde for Jekyll, was of a different order. His tenor of the gallows drove him continually to commit temporary suicide, and return to his subordinate station of a part in-stead of a person; but he loathed the necessity, he loathed the despondency into which Jekyll was now fallen, and he resented the dislike with which he was himself regarded. Hence the ape -like tricks that he would play me, scrawling in my own hand blasphemies on the pages of my books, burning the letters and destroying the portrait of my father; and indeed, had it not been for his fear of death, he would long ago have ruined himself in order to involve me in the ruin. But his love of life is wonderful; I go further: I, who sicken on for years, but for the last calamity which has now fallen, and which has finally severed me from my own face and nature. My provision of the salt, which had never been renewed since the date of the first experiment, began to run low. I sent out for a fresh supply, and mixed the draught; the ebullition followed, and the first change of colour, not the second; I drank it and it was without efficiency. You will learn from Poole how I have had London ransacked; it was in vain; and I am now persuaded that my first supply was impure, and that it was that unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught.

About a week has passed, and I am now finishing this statement under the influence of the last of the old powders. This, then, is the last time, short of a miracle, that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts or see his own face (now how sadly altered!) in the glass. Nor must I delaytoo long to bring my writing to an end; for if my narrative has hitherto escaped destruction, it has been by a combination of great

prudence and great good luck. Should the throes of change take me in the act of writing it, Hyde will tear it in pieces; but if some time shall have elapsed after I have laid it by, his wonderful selfishness and Circumscription to the moment will probably save it once again from the action of his ape-like spite. And indeed the doom that is closing on us both, has already changed and crushed him. Half an hour from now, when I shall again and forever rein due that hated personality, I know how I shall sit shuddering and weeping in my chair, or continue, with the most strained and fear-struck ecstasy of listening, to pace up andfreeze at the mere thought of him, when I recall the abjection and passion of this attachment, and when I know how he fears my power to cut him off by suicide, I find it in my heart to pityhim.

It is useless, and the time awfully fails me, to prolong this description; no one has ever suffered such torments, let that suffice; and yet even to these, habit brought — no, not alleviation — but a certain callousness of soul, a certain ac-quiescence of despair; and my punishment might have gone down this room (my last earthly refuge) and give ear to every sound of menace. Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? or will he find courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless; this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to anend.

Exercises:

Descriptive answer type questions:

1. Explain the theme of contrast in '*The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde'.*
2. Describe the character Mr. Utterson in '*The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde'.*

Short answer type questions:

1. What is the major conflict in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde?
1. How does the writer present Dr. Jekyll?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield?
3. How is the madness dealt with in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*?
4. What effects does Mr. Hyde on other people?
5. What is Jekyll's background story?
6. Why does Hyde commit suicide?

Classroom activities:

1. What message did you get from *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*?
2. What lessons or morals can we draw from *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*?

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Unit-I

B) OF MICE AND MEN

-John Steinbeck

Introduction:

John Ernst Steinbeck Jr. (February 27, 1902-December 20, 1968) was one ofgreatest American writers of the twentieth century, writes a powerful tragic tale *Of Mice and Men* in 1937. He was born in Salinas in California. Salinas is located in California's rich agricultural central valley. From an early age, he loved to write and share his works. In 1919, he enrolled at Stanford University and attended numerous writing and literature classes for six years before learning without graduation. He is widely known for his comic novels *Tortilla Flat* (1935) and *Cannery Raw* (1945), the multi generation epic *East of Eden* (1952) and the novella *The Red Ponny* (1937) the Pulitzer Prize winning *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) is considered his masterpiece of writing. His first novel *Cup of Gold* published in 1929. His series of articles '*The Harvest Gypsies*' describes shocking conditions and hardships of migrant workers. In 1936, he published *In Dubious Battle* about for worker strike. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1962. He has been called as 'a giant of American letters'.

The title of the novella is taken from the poem of Robert Burns, '*To a Mouse on Turning Her up in Her Nest with a Plow*', November, 1985. The poem describes a mouse trying to in vain to protect his home from a huge plow. Steinbeck saw a parallel between the struggle of the mouse and the struggles of from the workers desperate to achieve some measures of material prosperity and ultimately failing usually due to circumstances beyond their control. As the same he saw the Americans dream as a futile, impossible quest for most farm workers. George Milton and Lennie Small are the only two characters in the novella who are explained in detail. *Of Mice and Men* was also adapted in Hollywood film in 1939 starred Lon Chaney Jr. as Lennie with Burgess Meredith as George, and was directed by Lewis Miestone for four Academy Awards.

It is the story of two men follows George Milton and Lennie Small, two displaced migrant ranch workers who move from one place to another place in California in search of new job opportunities during the great depression in the United States. Steinbeck presents the philosophy of the author and the scientist with its major theme of naturalism, the objective, nonjudgmental narration of the novel. He also touches the several themes such as the nature of dreams, loneliness, mass prosperity for cruelty, powerlessness and economic injustices and the uncertainty of the future. Friendship is another major theme of this novella. The idea that life is improved by friendship is the more sentimental aspect of the friendship theme. However Steinbeck's novella is essentially a tale of loneliness of men struggling alone against a cold, uncaring and faceless destiny.

Text:

A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillsidebank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan Mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees— willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter's flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them. Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening, and the damp flats are covered with the night tracks of 'coons, and with the spreadpads of dogs from the ranches, and with the split-wedge tracks of deer that come to drink in the dark.

There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down

from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water. In front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it.

Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves. The shade climbed up the hills toward the top. On the sand banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little gray sculptured stones. And then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps on crisp sycamore leaves. The rabbits hurried noiselessly for cover. A stilted heron labored up into the air and pounded down river. For a moment the place was lifeless, and then two men emerged from the path and came into the opening by the green pool.

They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore black, shapeless hats and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders. The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, and wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely.

The first man stopped short in the clearing, and the follower nearly ran over him. He took off his hat and wiped the sweat-band with his forefinger and snapped the moisture off. His huge companion dropped his blankets and flung himself down and drank from the surface of the green pool; drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse. The small man stepped nervously beside him.

"Lennie!" he said sharply. "Lennie, for God' sakes don't drink so much."
Lennie continued to snort into the pool. The small man leaned over and shook him by the shoulder. "Lennie. You gonna be sick like you was last night."

Lennie dipped his whole head under, hat and all, and then he sat up on the bank and his hat dripped down on his blue coat and ran down his back. "That's good," he said. "You drink some, George. You take a good big drink." He smiled happily.

George unslung his bindle and dropped it gently on the bank. "I ain't sure it's good water," he said. "Looks kinda scummy."

Lennie dabbled his big paw in the water and wiggled his fingers so the water arose in little splashes; rings widened across the pool to the other side and came back again. Lennie watched them go. "Look, George. Look what I done."

George knelt beside the pool and drank from his hand with quick scoops. "Tastes all right," he admitted. "Don't really seem to be running, though. You never oughta drink water when it ain't running, Lennie," he said hopelessly. "You'd drink out of a gutter if you was thirsty." He threw a scoop of water into his face and rubbed it about with his hand, under his chin and around the back of his neck. Then he replaced his hat, pushed himself back from the river, drew up his knees and embraced them. Lennie, who had been watching, imitated George exactly. He pushed himself back, drew up his knees, embraced them, looked over to George to see whether he had it just right. He pulled his hat down a little more over his eyes, the way George's hat was.

George stared morosely at the water. The rims of his eyes were red with sun glare. He said angrily, "We could just as well of rode clear to the ranch if that bastard bus driver knew what he was talkin' about. 'Jes' a little stretch down the highway,' he says. 'Jes' a little stretch.' God damn near four miles, that's what it was! Didn't wanta stop at the ranch gate, that's what. Too God damn lazy to pull up. Wonder he isn't too damn good to stop in Soledad at all. Kicks us out and says 'Jes' a little stretch down the road.' I bet it was *more* than four miles. Damn hot day."
Lennie looked timidly over to him.
"George?" "Yeah, what ya want?"
"Where we goin', George?"

The little man jerked down the brim of his hat and scowled over at Lennie. “So you forgot that awready, did you? I gotta tell you again, do I? Jesus Christ, you’re a crazy bastard!”

“I forgot,” Lennie said softly. “I tried not to forget. Honest to God I did, George.”

“O.K—O.K. I’ll tell ya again. I ain’t got nothing to do. Might jus’ as well spen’ all my time tellin’ you things and then you forget ‘em, and I tell you again.”

“Tried and tried,” said Lennie, “but it didn’t do no good. I remember about the rabbits, George.”

“The hell with the rabbits. That’s all you ever can remember is them rabbits. O.K.! Now you listen and this time you got to remember so we don’t get in no trouble. You remember settin’ in that gutter on Howard Street and watchin’ that blackboard?”

Lennie’s face broke into a delighted smile. “Why sure, George. I remember that but what’d we do then? I remember some girls come by and you says you says ”

“The hell with what I says. You remember about us goin’ in to Murray and Ready’s, and they give us work cards and bus tickets?”

“Oh, sure, George. I remember that now.” His hands went quickly into his side coat pockets. He said gently, “George I ain’t got mine. I musta lost it.”

He looked down at the ground in despair.

“You never had none, you crazy bastard. I got both of ‘em here. Think I’d let you carry your own work card?”

Lennie grinned with relief. “I..... I thought I put it in my side pocket.” His hand went into the pocket again.

George looked sharply at him. “What’d you take outa that pocket?” “Ain’t a thing in my pocket,” Lennie said cleverly.

“I know there ain’t. You got it in your hand. What you got in your hand— hidin’ it?” “I ain’t got nothin’, George. Honest.”

“Come on, give it here.”

Lennie held his closed hand away from George’s direction. “It’s on’y a mouse, George.” “A mouse? A live mouse?”

“Uh-uh. Jus’ a dead mouse, George. I didn’t kill it. Honest! I found it. I found it dead.” “Give it here!” said George.

“Aw, leave me have it, George.” “*Give it here!*”

Lennie’s closed hand slowly obeyed. George took the mouse and threw it across the pool to the other side, among the brush. “What you want of a dead mouse, anyways?”

“I could pet it with my thumb while we walked along,” said Lennie.

“Well, you ain’t petting no mice while you walk with me. You remember where we’re goin’ now?” Lennie looked startled and then in embarrassment hid his face against his knees. “I forgot again.” “Jesus Christ,” George said resignedly. “Well—look, we’re gonna work on a ranch like the one we come from up north.” “Up north?”

“In Weed.”

“Oh, sure. I remember. In Weed.”

“That ranch we’re goin’ to is right down there about a quarter mile. We’re gonna go in an’ see the boss. Now, look—I’ll give him the work tickets, but you ain’t gonna say a word. You jus’ stand there and don’t say nothing. If he finds out what a crazy bastard you are, we won’t get no job, but if he sees ya work before he hears ya talk, we’re set. Ya got that?”

“Sure, George. Sure I got it.”

“O.K. Now when we go in to see the boss, what you gonna do?”

“I I ” Lennie thought. His face grew tight with thought. “I ain’t gonna say nothin’. Jus’ gonna stan’ there.”

"Good boy. That's swell. You say that over two, three times so you sure won't forget it."

Lennie droned to himself softly, "I ain't gonna say nothin' . . . . I ain't gonna say nothin' I ain't gonna say nothin'."

"O.K.," said George. "An' you ain't gonna do no bad things like you done in Weed, neither." Lennie looked puzzled. "Like I done in Weed?"

"Oh, so ya forgot that too, did ya? Well, I ain't gonna remind ya, fear ya do it again."

A light of understanding broke on Lennie's face. "They run us outa Weed," he exploded triumphantly. "Run us out, hell," said George disgustedly. "We run. They was lookin' for us, but they didn't catch us."

Lennie giggled happily. "I didn't forget that, you bet."

George lay back on the sand and crossed his hands under his head, and Lennie imitated him, raising his head to see whether he was doing it right. "God, you're a lot of trouble," said George. "I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl." For a moment Lennie lay quiet, and then he said hopefully, "We gonna workon a ranch, George."

"Awright. You got that. But we're gonna sleep here because I got a reason." The day was going fast now. Only the tops of the Gabilan Mountains flamedwith the light of the sun that had gone from the valley. A water snake slipped along on the pool, its head held up like a little periscope. The reeds jerked slightly in the current. Far off toward the highway a man shouted something, and another man shouted back. The sycamore limbs rustled under a little wind that died immediately.

"George—why ain't we goin' on to the ranch and get some supper? They got supper at the ranch."

George rolled on his side. "No reason at all for you. I like it here. Tomorra we're gonna go to work. I seen thrashin' machines on the way down. That means we'll be buckin' grain bags, bustin' a gut. Tonight I'm gonna lay right here and look up. I like it."

Lennie got up on his knees and looked down at George. "Ain't we gonna have no supper?"

"Sure we are, if you gather up some dead willow sticks. I got three cans of beans in my bindle. You get a fire ready. I'll give you a match when you get the sticks together. Then we'll heat the beans and have supper."

Lennie said, "I like beans with ketchup."

"Well, we ain't got no ketchup. You go get wood. An' don't you fool around. It'll be dark before long."

Lennie lumbered to his feet and disappeared in the brush. George lay where he was and whistled softly to himself. There were sounds of splashings down the river in the direction Lennie had taken. George stopped whistling and listened. "Poor bastard," he said softly, and then went on whistling again.

In a moment Lennie came crashing back through the brush. He carried one small willow stick in his hand. George sat up. "Awright," he said brusquely. "Gi'me that mouse!"

But Lennie made an elaborate pantomime of innocence. "What mouse, George? I ain't got no mouse." George held out his hand. "Come on. Give it to me. You ain't puttin' nothing over."

Lennie hesitated, backed away, looked wildly at the brush line as though he contemplated running for his freedom. George said coldly, "You gonna give me that mouse or do I have to sock you?"

"Give you what, George?"

"You know God damn well what. I want that mouse."

Lennie reluctantly reached into his pocket. His voice broke a little. "I don't know why I can't keep it. It ain't nobody's mouse. I didn't steal it. I found it lyin' right beside the road."

George's hand remained outstretched imperiously. Slowly, like a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to its master, Lennie approached, drew back, approached again. George snapped his fingers sharply, and at the sound Lennie laid the mouse in his hand.

"I wasn't doin' nothing bad with it, George. Jus' strokin' it."

George stood up and threw the mouse as far as he could into the darkening brush, and then he stepped to the pool and washed his hands. "You crazy fool. Don't you think I could see your feet was wet where you went acrost the river to get it?" He heard Lennie's whimpering cry and wheeled about. "Blubberin'

like a baby! Jesus Christ! A big guy like you." Lennie's lip quivered and tears started in his eyes. "Aw, Lennie!" George put his hand on Lennie's shoulder. "I ain't takin' it away jus' for meanness. That mouse ain't fresh, Lennie; and besides, you've broke it pettin' it. You get another mouse that's fresh and I'll let you keep it a little while."

Lennie sat down on the ground and hung his head dejectedly. "I don't know where there is no other mouse. I remember a lady used to give 'em to me—ever' one she got. But that lady ain't here."

George scoffed. "Lady, huh? Don't even remember who that lady was. That was your own Aunt Clara. An' she stopped givin' 'em to ya. You always killed 'em."

Lennie looked sadly up at him. "They was so little," he said, apologetically. "I'd pet 'em, and pretty soon they bit my fingers and I pinched their heads a little and then they was dead—because they was so little.

"I wisht we'd get the rabbits pretty soon, George. They ain't so little."

"The hell with the rabbits. An' you ain't to be trusted with no live mice. Your Aunt Clara give you a rubber mouse and you wouldn't have nothing to do with it."

"It wasn't no good to pet," said Lennie.

The flame of the sunset lifted from the mountaintops and dusk came into the valley, and a half darkness came in among the willows and the sycamores. A big carp rose to the surface of the pool, gulped air and then sank mysteriously into the dark water again, leaving widening rings on the water. Overhead the leaves whisked again and little puffs of willow cotton blew down and landed on the pool's surface.

"You gonna get that wood?" George demanded. "There's plenty right up against the back of that sycamore. Floodwater wood. Now you get it."

Lennie went behind the tree and brought out a litter of dried leaves and twigs. He threw them in a heap on the old ash pile and went back for more and more. It was almost night now. A dove's wings whistled over the water. George walked to the fire pile and lighted the dry leaves. The flame cracked up among the twigs and fell to work. George undid his bindle and brought out three cans of beans. He stood them about the fire, close in against the blaze, but not quite touching the flame.

"There's enough beans for four men," George said.

Lennie watched him from over the fire. He said patiently, "I like 'em with ketchup."

"Well, we ain't got any," George exploded. "Whatever we ain't got, that's what you want. God a'mighty, if I was alone I could live so easy. I could go get a job an' work, an' no trouble. No mess at all, and when the end of the month come I could take my fifty bucks and go into town and get whatever I want. Why, I could stay in a cat house all night. I could eat any place I want, hotel or any place, and order any damn thing I could think of. An' I could do all that every damn month. Get a gallon of whisky, or set in a pool room and play cards or shoot pool." Lennie knelt and looked over the fire at the angry George. And Lennie's face was drawn with terror. "An' whatta I got," George went on furiously. "I got you! You can't keep a job and you lose me ever' job I get. Jus' keep me shovin' all over the country all the time. An' that ain't the worst. You get in trouble. You do bad things and I got to get you out." His voice rose nearly to a shout. "You crazy son-of-a-bitch. You keep me in hot water all the time." He took on the elaborate manner of little girls when they are mimicking one another. "Jus' wanted to feel that girl's dress—jus' wanted to pet it like it was a mouse—Well, how the hell did she know you jus' wanted to feel her dress? She jerks back and you hold on like it was a mouse. She yells and we got to hide in a irrigation ditch all day with guys lookin' for us, and we got to sneak out in the dark and get outa the country. All the time somethin' like that—all the time. I wisht I could put you in a cage with about a million mice an' let you have fun." His anger left him suddenly. He looked across the fire at Lennie's anguished face, and then he looked ashamedly at the flames.

It was quite dark now, but the fire lighted the trunks of the trees and the curving branches overhead. Lennie crawled slowly and cautiously around the fire until he was close to George. He sat back on his heels. George turned the bean cans so that another side faced the fire. He pretended to be unaware of Lennie so close beside him.

"George," very softly. No answer. "George!"

"Whatta you want?"

"I was only foolin', George. I don't want no ketchup. I wouldn't eat no ketchup if it was right here beside me."

"If it was here, you could have some."

"But I wouldn't eat none, George. I'd leave it all for you. You could cover your beans with it and I wouldn't touch none of it."

George still stared morosely at the fire. "When I think of the swell time I could have without you, I go nuts. I never get no peace."

Lennie still knelt. He looked off into the darkness across the river. "George, you want I should go away and leave you alone?"

"Where the hell could you go?"

"Well, I could. I could go off in the hills there. Some place I'd find a cave." "Yeah? How'd you eat? You ain't got sense enough to find nothing to eat." "I'd find things, George. I don't need no nice food with ketchup. I'd lay outin the sun and nobody'd hurt me. An' if I foun' a mouse, I could keep it. Nobody'd take it away from me."

George looked quickly and searchingly at him. "I been mean, ain't I?"

"If you don' want me I can go off in the hills an' find a cave. I can go away any time."

"No—look! I was jus' foolin', Lennie. 'Cause I want you to stay with me. Trouble with mice is you always kill 'em." He paused. "Tell you what I'll do, Lennie. First chance I get I'll give you a pup. Maybe you wouldn't kill *it*. That'd be better than mice. And you could pet it harder."

Lennie avoided the bait. He had sensed his advantage. "If you don't want me, you only jus' got to say so, and I'll go off in those hills right there—right up in those hills and live by myself. An' I won't get no mice stole from me."

George said, "I want you to stay with me, Lennie. Jesus Christ, somebody'd shoot you for a coyote if you was by yourself. No, you stay with me. Your Aunt Clara wouldn't like you running off by yourself, even if she is dead."

Lennie spoke craftily, "Tell me—like you done before." "Tell you what?"

"About the rabbits."

George snapped, "You ain't gonna put nothing over on me."

Lennie pleaded, "Come on, George. Tell me. Please, George. Like you done before."

"You get a kick outa that, don't you? Awright, I'll tell you, and then we'll eatour supper..... "

George's voice became deeper. He repeated his words rhythmically as though he had said them many times before. "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no fambly. They don't belong no place. They come to a ranch an' work up a stake and then they go into town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they're poundin' their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look ahead to."

Lennie was delighted. "That's it—that's it. Now tell how it is with us." George went on. "With us it ain't like that. We got a future. We gotsomebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. We don't have to sit-in no bar room blowin' in our jack jus' because we got no place else to go. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us."

Lennie broke in. "*But not us! An' why? Because because I got you tolook after me, and you got me to look after you, and that's why.*" He laugheddelightedly. "Go on now, George!"

"You got it by heart. You can do it yourself."

"No, you. I forget some a' the things. Tell about how it's gonna be."

"O.K. Someday—we're gonna get the jack together and we're gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an' a cow and some pigs and—"

"*An' live off the fatta the lan'*," Lennie shouted. "An' have *rabbits*. Go on, George! Tell about what we're gonna have in the garden and about the rabbits in the cages and about the rain in the winter and the stove, and how thick the cream is on the milk like you can hardly cut it. Tell about that, George."

“Why’n’t you do it yourself? You know all of it.”

“No you tell it. It ain’t the same if I tell it. Go on George. How I get to tend the rabbits.”

“Well,” said George, “we’ll have a big vegetable patch and a rabbit hutch and chickens. And when it rains in the winter, we’ll just say the hell with goin’ to work, and we’ll build up a fire in the stove and set around it an’ listen to the rain comin’ down on the roof—Nuts!” He took out his pocket knife. “I ain’t got time for no more.” He drove his knife through the top of one of the bean cans, sawed out the top and passed the can to Lennie. Then he opened a second can. From his side pocket he brought out two spoons and passed one of them to Lennie.

They sat by the fire and filled their mouths with beans and chewed mightily. A few beans slipped out of the side of Lennie’s mouth. George gestured with his spoon. “What you gonna say tomorrow when the boss asks you questions?”

Lennie stopped chewing and swallowed. His face was concentrated. “I I ain’t gonna say a word.”

“Good boy! That’s fine, Lennie! Maybe you’re gettin’ better. When we get the coupla acres I can let you tend the rabbits all right. ‘Specially if you remember as good as that.”

Lennie choked with pride. “I can remember,” he said.

George motioned with his spoon again. “Look, Lennie. I want you to look around here. You can remember this place, can’t you? The ranch is about a quarter mile up that way. Just follow the river?”

“Sure,” said Lennie. “I can remember this. Di’n’t I remember about not gonna say a word?”

“’Course you did. Well, look. Lennie—if you jus’ happen to get in trouble like you always done before, I want you to come right here an’ hide in the brush.”

“Hide in the brush,” said Lennie slowly.

“Hide in the brush till I come for you. Can you remember that?” “Sure I can, George. Hide in the brush till you come.”

“But you ain’t gonna get in no trouble, because if you do, I won’t let you tend the rabbits.” He threw his empty bean can off into the brush.

“I won’t get in no trouble, George. I ain’t gonna say a word“O.K. Bring your bindle over here by the fire. It’s gonna be nice sleepin’ here. Lookin’ up, and the leaves. Don’t build up no more fire. We’ll let her die down.”

They made their beds on the sand, and as the blaze dropped from the fire the sphere of light grew smaller; the curling branches disappeared and only a faint glimmer showed where the tree trunks were. From the darkness Lennie called, “George—you asleep?”

“No. Whatta you want?”

“Let’s have different color rabbits, George.”

“Sure we will,” George said sleepily. “Red and blue and green rabbits, Lennie. Millions of ‘em.” “Furry ones, George, like I seen in the fair in Sacramento.” “Sure, furry ones.”

“’Cause I can jus’ as well go away, George, an’ live in a cave.” “You can jus’ as well go to hell,” said George. “Shut up now.”

The red light dimmed on the coals. Up the hill from the river a coyote yammered, and a dog answered from the other side of the stream.

The sycamore leaves whispered in a little night breeze.

The bunk house was a long, rectangular building. Inside, the walls werewhitewashed and the floor unpainted. In three walls there were small, square windows, and in the fourth, a solid door with a wooden latch. Against the walls were eight bunks, five of them made up with blankets and the other three showing their burlap ticking. Over each bunk there was nailed an apple box with the opening forward so that it made two shelves for the personal belongings of the occupant of the bunk. And these shelves were loaded with little articles, soap and talcum powder, razors and those Western magazines ranch men love to read and scoff at and secretly believe. And there were medicines on the shelves, and little vials, combs; and

from nails on the box sides, a few neckties. Near one wall there was a black cast-iron stove, its stovepipe going straight up through the ceiling. In the middle of the room stood a big square table littered with playing cards, and around it were grouped boxes for the players to sit on.

At about ten o'clock in the morning the sun threw a bright dust-laden bar through one of the side windows, and in and out of the beam flies shot like rushing stars.

The wooden latch raised. The door opened and a tall, stoop-shouldered old man came in. He was dressed in blue jeans and he carried a big push-broom in his left hand. Behind him came George, and behind George, Lennie.

"The boss was expectin' you last night," the old man said. "He was sore as hell when you wasn't here to go out this morning." He pointed with his right arm, and out of the sleeve came a round stick-like wrist, but no hand. "You can have them two beds there," he said, indicating two bunks near the stove.

George stepped over and threw his blankets down on the burlap sack of straw that was a mattress. He looked into his box shelf and then picked a small yellow can from it. "Say. What the hell's this?"

"I don't know," said the old man.

"Says 'positively kills lice, roaches and other scourges.' What the hell kind of bed you giving us, anyways. We don't want no pants rabbits."

The old swamper shifted his broom and held it between his elbow and his side while he held out his hand for the can. He studied the label carefully. "Tell you what—" he said finally, "last guy that had this bed was a blacksmith—hell of a nice fella and as clean a guy as you want to meet. Used to wash his hands even *after* he ate."

"Then how come he got graybacks?" George was working up a slow anger. Lennie put his bindle on the neighboring bunk and sat down. He watched George with open mouth.

"Tell you what," said the old swamper. "This here blacksmith—name of Whitey—was the kind of guy that would put that stuff around even if there wasn't no bugs—just to make sure, see? Tell you what he used to do—At meals he'd peel his boil' potatoes, an' he'd take out ever' little spot, no matter what kind, before he'd eat it. And if there was a red splotch on an egg, he'd scrape it off. Finally quit about the food. That's the kinda guy he was—clean. Used ta dress up Sundays even when he wasn't going no place, put on a necktie even, and then set in the bunkhouse."

"I ain't so sure," said George skeptically. "What did you say he quit for?" The old man put the yellow can in his pocket, and he rubbed his bristly whitewhiskers with his knuckles. "Why he just quit, the way a guy will. Says it was the food. Just wanted to move. Didn't give no other reason but the food. Just says 'gimme my time' one night, the way any guy would."

George lifted his tick and looked underneath it. He leaned over and inspected the sacking closely. Immediately Lennie got up and did the same with his bed. Finally George seemed satisfied. He unrolled his bindle and put things on the shelf, his razor and bar of soap, his comb and bottle of pills, his liniment and leather wristband. Then he made his bed up neatly with blankets. The old man said, "I guess the boss'll be out here in a minute. He was sure burned when you wasn't here this morning. Come right in when we was eatin' breakfast and says, 'Where the hell's them new men?' An' he give the stable buck hell, too."

George patted a wrinkle out of his bed, and sat down. "Give the stable buck hell?" he asked. "Sure. Ya see the stable buck's a nigger."

"Nigger, huh?"

"Yeah. Nice fella too. Got a crooked back where a horse kicked him. The boss gives him hell when he's mad. But the stable buck don't give a damn about that. He reads a lot. Got books in his room."

"What kind of a guy is the boss?" George asked.

"Well, he's a pretty nice fella. Gets pretty mad sometimes, but he's pretty nice. Tell ya what—know what he done Christmas? Brang a gallon of whisky right in here and says, 'Drink hearty, boys. Christmas comes but once a year.'"

"The hell he did! Whole gallon?"

"Yes sir. Jesus, we had fun. They let the nigger come in that night. Little skinner name of Smitty took after the nigger. Done pretty good, too. The guys wouldn't let him use his feet, so the nigger got him. If he coulda used his feet, Smitty says he woulda killed the nigger. The guys said on account of the nigger's got a crooked back, Smitty can't use his feet." He paused in relish of the memory. "After that the guys went into Soledad and raised hell. I didn't go in there. I ain't got the poop no more."

Lennie was just finishing making his bed. The wooden latch raised again and the door opened. A little stocky man stood in the open doorway. He wore blue jean trousers, a flannel shirt, a black, unbuttoned vest and a black coat. His thumbs were stuck in his belt, on each side of a square steel buckle. On his head was a soiled brown Stetson hat, and he wore high-heeled boots and spurs to prove he was not a laboring man.

The old swamper looked quickly at him, and then shuffled to the door rubbing his whiskers with his knuckles as he went. "Them guys just come," he said, and shuffled past the boss and out the door.

The boss stepped into the room with the short, quick steps of a fat-legged man. "I wrote Murray and Ready I wanted two men this morning. You got your work slips?" George reached into his pocket and produced the slips and handed them to the boss. "It wasn't Murray and Ready's fault. Says right here on the slip that you was to be here for work this morning."

George looked down at his feet. "Bus driver give us a bum steer," he said.

"We hadda walk ten miles. Says we was here when we wasn't. We couldn't get no rides in the morning."

The boss squinted his eyes. "Well, I had to send out the grain teams short two buckers. Won't do any good to go out now till after dinner." He pulled his time book out of his pocket and opened it where a pencil was stuck between the leaves. George scowled meaningfully at Lennie, and Lennie nodded to show that he understood. The boss licked his pencil. "What's your name?"

"George Milton."

"And what's yours?"

George said, "His name's Lennie Small."

The names were entered in the book. "Le's see, this is the twentieth, noon the twentieth." He closed the book. "Where you boys been working?"

"Up around Weed," said George. "You, too?" to Lennie.

"Yeah, him too," said George.

The boss pointed a playful finger at Lennie. "He ain't much of a talker, is he?"

"No, he ain't, but he's sure a hell of a good worker. Strong as a bull." Lennie smiled to himself. "Strong as a bull," he repeated.

George scowled at him, and Lennie dropped his head in shame at having forgotten.

The boss said suddenly, "Listen, Small!" Lennie raised his head. "What can you do?"

In a panic, Lennie looked at George for help. "He can do anything you tell him," said George. "He's a good skinner. He can rassel grain bags, drive a cultivator. He can do anything. Just give him a try."

The boss turned on George. "Then why don't you let him answer? What you trying to put over?"

George broke in loudly, "Oh! I ain't saying he's bright. He ain't. But I say he's a God damn good worker. He can put up a four hundred pound bale."

The boss deliberately put the little book in his pocket. He hooked his thumbs in his belt and squinted one eye nearly closed. "Say—what you sellin'?"

"Huh?"

"I said what stake you got in this guy? You takin' his pay away from him?" "No, 'course I ain't. Why ya think I'm sellin' him out?"

"Well, I never seen one guy take so much trouble for another guy. I just like to know what your interest is."

George said, "He's my .....cousin. I told his old lady I'd take care of him. He got kicked in the head by a horse when he was a kid. He's awright. Just ain't bright. But he can do anything you tell him."

The boss turned half away. “Well, God knows he don’t need any brains to buck barley bags. But don’t you try to put nothing over, Milton. I got my eye on you. Why’d you quit in Weed?”
“Job was done,” said George
promptly. “What kinda job?”
“We we was diggin’ a cesspool.”

“All right. But don’t try to put nothing over, ‘cause you can’t get away with nothing. I seen wise guys before. Go on out with the grain teams after dinner. They’re pickin’ up barley at the threshing machine. Go out with Slim’s team.”
“Slim?”

“Yeah. Big tall skinner. You’ll see him at dinner.” He turned abruptly and went to the door, but before he went out he turned and looked for a long moment at the two men.

When the sound of his footsteps had died away, George turned on Lennie. “So you wasn’t gonna say a word. You was gonna leave your big flapper shut and leave me do the talkin’. Damn near lost us the job.” Lennie stared hopelessly at his hands. “I forgot, George.”

“Yeah, you forgot. You always forget, an’ I got to talk you out of it.” He sat down heavily on the bunk. “Now he’s got his eye on us. Now we got to be careful and not make no slips. You keep your big flapper shut after this.” He fell morosely silent.
“George.”
“What you want now?”
“I wasn’t kicked in the head with no horse, was I, George?”

“Be a damn good thing if you was,” George said viciously. “Save ever’body a hell of a lot of trouble.” “You said I was your cousin, George.”

“Well, that was a lie. An’ I’m damn glad it was. If I was a relative of yours I’d shoot myself.” He stopped suddenly, stepped to the open front door and peered out. “Say, what the hell you doin’ listenin’?”

The old man came slowly into the room. He had his broom in his hand. And at his heels there walked a dragfooted sheepdog, gray of muzzle, and with pale, blind old eyes. The dog struggled lamely to the side of the room and lay down, grunting softly to himself and licking his grizzled, moth-eaten coat. The swamper watched him until he was settled. “I wasn’t listenin’. I was jus’ standin’ in the shade a minute scratchin’ my dog. I jus’ now finished swampin’ out the wash house.”

“You was pokin’ your big ears into our business,” George said. “I don’t like nobody to get nosey.”

The old man looked uneasily from George to Lennie, and then back. “I jus’ come there,” he said. “I didn’t hear nothing you guys was sayin’. I ain’t interested in nothing you was sayin’. A guy on a ranch don’t never listen nor he don’t ast no questions.”

“Damn right he don’t,” said George, slightly mollified, “not if he wants to stay workin’ long.” But he was reassured by the swamper’s defense. “Come on in and set down a minute,” he said. “That’s a hell of an old dog.”

“Yeah. I had ‘im ever since he was a pup. God, he was a good sheepdog when he was younger.” He stood his broom against the wall and he rubbed his white bristled cheek with his knuckles. “How’d you like the boss?” he asked.
“Pretty good. Seemed awright.”
“He’s a nice fella,” the swamper agreed. “You got to take him right.”

At that moment a young man came into the bunk house; a thin young man with a brown face, with brown eyes and a head of tightly curled hair. He wore a work glove on his left hand, and, like the boss, he wore high-heeled boots. “Seen my old man?” he asked.

The swamper said, “He was here jus’ a minute ago, Curley. Went over to the cook house, I think.”

“I’ll try to catch him,” said Curley. His eyes passed over the new men and he stopped. He glanced coldly at George and then at Lennie. His arms gradually bent at the elbows and his hands closed into fists. He stiffened and went into a slight crouch. His glance was at once calculating and pugnacious. Lennie

squirmed under the look and shifted his feet nervously. Curley stepped gingerly close to him. “You the new guys the old man was waitin’ for?”
“We just come in,” said George. “Let the big guy talk.”
Lennie twisted with embarrassment.
George said, “S’pose he don’t want to talk?”

Curley lashed his body around. “By Christ, he’s gotta talk when he’s spoke to. What the hell are you gettin’ into it for?”
“We travel together,” said George coldly. “Oh, so it’s that way.”
George was tense, and motionless. “Yeah, it’s that way.” Lennie was looking helplessly to George for instruction. “An’ you won’t let the big guy talk, is that it?”
“He can talk if he wants to tell you anything.” He nodded slightly to Lennie. “We jus’ come in,” said Lennie softly.

Curley stared levelly at him. “Well, nex’ time you answer when you’re spoke to.” He turned toward the door and walked out, and his elbows were still bent out a little.

George watched him go, and then he turned back to the swamper. “Say, what the hell’s he got on his shoulder? Lennie didn’t do nothing to him.”

The old man looked cautiously at the door to make sure no one was listening. “That’s the boss’s son,” he said quietly. “Curley’s pretty handy. He done quite a bit in the ring. He’s a lightweight, and he’s handy.”

“Well, let him be handy,” said George. “He don’t have to take after Lennie. Lennie didn’t do nothing to him. What’s he got against Lennie?”

The swamper considered “Well tell you what. Curley’s like alot of little guys. He hates big guys. He’s alla time picking scraps with big guys. Kind of like he’s mad at ‘em because he ain’t a big guy. You seen little guys like that, ain’t you? Always scrappy?”

“Sure,” said George. “I seen plenty tough little guys. But this Curley better not make no mistakes about Lennie. Lennie ain’t handy, but this Curley punk is gonna get hurt if he messes around with Lennie.”

“Well, Curley’s pretty handy,” the swamper said skeptically. “Never did seem right to me. S’pose Curley jumps a big guy an’ licks him. Ever’body says what a game guy Curley is. And s’pose he does the same thing and gets licked. Then ever’body says the big guy oughtta pick somebody his own size, and maybe they gang up on the big guy. Never did seem right to me. Seems like Curley ain’t givin’ nobody a chance.”

George was watching the door. He said ominously, “Well, he better watch out for Lennie. Lennie ain’t no fighter, but Lennie’s strong and quick and Lennie don’t know no rules.” He walked to the square table and sat down on one of the boxes. He gathered some of the cards together and shuffled them.

The old man sat down on another box. “Don’t tell Curley I said none of this. He’d slough me. He just don’t give a damn. Won’t ever get canned ‘cause his old man’s the boss.”

George cut the cards and began turning them over, looking at each one and throwing it down on a pile. He said, “This guy Curley sounds like a son-of-a-bitch to me. I don’t like mean little guys.”

“Seems to me like he’s worse lately,” said the swamper. “He got married a couple of weeks ago. Wife lives over in the boss’s house. Seems like Curley is cockier’n ever since he got married.”
George grunted, “Maybe he’s showin’ off for his wife.”
The swamper warmed to his gossip. “You seen that glove on his left hand?” “Yeah. I seen it.” “Well, that glove’s fulla vaseline.”
“Vaseline? What the hell for?”
“Well, I tell ya what—Curley says he’s keepin’ that hand soft for his wife.” George studied the cards absorbedly. “That’s a dirty thing to tell around,” he said.

The old man was reassured. He had drawn a derogatory statement from George. He felt safe now, and he spoke more confidently. “Wait’ll you see Curley’s wife.”

George cut the cards again and put out a solitaire lay, slowly and deliberately. “Purty?” he asked casually.

“Yeah. Purty but—”

George studied his cards. “But what?” “Well—she got the eye.”

“Yeah? Married two weeks and got the eye? Maybe that’s why Curley’s pants is full of ants.”

“I seen her give Slim the eye. Slim’s a jerkline skinner. Hell of a nice fella. Slim don’t need to wear no high-heeled boots on a grain team. I seen her give Slim the eye. Curley never seen it. An’ I seen her give Carlson the eye.”

George pretended a lack of interest. “Looks like we was gonna have fun.” The swamper stood up from his box. “Know what I think?” George did notanswer. “Well, I think Curley’s married a tart.”

“He ain’t the first,” said George. “There’s plenty done that.”

The old man moved toward the door, and his ancient dog lifted his head and peered about, and then got painfully to his feet to follow. “I gotta be settin’ out the wash basins for the guys. The teams’ll be in before long. You guys gonna buck barley?”

“Yeah.”

“You won’t tell Curley nothing I said?” “Hell no.”

“Well, you look her over, mister. You see if she ain’t a tart.” He stepped out the door into the brilliant sunshine.

George laid down his cards thoughtfully, turned his piles of three. He built four clubs on his ace pile. The sun square was on the floor now, and the flies whipped through it like sparks. A sound of jingling harness and the croak of heavy-laden axles sounded from outside. From the distance came a clear call. “Stable buck—ooh, sta-able buck!” And then, “Where the hell is that God damn nigger?”

George stared at his solitaire lay, and then he flounced the cards together and turned around to Lennie. Lennie was lying down on the bunk watching him.

“Look, Lennie! This here ain’t no setup. I’m scared. You gonna have trouble with that Curley guy. I seen that kind before. He was kinda feelin’ you out. He figures he’s got you scared and he’s gonna take a sock at you the first chance he gets.”

Lennie’s eyes were frightened. “I don’t want no trouble,” he said plaintively. “Don’t let him sock me, George.”

George got up and went over to Lennie’s bunk and sat down on it. “I hate that kinda bastard,” he said. “I seen plenty of ‘em. Like the old guy says, Curley don’t take no chances. He always wins.” He thought for a moment. “If he tangles with you, Lennie, we’re gonna get the can. Don’t make no mistake about that. He’s the boss’s son. Look, Lennie. You try to keep away from him, will you? Don’t never speak to him. If he comes in here you move clear to the other side of the room. Will you do that, Lennie?”

“I don’t want no trouble,” Lennie mourned. “I never done nothing to him.” “Well, that won’t do you no good if Curley wants to plug himself up for afighter. Just don’t have nothing to do with him. Will you remember?” “Sure, George. I ain’t gonna say a word.”

The sound of the approaching grain teams was louder, thud of big hooves on hard ground, drag of brakes and the jingle of trace chains. Men were calling back and forth from the teams. George, sitting on the bunk beside Lennie, frowned as he thought. Lennie asked timidly, “You ain’t mad, George?”

“I ain’t mad at you. I’m mad at this here Curley bastard. I hoped we was gonna get a little stake together—maybe a hundred dollars.” His tone grew decisive. “You keep away from Curley, Lennie.” “Sure I will, George. I won’t say a word.”

“Don’t let him pull you in—but—if the son-of-a-bitch socks you—let ‘im have it.” “Let ‘im have what, George?”

“Never mind, never mind. I’ll tell you when. I hate that kind of a guy. Look, Lennie, if you get in any kind of trouble, you remember what I told you to do?” Lennie raised up on his elbow. His face contorted with thought. Then his eyes moved sadly to George’s face. “If I get in any trouble, you ain’t gonna let
me tend the rabbits.”

“That’s not what I meant. You remember where we slep’ last night? Down by the river?”
“Yeah. I remember. Oh, sure I remember! I go there an’ hide in the brush.” “Hide till I come for you. Don’t let nobody see you. Hide in the brush by theriver. Say that over.”
“Hide in the brush by the river, down in the brush by the
river.” “If you get in trouble.”
“If I get in trouble.”
A brake screeched outside. A call came, “Stable—buck. Oh! Sta-able buck.” George said, “Say it over to yourself, Lennie, so you won’t forget it.”

Both men glanced up, for the rectangle of sunshine in the doorway was cut off. A girl was standing there looking in. She had full, rouged lips and wide-spaced eyes, heavily made up. Her fingernails were red. Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages. She wore a cotton house dress and red mules, on the insteps of which were little bouquets of red ostrich feathers. “I’m lookin’ for Curley,” she said. Her voice had a nasal, brittle quality.

George looked away from her and then back. “He was in here a minute ago, but he went.”

“Oh!” She put her hands behind her back and leaned against the door frame so that her body was thrown forward. “You’re the new fellas that just come, ain’t ya?”
“Yeah.”

Lennie’s eyes moved down over her body, and though she did not seem to be looking at Lennie she bridled a little. She looked at her fingernails. “Sometimes Curley’s in here,” she explained.
George said brusquely. “Well he ain’t now.”
“If he ain’t, I guess I better look some place else,” she said playfully.

Lennie watched her, fascinated. George said, “If I see him, I’ll pass the word you was looking for him.”

She smiled archly and twitched her body. “Nobody can’t blame a person for lookin’,” she said.
There were footsteps behind her, going by. She turned her head. “Hi, Slim,” she said.
Slim’s voice came through the door. “Hi, Good-lookin’.” “I’m tryin’ to find Curley,
Slim.” “Well, you ain’t tryin’ very hard. I seen him goin’ in your house.”

She was suddenly apprehensive. “’Bye, boys,” she called into the bunk house, and she hurried away. George looked around at Lennie. “Jesus, what a tramp,” he said. “So that’s what Curley picks for a wife.” “She’s purty,” said Lennie defensively.

“Yeah, and she’s sure hidin’ it. Curley got his work ahead of him. Bet she’d clear out for twenty bucks.”

Lennie still stared at the doorway where she had been. “Gosh, she was purty.” He smiled admiringly. George looked quickly down at him and then he took him by an ear and shook him.

“Listen to me, you crazy bastard,” he said fiercely. “Don’t you even take a look at that bitch. I don’t care what she says and what she does. I seen ‘em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jail bait worse than her. You leave her be.”
Lennie tried to disengage his ear. “I never done nothing, George.”

“No, you never. But when she was standin’ in the doorway showin’ her legs, you wasn’t lookin’ the other way, neither.”
“I never meant no harm, George. Honest I never.”

“Well, you keep away from her, cause she’s a rattrap if I ever seen one. You let Curley take the rap. He let himself in for it. Glove fulla vaseline,” George said disgustedly. “An’ I bet he’s eatin’ raw eggs and writin’ to the patent medicine houses.”

Lennie cried out suddenly—"I don't like this place, George. This ain't no good place. I wanna get outa here."

"We gotta keep it till we get a stake. We can't help it, Lennie. We'll get out jus' as soon as we can. I don't like it no better than you do." He went back to the table and set out a new solitaire hand. "No, I don't like it," he said. "For two bits I'd shove out of here. If we can get jus' a few dollars in the poke we'll shove off and go up the American River and pan gold. We can make maybe a couple of dollars a day there, and we might hit a pocket."

Lennie leaned eagerly toward him. "Le's go, George. Le's get outa here. It's mean here." "We gotta stay," George said shortly. "Shut up now. The guys'll becomin' in."

From the washroom nearby came the sound of running water and rattling basins. George studied the cards. "Maybe we oughtta wash up," he said. "But we ain't done nothing to get dirty."

A tall man stood in the doorway. He held a crushed Stetson hat under his arm while he combed his long, black, damp hair straight back. Like the others he wore blue jeans and a short denim jacket. When he had finished combing his hair he moved into the room, and he moved with a majesty achieved only by royalty and master craftsmen. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love. This was Slim, the jerkline skinner. His hatchet face was ageless. He might have been thirty-five or fifty. His ear heard more than was said to him, and his slow speech had overtones not of thought, but of understanding beyond thought. His hands, large and lean, were as delicate in their action as those of a temple dancer.

He smoothed out his crushed hat, creased it in the middle and put it on. He looked kindly at the two in the bunk house. "It's brighter'n a bitch outside," he said gently. "Can't hardly see nothing in here. You the new guys?"

"Just come," said George.

"Gonna buck barley?"

"That's what the boss says."

Slim sat down on a box across the table from George. He studied the solitaire hand that was upside down to him. "Hope you get on my team," he said. His voice was very gentle. "I gotta pair of punks on my team that don't know a barley bag from a blue ball. You guys ever bucked anybarley?"

"Hell, yes," said George. "I ain't nothing to scream about, but that big bastard there can put up more grain alone than most pairs can."

Lennie, who had been following the conversation back and forth with his eyes, smiled complacently at the compliment. Slim looked approvingly at George for having given the compliment. He leaned over the table and snapped the corner of a loose card. "You guys travel around together?" His tone was friendly. It invited confidence without demanding it.

"Sure," said George. "We kinda look after each other." He indicated Lennie with his thumb. "He ain't bright. Hell of a good worker, though. Hell of a nice fella, but he ain't bright. I've knew him for a long time."

Slim looked through George and beyond him. "Ain't many guys travel around together," he mused. "I don't know why. Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other."

"It's a lot nicer to go around with a guy you know," said George.

A powerful, big-stomached man came into the bunk house. His head still dripped water from the scrubbing and dousing. "Hi, Slim," he said, and then stopped and stared at George and Lennie.

"These guys jus' come," said Slim by way of introduction. "Glad ta meet ya," the big man said. "My name's Carlson." "I'm George Milton. This here's Lennie Small."

"Glad ta meet ya," Carlson said again. "He ain't very small." He chuckled softly at his joke. "Ain't small at all," he repeated. "Meant to ask you, Slim— how's your bitch? I seen she wasn't under your wagon this morning."

"She slang her pups last night," said Slim. "Nine of 'em. I drowned four of 'em right off. She couldn't feed that many."
"Got five left, huh?"
"Yeah, five. I kept the biggest."
"What kinda dogs you think they're gonna be?"
"I dunno," said Slim. "Some kinda shepherds, I guess. That's the most kind I seen around here when she was in heat."
Carlson went on, "Got five pups, huh. Gonna keep all of 'em?"
"I dunno. Have to keep 'em a while so they can drink Lulu's milk."
Carlson said thoughtfully, "Well, looka here, Slim. I been thinkin'. That dog of Candy's is so God damn old he can't hardly walk. Stinks like hell, too. Ever' time he comes into the bunk house I can smell him for two, three days. Why'n't you get Candy to shoot his old dog and give him one of the pups to raise up? I can smell that dog a mile away. Got no teeth, damn near blind, can't eat. Candy feeds him milk. He can't chew nothing else."

George had been staring intently at Slim. Suddenly a triangle began to ring outside, slowly at first, and then faster and faster until the beat of it disappeared into one ringing sound. It stopped as suddenly as it had started.
"There she goes," said Carlson.
Outside, there was a burst of voices as a group of men went by.
Slim stood up slowly and with dignity. "You guys better come on while they's still something to eat. Won't be nothing left in a couple of minutes."
Carlson stepped back to let Slim precede him, and then the two of them went out the door.
Lennie was watching George excitedly. George rumpled his cards into a messy pile. "Yeah!" George said, "I heard him, Lennie. I'll ask him." "A brown and white one," Lennie cried excitedly.
"Come on. Le's get dinner. I don't know whether he got a brown and white one."
Lennie didn't move from his bunk. "You ask him right away, George, so he won't kill no more of 'em."
"Sure. Come on now, get up on your feet."
Lennie rolled off his bunk and stood up, and the two of them started for the door. Just as they reached it, Curley bounced in.
"You seen a girl around here?" he demanded angrily. George said coldly. "'Bout half an hour ago maybe." "Well what the hell was she doin'?"
George stood still, watching the angry little man. He said insultingly, "She said—she was lookin' for you."
Curley seemed really to see George for the first time. His eyes flashed over George, took in his height, measured his reach, looked at his trim middle. "Well, which way'd she go?" he demanded at last. "I dunno," said George. "I didn' watch her go."
Curley scowled at him, and turning, hurried out the door.
George said, "Ya know, Lennie, I'm scared I'm gonna tangle with that bastard myself. I hate his guts. Jesus Christ! Come on. They won't be a damn thing left to eat."
They went out the door. The sunshine lay in a thin line under the window. From a distance there could be heard a rattle of dishes.
After a moment the ancient dog walked lamely in through the open door. He gazed about with mild, half-blind eyes. He sniffed, and then lay down and put his head between his paws. Curley popped into the doorway again and stood looking into the room. The dog raised his head, but when Curley jerked out, the grizzled head sank to the floor again.

Although there was evening brightness showing through the windows of thebunk house, inside it was dusk. Through the open door came the thuds and occasional clangs of a horseshoe game, and now and then the sound of voices raised in approval or derision.

Slim and George came into the darkening bunk house together. Slim reached up over the card table and turned on the tin-shaded electric light. Instantly the table was brilliant with light, and the cone of the shade threw its brightness straight downward, leaving the corners of the bunk house still in dusk. Slim sat down on a box and George took his place opposite.

"It wasn't nothing," said Slim. "I would of had to drowned most of 'em anyways. No need to thank me about that."

George said, "It wasn't much to you, maybe, but it was a hell of alot to him. Jesus Christ, I don't know how we're gonna get him to sleep in here. He'll want to sleep right out in the barn with 'em. We'll have trouble keepin' him from getting right in the box with them pups."

"It wasn't nothing," Slim repeated. "Say, you sure was right about him. Maybe he ain't bright, but I never seen such a worker. He damn near killed his partner buckin' barley. There ain't nobody can keep up with him. God awmighty, I never seen such a strong guy."

George spoke proudly. "Jus' tell Lennie what to do an' he'll do it if it don't take no figuring. He can't think of nothing to do himself, but he sure can take orders."

There was a clang of horseshoe on iron stake outside and a little cheer of voices.

Slim moved back slightly so the light was not on his face. "Funny how you an' him string along together." It was Slim's calm invitation to confidence.

"What's funny about it?" George demanded defensively.

"Oh, I dunno. Hardly none of the guys ever travel together. I hardly never seen two guys travel together. You know how the hands are, they just come in and get their bunk and work a month, and then they quit and go out alone. Never seem to give a damn about nobody. It jus' seems kinda funny a cuckoo like him and a smart little guy like you travelin' together."

"He ain't no cuckoo," said George. "He's dumb as hell, but he ain't crazy. An' I ain't so bright neither, or I wouldn't be buckin' barley for my fifty and found. If I was bright, if I was even a little bit smart, I'd have my own little place, an' I'd be bringin' in my own crops, 'stead of doin' all the work and not getting what comes up outa the ground." George fell silent. He wanted to talk. Slim neither encouraged nor discouraged him. He just sat back quiet and receptive.

"It ain't so funny, him an' me goin' aroun' together," George said at last.

"Him and me was both born in Auburn. I knowed his Aunt Clara. She took him when he was a baby and raised him up. When his Aunt Clara died, Lennie just come along with me out workin'. Got kinda used to each other after a little while."

"Umm," said Slim.

George looked over at Slim and saw the calm, Godlike eyes fastened on him. "Funny," said George. "I used to have a hell of a lot of fun with 'im. Used to play jokes on 'im 'cause he was too dumb to take care of 'imself. But he was too dumb even to know he had a joke played on him. I had fun. Made me seem God damn smart alongside of him. Why he'd do any damn thing I tol' him. If I tol' him to walk over a cliff, over he'd go. That wasn't so damn much fun after a while. He never got mad about it, neither. I've beat the hell outa him, and he coulda bust every bone in my body jus' with his han's, but he never lifted a finger against me." George's voice was taking on the tone of confession. "Tell you what made me stop that. One day a bunch of guys was standin' around up on the Sacramento River. I was feelin' pretty smart. I turns to Lennie and says, 'Jump in.' An' he jumps. Couldn't swim a stroke. He damn near drowned before we could get him. An' he was so damn nice to me for pullin' him out. Clean forgot I told him to jump in. Well, I ain't done nothing like that no more."

"He's a nice fella," said Slim. "Guy don't need no sense to be a nice fella. Seems to me sometimes it jus' works the other way around. Take a real smart guy and he ain't hardly ever a nice fella."

George stacked the scattered cards and began to lay out his solitaire hand. The shoes thudded on the ground outside. At the windows the light of the evening still made the window squares bright.

"I ain't got no people," George said. "I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean. They get wantin' to fight all the time."

"Yeah, they get mean," Slim agreed. "They get so they don't want to talk to nobody."

"'Course Lennie's a God damn nuisance most of the time," said George. "But you get used to goin' around with a guy an' you can't get rid of him."

"He ain't mean," said Slim. "I can see Lennie ain't a bit mean."

"'Course he ain't mean. But he gets in trouble alla time because he's so God damn dumb. Like what happened in Weed-" He stopped, stopped in the middle of turning over a card. He looked alarmed and peered over at Slim. "You wouldn't tell nobody?"

"What'd he do in Weed?" Slim asked calmly. "You wouldn' tell? . . . . No, 'course you wouldn'."

"What'd he do in Weed?" Slim asked again.

"Well, he seen this girl in a red dress. Dumb bastard like he is, he wants to touch ever'thing he likes. Just wants to feel it. So he reaches out to feel this red dress an' the girl lets out a squawk, and that gets Lennie all mixed up, and he holds on 'cause that's the only thing he can think to do. Well, this girl squawks and squawks. I was jus' a little bit off, and I heard all the yellin', so I comes running, an' by that time Lennie's so scared all he can think to do is jus' hold on. I socked him over the head with a fence picket to make him let go. He was so scairt he couldn't let go of that dress. And he's so God damn strong, you know."

Slim's eyes were level and unwinking. He nodded very slowly. "So what happens?"

George carefully built his line of solitaire cards. "Well, that girl rabbits in an' tells the law she been raped. The guys in Weed start a party out to lynch Lennie.

So we sit in a irrigation ditch under water all the rest of that day. Got on'y our heads sticking outa water, an' up under the grass that sticks out from the side of the ditch. An' that night we scrammed outa there."

Slim sat in silence for a moment. "Didn't hurt the girl none, huh?" he asked finally.

"Hell, no. He just scared her. I'd be scared too if he grabbed me. But he never hurt her. He jus' wanted to touch that red dress, like he wants to pet them pups all the time."

"He ain't mean," said Slim. "I can tell a mean guy a mile off." "'Course he ain't, and he'll do any damn thing I—"

Lennie came in through the door. He wore his blue denim coat over his shoulders like a cape, and he walked hunched way over.

"Hi, Lennie," said George. "How you like the pup now?"

Lennie said breathlessly, "He's brown an' white jus' like I wanted." He went directly to his bunk and lay down and turned his face to the wall and drew up his knees.

George put down his cards very deliberately. "Lennie," he said sharply. Lennie twisted his neck and looked over his shoulder. "Huh? What you want, George?"

"I tol' you you couldn't bring that pup in here." "What pup, George? I ain't got no pup."

George went quickly to him, grabbed him by the shoulder and rolled him over. He reached down and picked the tiny puppy from where Lennie had been concealing it against his stomach.

Lennie sat up quickly. "Give 'um to me, George."

George said, "You get right up an' take this pup back to the nest. He's gotta sleep with his mother. You want to kill him? Just born last night an' you take him out of the nest. You take him back or I'll tell Slim not to let you have him." Lennie held out his hands pleadingly. "Give 'um to me, George. I'll take 'um back. I didn't mean no harm, George. Honest I didn't. I jus' wanted to pet 'um a little."

George handed the pup to him. "Awright. You get him back there quick, and don't you take him out no more. You'll kill him, the first thing you know." Lennie fairly scuttled out of the room.

Slim had not moved. His calm eyes followed Lennie out the door. “Jesus,” he said. “He’s jus’ like a kid, ain’t he?”

“Sure he’s jes’ like a kid. There ain’t no more harm in him than a kid neither, except he’s so strong. I bet he won’t come in here to sleep tonight. He’d sleep right alongside that box in the barn. Well—let ‘im. He ain’t doin’ no harm out there.”

It was almost dark outside now. Old Candy, the swamper, came in and went to his bunk, and behind him struggled his old dog. “Hello, Slim. Hello, George. Didn’t neither of you play horseshoes?”

“I don’t like to play ever’ night,” said Slim.

Candy went on, “Either you guys got a slug of whisky? I gotta gut ache.”

“I ain’t,” said Slim. “I’d drink it myself if I had, an’ I ain’t got a gut ache neither.”

“Gotta bad gut ache,” said Candy. “Them God damn turnips give it to me. I knowed they was going to before I ever eat ‘em.”

The thick-bodied Carlson came in out of the darkening yard. He walked to the other end of the bunk house and turned on the second shaded light. “Darker’n hell in here,” he said. “Jesus, how that nigger can pitch shoes.”

“He’s plenty good,” said Slim.

“Damn right he is,” said Carlson. “He don’t give nobody else a chance to win —” He stopped and sniffed the air, and still sniffing, looked down at the old dog. “God awmighty, that dog stinks. Get him outa here, Candy! I don’t know nothing that stinks as bad as an old dog. You gotta get him out.”

Candy rolled to the edge of his bunk. He reached over and patted the ancient dog, and he apologized, “I been around him so much I never notice how hestinks.”

“Well, I can’t stand him in here,” said Carlson. “That stink hangs around even after he’s gone.” He walked over with his heavy-legged stride and looked down at the dog. “Got no teeth,” he said. “He’s all stiff with rheumatism. He ain’t no good to you, Candy. An’ he ain’t no good to himself. Why’n’t you shoot him, Candy?”

The old man squirmed uncomfortably. “Well—hell! I had him so long. Had him since he was a pup. I herded sheep with him.” He said proudly, “You wouldn’t think it to look at him now, but he was the best damn sheep dog I ever seen.”

George said, “I seen a guy in Weed that had an Airedale could herd sheep. Learned it from the other dogs.”

Carlson was not to be put off. “Look, Candy. This ol’ dog jus’ suffers hisself all the time. If you was to take him out and shoot him right in the back of the head—” he leaned over and pointed, “—right there, why he’d never know what hit him.”

Candy looked about unhappily. “No,” he said softly. “No, I couldn’t do that. I had ‘im too long.”

“He don’t have no fun,” Carlson insisted. “And he stinks to beat hell. Tell you what. I’ll shoot him for you. Then it won’t be you that does it.”

Candy threw his legs off his bunk. He scratched the white stubble whiskers on his cheek nervously. “I’m so used to him,” he said softly. “I had him from a pup.”

“Well, you ain’t bein’ kind to him keepin’ him alive,” said Carlson. “Look, Slim’s bitch got a litter right now. I bet Slim would give you one of them pups to raise up, wouldn’t you, Slim?”

The skinner had been studying the old dog with his calm eyes. “Yeah,” he said. “You can have a pup if you want to.” He seemed to shake himself free for speech. “Carl’s right, Candy. That dog ain’t no good to himself. I wisht somebody’d shoot me if I get old an’ a cripple.”

Candy looked helplessly at him, for Slim’s opinions were law. “Maybe it’d hurt him,” he suggested. “I don’t mind takin’ care of him.”

Carlson said, “The way I’d shoot him, he wouldn’t feel nothing. I’d put the gun right there.” He pointed with his toe. “Right back of the head. He wouldn’t even quiver.”

Candy looked for help from face to face. It was quite dark outside by now. A young laboring man came in. His sloping shoulders were bent forward and he walked heavily on his heels, as though he carried

the invisible grain bag. He went to his bunk and put his hat on his shelf. Then he picked a pulp magazine from his shelf and brought it to the light over the table. “Did I show you this, Slim?” he asked.

“Show me what?”

The young man turned to the back of the magazine, put it down on the table and pointed with his finger. “Right there, read that.” Slim bent over it. “Go on,” said the young man. “Read it outloud.”

“’Dear Editor,’” Slim read slowly. “’I read your mag for six years and I think it is the best on the market. I like stories by Peter Rand. I think he is a whing- ding. Give us more like the Dark Rider. I don’t write many letters. Just thought I would tell you I think your mag is the best dime’s worth I ever spent.’”

Slim looked up questioningly. “What you want me to read that for?” Whit said, “Go on. Read the name at the bottom.”

Slim read, “’Yours for success, William Tenner.’” He glanced up at Whit again. “What you want me to read that for?”

Whit closed the magazine impressively. “Don’t you remember Bill Tenner? Worked here about three months ago?”

Slim thought..... “Little guy?” he asked. “Drove a cultivator?” “That’s him,” Whit cried. “That’s the guy!” “You think he’s the guy wrote this letter?”

“I know it. Bill and me was in here one day. Bill had one of them books that just come. He was lookin’ in it and he says, ‘I wrote a letter. Wonder if they put it in the book!’ But it wasn’t there. Bill says, ‘Maybe they’re savin’ it for later.’ An’ that’s just what they done. There it is.”

“Guess you’re right,” said Slim. “Got it right in the book.” George held out his hand for the magazine. “Let’s look at it?”

Whit found the place again, but he did not surrender his hold on it. He pointed out the letter with his forefinger. And then he went to his box shelf and laid the magazine carefully in. “I wonder if Bill seen it,” he said. “Bill and me worked in that patch of field peas. Run cultivators, both of us. Bill was a hell of a nice fella.”

During the conversation Carlson had refused to be drawn in. He continued to look down at the old dog. Candy watched him uneasily. At last Carlson said, “If you want me to, I’ll put the old devil out of his misery right now and get it over with. Ain’t nothing left for him. Can’t eat, can’t see, can’t even walk without hurtin’.”

Candy said hopefully, “You ain’t got no gun.”

“The hell I ain’t. Got a Luger. It won’t hurt him none at all.” Candy said, “Maybe tomorra. Le’s wait till tomorra.”

“I don’t see no reason for it,” said Carlson. He went to his bunk, pulled his bag from underneath it and took out a Luger pistol. “Le’s get it over with,” he said. “We can’t sleep with him stinkin’ around in here.” He put the pistol in his hip pocket.

Candy looked a long time at Slim to try to find some reversal. And Slim gave him none. At last Candy said softly and hopelessly, “Awright—take ‘im.” He did not look down at the dog at all. He lay back on his bunk and crossed his arms behind his head and stared at the ceiling.

From his pocket Carlson took a little leather thong. He stooped over and tied it around the old dog’s neck. All the men except Candy watched him. “Come boy. Come on, boy,” he said gently. And he said apologetically to Candy, “He won’t even feel it.” Candy did not move nor answer him. He twitched the thong. “Come on, boy.” The old dog got slowly and stiffly to his feet and followed the gently pulling leash.

Slim said,

“Carlson.”

“Yeah?”

“You know what to do.” “What ya mean, Slim?”

“Take a shovel,” said Slim shortly.

“Oh, sure! I get you.” He led the dog out into the darkness.

George followed to the door and shut the door and set the latch gently in its place. Candy lay rigidly on his bed staring at the ceiling.
Slim said loudly, “One of my lead mules got a bad hoof. Got to get some tar on it.” His voice trailed off. It was silent outside. Carlson’s footsteps died away.
The silence came into the room. And the silence lasted.

George chuckled, “I bet Lennie’s right out there in the barn with his pup. He won’t want to come in here no more now he’s got a pup.”
Slim said, “Candy, you can have any one of them pups you want.”

Candy did not answer. The silence fell on the room again. It came out of the night and invaded the room. George said, “Anybody like to play a little euchre?”
“I’ll play out a few with you,” said Whit.

They took places opposite each other at the table under the light, but George did not shuffle the cards. He rippled the edge of the deck nervously, and the little snapping noise drew the eyes of all the men in the room, so that he stopped doing it. The silence fell on the room again. A minute passed, and another minute. Candy lay still, staring at the ceiling. Slim gazed at him for a moment and then looked down at his hands; he subdued one hand with the other, and held it down. There came a little gnawing sound from under the floor and all the men looked down toward it gratefully. Only Candy continued to stare at the ceiling.

“Sounds like there was a rat under there,” said George. “We ought to get a trap down there.”

Whit broke out, “What the hell’s takin’ him so long? Lay out some cards, why don’t you? We ain’t going to get no euchre played this way.”

George brought the cards together tightly and studied the backs of them. The silence was in the room again.
A shot sounded in the distance. The men looked quickly at the old
man. Every head turned toward him.

For a moment he continued to stare at the ceiling. Then he rolled slowly over and faced the wall and lay silent.

George shuffled the cards noisily and dealt them. Whit drew a scoring board to him and set the pegs to start. Whit said, “I guess you guys really come here to work.”
“How do ya mean?” George asked.

Whit laughed. “Well, ya come on a Friday. You got two days to work till
Sunday.” “I don’t see how you figure,” said George.

Whit laughed again. “You do if you been around these big ranches much. Guy that wants to look over a ranch comes in Sat’day afternoon. He gets Sat’day night supper an’ three meals on Sunday, and he can quit Monday mornin’ after breakfast without turning his hand. But you come to work Friday noon. You got to put in a day an’ a half no matter how you figure.”

George looked at him levelly. “We’re gonna stick aroun’ a while,” he said. “Me an’ Lennie’s gonna roll up a stake.”

The door opened quietly and the stable buck put in his head; a lean negro head, lined with pain, the eyes patient. “Mr. Slim.”

Slim took his eyes from old Candy. “Huh? Oh! Hello, Crooks. What’s’ a matter?”
“You told me to warm up tar for that mule’s foot. I got it warm.” “Oh! Sure, Crooks. I’ll come right out an’ put it on.” “I can do it if you want, Mr. Slim.”
“No. I’ll come do it myself.” He stood
up. Crooks said, “Mr. Slim.”
“Yeah.”
“That big new guy’s messin’ around your pups out in the barn.” “Well, he ain’t doin’ no harm. I give him one of them pups.”

"Just thought I'd tell ya," said Crooks. "He's takin' 'em outa the nest and handlin' them. That won't do them no good."

"He won't hurt 'em," said Slim. "I'll come along with you now."

George looked up. "If that crazy bastard's foolin' around too much, jus' kick him out, Slim." Slim followed the stable buck out of the room.

George dealt and Whit picked up his cards and examined them. "Seen the new kid yet?" he asked. "What kid?" George asked.

"Why, Curley's new wife." "Yeah, I seen her."

"Well, ain't she a looloo?"

"I ain't seen that much of her," said George.

Whit laid down his cards impressively. "Well, stick around an' keep your eyes open. You'll see plenty. She ain't concealin' nothing. I never seen nobody like her. She got the eye goin' all the time on everybody. I bet she even gives the stable buck the eye. I don't know what the hell she wants."

George asked casually, "Been any trouble since she got here?"

It was obvious that Whit was not interested in his cards. He laid his hand down and George scooped it in. George laid out his deliberate solitaire hand— seven cards, and six on top, and five on top of those.

Whit said, "I see what you mean. No, they ain't been nothing yet. Curley's got yella-jackets in his drawers, but that's all so far. Ever' time the guys is around she shows up. She's lookin' for Curley, or she thought she lef' somethin' layin' around and she's lookin' for it. Seems like she can't keep away from guys. An' Curley's pants is just crawlin' with ants, but they ain't nothing come of it yet."

George said, "She's gonna make a mess. They's gonna be a bad mess about her. She's a jail bait all set on the trigger. That Curley got his work cut out for him. Ranch with a bunch of guys on it ain't no place for a girl, specially like her."

Whit said, "If you got idears, you oughtta come in town with us guys tomorra night." "Why? What's doin'?"

"Jus' the usual thing. We go in to old Susy's place. Hell of a nice place. Old Susy's a laugh—always crackin' jokes. Like she says when we come up on the front porch las' Sat'day night. Susy opens the door and then she yells over her shoulder, 'Get yor coats on, girls, here comes the sheriff.' She never talks dirty, neither. Got five girls there."

"What's it set you back?" George asked.

"Two an' a half. You can get a shot for two bits. Susy got nice chairs to set in, too. If a guy don't want a flop, why he can just set in the chairs and have a couple or three shots and pass the time of day and Susy don't give a damn. She ain't rushin' guys through and kickin' 'em out if they don't want a flop."

"Might go in and look the joint over," said George.

"Sure. Come along. It's a hell of a lot of fun—her crackin' jokes all the time. Like she says one time, she says, 'I've knew people that if they got a rag rug on the floor an' a kewpie doll lamp on the phonograph they think they're running a parlor house.' That's Clara's house she's talkin' about. An' Susy says, 'I know what you boys want,' she says. 'My girls is clean,' she says, 'an' there ain't no water in my whisky,' she says. 'If any you guys wanta look at a kewpie doll lamp an' take your own chance gettin' burned, why you know where to go.' An' she says, 'There's guys around here walkin' bow-legged 'cause they like to look at a kewpie doll lamp.'"

George asked, "Clara runs the other house, huh?"

"Yeah," said Whit. "We don't never go there. Clara gets three bucks a crack and thirty-five cents a shot, and she don't crack no jokes. But Susy's place is clean and she got nice chairs. Don't let no goo-goos in, neither."

"Me an' Lennie's rollin' up a stake," said George. "I might go in an' set and have a shot, but I ain't puttin' out no two and a half."

"Well, a guy got to have some fun sometime," said Whit.

The door opened and Lennie and Carlson came in together. Lennie crept to his bunk and sat down, trying not to attract attention. Carlson reached under his bunk and brought out his bag. He didn't look at old Candy, who still faced the wall. Carlson found a little cleaning rod in the bag and a can of oil. He laid them on his bed and then brought out the pistol, took out the magazine and snapped the loaded shell from the chamber. Then he fell to cleaning the barrel with the little rod. When the ejector snapped, Candy turned over and looked for a moment at the gun before he turned back to the wall again.

Carlson said casually, "Curley been in yet?" "No," said Whit. "What's eatin' on Curley?"

Carlson squinted down the barrel of his gun. "Lookin' for his old lady. I seen him going round and round outside."

Whit said sarcastically, "He spends half his time lookin' for her, and the rest of the time she's lookin' for him."

Curley burst into the room excitedly. "Any you guys seen my wife?" he demanded. "She ain't been here," said Whit.

Curley looked threateningly about the room. "Where the hell's Slim?" "Went out in the barn," said George. "He was gonna put some tar on a splithoof."

Curley's shoulders dropped and squared. "How long ago'd he go?" "Five—ten minutes." Curley jumped out the door and banged it after him.

Whit stood up. "I guess maybe I'd like to see this," he said. "Curley's just spoilin' or he wouldn't start for Slim. An' Curley's handy, God damn handy. Got in the finals for the Golden Gloves. He got newspaper clippings about it." He considered. "But jus' the same, he better leave Slim alone. Nobody don't know what Slim can do."

"Thinks Slim's with his wife, don't he?" said George.

"Looks like it," Whit said. "'Course Slim ain't. Least I don't think Slim is. But I like to see the fuss if it comes off. Come on, le's go."

George said, "I'm stayin' right here. I don't want to get mixed up in nothing. Lennie and me got to make a stake."

Carlson finished the cleaning of the gun and put it in the bag and pushed the bag under his bunk. "I guess I'll go out and look her over," he said. Old Candy lay still, and Lennie, from his bunk, watched George cautiously.

When Whit and Carlson were gone and the door closed after them, George turned to Lennie. "What you got on your mind?"

"I ain't done nothing, George. Slim says I better not pet them pups so much for a while. Slim says it ain't good for them; so I come right in. I been good, George."

"I coulda told you that," said George.

"Well, I wasn't hurtin' 'em none. I jus' had mine in my lap pettin' it." George asked, "Did you see Slim out in the barn?" "Sure I did. He tol' me I better not pet that pup no more."

"Did you see that girl?"

"You mean Curley's girl?"

"Yeah. Did she come in the barn?"

"No. Anyways I never seen her."

"You never seen Slim talkin' to her?" "Uh-uh. She ain't been in the barn."

"O.K.," said George. "I guess them guys ain't gonna see no fight. If there's any fightin', Lennie, you keep out of it."

"I don't want no fights," said Lennie. He got up from his bunk and sat down at the table, across from George. Almost automatically George shuffled the cards and laid out his solitaire hand. He used a deliberate, thoughtful slowness.

Lennie reached for a face card and studied it, then turned it upside down and studied it. “Both ends the same,” he said. “George, why is it both ends the same?”

“I don’t know,” said George. “That’s jus’ the way they make ‘em. What was Slim doin’ in the barn when you seen him?”

“Slim?”

“Sure. You seen him in the barn, an’ he tol’ you not to pet the pups so much.”

“Oh, yeah. He had a can a’ tar an’ a paint brush. I don’t know what for.” “You sure that girl didn’t come in like she come in here today?” “No. She never come.”

George sighed. “You give me a good whore house every time,” he said. “A guy can go in an’ get drunk and get ever’thing outa his system all at once, an’ no messes. And he knows how much it’s gonna set him back. These here jail baits is just set on the trigger of the hoosegow.”

Lennie followed his words admiringly, and moved his lips a little to keep up. George continued, “You remember Andy Cushman, Lennie? Went to grammar school?”

“The one that his old lady used to make hot cakes for the kids?” Lennie asked.

“Yeah. That’s the one. You can remember anything if there’s anything to eat in it.” George looked carefully at the solitaire hand. He put an ace up on his scoring rack and piled a two, three and four of diamonds on it. “Andy’s in San Quentin right now on account of a tart,” said George.

Lennie drummed on the table with his fingers. “George?” “Huh?”

“George, how long’s it gonna be till we get that little place an’ live on the fatta the lan’—an’ rabbits?” “I don’t know”, said George. “We gotta get a big stake together. I know a little place we can get cheap,

but they ain’t givin’ it away.”

Old Candy turned slowly over. His eyes were wide open. He watched George carefully.

Lennie said, “Tell about that place,

George.” “I jus’ tol’ you, jus’ las’ night.”

“Go on—tell again, George.”

“Well, it’s ten acres,” said George. “Got a little win’mill. Got a little shack on it, an’ a chicken run. Got a kitchen, orchard, cherries, apples, peaches, ‘cots, nuts, got a few berries. They’s a place for alfalfa and plenty water to flood it. They’s a pig pen—”

“An’ rabbits, George.”

“No place for rabbits now, but I could easy build a few hutches and you could feed alfalfa to the rabbits.”

“Damn right, I could,” said Lennie. “You God damn right I could.”

George’s hands stopped working with the cards. His voice was growing warmer. “An’ we could have a few pigs. I could build a smoke house like the one gran’pa had, an’ when we kill a pig we can smoke the bacon and the hams, and make sausage an’ all like that. An’ when the salmon run up river we could catch a hundred of ‘em an’ salt ‘em down or smoke ‘em. We could have them for breakfast. They ain’t nothing so nice as smoked salmon. When the fruit come in we could can it—and tomatoes, they’re easy to can. Ever’ Sunday we’d kill a chicken or a rabbit. Maybe we’d have a cow or a goat, and the cream is so God damn thick you got to cut it with a knife and take it out with a spoon.”

Lennie watched him with wide eyes, and old Candy watched him too. Lennie said softly, “We could live offa the fatta the lan’.”

“Sure,” said George. “All kin’s a vegetables in the garden, and if we want a little whisky we can sell a few eggs or something, or some milk. We’d jus’ live there. We’d belong there. There wouldn’t be no more runnin’ round the country and gettin’ fed by a Jap cook. No, sir, we’d have our own place where we belonged and not sleep in no bunk house.”

“Tell about the house, George,” Lennie begged.

“Sure, we’d have a little house an’ a room to ourself. Little fat iron stove, an’ in the winter we’d keep a fire goin’ in it. It ain’t enough land so we’d have to work too hard. Maybe six, seven hours a day. We wouldn’t have to buck no barley eleven hours a day. An’ when we put in a crop, why, we’d be there to take the crop up. We’d know what come of our planting.”

"An' rabbits," Lennie said eagerly. "An' I'd take care of 'em. Tell how I'd do that, George."

"Sure, you'd go out in the alfalfa patch an' you'd have a sack. You'd fill up the sack and bring it in an' put it in the rabbit cages."

"They'd nibble an' they'd nibble," said Lennie, "the way they do. I seen 'em."

"Ever' six weeks or so," George continued, "them does would throw a litter so we'd have plenty rabbits to eat an' to sell. An' we'd keep a few pigeons to go flyin' around the win'mill like they done when I was a kid." He looked raptly at the wall over Lennie's head. "An' it'd be our own, an' nobody could can us. If we don't like a guy we can say, 'Get the hell out,' and by God he's got to do it. An' if a fren' come along, why we'd have an extra bunk, an' we'd say, 'Why don't you spen' the night?' an' by God he would. We'd have a setter dog and a couple stripe cats, but you gotta watch out them cats don't get the little rabbits."

Lennie breathed hard. "You jus' let 'em try to get the rabbits. I'll break their God damn necks. I'll . . . . I'll smash 'em with a stick." He subsided, grumbling to himself, threatening the future cats which might dare to disturb the future rabbits.

George sat entranced with his own picture.

When Candy spoke they both jumped as though they had been caught doing something reprehensible. Candy said, "You know where's a place like that?"

George was on guard immediately. "S'pose I do," he said. "What's that to you?" "You don't need to tell me where it's at. Might be any place."

"Sure," said George. "That's right. You couldn't find it in a hundred years." Candy went on excitedly, "How much they want for a place like that?" George watched him suspiciously. "Well—I could get it for six hundredbucks. The ol' people that owns it is flat bust an' the ol' lady needs an operation. Say—what's it to you? You got nothing to do with us."

Candy said, "I ain't much good with on'y one hand. I lost my hand right here on this ranch. That's why they give me a job swampin'. An' they give me two hunderd an' fifty dollars 'cause I los' my hand. An' I got fifty more saved up right in the bank, right now. Tha's three hunderd, and I got fifty more comin' the end a the month. Tell you what—" He leaned forward eagerly. "S'pose I went in with you guys. Tha's three hunderd an' fifty bucks I'd put in. I ain't much good, but I could cook and tend the chickens and hoe the garden some. How'd that be?"

George half-closed his eyes. "I gotta think about that. We was always gonna do it by ourselves."

Candy interrupted him, "I'd make a will an' leave my share to you guys in case I kick off, 'cause I ain't got no relatives nor nothing. You guys got any money? Maybe we could do her right now?"

George spat on the floor disgustedly. "We got ten bucks between us." Then he said thoughtfully, "Look, if me an' Lennie work a month an' don't spen' nothing, we'll have a hunderd bucks. That'd be four fifty. I bet we could swing her for that. Then you an' Lennie could go get her started an' I'd get a job an' make up the res', an' you could sell eggs an' stuff like that."

They fell into a silence. They looked at one another, amazed. This thing they had never really believed in was coming true. George said reverently, "Jesus Christ! I bet we could swing her." His eyes were full of wonder. "I bet we could swing her," he repeated softly.

Candy sat on the edge of his bunk. He scratched the stump of his wrist nervously. "I got hurt four year ago," he said. "They'll can me purty soon. Jus' as soon as I can't swamp out no bunk houses they'll put me on the county. Maybe if I give you guys my money, you'll let me hoe in the garden even after I ain't no good at it. An' I'll wash dishes an' little chicken stuff like that. But I'll be on our own place, an' I'll be let to work on our own place." He said miserably, "You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They says he wasn't no good to himself nor nobody else. When they can me here I wisht somebody'd shoot me. But they won't do nothing like that. I won't have no place to go, an' I can't get no more jobs. I'll have thirty dollars more comin', time you guys is ready to quit."

George stood up. “We’ll do her,” he said. “We’ll fix up that little old place an’ we’ll go live there.” He sat down again. They all sat still, all bemused by the beauty of the thing, each mind was popped into the future when this lovely thing should come about.

George said wonderingly, “S’pose they was a carnival or a circus come to town, or a ball game, or any damn thing.” Old Candy nodded in appreciation of the idea. “We’d just go to her,” George said. “We wouldn’t ask nobody if we could. Jus’ say, ‘We’ll go to her,’ an’ we would. Jus’ milk the cow and sling some grain to the chickens an’ go to her.”

“An’ put some grass to the rabbits,” Lennie broke in. “I wouldn’t never forget to feed them. When we gon’ta do it, George?”

“In one month. Right squack in one month. Know what I’m gon’ta do? I’m gon’ta write to them old people that owns the place that we’ll take it. An’ Candy’ll send a hunderd dollars to bind her.”

“Sure will,” said Candy. “They got a good stove there?” “Sure, got a nice stove, burns coal or wood.” “I’m gonna take my pup,” said Lennie. “I bet by Christ he likes it there, by Jesus.”

Voices were approaching from outside. George said quickly, “Don’t tell nobody about it. Jus’ us three an’ nobody else. They li’ble to can us so we can’t make no stake. Jus’ go on like we was gonna buck barley the rest of our lives, then all of a sudden some day we’ll go get our pay an’ scram outa here.”

Lennie and Candy nodded, and they were grinning with delight. “Don’t tellnobody,” Lennie said to himself.

Candy said,

“George.” “Huh?”

“I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn’t ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog.”

The door opened. Slim came in, followed by Curley and Carlson and Whit. Slim’s hands were black with tar and he was scowling. Curley hung close to his elbow.

Curley said, “Well, I didn’t mean nothing, Slim. I just ast you.”

Slim said, “Well, you been askin’ me too often. I’m gettin’ God damn sick of it. If you can’t look after your own God damn wife, what you expect me to do about it? You lay offa me.”

“I’m jus’ tryin’ to tell you I didn’t mean nothing,” said Curley. “I jus’ thought you might of saw her.” “Why’n’t you tell her to stay the hell home where she belongs?” said Carlson. “You let her hang

around bunk houses and pretty soon you’re gonna have som’pin on your hands and you won’t be able to do nothing about it.”

Curley whirled on Carlson. “You keep outa this les’ you wanta step outside.” Carlson laughed. “You God damn punk,” he said. “You tried to throw a scare into Slim, an’ you couldn’t make it stick. Slim throwed a scare into you. You’re yella as a frog belly. I don’t care if you’re the best welter in the country. You

come for me, an’ I’ll kick your God damn head off.”

Candy joined the attack with joy. “Glove fulla vaseline,” he said disgustedly. Curley glared at him. His eyes slipped on past and lighted on Lennie; and Lennie was still smiling with delight at the memory of the ranch.

Curley stepped over to Lennie like a terrier. “What the hell you laughin’ at?” Lennie looked blankly at him. “Huh?”

Then Curley’s rage exploded. “Come on, ya big bastard. Get up on your feet. No big son-of-a-bitch is gonna laugh at me. I’ll show ya who’s yella.”

Lennie looked helplessly at George, and then he got up and tried to retreat. Curley was balanced and poised. He slashed at Lennie with his left, and then smashed down his nose with a right. Lennie gave a cry of terror. Blood welled from his nose. “George,” he cried. “Make ‘um let me alone, George.” He backed until he was against the wall, and Curley followed, slugging him in the face. Lennie’s hands remained at his sides; he was too frightened to defend himself.

George was on his feet yelling, “Get him, Lennie. Don’t let him do it.” Lennie covered his face with his huge paws and bleated with terror. He cried,

“Make ‘um stop, George.” Then Curley attacked his stomach and cut off his wind.

Slim jumped up. “The dirty little rat,” he cried, “I’ll get ‘um myself.” George put out his hand and grabbed Slim. “Wait a minute,” he shouted. Hecupped his hands around his mouth and yelled, “Get ‘im, Lennie!”

Lennie took his hands away from his face and looked about for George, and Curley slashed at his eyes. The big face was covered with blood. George yelled again, “I said get him.”

Curley’s fist was swinging when Lennie reached for it. The next minute Curley was flopping like a fish on a line, and his closed fist was lost in Lennie’s big hand. George ran down the room. “Leggo of him, Lennie. Let go.”

But Lennie watched in terror the flopping little man whom he held. Blood ran down Lennie’s face, one of his eyes was cut and closed. George slapped him in the face again and again, and still Lennie held on to the closed fist. Curley was white and shrunken by now, and his struggling had become weak. He stood crying, his fist lost in Lennie’s paw.

George shouted over and over. “Leggo his hand, Lennie. Leggo. Slim, come help me while the guy got any hand left.”

Suddenly Lennie let go his hold. He crouched cowering against the wall. “You tol’ me to, George,” he said miserably.

Curley sat down on the floor, looking in wonder at his crushed hand. Slim and Carlson bent over him. Then Slim straightened up and regarded Lennie with horror. “We got to get him in to a doctor,” he said. “Looks to me like ever’ bone in his han’ is bust.”

“I didn’t wanta,” Lennie cried. “I didn’t wanta hurt him.”

Slim said, “Carlson, you get the candy wagon hitched up. We’ll take ‘um into Soledad an’ get ‘um fixed up.” Carlson hurried out. Slim turned to the whimpering Lennie. “It ain’t your fault,” he said. “This punk sure had it comin’ to him. But—Jesus! He ain’t hardly got no han’ left.” Slim hurried out, and in a moment returned with a tin cup of water. He held it to Curley’s lips.

George said, “Slim, will we get canned now? We need the stake. Will Curley’s old man can us now?”

Slim smiled wryly. He knelt down beside Curley. “You got your senses in hand enough to listen?” he asked. Curley nodded. “Well, then listen,” Slim went on. “I think you got your han’ caught in a machine. If you don’t tell nobody what happened, we ain’t going to. But you jus’ tell an’ try to get this guy canned and we’ll tell ever’body, an’ then will you get the laugh.”

“I won’t tell,” said Curley. He avoided looking at Lennie.

Buggy wheels sounded outside. Slim helped Curley up. “Come on now. Carlson’s gonna take you to a doctor.” He helped Curley out the door. The sound of wheels drew away. In a moment Slim came back into the bunk house. He looked at Lennie, still crouched fearfully against the wall. “Le’s see your hands,” he asked.

Lennie stuck out his hands.

“Christ awmighty, I hate to have you mad at me,” Slim said.

George broke in, “Lennie was jus’ scairt,” he explained. “He didn’t know what to do. I told you nobody ought never to fight him. No, I guess it was Candy I told.”

Candy nodded solemnly. “That’s jus’ what you done,” he said. “Right this morning when Curley first lit intil your fren’, you says, ‘He better not fool with Lennie if he knows what’s good for ‘um.’ That’s jus’ what you says to me.”

George turned to Lennie. “It ain’t your fault,” he said. “You don’t need to be scairt no more. You done jus’ what I tol’ you to. Maybe you better go in the wash room an’ clean up your face. You look like hell.”

Lennie smiled with his bruised mouth. “I didn’t want no trouble,” he said. He walked toward the door, but just before he came to it, he turned back. “George?”

“What you want?”

“I can still tend the rabbits, George?” “Sure. You ain’t done nothing wrong.” “I di’n’t mean no harm, George.”

“Well, get the hell out and wash your face.”

Crooks, the Negro stable buck, had his bunk in the harness room; a little shedthat leaned off the wall of the barn. On one side of the little room there was a square four-paned window, and on the other, a narrow plank door leading into the barn. Crooks' bunk was a long box filled with straw, on which his blankets were flung. On the wall by the window there were pegs on which hung broken harness in process of being mended; strips of new leather; and under the window itself a little bench for leather - working tools, curved knives and needles and balls of linen thread, and a small hand riveter. On pegs were also pieces of harness, a split collar with the horsehair stuffing sticking out, a broken hame, and a trace chain with its leather covering split. Crooks had his apple box over his bunk, and in it a range of medicine bottles, both for himself and for the horses. There were cans of saddle soap and a drippy can of tar with its paint brush sticking over the edge. And scattered about the floor were a number of personal possessions; for, being alone, Crooks could leave his things about, and being a stable buck and a cripple, he was more permanent than the other men, and he had accumulated more possessions than he could carry on hisback.

Crooks possessed several pairs of shoes, a pair of rubber boots, a big alarm clock and a single-barreled shotgun. And he had books, too; a tattered dictionary and a mauled copy of the California civil code for 1905. There were battered magazines and a few dirty books on a special shelf over his bunk. A pair of large gold-rimmed spectacles hung from a nail on the wall above his bed.

This room was swept and fairly neat, for Crooks was a proud, aloof man. He kept his distance and demanded that other people keep theirs. His body was bent over to the left by his crooked spine, and his eyes lay deep in his head, and because of their depth seemed to glitter with intensity. His lean face was lined with deep black wrinkles, and he had thin, pain-tightened lips which were lighter than his face.

It was Saturday night. Through the open door that led into the barn came the sound of moving horses, of feet stirring, of teeth champing on hay, of the rattle of halter chains. In the stable buck's room a small electric globe threw a meager yellow light.

Crooks sat on his bunk. His shirt was out of his jeans in back. In one hand he held a bottle of liniment, and with the other he rubbed his spine. Now and then he poured a few drops of the liniment into his pink- palmed hand and reached up under his shirt to rub again. He flexed his muscles against his back and shivered.

Noiselessly Lennie appeared in the open doorway and stood there looking in, his big shoulders nearly filling the opening. For a moment Crooks did not see him, but on raising his eyes he stiffened and a scowl came on his face. His hand came out from under his shirt.

Lennie smiled helplessly in an attempt to make friends.

Crooks said sharply, "You got no right to come in my room. This here's my room. Nobody got any right in here but me."

Lennie gulped and his smile grew more fawning. "I ain't doing nothing," he said. "Just come to look at my puppy. And I seen your light," he explained.

"Well, I got a right to have a light. You go on get outa my room. I ain't wanted in the bunk house, and you ain't wanted in my room."

"Why ain't you wanted?" Lennie asked.

"'Cause I'm black. They play cards in there, but I can't play because I'm black. They say I stink. Well, I tell you, you all of you stink to me."

Lennie flapped his big hands helplessly. "Ever'body went into town," he said. "Slim an' George an' ever'body. George says I gotta stay here an' not get in no trouble. I seen your light."

"Well, what do you want?"

"Nothing—I seen your light. I thought I could jus' come in an' set."

Crooks stared at Lennie, and he reached behind him and took down the spectacles and adjusted them over his pink ears and stared again. "I don't know what you're doin' in the barn anyway," he complained. "You ain't no skinner. They's no call for a bucker to come into the barn at all. You ain't no skinner. You ain't got nothing to do with the horses."

"The pup," Lennie repeated. "I come to see my pup."

"Well, go see your pup, then. Don't come in a place where you're not wanted."

Lennie lost his smile. He advanced a step into the room, then remembered and backed to the door again. "I looked at 'em a little. Slim says I ain't to pet 'em very much."

Crooks said, "Well, you been takin' 'em out of the nest all the time. I wonder the old lady don't move 'em someplace else."

"Oh, she don't care. She lets me." Lennie had moved into the room again. Crooks scowled, but Lennie's disarming smile defeated him. "Come on inand set a while," Crooks said. "'Long as you won't get out and leave me alone, you might as well set down." His tone was a little more friendly. "All the boys gone into town, huh?"

"All but old Candy. He just sets in the bunk house sharpening his pencil and sharpening and figuring." Crooks adjusted his glasses. "Figuring? What's Candy figuring about?" Lennie almost shouted, "'Bout the rabbits."

"You're nuts," said Crooks. "You're crazy as a wedge. What rabbits you talkin' about?"

"The rabbits we're gonna get, and I get to tend 'em, cut grass an' give 'em water, an' like that." "Jus' nuts," said Crooks. "I don't blame the guy you travel with for keepin' you outa sight."

Lennie said quietly, "It ain't no lie. We're gonna do it. Gonna get a little place an' live on the fatta the lan'."

Crooks settled himself more comfortably on his bunk. "Set down," he invited. "Set down on the nail keg."

Lennie hunched down on the little barrel. "You think it's a lie," Lennie said. "But it ain't no lie. Ever' word's the truth, an' you can ast George."

Crooks put his dark chin into his pink palm. "You travel aroun' with George, don't ya?" "Sure. Me an' him goes ever' place together."

Crooks continued. "Sometimes he talks, and you don't know what the hell he's talkin' about. Ain't that so?" He leaned forward, boring Lennie with his deep eyes. "Ain't that so?"

"Yeah..... sometimes."

"Jus' talks on, an' you don't know what the hell it's all about?" "Yeah . . . . sometimes. But ..... not always."

Crooks leaned forward over the edge of the bunk. "I ain't a southern Negro," he said. "I was born right here in California. My old man had a chicken ranch, 'bout ten acres. The white kids come to play at our place, an' sometimes I went to play with them, and some of them was pretty nice. My ol' man didn't like that. I never knew till long later why he didn't like that. But I know now." He hesitated, and when he spoke again his voice was softer. "There wasn't another colored family for miles around. And now there ain't a colored man on this ranch an' there's jus' one family in Soledad." He laughed. "If I say something, why it's just a nigger sayin' it."

Lennie asked, "How long you think it'll be before them pups will be old enough to pet?"

Crooks laughed again. "A guy can talk to you an' be sure you won't go blabbin'. Couple of weeks an' them pups'll be all right. George knows what he's about. Jus' talks, an' you don't understand nothing." He leaned forward excitedly. "This is just a nigger talkin', an' a busted-back nigger. So it don't mean nothing, see? You couldn't remember it anyways. I seen it over an' over —a guy talkin' to another guy and it don't make no difference if he don't hear or understand. The thing is, they're talkin', or they're settin' still not talkin'. It don't make no difference, no difference." His excitement had increased until he pounded his knee with this hand. "George can tell you screwy things, and it don't matter. It's just the talking. It's just bein' with another guy. That's all." He paused.

His voice grew soft and persuasive. "S'pose George don't come back no more. S'pose he took a powder and just ain't coming back. What'll you do then?"

Lennie's attention came gradually to what had been said. "What?" he demanded.

"I said s'pose George went into town tonight and you never heard of him no more." Crooks pressed forward some kind of private victory. "Just s'pose that," he repeated.

"He won't do it," Lennie cried. "George wouldn't do nothing like that. I been with George a long a time. He'll come back tonight—" But the doubt was too much for him. "Don't you think he will?"

Crooks' face lighted with pleasure in his torture. "Nobody can't tell what a guy'll do," he observed calmly. "Le's say he wants to come back and can't. S'pose he gets killed or hurt so he can't come back."

Lennie struggled to understand. "George won't do nothing like that," he repeated. "George is careful. He won't get hurt. He ain't never been hurt, 'cause he's careful."

"Well, s'pose, jus' s'pose he don't come back. What'll you do then?" Lennie's face wrinkled with apprehension. "I don' know. Say, what youdoin' anyways?" he cried. "This ain't true. George ain't got hurt."

Crooks bored in on him. "Want me ta tell ya what'll happen? They'll take ya to the booby hatch. They'll tie ya up with a collar, like a dog."

Suddenly Lennie's eyes centered and grew quiet, and mad. He stood up and walked dangerously toward Crooks. "Who hurt George?" he demanded.

Crooks saw the danger as it approached him. He edged back on his bunk to get out of the way. "I was just supposin'," he said. "George ain't hurt. He's all right. He'll be back all right."

Lennie stood over him. "What you supposin' for? Ain't nobody goin' to suppose no hurt to George."

Crooks removed his glasses and wiped his eyes with his fingers. "Jus' set down," he said. "George ain't hurt."

Lennie growled back to his seat on the nail keg. "Ain't nobody goin' to talk no hurt to George," he grumbled.

Crooks said gently, "Maybe you can see now. You got George. You *know* he's goin' to come back. S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go into the bunk house and play rummy 'cause you was black. How'd you like that? S'pose you had to sit out here an' read books. Sure you could play horseshoes till it got dark, but then you got to read books. Books ain't no good. A guy needs somebody— to be near him." He whined, "A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you. I tell ya," he cried, "I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."

"George gonna come back," Lennie reassured himself in a frightened voice. "Maybe George come back already. Maybe I better go see."

Crooks said, "I didn't mean to scare you. He'll come back. I was talkin' about myself. A guy sets alone out here at night, maybe readin' books or thinkin' or stuff like that. Sometimes he gets thinkin', an' he got nothing to tell him what's so an' what ain't so. Maybe if he sees somethin', he don't know whether it's right or not. He can't turn to some other guy and ast him if he sees it too. He can't tell. He got nothing to measure by. I seen things out here. I wasn't drunk. I don't know if I was asleep. If some guy was with me, he could tell me I was asleep, an' then it would be all right. But I jus' don't know." Crooks was looking across the room now, looking toward the window.

Lennie said miserably, "George wun't go away and leave me. I know George wun't do that."

The stable buck went on dreamily, "I remember when I was a little kid on my old man's chicken ranch. Had two brothers. They was always near me, always there. Used to sleep right in the same room, right in the same bed—all three. Had a strawberry patch. Had an alfalfa patch. Used to turn the chickens out in the alfalfa on a sunny morning. My brothers'd set on a fence rail an' watch 'em —white chickens they was."

Gradually Lennie's interest came around to what was being said. "George says we're gonna have alfalfa for the rabbits."

"What rabbits?"

"We're gonna have rabbits an' a berry

patch." "You're nuts."

"We are too. You ast George."

“You’re nuts.” Crooks was scornful. “I seen hunderds of men come by on the road an’ on the ranches, with their bindles on their back an’ that same damn thing in their heads. Hunderds of them. They come, an’ they quit an’ go on; an’ every damn one of ‘em’s got a little piece of land in his head. An’ never a God damn one of ‘em ever gets it. Just like heaven. Ever’body wants a little piece of lan’. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It’s just in their head. They’re all the time talkin’ about it, but it’s jus’ in their head.” He paused and looked toward the open door, for the horses were moving restlessly and the halter chains clinked. A horse whinnied. “I guess somebody’s out there,” Crooks said. “Maybe Slim. Slim comes in sometimes two, three times a night. Slim’s a real skinner. He looks out for his team.” He pulled himself painfully upright and moved toward the door. “That you, Slim?” he called.

Candy’s voice answered. “Slim went in town. Say, you seen Lennie?” “Ya mean the big guy?” “Yeah. Seen him around any place?”

“He’s in here,” Crooks said shortly. He went back to his bunk and lay down. Candy stood in the doorway scratching his bald wrist and looking blindly into the lighted room. He made no attempt to enter. “Tell ya what, Lennie. I been figuring out about them rabbits.”

Crooks said irritably, “You can come in if you want.”

Candy seemed embarrassed. “I do’ know. ‘Course, if ya want me to.” “Come on in. If ever’body’s comin’ in, you might just as well.” It wasdifficult for Crooks to conceal his pleasure with anger.

Candy came in, but he was still embarrassed, “You got a nice cozy little place in here,” he said to Crooks. “Must be nice to have a room all to yourself this way.”

“Sure,” said Crooks. “And a manure pile under the window. Sure, it’s swell.” Lennie broke in, “You said about them rabbits.”

Candy leaned against the wall beside the broken collar while he scratched the wrist stump. “I been here a long time,” he said. “An’ Crooks been here a long time. This’s the first time I ever been in his room.”

Crooks said darkly, “Guys don’t come into a colored man’s room very much. Nobody been here but Slim. Slim an’ the boss.”

Candy quickly changed the subject. “Slim’s as good a skinner as I ever seen.”

Lennie leaned toward the old swamper. “About them rabbits,” he insisted. Candy smiled. “I got it figured out. We can make some money on themrabbits if we go about it right.”

“But I get to tend ‘em,” Lennie broke in. “George says I get to tend ‘em. He promised.”

Crooks interrupted brutally. “You guys is just kiddin’ yourself. You’ll talk about it a hell of a lot, but you won’t get no land. You’ll be a swamper here till they take you out in a box. Hell, I seen too many guys. Lennie here’ll quit an’ be on the road in two, three weeks. Seems like ever’ guy got land in his head.”

Candy rubbed his cheek angrily. “You God damn right we’re gonna do it. George says we are. We got the money right now.”

“Yeah?” said Crooks. “An’ where’s George now? In town in a whorehouse. That’s where your money’s goin’. Jesus, I seen it happen too many times. I seen too many guys with land in their head. They never get none under their hand.”

Candy cried, “Sure they all want it. Everybody wants a little bit of land, not much. Jus’ som’thin’ that was his. Som’thin’ he could live on and there couldn’t nobody throw him off of it. I never had none. I planted crops for damn near ever’body in this state, but they wasn’t my crops, and when I harvested ‘em, it wasn’t none of my harvest. But we gonna do it now, and don’t you make no mistake about that. George ain’t got the money in town. That money’s in the bank. Me an’ Lennie an’ George. We gonna have a room to ourself. We’re gonna have a dog an’ rabbits an’ chickens. We’re gonna have green corn an’ maybe a cow or a goat.” He stopped, overwhelmed with his picture.

Crooks asked, “You say you got the money?”

“Damn right. We got most of it. Just a little bit more to get. Have it all in one month. George got the land all picked out, too.”

Crooks reached around and explored his spine with his hand. “I never seen a guy really do it,” he said. “I seen guys nearly crazy with loneliness for land, but ever’ time a whore house or a blackjack game took what it takes.” He hesitated. “ If you guys would want a hand to work for nothing—just his keep, why I’d come an’ lend a hand. I ain’t so crippled I can’t work like a son-of-a-bitch if I want to.” “Any you boys seen Curley?”

They swung their heads toward the door. Looking in was Curley’s wife. Her face was heavily made up. Her lips were slightly parted. She breathed strongly, as though she had been running.
“Curley ain’t been here,” Candy said sourly.

She stood still in the doorway, smiling a little at them, rubbing the nails of one hand with the thumb and forefinger of the other. And her eyes traveled from one face to another. “They left all the weak ones here,” she said finally. “Think I don’t know where they all went? Even Curley. I know where they all went.”

Lennie watched her, fascinated; but Candy and Crooks were scowling down away from her eyes.
Candy said, “Then if you know, why you want to ast us where Curley is at?”

She regarded them amusedly. “Funny thing,” she said. “If I catch any one man, and he’s alone, I get along fine with him. But just let two of the guys get together an’ you won’t talk. Jus’ nothing but mad.” She dropped her fingers and put her hands on her hips. “You’re all scared of each other, that’s what. Ever’ one of you’s scared the rest is goin’ to get something on you.”

After a pause Crooks said, “Maybe you better go along to your own house now. We don’t want no trouble.”

“Well, I ain’t giving you no trouble. Think I don’t like to talk to somebody ever’ once in a while? Think I like to stick in that house alla time?”

Candy laid the stump of his wrist on his knee and rubbed it gently with his hand. He said accusingly, “You gotta husban’. You got no call foolin’ aroun’ with other guys, causin’ trouble.”

The girl flared up. “Sure I gotta husban’. You all seen him. Swell guy, ain’t he? Spends all his time sayin’ what he’s gonna do to guy she don’t like, and he don’t like nobody. Think I’m gonna stay in that two-by-four house and listen how Curley’s gonna lead with his left twicet, and then bring in the ol’ right cross? ‘One-two,’ he says. ‘Jus’ the ol’ one-two an’ he’ll go down.’” She paused and her face lost its sullenness and grew interested. “Say—what happened to Curley’s han’?”

There was an embarrassed silence. Candy stole a look at Lennie. Then he coughed. “Why Curley . . . . he got his han’ caught in a machine, ma’am. Bust his han’.”

She watched for a moment, and then she laughed. “Baloney! What you think you’re sellin’ me? Curley started som’pin’ he didn’ finish. Caught in a machine —baloney! Why, he ain’t give nobody the good ol’ one-two since he got his han’ bust. Who bust him?”
Candy repeated sullenly, “Got it caught in a machine.”

“Awright,” she said contemptuously. “Awright, cover ‘im up if ya wanta. Whatta I care? You bindle bums think you’re so damn good. Whatta ya think I am, a kid? I tell ya I could of went with shows. Not jus’ one, neither. An’ a guy tol’ me he could put me in pitchers ” She was breathless with indignation. “—Sat’iday night. Ever’body out doin’ som’pin’. Ever’body! An’ what am I doin’? Standin’ here talkin’ to a bunch of bindle stiffs—a nigger an’ a dum-dum and a lousy ol’ sheep—an’ likin’ it because they ain’t nobody else.”
Lennie watched her, his mouth half open. Crooks had retired into the terrible protective dignity of the Negro. But a change came over old Candy. He stood up suddenly and knocked his nail keg over backward. “I had enough,” he said angrily. “You ain’t wanted here. We told you you ain’t. An’ I tell ya, you got floozy idears about what us guys amounts to. You ain’t got sense enough in that chicken head to even see that we ain’t stiffs. S’pose you get us canned. S’pose you do. You think we’ll hit the highway an’ look for another lousy two-bit job like this. You don’t know that we got our own ranch to go to, an’ our own house. We ain’t got to stay here. We gotta house and chickens an’ fruit trees an’ a place a hunderd

time prettier than this. An' we got fren's, that's what we got. Maybe there was a time when we was scared of gettin' canned, but we ain't no more. We got our own lan', and it's ours, an' we c'n go to it."

Curley's wife laughed at him. "Baloney," she said. "I seen too many you guys. If you had two bits in the worl', why you'd be in gettin' two shots of corn with it and suckin' the bottom of the glass. I know you guys."

Candy's face had grown redder and redder, but before she was done speaking, he had control of himself. He was the master of the situation. "I might of knew," he said gently. "Maybe you just better go along an' roll your hoop. We ain't got nothing to say to you at all. We know what we got, and we don't care whether you know it or not. So maybe you better jus' scatter along now, 'cause Curley maybe ain't gonna like his wife out in the barn with us 'bindle stiffs.'"

She looked from one face to another, and they were all closed against her. And she looked longest at Lennie, until he dropped his eyes in embarrassment. Suddenly she said, "Where'd you get them bruises on your face?"

Lennie looked up guiltily. "Who—me?" "Yeah, you."

Lennie looked to Candy for help, and then he looked at his lap again. "He got his han' caught in a machine," he said.

Curley's wife laughed. "O.K., Machine. I'll talk to you later. I like machines."

Candy broke in. "You let this guy alone. Don't you do no messing aroun' with him. I'm gonna tell George what you says. George won't have you messin' with Lennie."

"Who's George?" she asked. "The little guy you come with?"

Lennie smiled happily. "That's him," he said. "That's the guy, an' he's gonna let me tend the rabbits." "Well, if that's all you want, I might get a couple rabbits myself."

Crooks stood up from his bunk and faced her. "I had enough," he said coldly. "You got no rights comin' in a colored man's room. You got no rights messing around in here at all. Now you jus' get out, an' get out quick. If you don't, I'm gonna ast the boss not to ever let you come in the barn no more."

She turned on him in scorn. "Listen, Nigger," she said. "You know what I can do to you if you open your trap?"

Crooks stared hopelessly at her, and then he sat down on his bunk and drew into himself. She closed on him. "You know what I could do?"

Crooks seemed to grow smaller, and he pressed himself against the wall. "Yes, ma'am."

"Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung upon a tree so easy it ain't even funny."

Crooks had reduced himself to nothing. There was no personality, no ego— nothing to arouse either like or dislike. He said, "Yes, ma'am," and his voice was toneless.

For a moment she stood over him as though waiting for him to move so that she could whip at him again; but Crooks sat perfectly still, his eyes averted, everything that might be hurt drawn in. She turned at last to the other two.

Old Candy was watching her, fascinated. "If you was to do that, we'd tell," he said quietly. "We'd tell about you framin' Crooks."

"Tell an' be damned," she cried. "Nobody'd listen to you, an' you know it. Nobody'd listen to you." Candy subsided. "No " he agreed. "Nobody'd listen to us."

Lennie whined, "I wisht George was here. I wisht George was here."

Candy stepped over to him. "Don't you worry none," he said. "I jus' heard the guys comin' in. George'll be in the bunk house right now, I bet." He turned to Curley's wife. "You better go home now," he said quietly. "If you go right now, we won't tell Curley you was here."

She appraised him coolly. "I ain't sure you heard nothing."

"Better not take no chances," he said. "If you ain't sure, you better take the safe way."

She turned to Lennie. “I’m glad you bust up Curley a little bit. He got it comin’ to him. Sometimes I’d like to bust him myself.” She slipped out the door and disappeared into the dark barn. And while she went through the barn, the halter chains rattled, and some horses snorted and some stamped their feet.
Crooks seemed to come slowly out of the layers of protection he had put on. “Was that the truth what you said about the guys come back?” he asked. “Sure. I heard ‘em.”
“Well, I didn’t hear nothing.”

“The gate banged,” Candy said, and he went on, “Jesus Christ, Curley’s wife can move quiet. I guess she had a lot of practice, though.”

Crooks avoided the whole subject now. “Maybe you guys better go,” he said. “I ain’t sure I want you in here no more. A colored man got to have some rights even if he don’t like ‘em.”
Candy said, “That bitch didn’t ought to of said that to you.”

“It wasn’t nothing,” Crooks said dully. “You guys comin’ in an’ settin’ made me forget. What she says is true.”

The horses snorted out in the barn and the chains rang and a voice called, “Lennie. Oh, Lennie. You in the barn?”

“It’s George,” Lennie cried. And he answered, “Here, George. I’m right in here.”

In a second George stood framed in the door, and he looked disapprovingly about. “What you doin’ in Crooks’ room? You hadn’t ought to be here.”
Crooks nodded. “I tol’ ‘em, but they come in anyways.” “Well, why’n’t you kick ‘em out?” “I di’n’t care much,” said Crooks. “Lennie’s a nice fella.”

Now Candy aroused himself. “Oh, George! I been figurin’ and figurin’. I got it doped out how we can even make some money on them rabbits.”
George scowled. “I thought I tol’ you not to tell nobody about that.” Candy was crestfallen. “Didn’t tell nobody but Crooks.”

George said, “Well you guys get outa here. Jesus, seems like I can’t go away for a minute.” Candy and Lennie stood up and went toward the door. Crooks called, “Candy!”
“Huh?”
“’Member what I said about hoein’ and doin’ odd jobs?” “Yeah,” said Candy. “I remember.”

“Well, jus’ forget it,” said Crooks. “I didn’t mean it. Jus’ foolin’. I wouldn’ want to go no place like that.”
“Well, O.K., if you feel like that. Good night.”

The three men went out of the door. As they went through the barn the horses snorted and the halter chains rattled.

Crooks sat on his bunk and looked at the door for a moment, and then he reached for the liniment bottle. He pulled out his shirt in back, poured a little liniment in his pink palm and, reaching around, he fell slowly to rubbing his back.

One end of the great barn was piled high with new hay and over the pile hungthe four-taloned Jackson fork suspended from its pulley. The hay came down like a mountain slope to the other end of the barn, and there was a level place as yet unfilled with the new crop. At the sides the feeding racks were visible, and between the slats the heads of horses could be seen.

It was Sunday afternoon. The resting horses nibbled the remaining wisps of hay, and they stamped their feet and they bit the wood of the mangers and rattled the halter chains. The afternoon sun sliced in through the cracks of the barn walls and lay in bright lines on the hay. There was the buzz of flies in the air, the lazy afternoon humming.

From outside came the clang of horseshoes on the playing peg and the shouts of men, playing, encouraging, jeering. But in the barn it was quiet and humming and lazy and warm.

Only Lennie was in the barn, and Lennie sat in the hay beside a packing case under a manger in the end of the barn that had not been filled with hay. Lennie sat in the hay and looked at a little dead puppy that lay in front of him. Lennie looked at it for a long time, and then he put out his huge hand and stroked it, stroked it clear from one end to the other.

And Lennie said softly to the puppy, "Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice. I didn't bounce you hard." He bent the pup's head up and looked in its face, and he said to it, "Now maybe George ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits, if he fin's out you got killed."

He scooped a little hollow and laid the puppy in it and covered it over with hay, out of sight; but he continued to stare at the mound he had made. He said, "This ain't no bad thing like I got to go hide in the brush. Oh! no. This ain't. I'll tell George I foun' it dead."

He unburied the puppy and inspected it, and he stroked it from ears to tail. He went on sorrowfully, "But he'll know. George always knows. He'll say, 'You done it. Don't try to put nothing over on me.' An' he'll say, 'Now jus' for that you don't get to tend no rabbits!'"

Suddenly his anger arose. "God damn you," he cried. "Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice." He picked up the pup and hurled it from him. He turned his back on it. He sat bent over his knees and he whispered, "Now I won't get to tend the rabbits. Now he won't let me." He rocked himself back and forth in his sorrow.

From outside came the clang of horseshoes on the iron stake, and then a little chorus of cries. Lennie got up and brought the puppy back and laid it on the hay and sat down. He stroked the pup again. "You wasn't big enough," he said. "They tol' me and tol' me you wasn't. I di'n't know you'd get killed so easy." He worked his fingers on the pup's limp ear. "Maybe George won't care," he said. "This here God damn little son-of-a-bitch wasn't nothing to George." Curley's wife came around the end of the last stall. She came very quietly, sothat Lennie didn't see her. She wore her bright cotton dress and the mules with the red ostrich feathers. Her face was made-up and the little sausage curls were all in place. She was quite near to him before Lennie looked up and saw her.

In a panic he shoveled hay over the puppy with his fingers. He looked sullenly up at her.

She said, "What you got there, sonny boy?"

Lennie glared at her. "George says I ain't to have nothing to do with you— talk to you or nothing." She laughed. "George giving you orders about everything?"

Lennie looked down at the hay. "Says I can't tend no rabbits if I talk to you or anything."

She said quietly, "He's scared Curley'll get mad. Well, Curley got his arm in a sling- an' if Curley gets tough, you can break his other han'. You didn't put nothing over on me about gettin' it caught in no machine."

But Lennie was not to be drawn. "No, sir. I ain't gonna talk to you or nothing."

She knelt in the hay beside him. "Listen," she said. "All the guys got a horseshoe tenement goin' on. It's on'y about four o'clock. None of them guys is goin' to leave that tenement. Why can't I talk to you? I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely."

Lennie said, "Well, I ain't supposed to talk to you or nothing."

"I get lonely," she said. "You can talk to people, but I can't talk to nobody but Curley. Else he gets mad. How'd you like not to talk to anybody?"

Lennie said, "Well, I ain't supposed to. George's scared I'll get in trouble." She changed the subject. "What you got covered up there?"

Then all of Lennie's woe came back on him. "Jus' my pup," he said sadly. "Jus' my little pup." And he swept the hay from on top of it.

"Why, he's dead," she cried.

"He was so little," said Lennie. "I was jus' playin' with him an' he made like he's gonna bite me . . . . an' I made like I was gonna smack him . . . . an'..... an' I done it. An' then he was dead."

She consoled him. “Don’t you worry none. He was jus’ a mutt. You can get another one easy. The whole country is fulla mutts.”

“It ain’t that so much,” Lennie explained miserably. “George ain’t gonna let me tend no rabbits now. “Why don’t he?”

“Well, he said if I done any more bad things he ain’t gonna let me tend the rabbits.”

She moved closer to him and she spoke soothingly. “Don’t you worry about talkin’ to me. Listen to the guys yell out there. They got four dollars bet in that tenement. None of them ain’t gonna leave till it’s over.”

“If George sees me talkin’ to you he’ll give me hell,” Lennie said cautiously. “He tol’ me so.”

Her face grew angry. “Wha’s the matter with me?” she cried. “Ain’t I got a right to talk to nobody? Whatta they think I am, anyways? You’re a nice guy. I don’t know why I can’t talk to you. I ain’t doin’ no harm to you.”

“Well, George says you’ll get us in a mess.”

“Aw, nuts!” she said. “What kinda harm am I doin’ to you? Seems like they ain’t none of them cares how I gotta live. I tell you I ain’t used to livin’ like this. I coulda made somethin’ of myself.” She said darkly, “Maybe I will yet.” And then her words tumbled out in a passion of communication, as though she hurried before her listener could be taken away. “I lived right in Salinas,” she said. “Come there when I was a kid. Well, a show come through, an’ I met one of the actors. He says I could go with that show. But my ol’ lady wouldn’t let me. She says because I was on’y fifteen. But the guy says I coulda. If I’d went, I wouldn’t be livin’ like this, you bet.”

Lennie stroked the pup back and forth. “We gonna have a little place—an’ rabbits,” he explained.

She went on with her story quickly, before she could be interrupted. “’Nother time I met a guy, an’ he was in pitchers. Went out to the Riverside Dance Palace with him. He says he was gonna put me in the movies. Says I was a natural. Soon’s he got back to Hollywood he was gonna write to me about it.” She looked closely at Lennie to see whether she was impressing him. “I never got that letter,” she said. “I always thought my ol’ lady stole it. Well, I wasn’t gonna stay no place where I couldn’t get nowhere or make something of myself, an’ where they stole your letters, I ast her if she stole it, too, an’ she says no. So I married Curley. Met him out to the Riverside Dance Palace that same night.” She demanded, “You listenin’?”

“Me? Sure.”

“Well, I ain’t told this to nobody before. Maybe I oughten to. I don’ *like* Curley. He ain’t a nice fella.” And because she had confided in him, she moved closer to Lennie and sat beside him. “Coulda been in the movies, an’ had nice clothes—all them nice clothes like they wear. An’ I coulda sat in them big hotels, an’ had pitchers took of me. When they had them previews I coulda went to them, an’ spoke in the radio, an’ it wouldn’ta cost me a cent because I was in the pitcher. An’ all them nice clothes like they wear. Because this guy says I was a natural.” She looked up at Lennie, and she made a small grand gesture with her arm and hand to show that she could act. The fingers trailed after her leading wrist, and her little finger stuck out grandly from the rest.

Lennie sighed deeply. From outside came the clang of a horseshoe on metal, and then a chorus of cheers. “Somebody made a ringer,” said Curley’s wife.

Now the light was lifting as the sun went down, and the sun streaks climbed up the wall and fell over the feeding racks and over the heads of the horses.

Lennie said, “Maybe if I took this pup out and throwed him away George wouldn’t never know. An’ then I could tend the rabbits without no trouble.”

Curley’s wife said angrily, “Don’t you think of nothing but rabbits?”

“We gonna have a little place,” Lennie explained patiently. “We gonna have a house an’ a garden and a place for alfalfa, an’ that alfalfa is for the rabbits, an’ I take a sack and get it all fulla alfalfa and then I take it to the rabbits.”

She asked, “What makes you so nuts about rabbits?”

Lennie had to think carefully before he could come to a conclusion. He moved cautiously close to her, until he was right against her. “I like to pet nice things. Once at a fair I seen some of them long-hair rabbits. An’ they was nice, you bet. Sometimes I’ve even pet mice, but not when I couldn’t get nothing better.”

Curley’s wife moved away from him a little. “I think you’re nuts,” she said. “No I ain’t,” Lennie explained earnestly. “George says I ain’t. I like to petnice things with my fingers, sof’things.”

She was a little bit reassured. “Well, who don’t?” she said. “Ever’body likes that. I like to feel silk an’ velvet. Do you like to feel velvet?”

Lennie chuckled with pleasure. “You bet, by God,” he cried happily. “An’ I had some, too. A lady give me some, an’ that lady was—my own Aunt Clara. She give it right to me—‘bout this big a piece. I wisht I had that velvet right now.” A frown came over his face. “I lost it,” he said. “I ain’t seen it for a long time.” Curley’s wife laughed at him. “You’re nuts,” she said. “But you’re a kinda nice fella. Jus’ like a big baby. But a person can see kinda what you mean. When I’m doin’ my hair sometimes I jus’ set an’ stroke it ‘cause it’s so soft.” To show how she did it, she ran her fingers over the top of her head. “Some people got kinda coarse hair,” she said complacently. “Take Curley. His hair is jus’ like wire. But mine is soft and fine. ‘Course I brush it a lot. That makes it fine. Here—feel right here.” She took Lennie’s hand and

put it on her head. “Feel right aroun’ there an’ see how soft it

is.” Lennie’s big fingers fell to stroking her hair.

“Don’t you muss it up,” she said.

Lennie said, “Oh! That’s nice,” and he stroked harder. “Oh, that’s nice.” “Look out, now, you’ll muss it.” And then she cried angrily, “You stop itnow, you’ll mess it all up.” She jerked her head sideways, and Lennie’s fingers closed on her hair and hung on. “Let go,” she cried. “You let go!”

Lennie was in a panic. His face was contorted. She screamed then, and Lennie’s other hand closed over her mouth and nose. “Please don’t,” he begged. “Oh! Please don’t do that. George’ll bemad.”

She struggled violently under his hands. Her feet battered on the hay and she writhed to be free; and from under Lennie’s hand came a muffled screaming. Lennie began to cry with fright. “Oh! Please don’t do none of that,” he begged. “George gonna say I done a bad thing. He ain’t gonna let me tend no rabbits.” He moved his hand a little and her hoarse cry came out. Then Lennie grew angry. “Now don’t,” he said. “I don’t want you to yell. You gonna get me in trouble jus’ like George says you will. Now don’t you do that.” And she continued to struggle, and her eyes were wild with terror. He shook her then, and he was angry with her. “Don’t you go yellin’,” he said, and he shook her; and her body flopped like a fish. And then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck.

He looked down at her, and carefully he removed his hand from over her mouth, and she lay still. “I don’t want to hurt you,” he said, “but George’ll be mad if you yell.” When she didn’t answer nor move he bent closely over her. He lifted her arm and let it drop. For a moment he seemed bewildered. And then he whispered in fright, “I done a bad thing. I done another bad thing.”

He pawed up the hay until it partly covered her.

From outside the barn came a cry of men and the double clang of shoes on metal. For the first time Lennie became conscious of the outside. He crouched down in the hay and listened. “I done a real bad thing,” he said. “I shouldn’t of did that. George’ll be mad. An’ he said an’ hide in the brush till

he come. He’s gonna be mad. In the brush till he come. Tha’s what he said.” Lennie went back and looked at the dead girl. The puppy lay close to her. Lennie picked it up. “I’ll throw him away,” he said. “It’s bad enough like it is.” He put the pup under his coat, and he crept to the barn wall and peered out between the cracks, toward the horseshoe game. And then he crept around the end of the last manger and disappeared.

The sun streaks were high on the wall by now, and the light was growing soft in the barn. Curley’s wife lay on her back, and she was half covered with hay.

It was very quiet in the barn, and the quiet of the afternoon was on the ranch. Even the clang of the pitched shoes, even the voices of the men in the game, seemed to grow more quiet. The air in the barn was dusky in advance of the outside day. A pigeon flew in through the open hay door and circled and flew out

again. Around the last stall came a shepherd bitch, lean and long, with heavy, hanging dugs. Halfway to the packing box where the puppies were shecaught the dead scent of Curley's wife, and the hair arose along her spine. She whimpered and cringed to the packing box, and jumped in among the puppies.

Curley's wife lay with a half-covering of yellow hay. And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face. She was very pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young. Now her rouged cheeks and her reddened lips made her seem alive and sleeping very lightly. The curls, tiny little sausages, were spread on the hay behind her head, and her lips were parted.

As happens sometimes, a moment settled and hovered and remained for much more than a moment. And sound stopped and movement stopped for much, much more than a moment.

Then gradually time awakened again and moved sluggishly on. The horses stamped on the other side of the feeding racks and the halterchains clinked. Outside, the men's voices became louder andclearer.

From around the end of the last stall old Candy's voice came. "Lennie," he called. "Oh, Lennie! You in here? I been figuring some more. Tell you what we can do, Lennie." Old Candy appeared around the end of the last stall. "Oh, Lennie!" he called again; and then he stopped, and his body stiffened. He rubbed his smooth wrist on his white stubble whiskers. "I di'n't know you was here," he said to Curley's wife.

When she didn't answer, he stepped nearer. "You oughten to sleep out here," he said disapprovingly; and then he was beside her and—"Oh, Jesus Christ!" He looked about helplessly, and he rubbed his beard. And then he jumped up and went quickly out of the barn.

But the barn was alive now. The horses stamped and snorted, and they chewed the straw of their bedding and they clashed the chains of their halters. In a moment Candy came back, and George was with him.

George said, "What was it you wanted to see me about?"

Candy pointed at Curley's wife. George stared. "What's the matter with her?" he asked. He stepped closer, and then he echoed Candy's words. "Oh, Jesus Christ!" He was down on his knees beside her. He put his hand over her heart. And finally, when he stood up, slowly and stiffly, his face was as hard and tight as wood, and his eyes were hard.

Candy said, "What done it?"

George looked coldly at him. "Ain't you got any idear?" he asked. And Candy was silent. "I should of knew," George said hopelessly. "I guess maybe way back in my head I did."

Candy asked, "What we gonna do now, George? What we gonna do now?" George was a long time in answering. "Guess we gotta tell the guys. I guess we gotta get 'im an' lock 'im up. We can't let 'im get away. Why, the poor bastard'd starve." And he tried to reassure himself. "Maybe they'll lock 'im up an' be nice to 'im."

But Candy said excitedly, "We oughta let 'im get away. You don't know that Curley. Curley gon'ta wanta get 'im lynched. Curley'll get 'im killed."

George watched Candy's lips. "Yeah," he said at last, "that's right, Curley will. An' the other guys will." And he looked back at Curley's wife.

Now Candy spoke his greatest fear. "You an' me can get that little place, can't we, George? You an' me can go there an' live nice, can't we, George? Can't we?"

Before George answered, Candy dropped his head and looked down at the hay. He knew.

George said softly, "—I think I knowed from the very first. I think I know'd we'd never do her. He usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we would."

"Then—it's all off?" Candy asked sulkily.

George didn't answer his question. George said, "I'll work my month an' I'll take my fifty bucks an' I'll stay all night in some lousy cat house. Or I'll set in some poolroom till ever'body goes home. An' then I'll come back an' work another month an' I'll have fifty bucks more."

Candy said, "He's such a nice fella. I didn' think he'd do nothing like this." George still stared at Curley's wife. "Lennie never done it in meanness," hesaid. "All the time he done bad things, but he never done one

of ‘em mean.” He straightened up and looked back at Candy. “Now listen. We gotta tell the guys. They got to bring him in, I guess. They ain’t no way out. Maybe they won’t hurt ‘im.” He said sharply, “I ain’t gonna let ‘em hurt Lennie. Now you listen. The guys might think I was in on it. I’m gonna go in the bunk house. Then in a minute you come out and tell the guys about her, and I’ll come along and make like I never seen her. Will you do that? So the guys won’t think I was in onit?”
Candy said, “Sure, George. Sure I’ll do that.”

“O.K. Give me a couple minutes then, and you come runnin’ out an’ tell like you jus’ found her. I’m going now.” George turned and went quickly out of the barn.

Old Candy watched him go. He looked helplessly back at Curley’s wife, and gradually his sorrow and his anger grew into words. “You God damn tramp”, he said viciously. “You done it, di’n’t you? I s’pose you’re glad. Ever’body knowed you’d mess things up. You wasn’t no good. You ain’t no good now, you lousy tart.” He sniveled, and his voice shook. “I could of hoed in the garden and washed dishes for them guys.” He paused, and then went on in a singsong. And he repeated the old words: “If they was a circus or a baseball game we would of went to her jus’ said ‘ta hell with work,’ an’ went to her. Never ast nobody’s say so. An’ they’d of been a pig and chickens . . . . an’ in the winter . . . . the little fat stove . . . .
an’ the rain comin’ an’ us jes’ settin’ there.” His eyes blinded with tears and he turned and went weakly out of the barn, and he rubbed his bristly whiskers with his wrist stump.

Outside the noise of the game stopped. There was a rise of voices in question, a drum of running feet and the men burst into the barn. Slim and Carlson and young Whit and Curley, and Crooks keeping back out of attention range. Candy came after them, and last of all came George. George had put on his blue denim coat and buttoned it, and his black hat was pulled down low over his eyes. The men raced around the last stall. Their eyes found Curley’s wife in the gloom, they stopped and stood still and looked.

Then Slim went quietly over to her, and he felt her wrist. One lean finger touched her cheek, and then his hand went under her slightly twisted neck and his fingers explored her neck. When he stood up the men crowded near and the spell was broken.

Curley came suddenly to life. “I know who done it,” he cried. “That big son-of-a-bitch done it. I know he done it. Why—ever’body else was out there playin’ horseshoes.” He worked himself into a fury. “I’m gonna get him. I’m going for my shotgun. I’ll kill the big son-of-a-bitch myself. I’ll shoot ‘im in the guts. Come on, you guys.” He ran furiously out of the barn. Carlson said, “I’ll get my Luger,” and he ran out too.

Slim turned quietly to George. “I guess Lennie done it, all right,” he said. “Her neck’s bust. Lennie coulda did that.”

George didn’t answer, but he nodded slowly. His hat was so far down on his forehead that his eyes were covered.
Slim went on, “Maybe like that time in Weed you was tellin’
about.” Again George nodded.

Slim sighed. “Well, I guess we got to get him. Where you think he might of went?”

It seemed to take George some time to free his words. “He—would of went south,” he said. “We come from north so he would of went south.”
“I guess we gotta get ‘im,” Slim repeated.

George stepped close. “Couldn’ we maybe bring him in an’ they’ll lock him up? He’s nuts, Slim. He never done this to be mean.”

Slim nodded. “We might,” he said. “If we could keep Curley in, we might. But Curley’s gonna want to shoot ‘im. Curley’s still mad about his hand. An’ s’pose they lock him up an’ strap him down and put him in a cage. That ain’t no good, George.”
“I know,” said George, “I know.”

Carlson came running in. “The bastard’s stole my Luger,” he shouted. “It ain’t in my bag.” Curley followed him, and Curley carried a shotgun in his good hand. Curley was cold now.

“All right, you guys,” he said. “The nigger’s got a shotgun. You take it, Carlson. When you see ‘um, don’t give ‘im no chance. Shoot for his guts. That’ll double ‘im over.”

Whit said excitedly, “I ain’t got a gun.”

Curley said, “You go in Soledad an’ get a cop. Get Al Wilts, he’s deputy sheriff. Le’s go now.” He turned suspiciously on George. “You’re comin’ with us, fella.”

“Yeah,” said George. “I’ll come. But listen, Curley. The poor bastard’s nuts. Don’t shoot ‘im. He di’n’t know what he was doin’.”

“Don’t shoot ‘im?” Curley cried. “He got Carlson’s Luger. ‘Course we’ll shoot ‘im.” George said weakly, “Maybe Carlson lost his gun.”

“I seen it this morning,” said Carlson. “No, it’s been took.”

Slim stood looking down at Curley’s wife. He said, “Curley—maybe you better stay here with your wife.”

Curley’s face reddened. “I’m goin’,” he said. “I’m gonna shoot the guts outa that big bastard myself, even if I only got one hand. I’m gonna get ‘im.”

Slim turned to Candy. “You stay here with her then, Candy. The rest of us better get goin’.”

They moved away. George stopped a moment beside Candy and they both looked down at the dead girl until Curley called, “You George! You stick with us so we don’t think you had nothin’ to do with this.”

George moved slowly after them, and his feet dragged heavily.

And when they were gone, Candy squatted down in the hay and watched the face of Curley’s wife. “Poor bastard,” he said softly.

The sound of the men grew fainter. The barn was darkening gradually and, in their stalls, the horses shifted their feet and rattled the halter chains. Old Candy lay down in the hay and covered his eyes with his arm.

The deep green pool of the Salinas River was still in the late afternoon.Already the sun had left the valley to go climbing up the slopes of the Gabilan Mountains, and the hilltops were rosy in the sun. But by the pool among the mottled sycamores, a pleasant shade had fallen.

A water snake glided smoothly up the pool, twisting its periscope head from side to side; and it swam the length of the pool and came to the legs of a motionless heron that stood in the shallows. A silent head and beak lanced down and plucked it out by the head, and the beak swallowed the little snake while its tail waved frantically.

A far rush of wind sounded and a gust drove through the tops of the trees like a wave. The sycamore leaves turned up their silver sides, the brown, dry leaves on the ground scudded a few feet. And row on row of tiny wind waves flowed up the pool’s green surface.

As quickly as it had come, the wind died, and the clearing was quiet again. The heron stood in the shallows, motionless and waiting. Another little water snake swam up the pool, turning its periscope head from side to side.

Suddenly Lennie appeared out of the brush, and he came as silently as a creeping bear moves. The heron pounded the air with its wings, jacked itself clear of the water and flew off down river. The little snake slid in among the reeds at the pool’s side.

Lennie came quietly to the pool’s edge. He knelt down and drank, barely touching his lips to the water. When a little bird skittered over the dry leaves behind him, his head jerked up and he strained toward the sound with eyes and ears until he saw the bird, and then he dropped his head and drank again.

When he was finished, he sat down on the bank, with his side to the pool, so that he could watch the trail’s entrance. He embraced his knees and laid his chin down on his knees.

The light climbed on out of the valley, and as it went, the tops of the mountains seemed to blaze with increasing brightness.

Lennie said softly, “I di’n’t forget, you bet, God damn. Hide in the brush an’ wait for George.” He pulled his hat down low over his eyes. “George gonna give me hell,” he said. “George gonna wish he was alone an’ not have me botherin’ him.” He turned his head and looked at the bright mountain tops. “I can

go right off there an' find a cave," he said. And he continued sadly, "—an' never have no ketchup—but I won't care. If George don't want me I'll go away. I'll go away."

And then from out of Lennie's head there came a little fat old woman. She wore thick bull's-eye glasses and she wore a huge gingham apron with pockets, and she was starched and clean. She stood in front of Lennie and put her hands on her hips, and she frowned disapprovingly at him.

And when she spoke, it was in Lennie's voice. "I tol' you an' tol' you," she said. "I tol' you, 'Min' George because he's such a nice fella an' good to you.' But you don't never take no care. You do bad things."

And Lennie answered her, "I tried, Aunt Clara, ma'am. I tried and tried. I couldn't help it."

"You never give a thought to George," she went on in Lennie's voice. "He been doin' nice things for you alla time. When he got a piece of pie you always got half or more'n half. An' if they was any ketchup, why he'd give it all to you."

"I know," said Lennie miserably. "I tried, Aunt Clara, ma'am. I tried and tried."

She interrupted him. "All the time he coulda had such a good time if it wasn't for you. He woulda took his pay an' raised hell in a whorehouse, and he coulda set in a pool room an' played snooker. But he got to take care of you."

Lennie moaned with grief. "I know, Aunt Clara, ma'am. I'll go right off in the hills an' I'll fin' a cave an' I'll live there so I won't be no more trouble to George."

"You jus' say that," she said sharply. "You're always sayin' that, an' you know sonofabitching well you ain't never gonna do it. You'll jus' stick around an' stew the b'Jesus outa George all the time."

Lennie said, "I might jus' as well go away. George ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits now."

Aunt Clara was gone, and from out of Lennie's head there came a gigantic rabbit. It sat on its haunches in front of him, and it waggled its ears and crinkled its nose at him. And it spoke in Lennie's voice too.

"Tend rabbits," it said scornfully. "You crazy bastard. You ain't fit to lick the boots of no rabbit. You'd forget 'em and let 'em go hungry. That's what you'd do. An' then what would George think?" "I would *not* forget," Lennie said loudly.

"The hell you wouldn'," said the rabbit. "You ain't worth a greased jack-pin to ram you into hell. Christ knows George done ever'thing he could to jack you outa the sewer, but it don't do no good. If you think George gonna let you tend rabbits, you're even crazier'n usual. He ain't. He's gonna beat hell outa you with a stick, that's what he's gonna do."

Now Lennie retorted belligerently, "He ain't neither. George won't do nothing like that. I've knew George since—I forget when—and he ain't never raised his han' to me with a stick. He's nice to me. He ain't gonna be mean."

"Well, he's sick of you," said the rabbit. "He's gonna beat hell outa you an' then go away an' leave you."

"He won't," Lennie cried frantically. "He won't do nothing like that. I know George. Me an' him travels together."

But the rabbit repeated softly over and over, "He gonna leave you, ya crazy bastard. He gonna leave ya all alone. He gonna leave ya, crazy bastard."

Lennie put his hands over his ears. "He ain't, I tell ya he ain't." And he cried, "Oh! George—George—George!"

George came quietly out of the brush and the rabbit scuttled back into Lennie's brain.
George said quietly, "What the hell you yellin' about?"

Lennie got up on his knees. "You ain't gonna leave me, are ya, George? I know you ain't."
George came stiffly near and sat down beside him. "No." "I knowed it," Lennie cried. "You ain't that kind." George was silent.
Lennie said,
"George." "Yeah?"
"I done another bad thing."

“It don’t make no difference,” George said, and he fell silent again.

Only the topmost ridges were in the sun now. The shadow in the valley was blue and soft. From the distance came the sound of men shouting to one another. George turned his head and listened to the shouts.

Lennie said,

“George.” “Yeah?”

“Ain’t you gonna give me hell?” “Give ya hell?”

“Sure, like you always done before. Like, ‘If I di’n’t have you I’d take my fifty bucks—’”

“Jesus Christ, Lennie! You can’t remember nothing that happens, but you remember ever’ word I say.” “Well, ain’t you gonna say it?”

George shook himself. He said woodenly, “If I was alone I could live so easy.” His voice was monotonous, had no emphasis. “I could get a job an’ not have no mess.” He stopped.

“Go on,” said Lennie. “An’ when the enda the month come—”

“An’ when the end of the month came I could take my fifty bucks an’ go to a..... cat house—” He stopped again.

Lennie looked eagerly at him. “Go on, George. Ain’t you gonna give me no more hell?” “No,” said George.

“Well, I can go away,” said Lennie. “I’ll go right off in the hills an’ find a cave if you don’ want me.” George shook himself again. “No,” he said. “I want you to stay with me here.”

Lennie said craftily—“Tell me like you done before.” “Tell you what?” “’Bout the other guys an’ about us.”

George said, “Guys like us got no fambly. They make a little stake an’ then they blow it in. They ain’t got nobody in the worl’ that gives a hoot in hell about ‘em—”

“*But not us,*” Lennie cried happily. “Tell about us now.” George was quiet for a moment. “But not us,” he said. “Because—”

“Because I got you an’—”

“An’ I got you. We got each other, that’s what, that gives a hoot in hell about us,” Lennie cried in triumph.

The little evening breeze blew over the clearing and the leaves rustled and the wind waves flowed up the green pool. And the shouts of men sounded again, this time much closer than before.

George took off his hat. He said shakily, “Take off your hat, Lennie. The air feels fine.”

Lennie removed his hat dutifully and laid it on the ground in front of him. The shadow in the valley was bluer, and the evening came fast. On the wind the sound of crashing in the brush came to them. Lennie said, “Tell how it’s gonna be.”

George had been listening to the distant sounds. For a moment he was businesslike. “Look acrost the river, Lennie, an’ I’ll tell you so you can almost see it.”

Lennie turned his head and looked off across the pool and up the darkening slopes of the Gabilans. “We gonna get a little place,” George began. He reached in his side pocket and brought out Carlson’s Luger; he snapped off the safety, and the hand and gun lay on the ground behind Lennie’s back. He looked at the back of Lennie’s head, at the place where the spine and skull werejoined.

A man’s voice called from up the river, and another man answered. “Go on,” said Lennie.

George raised the gun and his hand shook, and he dropped his hand to the ground again.

“Go on,” said Lennie. “How’s it gonna be. We gonna get a little place.” “We’ll have a cow,” said George. “An’ we’ll have maybe a pig an’ chickens . . . an’ down the flat we’ll have a little piece alfalfa—“ “For the rabbits,” Lennie shouted.

“For the rabbits,” George repeated. “And I get to tend the rabbits.”

“An’ you get to tend the rabbits.”
Lennie giggled with happiness. “An’ live on the fatta the lan’.”
“Yes.” Lennie turned his head.

“No, Lennie. Look down there acrost the river, like you can almost see the place.” Lennie obeyed him. George looked down at the gun.

There were crashing footsteps in the brush now. George turned and looked toward them. “Go on, George. When we gonna do it?”
“Gonna do it soon.” “Me an’ you.”

“You an’ me. Ever’body gonna be nice to you. Ain’t gonna be no more trouble. Nobody gonna hurt nobody nor steal from ‘em.”
Lennie said, “I thought you was mad at me, George.”

“No,” said George. “No, Lennie. I ain’t mad. I never been mad, an’ I ain’t now. That’s a thing I want ya to know.”
The voices came close now. George raised the gun and listened to the voices. Lennie begged, “Le’s do it now. Le’s get that place now.” “Sure, right now. I gotta. We gotta.”

And George raised the gun and steadied it, and he brought the muzzle of it close to the back of Lennie’s head. The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger. The crash of the shot rolled up the hills and rolled down again. Lennie jarred, and then settled slowly forward to the sand, and he lay without quivering.

George shivered and looked at the gun, and then he threw it from him, back up on the bank, near the pile of old ashes.

The brush seemed filled with cries and with the sound of running feet. Slim’s voice shouted. “George. Where you at, George?”

But George sat stiffly on the bank and looked at his right hand that had thrown the gun away. The group burst into the clearing, and Curley was ahead. He saw Lennie lying on the sand. “Got him, by God.” He went over and looked down at Lennie, and then he looked back at George. “Right in the back of the head,” he said softly.

Slim came directly to George and sat down beside him, sat very close to him. “Never you mind,” said Slim. “A guy got to sometimes.”
But Carlson was standing over George. “How’d you do it?” he asked. “I just done it,” George said tiredly.
“Did he have my gun?”
“Yeah. He had your gun.”
“An’ you got it away from him and you took it an’ you killed him?”

“Yeah. Tha’s how.” George’s voice was almost a whisper. He looked steadily at his right hand that had held the gun.

Slim twitched George’s elbow. “Come on, George. Me an’ you’ll go in an’ get a drink.” George let himself be helped to his feet. “Yeah, a drink.”

Slim said, “You hadda, George. I swear you hadda. Come on with me.” He led George into the entrance of the trail and up toward the highway.

Curley and Carlson looked after them. And Carlson said, “Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin’ them two guys?”

THE END

Exercises:

Descriptive answer type questions:

1. Describe the relationship between George Milton and Lennie Small.
2. Explain the corrupting power of female sexuality presented in *Of Mice and Men*.

Short answer type questions:

1. Write the examples of George as the archetype of caretaker.
2. What is the significance of dream in *Of Mice and Men*?
3. Why does Curley's wife want to be an actress?
4. What makes George and Lennie different from each other ranch laborers, according to George?
5. What does Crooks say to Lennie about loneliness?
6. How does Candy react to the death of Curley's wife?
7. What can *Of Mice and Men* teach us?

Classroom activities:

7. Why do you think that many men did not travel around together like Lennie and George in the story? Explain.
8. Hopes and dreams help people to survive even if they can never become real. Discuss.

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Unit-II
I AM LEGEND

-Richard Matheson

Introduction:

Richard Burton Matheson (February 20, 1926-June 23, 2013) was one of greatest American author and screenwriter of fantasy, horror and science fiction.He was born in Allendale, New Jersey to Norwegian immigrants Bertolf and Fanny Matheson. They divorced when he was eight years old and he was raised in Brooklyn, New York by his mother. He is best known as the author of *I Am Legend* (1954) is a vampire novella or a supernatural horror novella and it is regarded as a significant milestone in horror and Gothic fiction. It was also an inspiration behind *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). This novella has been numerous film adaptations, including *The Last Man on the Earth* (1964) *The Omega Man* (1971) and *I Am Legend* (2007). He has written several short stories three of them were filmed together as *Trilogy of Terror* (1975). His first novel was published *Someone Is Bleeding* (1953). He received the *World Fantasy Award* for Life Achievement in 1984 and the *Bram Stoker Award* for Life Time Achievement from the Horror Writers Association in 1991.

It's an apocalyptic novel. The vampire plague has destroyed our society. Much of the story focuses on hero's loneliness. Its powerful and disturbing reworking of the vampire myth has made it a classic and enduring novel that has had a profound impact on generations of writers.It concentrates much more on the behavior and the feelings of a man who is the only survivor, his daily routines and his search for answers and solutions to the vampire problem. When, he finds an uninfected dog, his attempts to befriend it are almost pathetic & truly heart-wrenching.The image Matheson provides, at the start of the novel, of Dr. Robert Neville alone in Los Angeles, is one of the most chilling, the most believable, in post-apocalyptic fiction.Neville has become to vampires what vampires used to be to people: An unnatural monster with special powers, a creepy horror that kills indiscriminately. Matheson tells this story in the third-person limited. The point of view is strictly confined to Robert and what he is seeing, feeling, thinking. The result is a constricted, almost claustrophobic atmosphere.

It is the story of a man named Dr. Robert Neville former U. S. Army medical Doctor who lost his wife and daughter in a helicopter crash, is the only left alive after a viral epidemic which turns the infected into Vampires has ravaged the world. Man may never see Vampires come to take over the Earth, but the ideas presented in this story after invaluable insight to societal structure and its resistance to change. The most common theme of this novella is an emphasis on human emotions and how we interest with others. He also touches the several themes such as isolation, recreation of the world, a single hero, Christian faith, Humanity, failure of technology and Multiculturalism. The story ends with Neville looking out his prison window at the new and future society and they stare back.

Text:

PART I: January 1976

Chapter One

ON THOSE CLOUDY DAYS, Robert Neville was never sure when sunset came, and sometimes they were in the streets before he could get back.

If he had been more analytical, he might have calculated the approximate time of their arrival; but he still used the lifetime habit of judging nightfall by the sky, and on cloudy days that method didn't work. That was why he chose to stay near the house on those days.

He walked around the house in the dull gray of afternoon, a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth, trailing threadlike smoke over his shoulder. He checked each window to see if any of the boards had been loosened. After violent attacks, the planks were often split or partially pried off, and he had to replace them completely; a job he hated. Today only one plank was loose. Isn't that amazing? he thought.

In the back yard he checked the hothouse and the water tank. Sometimes the structure around the tank might be weakened or its rain catchers bent or broken off. Sometimes they would lob rocks over the high fence around the hothouse, and occasionally they would tear through the overhead net and he'd have to replace panes.

Both the tank and the hothouse were undamaged today. He went to the house for a hammer and nails. As he pushed open the front door, he looked at the distorted reflection of himself in the cracked mirror he'd fastened to the door a month ago. In a few days, jagged pieces of the silver-backed glass would start to fall off. Let 'em fall, he thought. It was the last damned mirror he'd put there; it wasn't worth it. He'd put garlic there instead. Garlic always worked.

He passed slowly through the dim silence of the living room, turned left into the small hallway, and left again into his bedroom.

Once the room had been warmly decorated, but that was in another time. Now it was a room entirely functional, and since Neville's bed and bureau took up so little space, he had converted one side of the room into a shop.

A long bench covered almost an entire wall, on its hardwood top a heavy band saw; a wood lathe, an emery wheel, and a vise. Above it, on the wall, were haphazard racks of the tools that Robert Nèville used.

He took a hammer from the bench and picked out a few nails from one of the disordered bins. Then he went back outside and nailed the plank fast to the shutter. The unused nails he threw into the rubble next door. For a while he stood on the front lawn looking up and down the silent length of Cimarron Street. He was a tall man, thirty-six, born of English-German stock, his features undistinguished except for the long, determined mouth and the bright blue of his eyes, which moved now over the charred ruins of the houses on
each side of his. He'd burned them down to prevent them from jumping on his roof from the adjacent ones.

After a few minutes he took a long, slow breath and went back into the house. He tossed the hammer on the living-room couch, then lit another cigarette and had his midmorning drink.

Later he forced himself into the kitchen to grind up the five-day accumulation of garbage in the sink. He knew he should burn up the paper plates and utensils too, and dust the furniture and wash out the sinks and the bathtub and toilet, and change the sheets and pillowcase on his bed; but he didn't feel like it.
For he was a man and he was alone and these things had no importance to him.
It was almost noon. Robert Neville was in his hothouse collecting a basketful of garlic.

In the beginning it had made him sick to smell garlic in such quantity his stomach had been in a state of constant turmoil. Now the smell was in his house and in his clothes, and sometimes he thought it was even in his flesh.

He hardly noticed it at all.

When he had enough bulbs, he went back to the house and dumped them on the drainboard of the sink. As he flicked the wall switch, the light flickered, then flared into normal brilliance. A disgusted hiss passed his clenched teeth. The generator was at it again. He'd have to get out that damned manual again and check the wiring. And, if it were too much trouble to repair, he'd have to install a new generator.

Angrily he jerked a high- legged stool to the sink, got a knife, and sat down with an exhausted grunt.

First, be separated the bulbs into the small, sickle-shaped cloves. Then he cut each pink, leathery clove in half, exposing the fleshy center buds. The air thickened with the musky, pungent odor. When it got too oppressive, he snapped on the air-conditioning unit and suction drew away the worst of it.

Now he reached over and took an icepick from its wall rack. He punched holes in each clove half, then strung them all together with wire until he had about twenty-five necklaces.

In the beginning he had hung these necklaces over the windows. But from a distance they'd thrown rocks until he'd been forced to cover the broken panes with plywood scraps. Finally one day he'd torn off the plywood and nailed up even rows of planks instead. It had made the house a gloomy sepulcher, but it was better than having rocks come flying into his rooms in a shower of splintered glass. And, once he had installed the three air-conditioning units, it wasn't too bad. A man could get used to anything if he had to.

When he was finished stringing the garlic cloves, he went outside and nailed them over the window boarding, taking down the old strings, which had lost most of their potent smell.

He had to go through this process twice a week. Until he found something better, it was his first line of defense.

Defense? he often thought. For what? All afternoon he made stakes.

He lathed them out of thick doweling, band-sawed into nine- inch lengths. These be held against the whirling emery stone until they were as sharp as daggers

It was tiresome, monotonous work, and it filled the air with hot-smelling wood dust that settled in his pores and got into his lungs and made him cough.

Yet he never seemed to get ahead. No matter how many stakes he made, they were gone in no time at all. Doweling was getting harder to find, too. Eventually he'd have to lathe down rectangular lengths of wood. Won't that be fun? he thought irritably.

It was all very depressing and it made him resolve to find a better method of disposal. But how could he find it when they never gave him a chance to slow down and think?

As he lathed, he listened to records over the loudspeaker he'd set up in the bedroom— Beethoven's Third, Seventh, and Ninth symphonies. He was glad he'd learned early in life, from his mother, to appreciate this kind of music. It helped to fill the terrible void of hours.

From four o'clock on, his gaze kept shifting to the clock on the wall. He worked in silence, lips pressed into a hard line, a cigarette in the corner of his mouth, his eyes staring at the bit as it gnawed away the wood and sent floury dust filtering down to the floor.

Four- fifteen. Four-thirty. It was a quarter to five.

In another hour they'd be at the house again, the filthy bastards. As soon as the light was gone.

He stood before the giant freezer, selecting his supper.

His jaded eyes moved over the stacks of meats down to the frozen vegetables, down to the breads and pastries, the fruits and ice cream.

He picked out two lamb chops, string beans, and a small box of orange sherbet. He picked the boxes from the freezer and pushed shut the door with his elbow,

Next he moved over to the uneven stacks of cans piled to the ceiling. He took down a can of tomato juice, then left the room that had once belonged to Kathy and now belonged to his stomach.

He moved slowly across the living room, looking at the mural that covered the back wall. It showed a cliff edge, sheering off to green-blue ocean that surged and broke over black rocks. Far up in the clear blue sky,

white sea gulls floated on the wind, and over on the right a gnarled tree hung over the precipice, its dark branches etched against the sky.

Neville walked into the kitchen and dumped the groceries on the table, his eyes moving to the clock. Twenty minutes to six. Soon now.

He poured a little water into a small pan and clanked it down on a stove burner. Next he thawed out the chops and put them under the broiler. By this time the water was boiling and he dropped in the frozen string beans and covered them, thinking that it was probably the electric stove that was milking the generator.

At the table he sliced himself two pieces of bread and poured himself a glass of tomato juice. He sat down and looked at the red second hand as it swept slowly around the clock face. The bastards ought to be here soon.

After he'd finished his tomato juice, he walked to the front door and went out onto the porch. He stepped off onto the lawn and walked down to the sidewalk.

The sky was darkening and it was getting chilly. He looked up and down Cimarron Street, the cool breeze ruffling his blond hair. That's what was wrong with these cloudy days; you never knew when they were coming.

Oh, well, at least they were better than those damned dust storms. With a shrug, he moved back across the lawn and into the house, locking and bolting the door behind him, sliding the thick bar into place. Then he went back into the kitchen, turned his chops, and switched off the heat under the string beans.

He was putting the food on his plate when he stopped and his eyes moved quickly to the clock. Six-twenty- five today. Ben Cortman was shouting.

"Come out, Neville!"

Robert Neville sat down with a sigh and began to eat.

He sat in the living room, trying to read. He'd made himself a whisky and soda at his small bar and he held the cold glass as he read a physiology text. From the speaker over the hallway door, the music of Schonberg was playing loudly.

Not loudly enough, though. He still heard them outside, their murmuring and their walkings about and their cries, their snarling and fighting among themselves. Once in a while a rock or brick thudded off the house. Sometimes a dog barked.

And they were all there for the same thing.

Robert Neville closed his eyes a moment and held his lips in a tight line. Then he opened his eyes and lit another cigarette, letting the smoke go deep into his lungs.

He wished he'd had time to soundproof the house. It wouldn't be so bad if it weren't that he had to listen to them. Even after five months, it got on his nerves.

He never looked at them anymore. In the beginning he'd made a peephole in the front window and watched them. But then the women had seen him and had started striking vile postures in order to entice him out of the house. He didn't want to look at that.

He put down his book and stared bleakly at the rug, hearing Verklärte Nacht play over the loud-speaker. He knew he could put plugs in his ears to shut off the sound of them, but that would shut off the music too, and he didn't want to feel that they were forcing him into a shell.

He closed his eyes again. It was the women who made it so difficult, be thought, the women posing like lewd puppets in the night on the possibility that he'd see them and decide to come out.

A shudder. ran through him. Every night it was the same. He'd be reading and listening to music. Then he'd start to think about soundproofing the house, then he'd think about the women.

Deep in his body, the knotting heat began again, and be pressed his lips together until they were white. He knew the feeling well and it enraged him that he couldn't combat it. It grew and grew until he couldn't sit still any more. Then he'd get up and pace the floor, fists bloodless at his sides. Maybe he'd set up the movie projector or eat something or have too much to drink or turn the music up so loud it hurt his ears. He had to do something when it got really bad.

He felt the muscles of his abdomen closing in like frightening coils. He picked up the book and tried to read, his lips forming each word slowly and painfully.

But in a moment the book was on his lap again. He looked at the bookcase across from him. All the knowledge in those books couldn't put out the fires in him; all the words of centuries couldn't end the wordless, mindless craving of his flesh.

The realization made him sick. It was an insult to a man. All right, it was a natural drive, but there was no outlet for it any more. They'd forced celibacy on him; he'd have to live with it. You have a mind, don't you? he asked himself. Well, use it?

He reached over and turned the music still louder; then forced himself to read a whole page without pause. He read about blood cells being forced through membranes, about pale lymphcarrying the wastes through tubes blocked by lymph nodes, about lymphocytes and phagocytic cells.

"—to empty, in the left shoulder region, near the thorax, into a large vein of the blood circulating system." The book shut with a thud.

Why didn't they leave him alone? Did they think they could all have him? Were they so stupid they thought that? Why did they keep coming every night? After five months, you'dthink they'd give up and try elsewhere. He went over to the bar and made himself another drink. As he turned back to his chair he heard stones rattling down across the roof and landing with thuds in the shrubbery beside the house. Above the noises, he
heard Ben Cortman shout as he always
shouted. "Come out, Neville!"

Someday I'll get that bastard, he thought as he took a big swallow of the bitter drink. Someday I'll knock a stake right through his goddamn chest. I'll make one a foot long for him, a special one with ribbons on it, the bastard.

Tomorrow. Tomorrow he'd soundproof the house. His fingers drew into white-knuckled fists. He couldn't stand thinking about those women. If he didn't hear them, maybe he wouldn't think about them. Tomorrow. Tomorrow.

The music ended and he took a stack of records off the turntable and slid them back into their cardboard envelopes. Now he could hear them even more clearly outside. He reached for the first new record he could get and put it on the turntable and twisted the volume up to its highest point.

"The Year of the Plague," by Roger Leie, filled his ears. Violins scraped and whined, tympani thudded like the beats of a dying heart, flutes played weird, atonal melodies.

With a stiffening of rage, he wrenched up the record and snapped it over his right knee. He'd meant to break it long ago. He walked on rigid legs to the kitchen and flung the pieces into the trash box. Then he stood in the dark kitchen, eyes tightly shut, teeth clenched, hands damped over his ears. Leave me alone, leave me alone, leave me alone!

No use, you couldn't beat them at night. No use trying; it was their special time. He was acting very stupidly, trying to beat them. Should he watch a movie? No, he didn't feel like setting up the projector. He'd go to bed and put the plugs in his ears. It was what he ended up doing every night, anyway.

Quickly, trying not to think at all; he went to the bedroom and undressed. He put on pajama bottoms and went into the bathroom. He never wore pajama tops; it was a habit he'd acquired in Panama during the war. As he washed, he looked into the mirror at his broad chest, at the dark hair swirling aroundthe nipples and down the center line of his chest. He looked at the ornate cross he'd had tattooed on his chest one night in Panama when he'd been drunk. What a fool I was in those days! he thought. Well, maybe that cross had saved his life.

He brushed his teeth carefully and used dental- floss. He tried to take good care of his teeth
because he was his own dentist now. Some things could go to pot, but not his health, he thought. Then why don't you stop pouring alcohol into yourself? he thought. Why don't you shut the hell up? he thought.

Now be went through the house, turning out lights. For a few minutes he looked at the mural and tried to believe it was really the ocean. But how could he believe it with all the bumpings and the scrapings, the howlings and snarlings and cries in the night?

He turned off the living- room lamp and went into the bedroom.

He made a sound of disgust when he saw that sawdust covered the bed. He brushed it off with snapping hand strokes, thinking that he'd better build a partition between the shop and the sleeping portion of the room.

Better do this and better do that, he thought morosely. There were so many damned things to do, he'd never get to the real problem.

He jammed in his earplugs and a great silence engulfed him. He turned off the light and crawled in between the sheets. He looked at the radium- faced clock and saw that it was only afew minutes past ten. Just as well, he thought. This way I'll get an early start.

He lay there on the bed and took deep breaths of the darkness, hoping for sleep. But the silence didn't really help. He could still see them out there, the white- faced men prowling around his house, looking ceaselessly for a way to get in at him. Some of them, probably, crouching on their haunches like dogs, eyes glittering at the house, teeth slowly grating together, back and forth, back and forth.

And the women ...

Did he have to start thinking about them again? He tossed over on his stomach with a curse and pressed his face into the hot pillow. He lay there, breathing heavily, body writhing slightly on the sheet. Let the morning come. His mind spoke the words it spoke every night, Dear God, let the morning come.

He dreamed about Virginia and he cried out in his sleep and his fingers gripped the sheets like frenzied talons.

Chapter Two

THE ALARM WENT OFF at five-thirty and Robert Neville reached out a numbed arm in the morning gloom and pushed in the stop.

He reached for his cigarettes and lit one, then sat up. After a few moments he got up and walked into the dark living room and opened the peephole door.

Outside, on the lawn, the dark figures stood like silent soldiers on duty. As he watched, some of them started moving away, and he heard them muttering discontentedly among themselves. Another night was ended.

He went back to the bedroom, switched on the light, and dressed. As he was pulling on his shirt, he heard Ben Cortman cry out, "Come out, Neville!"

And that was all. After that, they all went away weaker, he knew, than when they had come. Unless they had attacked one of their own. They did that often. There was no union among them. Their need was their only motivation.

After dressing, Neville sat down on his bed with a grunt and penciled his list for the day:

Lathe at Sears
Water
Check generator
Doweling (?)
Usual

Breakfast was hasty: a glass of orange juice, a slice of toast, and two cups of coffee. He finished it quickly, wishing he had the patience to eat slowly.

After breakfast he threw the paper plate and cup into the trash box and brushed his teeth. At least I have one good habit, he consoled himself.

The first thing he did when he went outside was look at the sky. It was clear, virtually cloudless. He could go, out today. Good.

As he crossed the porch, his shoe kicked some pieces of the mirror. Well, the damn thing broke just as I thought it would, he thought. He'd clean it up later.

One of the bodies was sprawled on the sidewalk; the other one was half concealed in the shrubbery. They were both women. They were almost always women.

He unlocked the garage door and backed his Willys station wagon into the early- morningcrispness. Then he got out and pulled down the back gate. He put on heavy gloves and walked over to the woman on the sidewalk.

There was certainly nothing attractive about them in the daylight, he thought, as he dragged them across the lawn and threw them up on the canvas tarpaulin. There wasn't a drop left in them; both women were the color of fish out of water. He raised the gate and fastened it.

He went around the lawn then, picking up stones and bricks and putting them into a cloth sack. He put the sack in the station wagon and then took off his gloves. He went inside the house, washed his hands, and made lunch: two sandwiches, a few cookies, and a thermos of hotcoffee.

When that was done, he went into the bedroom and got his bag of stakes. He slung this across his back and buckled on the holster that held his mallet. Then he went out of the house, locking the front door behind him.

He wouldn't bother searching for Ben Cortman that morning; there were too many other things to do. For a second, he thought about the soundproofing job he'd resolved to do on the house. Well, the hell with it, he thought. I'll do it tomorrow or some cloudy day.

He got into the station wagon and checked his list. "Lathe at Sears"; that was first. After he dumped the bodies, of course.

He started the car and backed quickly into the street and headed for Compton Boulevard. There he turned right and headed east. On both sides of him the houses stood silent, and against the curbs cars were parked, empty and dead.

Robert Neville's eyes shifted down for a moment to the fuel gauge. There was still a half tank, but he might as well stop on Western Avenue and fill it. There was no point in using any of the gasoline stored in the garage until be had to.

He pulled into the silent station and braked. He got a barrel of gasoline and siphoned it into his tank until the pale amber fluid came gushing out of the tank opening and ran down onto the cement.

He checked the oil, water, battery water, and tires. Everything was in good condition. It usually was, because he took special care of the car. If it ever broke down so that he couldn't get back to the house by sunset…

Well, there was no point in even worrying about that. If it ever happened, that was the end. Now he continued up Compton Boulevard past the tall oil derricks, through Compton, through all the silent streets. There was no one to be seen anywhere. But Robert Neville knew where they were.

The fire was always burning. As the car drew closer, he pulled on his gloves and gas mask and watched through the eyepieces the sooty pall of smoke hovering above the earth. The entire field had been excavated into one gigantic pit, that was in June 1975.

Neville parked the car and jumped out, anxious to get the job over with quickly. Throwing the catch and jerking. down the rear gate, he pulled out one of the bodies and dragged it to the edge of the pit. There he stood it on its feet and shoved.

The body bumped and rolled down the steep incline until it settled on the great pile of smoldering ashes at the bottom.

Robert Neville drew in harsh breaths as he hurried back to the station wagon. He always felt as though he were strangling when he was here, even though he had the gas mask on.

Now he dragged the second body to the brink of the pit and pushed it over. Then, after tossing the sack, of rocks down, he hurried back to the car and sped away.

After he'd driven a half mile, he skinned off the mask and gloves and tossed them into the back. His mouth opened and he drew in deep lungfuls of fresh air. He took the flask from the glove compartment and took a long drink of burning whisky. Then he lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply. Sometimes he had to go to the burning pit every day for weeks at a time, and it always made him sick.

Somewhere down there was Kathy.

On the way to Inglewood he stopped at a market to get some bottled water. As he entered the silent store, the smell of rotted food filled his nostrils. Quickly he pushed a metal wagon up and down the silent, dust-thick aisles, the heavy smell of decay setting his teeth on edge, making himbreathe through his mouth.

He found the water bottles in back, and also found a door opening on a flight of stairs. After putting all the bottles into the wagon, he went up the stairs. The owner of the market might be up there; he might as well get started.

There were two of them. In the living room, lying on a couch, was a woman about thirty years old, wearing a red housecoat. Her chest rose and fell slowly as she lay there, eyes closed, her hands clasped over her stomach.

Robert Neville's hands fumbled on the stake and mallet. It was always hard, when they were alive; especially with women. He could feel that senseless demand returning again, tightening his muscles. He forced it down. It was insane, there was no rational argument for it.

She made no sound except for a sudden, hoarse intake of breath. As he walked into the bedroom, he could hear a sound like the sound of water running. Well, what else can I do? he asked himself, for he still had to convince himself he was doing the right thing.

He stood in the bedroom doorway, staring at the small bed by the window, his throat moving, breath shuddering in his chest. Then, driven on, he walked to the side of the bed and looked down at her.

Why do they all look like Kathy to me? he thought, drawing out the second stake with shaking hands.

Driving slowly to Sears, he tried to forget by wondering why it was that only wooden stakes should work.

He frowned as he drove along the empty boulevard, the only sound the muted growling of the motor in his car. It seemed fantastic that it had taken him five months to start wondering about it.

Which brought another question to mind. How was it that he always managed to hit the heart? It had to be the heart; Dr. Busch had said so. Yet he, Neville, had no anatomical knowledge.

His brow furrowed. It irritated him that he should have gone through this hideous process so long without stopping once to question it.

He shook, his head. No, I should think it over carefully, he thought, I should collect all the questions before I try to answer them. Things should be done the right way, the scientific way.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, he thought, shades of old Fritz. That had been his father's name. Neville had loathed his father and fought the acquisition of his father's logic and mechanical facility every inch of the way. His father had died denying the vampire violently to the last.

At Sears he got the lathe, loaded it into the station wagon, then searched the store.

There were five of them in the basement, hiding in various shadowed places. One of them Neville found inside a display freezer. When he saw the man lying there in this enamel coffin, he had to laugh; it seemed such a funny place to hide.

Later, he thought of what a humorless world it was when he could find amusement in such a thing.

About two o'clock he parked and ate his lunch. Everything seemed to taste of garlic.

And that set him wondering about the effect garlic had on them. It must have been the smell that chased them off, but why?

They were strange, the facts about them: their staying inside by day, their avoidance of garlic, their death by stake, their reputed fear of crosses, their supposed dread of mirrors.

Take that last, now. According to legend, they were invisible in mirrors, but he knew that was untrue. As untrue as the belief that they transformed themselves into bats. That was a superstition that logic, plus observation had easily disposed of. It was equally foolish to believe that they could transform themselves into wolves. Without a doubt there were vampire dogs; he had seen and heard them outside his house at night. But they were only dogs.

Robert Neville compressed his lips suddenly. Forget it, he told himself; you're not ready, yet.

The time would come when he'd take a crack at it, detail for detail, but the time wasn't now. There were enough things to worry about now.

After lunch, he went from house to house and used up all his stakes. He had forty-seven stakes.

Chapter Three

"THE STRENGTH OF THE vampire is that no one will believe in him."

Thank you, Dr. Van Helsing, he thought, putting down his copy Of "Dracula." He sat staring moodily at the bookcase, listening to Brahms' second piano concerto, a whisky sour in his right hand, a cigarette between his lips.

It was true. The book was a hodgepodge of superstitions and soap-opera clichés, but that line was true; no one had believed in them, and how could they fight something they didn't even believe in?

That was what the situation had been. Something black and of the night had come crawling out of the Middle Ages. Something with no framework or credulity, something that had been consigned, fact and figure, to the pages of imaginative literature. Vampires were passé; Summers' idylls or Stoker's melodramatics or a brief inclusion in the Britannica or grist for the pulp writer's mill or raw material for the B- film factories. A tenuous legend passed from century to century.

Well, it was true.

He took a sip from his drink and closed his eyes as the cold liquid trickled down his throat and warmed his stomach. True, he thought, but no one ever got the chance to know it. Oh, they knew it was something, but it couldn't be that—not that. That was imagination, that was superstition, there was no such thing as that.

And, before science had caught up with the legend, the legend had swallowed science and everything.

He hadn't found any doweling that day. He hadn't checked the generator. He hadn't cleaned up the pieces of mirror. He hadn't eaten supper; he'd lost his appetite. That wasn't hard. He lost it most of the time. He couldn't do the things he'd done all afternoon and then come home to a hearty meal. Not even after five months.

He thought of the eleven—no, the twelve children that afternoon, and he finished his drink in two swallows.

He blinked and the room wavered a little before him. You're getting blotto, Father, he told himself. So what? he returned. Has anyone more right?

He tossed the book across the room. Begone, Van Helsing and Mina and Jonathan and blood-eyed Count and all! All figments, all driveling extrapolations on a somber theme.

A coughing chuckle emptied itself from his throat. Outside, Ben Cortman called for him to come out. Be right out, Benny, he thought. Soon as I get my tuxedo on.

He shuddered. and gritted his teeth edges together. Be right out. Well; why not? Why not go out? It was a sure way to be free of them.

Be one of them.

He chuckled at the simplicity of it, then shoved himself up and walked crookedly to the bar. Why not? His mind plodded on. Why go through all this complexity when a flung open door and a few steps would end it all?

For the life of him, he didn't know. There was, of course, the faint possibility that others likehim existed somewhere, trying to go on, hoping that someday they would be among their own kind again. But how could he ever find them if they weren't within a day's drive of his house?

He shrugged and poured more whisky in the glass; he'd given up the use of jiggers months ago. Garlic on the windows, and nets over the hothouse and burn the bodies and cart the rocks away and, fraction of an inch by fraction of an inch, reduce their unholy numbers. Why kid himself? He'd never find anyone else.

His body dropped down heavily on the chair. Here we are, kiddies, sitting like a bug in a rug, snugly, surrounded by a battalion of blood -suckers who wish no more than to sip freely of my bonded, 100-proof hemoglobin. Have a drink, men, this one's really on me.

His face twisted into an expression of raw, unqualified hatred. Bastards! I'll kill every, mother's son of you before I'll give in! His right hand closed like a clamp and the glass shattered in his grip.

He looked down, dull-eyed, at the fragments on the floor, at the jagged piece of glass still in his hand, at the whisky-diluted blood dripping off his palm.

Wouldn't they like to get some of it, though? he thought. He started up with a furious lurch and almost opened the door so he could wave the hand in their faces and hear them howl.

Then he closed his eyes and a shudder ran through his body. Wise up, buddy, he thought. Go bandage your goddamn hand.

He stumbled into the bathroom and washed his hand carefully, gasping as he daubed iodine into the sliced- open flesh. Then he bandaged it clumsily, his broad chest rising and falling with jerky movements, sweat dripping from his forehead. I need a cigarette, he thought.

In the living room again, he changed Brahms for Bernstein and lit a cigarette. What will I do if I ever run out of coffin nails? he wondered, looking at the cigarette's blue trailing smoke. Well, there wasn't much chance of that. He had about a thousand cartons in the closet of Kathy's—He clenched his teeth together. In the closet of the larder, the larder, the larder.

Kathy's room.

He sat staring with dead eyes at the mural while "The Age of Anxiety" pulsed in his ears. Age of anxiety, he mused. You thought you had anxiety, Lenny boy. Lenny and Benny; you two should meet. Composer, meet corpse. Mamma, when I grow up I wanna be a wampir like Dada.

Why, bless you, boo, of course you shall.

The whisky gurgled into the glass. He grimaced a little at the pain in his hand and shifted the bottle to his left hand.

He sat down and sipped. Let the jagged edge of sobriety be now dulled, he thought. Let the crumby balance of clear vision be expunged, but post haste. I hate 'em.

Gradually the room shifted on its gyroscopic center and wove and undulated about his chair.

A pleasant haze, fuzzy at the edges, took over sight. He looked at the glass, at the record player. He let his head flop from side to side. Outside, they prowled and muttered and waited.

Pore vampires, he thought, pore little cusses, pussyfootin' round my house, so thirsty, so all forlorn.

A thought. He raised a forefinger that wavered before his eyes.

Friends, I come before you to discuss the vampire; a minority element if there ever was one, and there was one.

But to concision: I will sketch out the basis for my thesis, which thesis is this: Vampires are prejudiced against…

The keynote of minority prejudice is this: They are loathed because they are feared.

Thus… He made himself a drink. A long one.

At one time, the Dark and Middle Ages, to be succinct, the vampire's power was great, the fear of him tremendous. He was anathema and still remains anathema. Society hates him without ration.

But are his needs any more shocking than the needs of other animals and men? Are his deeds more outrageous than the deeds of the parent who drained the spirit from his child? The vampire may foster quickened heartbeats and levitated hair. But is he worse than the parent who gave to society a neurotic child who became a politician? Is he worse than the manufacturer who set up belated foundations with the money he made by handing bombs and guns to suicidal nationalists? Is he worse than the distiller who gave bastardized grain juice to stultify further the brains of those who, sober, were incapable of a progressive thought? (Nay, I apologize for this calumny; I nip the brew that feeds me.) Is he worse, then, than the publisher who filled ubiquitous racks with lust and death wishes? Really, now, search your soul; lovie—is the vampire so bad?

All he does is drink blood.

Why, then, this unkind prejudice, this thoughtless bias? Why cannot the vampire live where be chooses? Why must he seek out hiding places where none can find him out? Why do you wish him destroyed? Ah, see, you have turned the poor guileless innocent into a haunted animal. He has no means of support, no measures for proper education, he has not the, voting franchise. No wonder he is compelled to seek out a predatory nocturnal existence;

Robert Neville grunted a surly grunt. Sure, sure, he thought, but would you let your sister marry one? He shrugged. You got me there, buddy, you got me there.

The music ended. The needle scratched back and forth in the black grooves. He sat there, feeling a chill creeping up his legs. That's what was wrong with drinking too much. You became immune to drunken delights. There was no solace in liquor. Before you got happy, you collapsed. Already the room was straightening out, the sounds outside were starting to nibble at his eardrums..

"Come out, Neville!"

His throat moved and a shaking breath passed his lips. Come out. The women were out there, their dresses open or taken off, their flesh waiting for his touch, their lips waiting for—My blood, my blood!

As if it were someone else's hand, he watched his whitened fist rise up slowly, shuddering, to drive down on his leg. The pain made him suck in a breath of the house's stale air. Garlic. Everywhere the smell of garlic. In his clothes and in the furniture and in his food and even in his drink. Have a garlic and soda; his mind rattled out the attempted joke.

He lurched up and started pacing. What am I going to do now? Go through the routine again? I'll save you the trouble. Reading-drinking-soundproof-the-house—the women. The women, the lustful, bloodthirsty, naked women flaunting their hot bodies at him. No, not hot.

A shuddering whine wrenched up through his chest and throat. Goddamn them, what were they waiting for? Did they think he was going to come out and hand himself over?

Maybe I am, maybe I am. He actually found himself jerking off the crossbar from the door. Coming, girls, I'm coming. Wet your lips, now.

Outside, they heard the bar being lifted, and a howl of anticipation sounded in the night. Spinning, he drove his fists one after the other into the wall until he'd cracked the plaster andbroken his skin. Then he stood there trembling helplessly, his teeth chattering.

After a while it passed. He put the bar back across the door and went into the bedroom. He sank down, on the bed and fell back on the pillow with a groan. His left hand beat once, feebly, on the bedspread.

Oh, God, he thought, how long, how long?

Chapter Four

THE ALARM NEVER WENT off because he'd forgotten to set it. He slept soundly and motionlessly, his body like cast iron. When he finally opened his eyes, it was ten o'clock.

With a disgusted muttering, he struggled up and dropped his legs over the side of the bed. Instantly his head began throbbing as if his brains were trying to force their way through his skull. Fine, he thought, a hangover. That's all I need.

He pushed himself up with a groan and stumbled into the bathroom, threw water in his face and splashed some over his head. No good, his mind complained, no good. I still feel like hell. In the mirror his face was gaunt, bearded, and very much like the face of a man in his forties. Love, your magic spell is everywhere; inanely, the words flapped across his brain like wet sheets in a wind.

He walked slowly into the living room and opened the front door. A curse fell thickly from his lips at the sight of the woman crumpled across the sidewalk. He started to tighten angrily, but it made his head throb too much and he had to let it go. I'm sick, he thought.

The sky was gray and dead. Great! he thought. Another day stuck in this boarded- up rat hole! He slammed the door viciously, then winced, groaning, at the brain-stabbing noise. Outside, he heard the rest of the mirror fall out and shatter on the porch cement. Oh, great! His lips contorted back into a white twist of flesh.

Two cups of burning black coffee only made his stomach feel worse. He put down the cup and went into the living room. To hell with it, he thought, I'll get drunk again.

But the liquor tasted like turpentine, and with a rasping snarl he flung the glass against the wall and stood watching the liquor run down onto the rug. Hell, I'm runnin' out of glasses. The thought irritated him while breath struggled in through his nostrils and out again in faltering bursts.

He sank down on the couch and sat there, shaking his head slowly. It was no use; they'd beaten him, the black bastards had beaten him.

That restless feeling again; the feeling as if he were expanding and the house were contracting and any second now he'd go bursting through its frame in an explosion of wood, plaster, and brick. He got up and moved quickly to the door, his hands shaking.

On the lawn, he stood sucking in a great lungful of the wet morning air, his face turned away from the house he hated. But he hated the other houses around there too, and he hated the pavement and the sidewalks and the lawns and everything that was on Cimarron Street.

It kept building up. And suddenly he knew he had to get out of there. Cloudy day or not, he had to get out of there.

He locked the front door, unlocked the garage, and dragged up the thick door on its overhead hinges. He didn't bother putting down the door. I'll be back soon, he thought. I'll just go away for a while.

He backed the station wagon quickly down the driveway, jerked it around, and pressed down hard on the accelerator, heading for Compton Boulevard. He didn't know where he was going.

He went around the corner doing forty and jumped that to sixty- five before he'd gone anotherblock. The car leaped forward under his foot and he kept the accelerator on the floor, forced down by a rigid leg. His hands were like carved ice on the wheel and his face was the face of a statue. At eighty- nine miles an hour, he shot down the lifeless, empty boulevard, one roaring sound in the great stillness.

Things rank and gross in nature possess it merely, he thought as he walked slowly across the cemetery lawn.

The grass was so high that the weight of it had bent it over and it crunched under his heavy shoes as he walked. There was no sound but that of his shoes and the now senseless singing of birds. Once I thought they sang because everything was right with the world, Robert Neville thought, I know now I was wrong. They sing because they're feeble- minded.

He had raced six miles, the gas pedal pressed to the floor, before he'd realized where he was going. It was strange the way his mind and body had kept it secret from his consciousness. Consciously, he'd known only that he was sick and depressed and had to get away from the house. He didn't know he was going to visit Virginia.

But he'd driven there directly and as fast as he could. He'd parked at the curb and entered through the rusted gate, and now his shoes were pressing and crackling through the thick grass.

How long had it been since he'd come here? It must have been at least a month. He wished he'd brought flowers, but then, he hadn't realized he was coming here until he was almost at the gate.

His lips pressed together as an old sorrow held him again. Why couldn't he have Kathy there too? Why had he followed so blindly, listening to those fools who set up their stupid regulations during the plague? If only she could be there, lying across from her mother.

Don't start that again, he ordered himself.

Drawing closer to the crypt, he stiffened as he noticed that the iron door was slightly ajar. Oh, no, he thought. He broke into a run across the wet grass. If they've been at her, I'll burn down the city, he vowed. I swear to God, I'll burn it to the ground if they've touched her.

He flung open the door and it clanged against the marble wall with a hollow, echoing sound. His eyes moved quickly to the marble base on which the sealed casket rested.

The tension sank; he drew in breath again. It was still there, untouched.

Then, as he started in, he saw the man lying in one corner of the crypt, body curled upon the cold floor.

With a grunt of rage, Robert Neville rushed at the body, and, grabbing the man's coat in taut fingers, he dragged him across the floor and flung him violently out onto the grass. The body rolled onto its back, the white face pointing at the sky.

Robert Neville went back into the crypt, chest rising and falling with harsh movements. Then he closed his eyes and stood with his palms resting on the cover of the casket.

I'm here, he thought. I'm back. Remember me.

He threw out the flowers he'd brought the time before and cleared away the few leaves that had blown in because the door had been opened.

Then he sat down beside the casket and rested his forehead against its cold metal side. Silence held him in its cold and gentle hands.

If I could die now, be thought; peacefully, gently, without a tremor or a crying out, if I could be with her. If I could believe I would be with her.

His fingers tightened slowly and his head sank forward on his chest. Virginia. Take me where you are.

A tear, crystal, fell across his motionless hand...

He had no idea how long he'd been there. After a while, though, even the deepest sorrow faltered, even the most penetrating despair lost its scalpel edge. The flagellant's curse, he thought, to grow inured even to the whip.

He straightened up and stood. Still alive, he thought, heart beating senselessly, veins running without point, bones and muscles and tissue all alive and functioning with no purpose at all.

A moment longer he stood looking down at the casket, then he turned away with a sigh and left, closing the door behind him quietly so as not to disturb hersleep.

He'd forgotten about the man. He almost tripped over him now, stepping aside with a muttered curse and starting past the body.

Then, abruptly, he turned back.

What's this? He looked down incredulously at the man. The man was dead; really dead. But how could that be? The change had occurred so quickly, yet already the man looked and smelled as though he'd been dead for days.

His mind began churning with a sudden excitement. Something had killed the vampire;something brutally effective. The heart had not been touched, no garlic had been present, and yet...

It came, seemingly, without effort. Of course—the daylight!

A bolt of self-accusation struck him. To know for five months that they remained indoors by day and never once to make the connection! He closed his eyes, appalled by his own stupidity.

The rays of the sun; the infrared and ultraviolet. It had to be them. But why? Damn it, why didn't he know anything about the effects of sunlight on the human system?

Another thought: That man had been one of the true vampires; the living dead. Would sunlight have the same effect on those who were still alive?

The first excitement he'd felt in months made him break into a run for the station wagon. As the door slammed shut beside him, he wondered if he should have taken away the deadman. Would the body attract others, would they invade the crypt? No, they wouldn't go near the casket, anyway. It was sealed with garlic. Besides, the man's blood was dead now, it—Again his thoughts broke off as he leaped to another conclusion. The sun's rays must have done something to their blood!

Was it possible, then, that all things bore relations to the blood? The garlic, the cross, the mirror, the stake, daylight, the earth some of them slept in? He didn't see how, and yet...

He had to do a lot of reading, a lot of research. It might be just the thing he needed. He'd been planning for a long time to do it, but lately it seemed as if he'd forgotten it altogether. Now this new idea started the desire again.

He started, the car and raced up the street, turning off into a residential section and pulling up before the first house he came to.

He ran up the pathway to the front door, but it was locked and he couldn't force it in. With an impatient growl, he ran to the next house. The door was open and he ran to the stairs through the darkened living room and jumped up the carpeted steps two at a time.

He found the woman in the bedroom. Without hesitation, he jerked back the covers andgrabbed her by the wrists. She grunted as her body hit the floor, and he heard her making tiny sounds in her throat as he dragged her into the hall and started down the stairs.

As he pulled her across the living room, she started to move.

Her hands closed over his wrists and her body began to twist and flop on the rug. Her eyes were still closed, but she gasped and muttered and her body kept trying to writhe out of his grip. Her dark nails dug into his flesh. He tore out of her grasp with a snarl and dragged her the rest of the way by her hair. Usually he felt a twinge when he realized that, but for some affliction he didn't understand, these people were the same as he. But now an experimental fervor had seized him and he could think of nothing else.

Even so, he shuddered at the strangled sound of horror she made when he threw her on the sidewalk outside.

She lay twisting helplessly on the sidewalk, hands opening and closing, lips drawn back from red-spotted lips.

Robert Neville watched her tensely.

His throat moved. It wouldn't last, the feeling of callous brutality. He bit his lips as he watched her. All right, she's suffering, he argued with himself, but she's one of them and she'd kill me gladly if she got the chance. You've got to look at it that way, it's the only way. Teeth clenched, he stood there and watched her die.

In a few minutes she stopped moving, stopped muttering, and her hands uncurled slowly like white blossoms on the cement. Robert Neville crouched down and felt for her heartbeat. There was none. Already her flesh was growing cold.

He straightened up with a thin smile. It was true, then. He didn't need the stakes. After all this time, he'd finally found a better method.

Then his breath caught. But how did he know the woman was really dead? How could he know until sunset?

The thought filled him with a new, more restless anger. Why did each question blight the answers before it?

He thought about it as he sat drinking a can of tomato juice taken from the supermarket behind which he was parked.

How was he going to know? He couldn't very well stay with the woman until sunset came. Take her home with you, fool.

Again his eyes closed and he felt a shudder of irritation go through him. He was missing all the obvious answers today. Now he'd have to go all the way back and find her, and he wasn't even sure where the house was.

He started the motor and pulled away from the parking lot, glancing down at his watch. Three o'clock. Plenty of time to get back before they came. He eased the gas pedal down and the station wagon pulled ahead faster.

It took him about a half hour to relocate the house. The woman was still in the same position on the sidewalk. Putting on his gloves, Neville lowered the back gate of the station wagon and walked over to the woman. As be walked, he noticed her figure. No, don't start that again, for God's sake.

He dragged the woman back to the station wagon and tossed her in. Then he closed the gate and took off his gloves. He held up the watch and looked at it. Three o'clock. Plenty of time to—He jerked up the watch and held it against his ear, his heart suddenly jumping.

The watch had stopped.

Chapter Five

HIS FINGERS SHOOK AS he turned the ignition key. His hands gripped the wheel rigidly as he made a tight U turn and started back toward Gardena.

What a fool he'd been! It must have taken at least an hour to reach the cemetery. He must have been in the crypt for hours. Then going to get that woman. Going to the market, drinking the tomato juice, going back to get the woman again.

What time was it?

Fool! Cold fear poured through his veins at the thought of them all waiting for him at his house. Oh, my God, and he'd left the garage door open! The gasoline, the equipment—the generator!

A groan cut itself off in his throat as he jammed the gas pedal to the floor and the small station wagon leaped ahead, the speedometer needle fluttering, then moving steadily past the sixty- five mark, the seventy, the seventy- five. What if they were already waiting for him? How could he possibly get in the house?

He forced himself to be calm. He mustn't go to pieces now; he had to keep himself in check. He'd get in. Don't worry, you'll get inside, he told himself. But he didn't see how.

One hand ran nervously through his hair. This is fine, fine, commented his mind. You go to all that trouble to preserve your existence, and then one day you just don't come back in time. Shut up! his mind snapped back at itself. But he could have killed himself for forgetting to wind his watch the night before. Don't bother killing yourself, his mind reflected, they'll be glad to do it for you. Suddenly he realized he was almost weak from hunger.

The small amount of canned meat he'd eaten with the tomato juice had done nothing to alleviate hunger.

The silent streets flew past and he kept looking from side to side to see if any of them were appearing in the doorways. It seemed as if it were already getting dark, but that could have been imagination. It couldn't be that late, it couldn't be.

He'd just gone hurtling past the corner of Western and Compton when he saw the man come running out of a building and shout at him. His heart was contracted in an icy hand as the man's cry fluttered in the air behind the car.

He couldn't get any more speed out of the station wagon. And now his mind began torturing him with visions of one of the tires going, the station wagon veering, leaping the curb and crashing into a house. His lips started to shake and he jammed them together to stop them. His hands on the wheel feltnumb.

He had to slow down at the corner of Cimarron. Out of the corner of an eye he saw a man come rushing out of a house and start chasing the car.

Then, as he turned the corner with a screech of clinging tires, he couldn't hold back the gasp. They were all in front of his house, waiting.

A sound of helpless terror filled his throat. He didn't want to die. He might have thought about it, even contemplated it. But he didn't want to die. Not like this.

Now he saw them all turn their white faces at the sound of the motor. Some more of themcame running out of the open garage and his teeth ground together in impotent fury. What a stupid, brainless way to die!

Now be saw them start running straight toward the station wagon, a line of them across the street. And; suddenly, he knew he couldn't stop. He pressed down on the accelerator, and in a moment the car went plowing through them, knocking three of them aside like tenpins. He felt the car frame jolt as it struck the bodies. Their screaming white faces went flashing by his window, their cries chilling his blood.

Now they were behind and he saw in the rear- view mirror that they were all pursuing him. A sudden plan caught hold in his mind, and impulsively he slowed down, even braking, until the speed of the car fell to thirty, then twenty miles an hour.

He looked back and saw them gaining, saw their grayish-white faces approaching, their dark eyes fastened to his car, to him.

Suddenly he twitched with shock as a snarl sounded nearby and, jerking his head around, he saw the crazed face of Ben Cortman beside the car.

Instinctively his foot jammed down on the gas pedal, but his other foot slipped off the clutch, and with a neck-snapping jolt the station wagon jumped forward and stalled.

Sweat broke out on his forehead as he lunged forward feverishly to press the button. Ben Cortman clawed in at him.

With a snarl he shoved the cold white hand aside. "Neville, Neville!"

Ben Cortman reached in again, his hands like claws cut from ice. Again Neville pushed aside the hand and jabbed at the starter button, his body shaking helplessly. Behind, he could hear them all screaming excitedly as they came closer to the car.

The motor coughed into life again as he felt Ben Cortman's long nails rake across his cheek. "Neville!"

The pain made his hand jerk into a rigid fist, which he drove into Cortman's face. Cortman went flailing back onto the pavement as the gears caught and the station wagon jolted forward, picking up speed. One of the others caught up and leaped at the rear of the car. For a minute he held on, and Robert Neville could see his ashen face glaring insanely through the back window. Then he jerked the car over toward the curb, swerved sharply, and shook the man off. The man went running across a lawn, arms ahead of him, and smashed violently into the side of a house.

Robert Neville's heart was pounding so heavily now it seemed as if it would drive through his chest walls. Breath shuddered in him and his flesh felt number and cold. He could feel the trickle of blood on his cheek, but no pain. Hastily he wiped it off with one shaking hand.

Now he spun the station wagon around the corner, turning right. He kept looking at the rear-view mirror, then looking ahead. He went the short block to Haas Street and turned right again. What if they cut through the yards and blocked his way?

He slowed down a little until they came swarming around the corner like a pack of wolves. Then he pressed down on the accelerator. He'd have to take the chance that they were all following him. Would some of them guess what he was trying?

He shoved down the gas pedal all the way and the station wagon jumped forward, racing up the block. He wheeled it around the corner at fifty miles an hour, gunned up the short block to Cimarron, and turned right again.

His breath caught. There was no one in sight on his lawn. There was still a chance, then. He'd have to let the station wagon go, though; there was no time to put it in the garage.

He jerked the car to the curb and shoved the door open. As he raced around the edge of thecar he heard the billowing cry of their approach around the corner.

He'd have to take a chance on locking the garage. If he didn't, they might destroy the generator; they couldn't have had time to do it already. His footsteps pounded up the driveway to the garage.

"Neville!"

His body jerked back as Cortman came lunging out of the dark shadows of the garage. Cortman's body drove into his and almost knocked him down. He fell the cold, powerful hands clamp on his throat and smelled the fetid breath clouding over his face. The two of them went reeling back toward the sidewalk and the white- fanged mouth went darting down at Robert Neville's throat

Abruptly he jerked up his right fist and felt it drive into Cortman's throat. He heard the choking sound in Cortman's throat. Up the block the first of them came rushing and screaming around the corner.

With a violent movement, Robert Neville grabbed Cortman by his long, greasy hair and sent him hurtling down the driveway until he rammed head on into the side of the station wagon.

Robert Neville's eyes flashed up the street. No time for the garage! He dashed around the corner of the house and up to the porch.

He skidded to a halt. Oh, God, the keys!

With a terrified intake of breath he spun and rushed back toward the car. Cortman started up with a throaty snarl and he drove his knee into the white face and knocked Cortman back on the sidewalk. Then he lunged into the car and jerked the key chain away from the ignition slot.

As he scuttled back out of the car the first one of them came leaping at him.

He shrank back onto the car seat and the man tripped over his legs and went sprawling heavily onto the side walk. Robert Neville pushed himself out, dashed across the lawn, and leaped onto the porch.

He had to stop to find the right key and another man came leaping up the porch steps. Neville was slammed against the house by the impact of his body. The hot blood thick breath was on him again, the bared mouth lunging at his throat. He drove his knee into the man's groin and then, leaning his weight against the house, he raised his foot high and shoved the doubled over man into the other one who was rushing across the lawn.

Neville dived for the door and unlocked it. He pushed it open, slipped inside, and turned. As he slammed it shut an arm shot through the opening. He forced the door against it with all his strength until he heard bones snap, then he opened the door a little, shoved the broken arm out, and slammed the door. With trembling hands he dropped the bar into place.

Slowly he sank down onto the floor and fell on his back. He lay there in the darkness, his chest rising and falling, his legs and arms like dead limbs on the floor. Outside they howled and pummeled the door, shouting his name in a paroxysm of demented fury. They grabbed up bricks and rocks and hurled them against the house and they screamed and cursed at him. He lay there listening to the thud of the rocks and bricks against the house, listening to their howling.

After a while he struggled up to the bar. Half the whisky he poured splashed onto the rug. He threw down the contents of the glass and stood there shivering, holding onto the bar to support his wobbling legs, his throat tight and convulsed; his lips shaking without control.

Slowly the heat of the liquor expanded in his stomach and reached his body. His breath slowed down, his chest stopped shuddering.

He started as he heard the great crash outside.

He ran to the peephole and looked out. His teeth grated together and a burst of rage filled himas be saw the station wagon lying on its side and saw them smashing in the windshield with bricks and stones, tearing open the hood and smashing at the engine with insane club strokes, denting the frame with their frenzied blows. As he watched, fury poured through him like a current of hot acid and half formed curses sounded in his throat while his hands clamped into great white fists at his sides.

Turning suddenly, he moved to the lamp and tried to light it. It didn't work. With a snarl he turned and ran into the kitchen. The refrigerator was out. He ran from one dark room to another. The freezer was off; all the food would spoil. His house was a dead house.

Fury exploded in him. Enough!

His rage palsied hands ripped out the clothes from the bureau drawer until they closed on the loaded pistols.

Racing through the dark living room, he knocked up the bar across the door and sent it clattering to the floor. Outside, they howled as they heard him opening the door. I'm coming out, you bastards! his mind screamed out.

He jerked open the door and shot the first one in the face. The man went spinning back off the porch and two women came at him in muddy, torn dresses, their white arms spread to enfold him. He watched their bodies jerk as the bullets struck them, then he shoved them both aside and began firing his guns into their midst, a wild yell ripping back his bloodless lips.

He kept firing the pistols until they were both empty.

Then be stood on the porch clubbing them with insane blows, losing his mind almost completely when the same ones he'd shot came rushing at him again. And when they tore the guns out of his hands he used his fists and elbows and he butted with his head and kicked them with his big shoes.

It wasn't until the flaring pain of having his shoulder slashed open struck him that he realized what he was doing and how hopeless his attempt was. Knocking aside two women, he backed toward the door. A man's arm locked around his neck. He lurched forward, bending at the waist, and toppled the man over his head into the others. He jumped back into the doorway, gripped both sides of the frame and kicked out his legs like pistons, sending the men crashing back into the shrubbery.

Then, before they could get at him again, he slammed the door in their faces, locked it, bolted it, and dropped the heavy bar into its slots.

Robert Neville stood in the cold blackness of his house, listening to the vampires scream. He stood against the wall clubbing slowly and weekly at the plaster, tears streaming down hisbearded cheeks, his bleeding hand pulsing with pain. Everything was gone, everything. "Virginia," he sobbed like a lost, frightened child. "Virginia. Virginia."

PART II: March 1976

Chapter Six

THE HOUSE, AT LAST, was livable again.

Even more so than before, in fact, for he had finally taken three days and soundproofed the walls. Now they could scream and howl all they wanted and he didn't have to listen to them. He especially liked not having to listen to Ben Cortman any more.

It had all taken time and work. First of all was the matter of a new car to replace the one they'd destroyed. This had been more difficult than he'd imagined.

He had to get over to Santa Monica to the only Willys store he knew about. The Willys station wagons were the only ones he had had any experience with, and this didn't seem quite the time to start experimenting. He couldn't walk to Santa Monica, so he had to try using one of the many cars parked around the neighborhood. But most of them were inoperative for one reason or another: a dead battery, a clogged fuel pump, no gasoline, flat tires.

Finally, in a garage about a mile from the house, he found a car he could get started, and he drove quickly to Santa Monica to pick up another station wagon. He put a new battery in it, filled its tank with gasoline, put gasoline drums in the back, and drove home. He got back to the house about an hour before sunset.

He made sure of that.

Luckily the generator had not been ruined. The vampires apparently had no idea of its importance to him, for, except for a torn wire and a few cudgel blows, they had left it alone. He'd managed to fix it quickly the morning after the attack and keep his frozen foods from spoiling. He was grateful for that, because he was sure there were no places left where he could get more frozen foods now that electricity was gone from the city.

For the rest of it, he had to straighten up the garage and clean out the debris of broken bulbs, fuses, wiring, plugs, solder, spare motor parts, and a box of seeds he'd put there once; he didn't remember just when.

The washing machine they had ruined beyond repair, forcing him to replace it. But that wasn't hard. The worst part was mopping up all the gasoline they'd spilled from the drums. They'd really outdone themselves spilling gasoline, he thought irritably while he mopped it up.

Inside the house, he had repaired the cracked plaster, and as an added fillip he had put up another wall mural to give a different appearance to the room.

He'd almost enjoyed all the work once it was started. It gave him something to lose himself in, something to pour all the energy of his still pulsing fury into. It broke the monotony of his daily tasks: the carrying away of bodies, the repairing of the house's exterior, the hanging of garlic.

He drank sparingly during those days, managing to pass almost the entire day without a drink, even allowing his evening drinks to assume the function of relaxing night-caps rather than senseless escape. His appetite increased and he gained four pounds and lost a little belly. He even slept nights, a tired sleep without the dreams.

For a day or so he had played with the idea of moving to some lavish hotel suite. But the thought of all the work he'd have to do to make it habitable changed his mind.

No, he was all set in the house.

Now he sat in the living room, listening to Mozart's Jupiter Symphony and wondering how he was to begin, where he was to begin his investigation.

He knew a few details, but these were only landmarks above the basic earth of cause. The answer lay in something else. Probably in some fact he was aware of but did not adequately appreciate, in some apparent knowledge he had not yet connected with the over-all picture.

But what?

He sat motionless in the chair, a sweat-beaded glass in his right hand, his eyes fastened on the mural.

It was a scene from Canada: deep northern woods, mysterious with green shadows, standing aloof and motionless, heavy with the silence of manless nature. He stared into its soundless green depths and wondered. Maybe if he went back. Maybe the answer lay in the past, in some obscure crevice of memory. Go back,

then, he told his mind, go back. It tore his heart out to go back.

There had been another dust storm during the night. High, spinning winds had scoured the house with grit, driven it through the cracks, sifted it through plaster pores, and left a hair- thin layer of dust across all the furniture surfaces. Over their bed the dust filtered like fine powder, settling in their hair and on their eyelids and under their nails, clogging their pores.

Half the night he'd lain awake trying to single out the sound of Virginia's labored breathing. But he couldn't hear anything above the shrieking, grating sound of the storm. For a while, in the suspension between sleeping and waking, he had suffered the illusion that the house was being sandpapered by giant wheels that held its framework between monstrous abrasive surfaces and made it shudder.

He'd never got used to the dust storms. That hissing sound of whirlwind granulation always set his teeth on edge. The storms had never come regularly enough to allow him to adapt himself to them. Whenever they came, he spent a restless, tossing night, and went to the plant the next day with jaded mind and body.

Now there was Virginia to worry about too.

About four o'clock he awoke from a thin depression of sleep and realized that the storm had ended. The contrast made silence a rushing noise in his ears.

As he raised his body irritably to adjust his twisted pajamas, he noticed that Virginia was awake. She was lying on her back and staring at the ceiling.

"What's the matter?" he mumbled drowsily. She didn't answer.

"Honey?"

Her eyes moved slowly to him.

"Nothing," she said. "Go to sleep." "How do you feel?"

"The same."

"Oh."

He lay there for a moment looking at her.

"Well," he said then and, turning on his side, closed his eyes.

The alarm went off at six-thirty. Usually Virginia pushed in the stop, but when she failed to do so, he reached over her inert body and did it himself. She was still on her back, still staring.

"What is it?" he asked worriedly.

She looked at him and shook her head on the pillow. "I don't know," she said. "I just can't sleep."

"Why?" She made an indecisive sound.

"Still feel weak?" he asked.

She tried to sit up but she couldn't.

"Stay there, hon," he said. "Don't move." He put his hand on her brow. "You haven't got any fever," he told her.

"I don't feel sick," she said. "Just . . tired." "You look pale."

"I know. I look like a ghost." "Don't get up," he said She was up.

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"I'm not going to pamper myself," she said. "Go ahead, get dressed. I'll be all right." "Don't get up if you don't feel good, honey."

She patted his arm and smiled.

"I'll be all right," she said. "You get ready."

While he shaved he heard the shuffling of her slippers past the bathroom door. He opened the door and watched her crossing the living room very slowly, her wrappered body weaving a little. He went back in the bathroom shaking his head. She should have stayed in bed.

The whole top of the washbasin was grimy with dust. The damn stuff was everywhere. He'd finally been compelled to erect a tent over Kathy's bed to keep the dust from her face. He'd nailed one edge of a shelter half to the wall next to her bed and let it slope over the bed, the other edge held up by two poles lashed to the side of the bed.

He didn't get a good shave because there was grit in the shaving soap and he didn't have time for a second lathering. He washed off his face, got a clean towel from the hall closet, and dried himself.

Before going to the bedroom to get dressed he checked Kathy's room.

She was still asleep, her small blonde head motionless on the pillow, her cheeks pink with heavy sleep. He ran a finger across the top of the shelter half and drew it away gray with dust. With a disgusted shake of his head he left the room.

"I wish these damn storms would end," he said as he entered the kitchen ten minutes later. "I'm sure . . ." He stopped talking. Usually she was at the stove turning eggs or French toast or pancakes, making coffee.

Today she was sitting at the table. On the stove coffee was percolating, but nothing else was cooking. "Sweetheart, if you don't feel well, go back to bed," he told her. "I can fix my own breakfast."

"It's all right," she said. "I was just resting. I'm sorry. I'll get up and fry you some eggs." "Stay there," he said. "I'm not helpless."

He went to the refrigerator and opened the door.

"I'd like to know what this is going around," she said. "Half the people on the block have it,and you say that more than half the plant is absent." "Maybe it's some kind of virus," he said.

She shook her head. "I don't know."

"Between the storms and the mosquitoes and everyone being sick, life is rapidly becoming a pain," he said, pouring orange juice out of the bottle. "And speak of the devil."

He drew a black speck out of the orange juice in the glass.

"How the hell they get in the refrigerator I'll never know," he said. "None for me, Bob," she said.

"No orange juice?" "No."

"Good for you."

"No, thank you, sweetheart," she said, trying to smile.

He put back the bottle and sat down across from her with his glass of juice. "You don't feel any pain?" he said. "No headache, nothing?"

She shook her head slowly.

"I wish I did know what was wrong," she said. "You call up Dr. Busch today."

"I will," she said, starting to get up. He put his hand over hers. "No, no, sweetheart, stay there," he said.

"But there's no reason why I should be like this." She sounded angry. That was the way she'd been as long as he'd known her. If she became ill, it irritated her. She was annoyed by sickness. She seemed to regard it as a personal affront.

"Come on," he said, starting to get up. "I'll help you back to bed."

"No, just let me sit here with you," she said. "I'll go back to bed after Kathy goes to school." "All right. Don't you want something, though?"

"No."

"How about coffee?" She shook her head.
"You're really going to get sick if you don't eat," he said. "I'm just not hungry."

He finished his juice and got up to fry a couple of eggs. He cracked them on the side of the iron skillet and dropped the contents into the melted bacon fat. He got the bread from the drawer and went over to the table with it.

"Here, I'll put it in the toaster," Virginia said. "You watch your... Oh, God." "What is it?" She waved one hand weakly in front of her face.
"A mosquito," she said with a grimace.
He moved over and, after a moment, crushed it between his two palms. "Mosquitoes," she said. "Flies, sand fleas."
"We are entering the age of the insect," he said.

"It's not good," she said. "They carry diseases. We ought to put a net around Kathy's bed too."

"I know, I know," he said, returning to the stove and tipping the skillet so the hot fat ran over the white egg surfaces. "I keep meaning to."
"I don't think that spray works, either," Virginia said. "It doesn't?"
"No."
"My God, and it's supposed to be one of the best ones on the market." He slid the eggs onto a dish. "Sure you don't want some coffee?' he asked her.
"No, thank you."
He sat down and she handed him the buttered toast.

"I hope to hell we're not breeding a race of superbugs," he said. "You remember that strain of giant grasshoppers they found in Colorado?'
"Yes."
"Maybe the insects are . . . What's the word? Mutating." "What's that?"

"Oh, it means they're ... changing. Suddenly. Jumping over dozens of small evolutionary steps, maybe developing along lines they might not have followed at all if it weren't for . . ."
Silence.
"The bombings?" she said. "Maybe," he said.
"Well, they're causing the dust storms. They're probably causing a lot of things." She sighed wearily and shook her head.
"And they say we won the war," she said. "Nobody won it"
"The mosquitoes won it." He smiled a little.
"I guess they did," he said.

They sat there for a few moments without talking and the only sound in the kitchen was the clink of his fork on the plate and the cup on the saucer.
"You looked at Kathy last night?" she asked. "I just looked at her now. She looks fine." "Good."
She looked at him studiedly.

"I've been thinking, Bob," she said. "Maybe we should send her east to your mother's until I get better. It may be contagious."

"We could," he said dubiously, "but if it's contagious, my mother's place wouldn't be any safer than here."
"You don't think so?" she asked. She looked worried.

He shrugged. “I don’t know, hon. I think probably she’s just as safe here. If it starts to get bad on the block, we’ll keep her out of school.”
She started to say something, then stopped. “All right,” she said.
He looked at his watch.
“I’d better finish up,” he said.

She nodded and he ate the rest of his breakfast quickly. While he was draining the coffee cup she asked him if he had bought a paper the night before.
“It’s in the living room,” he told her. "Anything new in it?’

“No. Same old stuff. It’s all over the country, a little here, a little there. They haven’t been able to find the germ yet.”
She bit her lower lip.
“Nobody knows what it is?”
“I doubt it. If anybody did they’d have surely said so by now.
“But they must have some idea.”
“Everybody’s got an idea. But they aren’t worth anything.” ‘What do they say?” He shrugged. “Everything from germ warfare on down.” “Do you think it is?” “Germ warfare?”
“Yes,” she said.
“The war’s over,” he said.
“Bob,” she said suddenly, “do you think you should go to work?” He smiled helplessly. “What else can I do?” he asked. “We have to eat.” “I know, but . . ”
He reached across the table and felt how cold her hand was. “Honey, it’ll be all right,” he said.
“And you think I should send Kathy to school?”

“I think so,” he said. “Unless the health authorities say schools have to shut down, I don’t see why we should keep her home. She’s not sick.”
“But all the kids at school.”
“I think we’d better, though,” he said.
She made a tiny sound in her throat. Then she said, “All right. If you think so.” “Is there anything you want before I go?” he asked.
She shook her head.
“Now you stay in the house today,” he told her, “and in bed.”

“I will,” she said. “As soon as I send Kathy off.” He patted her hand. Outside, the car horn sounded. He finished the coffee and went to the bathroom to rinse out his mouth. Then he got his jacket from the hall closet and pulled it on.
“Good-by, honey,” he said, kissing her on the cheek. “Take it easy, now.” “Good-by,” she said. “Be careful.”

He moved across the lawn, gritting his teeth at the residue of dust in the air. He could smell it as he walked, a dry tickling sensation in his nasal passages.
“Morning,” he said, getting in the car and pulling the door shut behind him. “Good morning,” said Ben Cortman.

Chapter Seven

“DISTILLED FROM ALLIUM SATIVUM, a genus of Liliaceae comprising garlic, leek, onion, shallot, and chive. Is of pale color and penetrating odor, containing several allyl sulphides. Composition: water, 64.6%; protein, 6.8%; fat, 0.1%; carbohydrates, 26.3%; fiber, 0.8%; ash, l.4.%.”

There it was. He jiggled one of the pink, leathery cloves in his right palm. For seven months now he'd strung them together into aromatic necklaces and hung them outside his house without the remotest idea of why they chased the vampires away. It was time he learned why.

He put the clove on the sink ledge. Leek, onion, shallot, and chive. Would they all work as well as garlic? He'd really feel like a fool if they did, after searching miles around for garlic when onions were everywhere. He mashed the clove to a pulp and smelled the acrid fluid on the thick cleaver blade.

All right, what now? The past revealed nothing to help him; only talk of insect carriers and virus, and they weren't the causes. He was sure of it.

The past had brought something else, though; pain at remembering. Every recalled word had been like, a knife blade twisting in him. Old wounds had been reopened with every thought of her. He'd finally had to stop, eyes closed, fists clenched, trying desperately to accept the present on its own terms and not yearn with his very flesh for the past. But only enough drinks to stultify all introspection had managed to drive away the enervating sorrow that remembering brought.

He focused his eyes. All right, damn it, he told himself, do something!

He looked at the text again, water—was it that? he asked himself. No, that was ridiculous; all things had water in them. Protein? No. Fat? No. Carbohydrates? No. Fiber? No. Ash? No. What then?

"The characteristic odor and flavor of garlic are due to an essential oil amounting to about 0.2% of the weight, which consists mainly of allyl sulphide and allyl isothicyanate."

Maybe the answer was there.

Again the book: "Allyl sulphide may be prepared by heating mustard oil and potassium sulphide at 100 degrees."

His body thudded down into the living-room chair and a disgusted breath shuddered his long frame. And where the hell do I get mustard oil and potassium sulphide? And the equipment to prepare them in?

That's great, he railed at himself. The first step, and already you've fallen flat on your face. He pushed himself up disgustedly and headed for the bar. But halfway through pouring adrink he slammed down the bottle. No, by God, he had no intention of going on like a blind man, plodding down a path of brainless, fruitless existence until old age or accident took him. Either he found the answer or he ditched the whole mess, life included.

He checked his watch. Ten-twenty A.M.; still time. He moved to the hallway resolutely and checked through the telephone directories. There was a place in Inglewood.

Four hours later he straightened up from the workbench with a crick in his neck and the allylsulphide inside a hypodermic syringe, and in himself the first sense of real accomplishment since his forced isolation began.

A little excited, he ran to his car and drove out past the area he'd cleared out and marked with chalked rods. He knew it was more than possible that some vampires might have wandered into the cleared area and were hiding there again. But he had no time for searching.

Parking his car, he went into a house and walked to the bedroom. A young woman lay there, a coating of blood on her mouth.

Flipping her over, Neville pulled up her skirt and injected the allylsulphide into her soft, fleshy buttock, then turned her over again and stepped back. For a half hour he stood there watching her.

Nothing happened.

This doesn't make sense, his mind argued. I hang garlic around the house and the vampires stay away. And the characteristic of garlic is the oil I've injected in her. But nothing's happened. Goddamn it, nothing's happened!

He flung down the syringe and, trembling with rage and frustration, went home again. Before darkness, he built a small wooden structure on the front lawn and hung strings of onions on it. He spent a listless night, only the knowledge that there was still much left to do keeping him from theliquor.

In the morning he went out and looked at the matchwood on his lawn.

The cross. He held one in his hand, gold and shiny in the morning sun. This, too, drove the vampires away. Why? Was there a logical answer, something he could accept without slipping on banana skins of mysticism? There was only one way to find out.

He took the woman from her bed, pretending not to notice the question posed in his mind: Why do you always experiment on women? He didn't care to admit that the inference had any validity. She just happened to be the first one he'd come across, that was all. What about the man in the living mom, though? For God's sake! he flared back. I'm not going to rape the woman!

Crossing your fingers, Neville? Knocking on wood?

He ignored that, beginning to suspect his mind of harboring an alien. Once he might have termed it conscience. Now it was only an annoyance. Morality, after all, had fallen with society. He was his own ethic. Makes a good excuse, doesn't it, Neville? Oh, shut up.

But he wouldn't let himself pass the afternoon near her. After binding her to a chair, he secluded himself in the garage and puttered around with the car. She was wearing a torn black dress and too much was visible as she breathed. Out of sight, out of mind It was a lie, heknew, but he wouldn't admit it.

At last, mercifully, night came. He locked the garage door, went back to the house, and locked the front door, putting the heavy bar across it. Then he made a drink and sat down on the couch across from the woman.

From the ceiling, right before her face, hung the cross. At six-thirty her eyes opened. Suddenly, like the eyes of a sleeper who has a definite job to do upon awakening; who does not move into consciousness with a vague entry, but with a single, clear-cut motion, knowing just what is to be done.

Then she saw the cross and she jerked her eyes from it with a sudden raffling gasp and her body twisted in the chair.

"Why are you afraid of it?" he asked, startled at the sound of his own voice after so long. Her eyes, suddenly on him, made him shudder. The way they glowed, the way her tongue licked across her red lips as if it were a separate life in her mouth. The way she flexed her body as if trying to move it closer to him. A guttural rumbling filled her throat like the sound of a dogdefending its bone.

"The cross," he said nervously. "Why are you afraid of it?"

She strained against her bonds, her hands raking across the sides of the chair. No words from her, only a harsh, gasping succession of breaths. Her body writhed on the chair, her eyes burned into him.

"The cross!" he snapped angrily.

He was on his feet, the glass falling and splashing across the rug. He grabbed the string with tense fingers and swung the cross before her eyes. She flung her head away with a frightened snarl and recoiled into the chair.

"Look at it!" he yelled at her.

A sound of terror stricken whining came from her. Her eyes moved wildly around the room, great white eyes with pupils like specks of soot.

He grabbed at her shoulder, then jerked his hand back. It was dribbling blood from raw teeth wounds.

His stomach muscles jerked in. The hand lashed out again, this time smashing her across the cheek and snapping her head to the side.

Ten minutes later he threw her body out the front door and slammed it again in their faces. Then he stood there against the door breathing heavily. Faintly he heard through the soundproofing the sound of them fighting like jackals for the spoils.

Later he went to the bathroom and poured alcohol into the teeth gouges, enjoying fiercely the burning pain in his flesh.

Chapter Eight

NEVILLE BENT OVER AND picked up a little soil in his right hand. He ran it between his fingers, crumbling the dark lumps into grit. How many of them, he wondered, slept in the soil, as the story went? He shook his head. Precious few.

Where did the legend fit in, then?

He closed his eyes and let the dirt filter down slowly from his hand. Was there any answer? If only he could remember whether those who slept in soil were the ones who had returned from death. He might have theorized then.

But he couldn't remember. Another unanswerable question, then. Add it to the question that had occurred to him the night before.

What would a Mohammedan vampire do if faced with a cross?

The barking sound of his laugh in the silent morning air startled him. Good God, he thought, it's been so long since I've laughed, I've forgotten how. It sounded like the cough of a sick hound. Well, that's what I am, after all, isn't it? he decided. A very sick dog.

There had been a light dust storm about four that morning. Strange how it brought back memories. Virginia, Kathy, all those horrible days ...

He caught himself. No, no, there was danger there. It was thinking of the past that drove him to the bottle. He was just going to have to accept the present.

He found himself wondering again why he chose to go on living. Probably, he thought, there's no real reason. I'm just too dumb to end it all.

Well—he clapped his hands with false decision—what now? He looked around as if there were something to see along the stillness of Cimarron Street.

All right, he decided impulsively, let's see if the running water bit makes sense.

He buried a hose under the ground and ran it into a small trough constructed of wood. The water ran through the trough and out another hole into more hosing, which conducted the water into the earth.

When he'd finished, he went in and took a shower, shaved, and took the bandage off his hand. The wound had healed cleanly. But then, he hadn't been overly concerned about that. Time had more than proved to him that he was immune to their infection.

At six-twenty he went into the living room and stood before the peephole. He stretched a little, grunting at the ache in his muscles. Then, when nothing happened, he made himself a drink.

When he got back to the peephole, be saw Ben Cortman come walking onto the lawn.

"Come out, Neville," Robert Neville muttered, and Cortman echoed the words in a loud cry. Neville stood there motionless, looking at Ben Cortman.

Ben hadn't changed much. His hair was still black, his body inclined to corpulence, his face still white. But there was a beard on his face now; mostly under the nose, thinner around his chin and cheeks and under his throat. That was the only real difference, though. Ben had always been immaculately shaved in the old days, smelling of cologne each morning when he picked upNeville to drive to the plant.

It was strange to stand there looking out at Ben Cortman; a Ben completely alien to him now. Once he had spoken to that man, ridden to work with him, talked about cars and baseball and politics with him, later on about the disease, about how Virginia and Kathy were getting along, about how Freda Cortman was about.

Neville shook his head. There was no point going into that. The past was as dead as Cortman.

Again he shook his head. The world's gone mad, he thought. The dead walk about and I think nothing of it.

The return of corpses has become trivial in import. How quickly one accepts the incredible if only one sees it enough! Neville stood there, sipping his whisky and wondering who it was that Ben reminded him of. He'd felt for some time that Cortman reminded him of somebody, but for the life of him he couldn't think who.

He shrugged. What was the difference?

He put down the glass on the window sill and went into the kitchen. He turned on the water there and went back in. When he reached the peephole, he saw another man and a woman on the lawn. None of the three was speaking to either of the others. They never did. They walked and walked about on restless feet, circling each other like wolves, never looking at each other once, having hungry eyes only for the house and their prey inside the house.

Then Cortman saw the water running through the trough and went over to look at it. After a moment he lifted his white face and Neville saw him grinning.

Neville stiffened.

Cortman was jumping over the trough, then back again. Neville felt his throat tightening. The bastard knew!

With rigid legs he pistoned himself into the bedroom and, with shaking hands, pulled one of his pistols out of the bureau drawer.

Cortman was just about finishing stamping in the sides of the trough when the bullet struck him in the left shoulder.

He staggered back with a grunt and flopped onto the sidewalk with a kicking of legs. Neville fired again and the bullet whined up off the cement, inches from Cortman's twisting body.

Cortman started up with a snarl and the third bullet struck him full in thechest.

Neville stood there watching, smelling the acrid fumes of the pistol smoke. Then the woman blocked his view of Cortman and started jerking up her dress.

Neville pulled back and slammed the tiny door over the peephole. He wasn't going to let himself look at that. In the first second of it, he had felt that terrible heat dredging up from his loins like something ravenous. Later he looked out again and saw Ben Cortman pacing around, calling for him to come out. And, in the moonlight, he suddenly realized who Cortman reminded him of. The idea madehis chest shudder with repressed laughter and he turned away as the shaking reached his shoulders.

My God—Oliver Hardy! Those old two-reelers he'd looked at with his projector. Cortman was almost a dead ringer for the roly-poly comedian. A little less plump, that was all. Even the mustache was there now. Oliver Hardy flopping on his back under the driving impact of bullets. Oliver Hardy always coming back for more, no matter what happened. Ripped by bullets, punctured by knives, flattened by cars, smashed under collapsing chimneys and boats, submerged in water, flungthrough pipes. And always returning, patient and bruised.

That was who Ben Cortman was—a hideously malignant Oliver Hardy buffeted and long suffering.

My God, it was hilarious!

He couldn't stop laughing because it was more than laughter; it was release. Tears flooded down his cheeks. The glass in his hand shook so badly, the liquor spilled all over him and made him laugh harder. Then the glass fell thumping on the rug as his body jerked with spasms of uncontrollable amusement and the room was filled with his gasping, nerve-shattered laughter.

Later, he cried.

He drove it into the stomach, into the shoulder. Into the neck with a single mallet blow. Into the legs and the arms, and always the same result: the blood pulsing out, slick and crimson, over the white flesh.

He thought he'd found the answer. It was a matter of losing the blood they lived by; it was hemorrhage.

But then he found the woman in the small green and white house, and when he drove in the stake, the dissolution was so sudden it made him lurch away and lose his breakfast.

When he had recovered enough to look again, he saw on the bedspread what looked like a row of salt and pepper mixed; just about as long as the woman had been. It was the first time he'd ever seen such a thing.

Shaken by the sight, he went out of the house on trembling legs and sat in the car for an hour, drinking the flask empty. But even liquor couldn't drive away the vision.

It had been so quick. With the sound of the mallet blow still in his ears, she had virtually dissolved before his eyes.

He recalled talking once to a Negro at the plant. The man had studied mortuary science and had told Robert Neville about the mausoleums where people were stored in vacuum drawers and never changed their appearance.

"But you just let some air in," the Negro had said, "and whoom!—they'll look like a row of salt and pepper. Jus' like that!" And he snapped his fingers.

The woman had been long dead, then. Maybe, the thought occurred, she was one of the vampires who had originally started the plague. God only knew how many years she'd been cheating death.

He was too unnerved to do any more that day or for days to come. He stayed home and drank to forget and let the bodies pile up on the lawn and let the outside of the house fall into disrepair.

For days he sat in the chair with his liquor and thought about the woman. And, no matter how hard he tried not to, no matter how much he drank, he kept thinking about Virginia. He kept seeing himself entering the crypt, lifting the coffin lid.

He thought he was coming down with something, so palsied and nerveless was his shivering, so cold and ill did he feel.

Is that what she looked like?

Chapter Nine

MORNING. A SUN BRIGHT hush broken only by the chorus of birds in the trees. No breeze to stir the vivid blossoms around the houses, the bushes, the dark- leaved hedges. A cloud of silent heat was suspended over everything on Cimarron Street.

Virginia Neville's heart had stopped.

He sat beside her on the bed, looking down at her white face. He held her fingers in his hand, his fingertips stroking and stroking. His body was immobile, one rigid, insensible block of flesh and bone. His eyes did not blink, his mouth was a static line, and the movement of his breathing was so slight that it seemed to have stopped altogether.

Something had happened to his brain.

In the second he had felt no heartbeat beneath his trembling fingers, the core of his brain seemed to have petrified, sending out jagged lines of calcification until his head felt like stone. Slowly, on palsied legs, he had sunk down on the bed. And now, vaguely, deep in the struggling tissues of thought, he did not understand how he could sit there, did not understand why despair did not crush him to the earth. But prostration would not come. Time was caught on hooks and could not progress. Everything stood fixed. With Virginia, life and the world had shuddered to a halt.

Thirty minutes passed; forty.

Then, slowly, as though he were discovering some objective phenomenon, he found his body trembling. Not with a localized tremble, a nerve here, a muscle there. This was complete. His body shuddered without end, one mass, entire of nerves without control, bereft of will. And what operative mind was left knew that this was his reaction.

For more than an hour he sat in this palsied state, his eyes fastened dumbly to her face.

Then, abruptly, it ended, and with a choked muttering in his throat he lurched up from the bed and left the room.

Half the whisky splashed on the sink top as he poured. The liquor that managed to reach the glass he bolted down in a swallow. The thin current flared its way down to his stomach, feeling twice as intense in the polar numbness of his flesh. He stood, sagged against the sink. Hands shaking, he filled the glass again to its top and gulped the burning whisky down with great convulsive swallows.

It's a dream, he argued vainly. It was as if a voice spoke the words aloud in his head. "Virginia..."

He kept turning from one side to another, his eyes searching around the room as if there were something to be found, as if he had mislaid the exit from this house of horror. Tiny sounds of disbelief pulsed in his throat. He pressed his hands together, forcing the shaking palms against each other, the twitching fingers intertwining confusedly.

His hands began to shake so he couldn't make out their forms. With a gagging intake of breath he jerked them apart and pressed them against his legs.

"Virginia."

He took a step and cried aloud as the room flung itself off balance. Pain exploded in his right knee, sending hot barbs up his leg. He whined as he pushed himself up and stumbled to the living room. He stood there like a statue in an earthquake, his marble eyes frozen on the bedroomdoor.

In his mind he saw a scene enacted once again.

The great fire crackling, roaring yellow, sending its dense and grease-thick clouds into the sky. Kathy's tiny body in his arms. The man coming up and snatching her away as if he weretaking a bundle of rags. The

man lunging into the dark mist carrying his baby. Him standing there while pile driver blows of horror drove him down with their impact.
Then suddenly he had darted forward with a berserk scream.
"Kathy!"
The arms caught him, the men in canvas and masks drawing him back. His shoes gougedfrenziedly at the earth, digging two ragged trenches in the earth as they dragged him away. His brain exploded, the terrified screams flooding from him.

Then the sudden bolt of numbing pain in his jaw, the daylight swept over with clouds of night. The hot trickle of liquor down his throat, the coughing, a gasping, and then he had been sitting silent and rigid in Ben Cortman's car, staring as they drove away at the gigantic pail of smoke that rose above the earth like a black wraith of all earth's despair.
Remembering, he closed his eyes suddenly and his teeth pressed together until they ached.
"No." He wouldn't put Virginia there. Not if they killed him for it.

With a slow, stiff motion he walked to the front door and went out on the porch. Stepping off onto the yellowing lawn, he started down the block for Ben Cortman's house. The glare of the sun made his pupils shrink to points of jet. His hands swung useless and numbed at his sides.

The chimes still played "How Dry I Am." The absurdity of it made him want to break something in his hands. He remembered when Ben had put them in, thinking how funny it would be.

He stood rigidly before the door, his mind still pulsing. I don't care if it's the law, I don't care if refusal means death, I won't put her there!
His fist thudded on the door. "Ben!"

Silence in the house of Ben Cortman. White curtains hung motionless in the front windows. He could see the red couch, the floor lamp with the fringed shade, the upright Freda used to toy with on Sunday afternoons. He blinked. What day was it? He had forgotten, he had lost track of the days. He twisted his shoulders as impatient fury hosed acids through his veins. "Ben!"

Again the side of his hard fist pummeled the door, and the flesh along his whitening jaw line twitched. Damn him, where was he? Neville jammed in the button with a brittle finger and the chimes started the tippler's song over and over and over. "How dry I am, how dry I am, how dry I am, how dry I…"

With a frenzied gasp he lurched against the door and it flew open against the inside wall. It had been unlocked.
He walked into the silent living room.
"Ben," he said loudly. "Ben, I need your car."
They were in the bedroom, silent and still in their daytime comas, lying apart on the twinbeds, Ben in pajamas, Freda in silk nightgown; lying on the sheets, their thick chests faltering with labored breaths He stood there for a moment looking down at them. There were some wounds on Freda's white neck that had crusted over with dried blood. His eyes moved to Ben. There was no wound on Ben's throat and he heard a voice in his mind that said: If only I'd wake up.
He shook his head. No, there was no waking up from this.

He found the car keys on the bureau and picked them up. He turned away and left the silent house behind. It was the last time he ever saw either of them alive.

The motor coughed into life and he let it idle a few minutes, choke out, while he sat staring out through the dusty windshield. A fly buzzed its bloated form around his head in the hot, airless interior of the car. He watched the dull green glitter of it and felt the car pulsing under him.

After a moment he pushed in the choke and drove the car up the street. He parked it in the driveway before his garage and turned off the motor.

The house was cool and silent. His shoes scuffed quietly over the rug, then clicked on the floor boards in the hall.

He stood motionless in the doorway looking at her. She still lay on her back, arms at her sides, the white fingers slightly curled in. She looked as if she were sleeping.

He turned away and went back into the living room. What was be going to do? Choices seemed pointless now. What did it matter what he did? Life would be equally purposeless no matter what his decision was.

He stood before the window looking out at the quiet, sun-drenched street, his eyes lifeless. Why did I get the car, then? he wondered. His throat moved as he swallowed. I can't burnher, he thought. I won't. But what else was there? Funeral parlors were closed. What few morticians were healthy enough to practice were prevented from doing so by law. Everyone without exception had to be transported to the fires immediately upon death. It was the only way they knew now to prevent communication. Only flames could destroy the bacteria that caused the plague.

He knew that. He knew it was the law. But how many people followed it? He wondered that too. How many husbands took the women who had shared their life and love and dropped them into flames? How many parents incinerated the children they adored, how many children tossed their beloved parents on a bonfire a hundred yards square, a hundred feet deep?

No, if there was anything left in the world, it was his vow that she would not be burned in the fire.

An hour passed before he finally reached a decision. Then he went and got her needle and thread. He kept sewing until only her face showed. Then, fingers trembling, a tight knot in his stomach, he sewed the blanket together over her mouth. Over her nose. Her eyes.

Finished, he went in the kitchen and drank another glass of whisky. It didn't seem to affect him at all.

At last he went back to the bedroom on faltering legs. For a long minute he stood there breathing hoarsely. Then he bent over and worked his arms under her inert form. "Come on, baby," he whispered.

The words seemed to loosen everything. He felt himself shaking, felt the tears running slowly down his cheeks as he carried her through the living room and outside.

He put her in the back seat and got in the car. He took a deep breath and reached for the starter button. He drew back. Getting out of the car again, he went into the garage and got the shovel.

He twitched as he came out, seeing the man across the street approaching slowly. He put the shovel in the back and got in the car.

"Wait!"

The man's shout was hoarse. The man tried to run, but he wasn't strong enough. Robert Neville sat there silently as the man came shuffling up.

"Could you ... let me bring my ... my mother too?' the man said stiffly. "I...I...I..."

Neville's brain wouldn't function. He thought he was going to cry again, but he caught himself and stiffened his back.

"I'm not going to the ... there," he said. The man looked at him blankly.

"But your..."

"I'm not going to the fire, I said!" Neville blurted out, and jabbed in the starter button. "But your wife," said the man. "You have your..."

Robert Neville jerked the gear shift into reverse. "Please," begged the man.

"I'm not going there!" Neville shouted without looking at the man. "But it's the law!" the man shouted back, suddenly furious.

The car raced back quickly into the street and Neville jerked it around to face Compton Boulevard. As he sped away he saw the man standing at the curb watching him leave. Fool! his mind grated. Do you think I'm going to throw my wife into a fire?

The streets were deserted. He turned left at Compton and started west. As he drove he looked at the huge lot on the right side of the car. He couldn't use any of the cemeteries. They were locked and watched. Men had been shot trying to bury their loved ones.

He turned right at the next block and drove up one block, turned right again into a quiet street that ended in the lot. Halfway up the block he cut the motor. He rolled the rest of the way so no one would hear the car.

No one saw him carry her from the car or carry her deep into the high- weeded lot. No one saw him put her down on an open patch of ground and then disappear from view as he knelt.

Slowly he dug, pushing the shovel into the soft earth, the bright sun pouring heat into the little clearing like molten air into a dish. Sweat ran in many lines down his cheeks and foreheadas he dug, and the earth swam dizzily before his eyes. Newly thrown dirt filled his nostrils with its hot, pungentsmell.

At last the hole was finished. He put down the shovel and sagged down on his knees. His body shuddered and sweat trickled over his face. This was the part he dreaded.

But he knew he couldn't wait. If he was seen they would come out and get him. Being shot was nothing. But she would be burned then. His lips tightened. No.

Gently, carefully as he could, he lowered her into the shallow grave, making sure that her head did not bump.

He straightened up and looked down at her still body sewn up in the blanket. For the last time, he thought. No more talking, no more loving. Eleven wonderful years ending in a filled- in trench. He began to tremble. No, he ordered himself, there's no time for that

It was no use. The world shimmered through endless distorting tears while he pressed back the hot earth, patting it around her still body with nerveless fingers.

He lay fully clothed on his bed, staring at the black ceiling. He was half drunk and the darkness spun with fireflies.

His right arm faltered out for the table. His hand brushed the bottle over and he jerked out clawing fingers too late. Then he relaxed and lay there in the still of night, listening to the whisky gurgle out of the bottle mouth and spread across the floor.

His unkempt hair rustled on the pillow as he looked toward the clock. Two in the morning. Two days since he'd buried her. Two eyes looking at the clock, two ears picking up the hum of its electric chronology, two lips pressed together, two hands lying on the bed.

He tried to rid himself of the concept, but everything in the world seemed suddenly to have dropped into a pit of duality, victim to a system of twos. Two people dead, two beds in the room, two windows, two bureaus, two rugs, two hearts that…

His chest filled with night air, held, then pushed it out and sank abruptly. Two days, two hands, two eyes, two legs, two feet…

He sat up and dropped his legs over the edge of the bed.

His feet landed in the puddle of whisky and, he felt it soaking through his socks. A cold breeze was rattling the window blinds.

He stared at the blackness. What's left? he asked himself. What's left, anyway? Wearily he stood up and stumbled into the bathroom, leaving wet tracks behind him. He threw water into his face and fumbled for a towel. What's left? What's...

He stood suddenly rigid in the cold blackness.

Someone was turning the knob on the front door.

He felt a chill move up the back of his neck and his scalp began prickling. It's Ben, he heard his mind offering. He's come for the car keys.

The towel slipped from his fingers and he heard it swish down onto the tiles. His body twitched.

A fist thudded against the door, strengthless, as if it had fallen against the wood. He moved into the living room slowly, his heartbeat thudding heavily.

The door rattled as another fist thudded against it weakly. He felt himself twitch at the sound. What's the matter? he thought. The door is open. From the open window a cold breeze blew across his face. The darkness drew him to the door.

"Who," he murmured, unable to go on.

His hand recoiled from the doorknob as it turned under his fingers. With one step, he backed into the wall and stood there breathing harshly, his widened eyes staring.

Nothing happened. He stood there holding himself rigidly.

Then his breath was snuffed. Someone was mumbling on the porch, muttering words he couldn't hear. He braced himself; then, with a lunge, he jerked open the door and let the moonlight in.
He couldn't even scream. He just stood rooted to the spot, staring dumbly at Virginia. "Rob ... ert," she said.

Chapter Ten

THE SCIENCE ROOM WAS on the second floor. Robert Neville's footsteps thudded hollowly up the marble steps of the Los Angeles Public Library. It was April 7, 1976.

It had come to him, after a half week of drinking, disgust, and desultory investigation, that he was wasting his time. Isolated experiments were yielding nothing, that was clear. If there was a rational answer to the problem (and he had to believe that there was), he could only find it by careful research.
Tentatively, for want of better knowledge, he had set up a possible basis, and that was blood. It provided, at least, a starting point. Step number one, then, was reading about blood.

The silence of the library was complete save for the thudding of his shoes as he walked along the second- floor hallway. Outside, there were birds sometimes and, even lacking that, there seemed to be a sort of sound outside.

Inexplicable, perhaps, but it never seemed as deathly still in the open as it did inside. a building.

Especially here in this giant, gray- stoned building that housed the literature of a world's dead. Probably it was being surrounded by walls, he thought, something purely psychological. But knowing that didn't make it any easier. There were no psychiatrists left to murmur of groundless neuroses and auditory hallucinations. The last man in the world was irretrievably stuck with his delusions.
He entered the Science Room.

It was a high-ceilinged room with tall, large-paned windows. Across from the doorway was the desk where books had been checked out in days when books were still being checked out.

He stood there for a moment looking around the silent room, shaking his head slowly. All these books, he thought, the residue of a planet's intellect, the scrapings of futile minds, the leftovers, the potpourri of artifacts that had no power to save men from perishing.

His shoes clicked across the dark tiles as he walked to the beginning of the shelves on his left. His eyes moved to the cards between the shelf sections. 'Astronomy', he read; books about the heavens. He moved by them. It was not the heavens he was concerned about. Man's lust for the stars had died with the others. 'Physics', 'Chemistry', 'Engineering'. He passed them by and entered the main reading section of the Science Room.

He stopped and looked up at the high ceiling. There were two banks of dead lights overhead and the ceiling was divided into great sunken squares, each square decorated with what lookedlike Indian mosaics. Morning sunlight filtered through the dusty windows and he saw motes floating gently on the current of its beams.

He looked down the row of long wooden tables with chairs lined up before them. Someone had put them in place very neatly. The day the library was shut down, he thought, some maiden librarian had moved down the room, pushing each chair against its table. Carefully, with a plodding precision that was the cachet of herself.
He thought about that visionary lady. To die, he thought, never knowing the fierce joy and attendant comfort of a loved one's embrace. To sink into that hideous coma, to sink them intodeath and, perhaps, return to sterile, awful wanderings. All without knowing what it was to love and be loved.
That was a tragedy more terrible than becoming a vampire.

He shook his head. All right, that's enough, he told himself, you haven't got the time for maudlin reveries. He bypassed books until he came to 'Medicine'. That was what he wanted. He looked through the titles.

Books on hygiene, on anatomy, on physiology (general and specialized), on curative practices. Farther down, on bacteriology.

He pulled out five books on general physiology and several works on blood. These he stacked on one of the dust-surfaced tables. Should he get any of the books on bacteriology? He stood a minute, looking indecisively at the buckram backs.

Finally he shrugged. Well, what's the difference? he thought. They can't do any harm. He pulled out several of them at random and added them to the pile. He now had nine books on the table. That was enough for a start. He expected he'd be coming back.

As he left the Science Room, he looked up at the clock over the door.

The red hands had stopped at four-twenty- seven. He wondered what day they had stopped. As he descended the stairs with his armful of books, he wondered at just what moment the clock had stopped. Had it been morning or night? Was it raining or shining? Was anyone there when it stopped?

He twisted his shoulders irritably. For God's sake, what's the difference? he asked himself. He was getting disgusted at this increasing nostalgic preoccupation with the past. It was a weakness, he knew, a weakness he could scarcely afford if he intended to go on. And yet he kept discovering himself drifting into extensive meditation on aspects of the past. It was almost more than he could control, and it was making him furious with himself.

He couldn't get the huge front doors open from the inside, either; they were too well locked. He had to go out through the broken window again, first dropping the books to the sidewalk one at a time, then himself. He took the books to his car and got in.

As he started the car, he saw that he was parked along a red-painted curb, facing in the wrong direction on a one-way street. He looked up and down the street.

"Policeman!" he found himself calling. "Oh, policeman!"

He laughed for a mile without stopping, wondering just what was so funny about it.

He put down the book. He'd been reading again about the lymphatic system. He vaguely remembered reading about it months before, during the time he now called his 'frenzied period'. But what he'd read had made no impression on him then because he'd had nothing to apply it to.

There seemed to be something there now.

The thin walls of the blood capillaries permitted blood plasma to escape into the tissue spaces along with the red and colorless cells. These escaped materials eventually returned to the blood system through the lymphatic vessels, carried back by the thin fluid called lymph.

During this return flow, the lymph trickled through lymph nodes, which interrupted the flow and filtered out the solid particles of body waste, thus preventing them from entering the blood system.

Now.

There were two things that activated the lymphatic system: (1) breathing, which caused the diaphragm to compress the abdominal contents, thus forcing blood and lymph up against gravity;physical movement, which caused skeletal muscles to compress lymph vessels, thus moving the lymph. An intricate valve system prevented any backing up of the flow.

But the vampires didn't breathe; not the dead ones, anyway. That meant, roughly, that half of their lymph flow was cut off. This meant, further, that a considerable amount of waste products would be left in the vampire's system.

Robert Neville was thinking particularly of the fetid odor of the vampire. He read on

"The bacteria passes into the blood stream, where..."

"—the white corpuscles playing a vital part in our defense against bacteria attack." "Strong sunlight kills many germs rapidly and…"

"Many bacterial diseases of man can be disseminated by the mechanical agency of flies, mosquitoes…"

"— where, under the stimulus of bacterial attack, the phagocytic factories rush extra cells into the blood stream."

He let the book drop forward into his lap and it slipped off, his legs and thumped down on the rug.

It was getting harder and harder to fight, because no matter what he read, there was always the relationship between bacteria and blood affliction. Yet, all this time, he'd been letting contempt fall freely on all those in the past who had died proclaiming the truth of the germ theory and scoffing at vampires.

He got up and made himself a drink. But it sat untouched as he stood before the bar. Slowly, rhythmically, he thudded his right fist down on the top of the bar while his eyes stared bleakly at the wall. Germs.

He grimaced. Well, for God's sake, he snapped jadedly at himself, the word hasn't got thorns, you know. He took a deep breath. All right, he ordered himself, is there any reason why it couldn't be germs?

He turned away from the bar as if he could leave the question there. But questions had no location; they could follow him around.

He sat in the kitchen staring into a steaming cup of coffee. Germs. Bacteria. Viruses. Vampires. Why am I so against it? he thought. Was it just reactionary stubbornness, or was it that the task would loom as too tremendous for him if it were germs?

He didn't know. He started out on a new course, the course of compromise. Why throw out either theory? One didn't necessarily negate the other. Dual acceptance and correlation, he thought. Bacteria could be the answer to the vampire.

Everything seemed to flood over him then. It was as though he'd been the little Dutch boy with his finger in the dike, refusing to let the sea of reason in. There he'd been, crouching and content with his iron-bound theory. Now he'd straightened up and taken his finger out. The sea of answers was already beginning to wash in.

The plague had spread so quickly. Could it have done that if only vampires had spread it? Could their nightly marauding have propelled it on so quickly?

He felt himself jolted by the sudden answer. Only if you accepted bacteria could you explain the fantastic rapidity of the plague, the geometrical mounting of victims.

He shoved aside the coffee cup, his brain pulsing with a dozen different ideas. The flies and mosquitoes had been a part of it. Spreading the disease, causing it to race through the world.

Yes, bacteria explained a lot of things; the staying in by day, the coma enforced by the germ to protect itself from sun radiation.

A new idea: What if the bacteria were the strength of the true vampire? He felt a shudder run down his back. Was it possible that the same germ that killed the living provided the energy for the dead?

He had to know! He jumped up and almost ran out of the house. Then, at the last moment, he jerked back from the door with a nervous laugh. God's sake, he thought, am I going out of my mind? It was nighttime. He grinned and walked restlessly around the living room.

Could it explain the other things? The stake? His mind fell over itself trying to fit that into the framework of bacterial causation. Come on! he shouted impatiently in his mind. But all he could think of was hemorrhage, and that didn't explain that woman. And it wasn't the heart Heskipped it, afraid that his new- found theory would start to collapse before he'd established it. The cross, then. No, bacteria couldn't explain that. The soil; no, that was no help. Runningwater, the mirror, garlic...He felt himself trembling without control and he wanted to cry out loudly to stop the runaway horse of his brain. He had to find something! Goddamn it! he raged in his mind. I won't let it go!

He made himself sit down. Trembling and rigid, he sat there and blanked his mind until calm took over. Good Lord, he thought finally, what's the matter with me? I get an idea, and when it doesn't explain everything in the first minute, I panic. I must be going crazy.

He took that drink now; he needed it. He held up his glass, it was shaking. All right, little boy, he tried kidding himself, calm down now. Santa Claus is coming to town with all the nice answers. No longer will you be a weird Robinson Crusoe, imprisoned on an island of night surrounded by oceans of death.

He snickered at that, and it relaxed him. Colorful, he thought, tasty. The last man in the world is Edgar Guest.

All right, then, he ordered himself, you're going to bed. You're not going to go flying off in twenty different directions. You can't take that any more; you're an emotional misfit.

The first step was to get a microscope. That is the first step, he kept repeating forcefully to himself as he undressed for bed, ignoring the tight ball of indecision in his stomach, the almost painful craving to plunge directly into investigation without any priming.

He almost felt ill, lying there in the darkness and planning just one step ahead. He knew it had to be that way, though. That is the first step, that is the first step. Goddamn your bones, that is the first step.
He grinned in the darkness, feeling good about the definite work ahead.

One thought on the problem he allowed himself before sleeping. The bitings, the insects, the transmission from person to person—were even these enough to explain the horrible speed with which the plague spread?

He went to sleep with the question in his mind. And, about three n the morning, he woke up to find the house buffeted by another dust storm. And suddenly, in the flash of a second, he made the connection.

Chapter Eleven

THE FIRST ONE HE got was worthless.

The base was so poorly leveled that any vibration at all disturbed it. The action of its moving parts was loose to the point of wobbling. The mirror kept moving out of position because its pivots weren't tight enough. Moreover, the instrument had no substage to hold condenser or polarizer. It had only one nosepiece, so that he had to remove the object lens when he wanted any variation in magnification. The lenses were impossible.

But, of course, he knew nothing about microscopes, and he'd taken the first one he'd found. Three days later he hurled it against the wall with a strangled curse and stamped it into pieces with his heels.
Then, when he'd calmed down, he went to the library and got a book on microscopes.

The next time he went out, he didn't come back until he'd found a decent instrument; triple nose stage, substage for condenser and polarizer, good base, smooth movement, iris diaphragm, good lenses. It's just one more example, he told himself, of the stupidity of starting off half-cocked. Yeah, yeah, yeah, he answered disgustedly.

He forced himself to spend a good amount of time familiarizing himself with the instrument. He fiddled with the mirror until he could direct a beam of light on the object in a matter of seconds. He acquainted himself with the lenses, varying from a three- inch power to a one-twelfth- inch power. In the case of the latter, he learned to place a drop of cedar-wood oil on the slide, then rack down until the lens touched the oil. He broke thirteen slides doing it.

Within three days of steady attention, he could manipulate the milled adjustment heads rapidly, could control the iris diaphragm and condenser to get exactly the right amount of light on the slide, and was soon getting a sharply defined clarity with the ready- made slides he'd got. He never knew a flea looked so godawful.

Next came mounting, a process much more difficult, he soon discovered. No matter how he tried, he couldn't seem to keep dust particles out of the mount. When he looked at them in the microscope, it looked as if he were examining boulders.

It was especially difficult because of the dust storms, which still occurred on an average of once every four days. He was ultimately obliged to build a shelter over the bench.

He also learned to be systematic while experimenting with the mounts. He found that continually searching for things allowed that much more time for dust to accumulate on his slides. Grudgingly, almost amused, he soon had a place for everything. Glass slips, cover glasses, pipettes, cells, forceps, Petri dishes, needles, chemicals—all were placed in systematic locations.

He found, to his surprise, that he actually gleaned pleasure from practicing orderliness. I guess I got old Fritz's blood in me, after all, he thought once in amusement.
Then he got a specimen of blood from a woman.

It took him days to get a few drops properly mounted in a cell, the cell properly centered on the slide.
For a while he thought he'd never get it right. But then the morning came when, casually, as if it were only of minor import, he put histhirty-seventh slide of blood under the lens, turned on the spotlight, adjusted the draw tube and mirror, racked down and
adjusted the diaphragm and condenser. Every secon hat passed seemed to increase the heaviness of his heartbeat, for somehow he knew this was the time.

The moment arrived; his breath caught. It wasn't a virus, then. You couldn't see a virus. And there, fluttering on the slide, was a germ. I dub thee vampiris. The words crept across his mind as he stood looking down into the eyepiece.

By checking in one of the bacteriology texts, he'd found that the cylindrical bacterium he saw was a bacillus, a tiny rod of protoplasm that moved itself through the blood by means of tiny threads that projected from the cell envelope. These hairlike flagella lashed vigorously at the fluid medium and propelled the bacillus.

For a long time he stood looking into the microscope, unable to think or continue with the investigation. All he could think was that here, on the slide, was the cause of the vampire. All the centuries of fearful superstition had been felled in the moment he had seen the germ.

The scientists had been right, then; there were bacteria involved. It had taken him, Robert Neville, thirty-six, survivor, to complete the inquest and announce the murderer—the germ within the vampire.

Suddenly a massive weight of despair fell over him. To have the answer now when it was too late was a crushing blow. He tried desperately to fight the depression, but it held on. He didn't know where to start, he felt utterly helpless before the problem. How could he ever hope to cure those still living? He didn't know anything about bacteria.

Well, I will know! he raged inside. And he forced himself to study.

Certain kinds of bacilli, when conditions became unfavorable for life, were capable of creating, from themselves, bodies called spores. What they did was condense their cell contents into an oval body with a thick wall. This body, when completed, detached itself from the bacillus and became a free spore, highly resistant to physical and chemical change. Later, when conditions were more favorable for survival, the spore germinated again, bringing into existence all the qualities of the original bacillus.

Robert Neville stood before the sink, eyes closed, hands clasped tightly at the edge. Something there, he told himself forcefully, something there. But what?

Suppose, he predicated, the vampire got no blood. Conditions then for the vampiris bacillus would be unfavorable.

Protecting itself, the germ sporulates; the vampire sinks into a coma. Finally, when conditions become favorable again, the vampire walks again, its body still the same.

But how would the germ know if blood were available? He slammed a fist on the sink in anger. He read again. There was still something there. He felt it.

Bacteria, when not properly fed, metabolized abnormally and produced bacteriophages (inanimate, self-reproducing proteins). These bacteriophages destroyed the bacteria.

When no blood came in, the bacilli would metabolize abnormally, absorb water, and swell up, ultimately to explode and destroy all cells.

Sporulation again; it had to fit in.

All right, suppose the vampire didn't go into a coma. Suppose its body decomposed without blood. The germ still might sporulate and—Yes! The dust storms!

The freed spores would be blown about by the storms. They could lodge in minute skin abrasions caused by the scaling dust. Once in the skin, the spore could germinate and multiplyby fission. As this multiplication progressed, the surrounding tissues would be destroyed, the channels plugged with bacilli. Destruction of tissue cells and bacilli would liberate poisonous, decomposed bodies into surrounding healthy tissues. Eventually the poisons would reach the blood stream.

Process complete.

And all without blood-eyed vampires hovering over heroines' beds. All without bats fluttering against estate windows, all without the supernatural.

The vampire was real. It was only that his true story had never been told. Considering that, Neville recounted the historical plagues.

He thought about the fall of Athens. That had been very much like the plague of 1975. Before anything could be done, the city had fallen. Historians wrote of bubonic plague. Robert Neville was inclined to believe that the vampire had caused it.

No, not the vampire. For now, it appeared, that prowling, vulpine ghost was as much a tool of the germ as the living innocents who were originally afflicted. It was the germ that was the villain. The germ that hid behind obscuring veils of legend and superstition, spreading its scourge while people cringed before their own fears.

And what of the Black Plague, that horrible blight that swept across Europe, leaving in its wake a toll of three fourths of the population?

Vampires?

By ten that night, his head ached and his eyes felt like hot blobs of gelatin. He discovered that he was ravenous. He got a steak from the freezer, and while it was broiling he took a fast shower.

He jumped a little when a rock hit the side of the house. Then he grinned wryly. He'd been so absorbed all day that he'd forgotten about the pack of them that prowled around his house.

While he was drying himself, he suddenly realized that he didn't know what portion of the vampires who came nightly were physically alive and what portion were activated entirely by the germ. Odd, he thought, that he didn't know. There had to be both kinds, because some of them he shot without success, while others had been destroyed. He assumed that the dead ones could somehow withstand bullets.

Which brought up another point. Why did the living ones come to his house? Why just those few and not everyone in that area?

He had a glass of wine with his steak and was amazed how flavorsome everything was. Food usually tasted like wood to him. I must have worked up an appetite today, he thought.

Furthermore, he hadn't had a single drink. Even more fantastic, he hadn't wanted one. He shook his head. It was painfully obvious that liquor was an emotional solace to him.

The steak he finished to the bone, and he even chewed on that. Then he took the rest of the wine into the living room, turned on the record player, and sat down in his chair with a tired grunt.

He sat listening to Ravel's Daphnis and Chloe Suites One and Two, all the lights off except the spotlight on the woods. He managed to forget all about vampires for a while.

Later, though, he couldn't resist taking another look in the microscope.

You bastard, he thought, almost affectionately, watching the minuscule protoplasm fluttering on the slide. You dirty little bastard.

Chapter Twelve

THE NEXT DAY STANK.

The sun lamp killed the germs on the slide, but that didn't explain anything to him. He mixed allyl sulphide with the germ-ridden blood and nothing happened. The allylsulphide was absorbed, the germs still lived.

He paced nervously around the bedroom.

Garlic kept them away and blood was the fulcrum of their existence. Yet, mix the essence of garlic with the blood and nothing happened. His hands closed into angry fists.

Wait a minute; that blood was from one of the living ones.

An hour later he had a sample of the other kind. He mixed it with allyl sulphide and looked at it through the microscope. Nothing happened.

Lunch stuck in his throat.

What about the stake, then? All he could think of was hemorrhage, and he knew it wasn't that. That damned woman.

He tried half the afternoon to think of something concrete. Finally, with a snarl, he knocked the microscope over and stalked into the living room. He thudded down onto the chair and sat there, tapping impatient fingers on the arm.

Brilliant, Neville, he thought. You're uncanny. Go to the head of the class. He sat there, biting a knuckle. Let's face it, he thought miserably, I lost my mind a long time ago. I can't think two days in succession without having seams come loose. I'm useless, worthless, without value, a dud.

All right, he replied with a shrug, that settles it. Let's get back to the problem. So he did. There are certain things established, he lectured himself. There is a germ, it's transmitted, sunlight kills it, garlic is effective. Some vampires sleep in soil, the stake destroys them. They
don't turn into wolves or bats, but certain animals acquire the germ and become
vampires. All right.
He made a list. One column he headed "Bacilli," the other he headed with a question mark.
He began.

The cross. No, that couldn't have anything to do with the bacilli. If anything, it was psychological.

The soil. Could there be something in the soil that affected the germ? No. How would it get in the blood stream? Besides, very few of them slept in the soil.
His throat moved as he added the second item to the column headed by a question mark. Running water. Could it be absorbed porously and…

No, that was stupid. They came out in the rain, and they wouldn't if it harmed them. Another notation in the right-hand column. His hand shook a little as he entered it.

Sunlight. He tried vainly to glean satisfaction from putting down one item in the desired column.
The stake. No. His throat moved. Watch it, he warned. The mirror. For God's sake, how could a mirror have anything to do with germs? His hasty scrawl in the right-hand column washardly legible. His hand shook a little more.

Garlic. He sat there, teeth gritted. He had to add at least one more item to the bacilli column; it was almost a point of honor. He struggled over the last item. Garlic, garlic. It must affect the germ. But how?

He started to write in the right- hand column, but before he could finish, fury came from far down like lava shooting up to the crest of a volcano.
Damn!

He crumpled the paper into a ball in his fist and hurled it away. He stood up, rigid and frenzied, looking around. He wanted to break things, anything. So you thought your frenzied period was over, did you! he yelled at himself, lurching forward to fling over the bar.

Then he caught himself and held back. No, no, don't get started, he begged. Two shaking hands ran through his lank blond hair. His throat moved convulsively and he shuddered with the repressed craving for violence.

The sound of the whisky gurgling into the glass angered him. He turned the bottle upside down and the whisky spurted out in great gushes, splashing up the sides of the glass and over onto the mahogany top of the bar.

He swallowed the whole glassful at once, head thrown back, whisky running out the edges of his mouth. I'm an animal! he exulted. I'm a dumb, stupid animal and I'm going to drink!

He emptied the glass, then flung it across the room. It bounced off the bookcase and rolled across the rug. Oh, so you won't break, won't you! he rasped inside his head, leaping across the rug to grind the glass into splinters under his heavy shoes.

Then he spun and stumbled to the bar again. He filled another glass and poured the contents down his throat. I wish I had a pipe with whisky in it! he thought. I'd connect a goddamn hose to it and flush whisky down me until it came out my ears! Until I floated in it!

He flung away the glass. Too slow, too slow, damn it! He drank directly from the uptilted bottle, gulping furiously, hating himself, punishing himself with the whisky burning down his rapidly swallowing throat.

I'll choke myself! he stormed. I'll strangle myself, I'll drown myself in whisky! Like Clarence in his malmsey, I'll die, die, die!

He hurled the empty bottle across the room and it shattered on the wall mural. Whisky ran down the tree trunks and onto the ground. He lurched across the room and picked up a piece of the broken bottle. He slashed at the mural and the jagged edge sliced through the scene and peeled it away from the wall. There! he thought, his breath like steam escaping. That for you!

He flung the glass away, then looked down as he felt dull pain in his fingers. He'd sliced open the flesh.

Good! he exulted viciously, and pressed on each side of the slices until the blood ran out and fell in big drops on the rug. Bleed to death, you stupid, worthless bastard!

An hour later he was totally drunk, lying flat on the floor with a vacuous smile on his face. World's gone to hell. No germs, no science. World's fallen to the supernatural, it's asupernatural world. Harper's Bizarre and Saturday Evening Ghost and Ghoul Housekeeping. 'Young Dr. Jekyll' and 'Dracula's Other Wife' and 'Death Can Be Beautiful'. 'Don't be half-staked' and Smith Brothers' Coffin Drops.

He stayed drunk for two days and planned on staying drunk till the end of time or the world's whisky supply, whichever came first.

And he might have done it, too, if it hadn't been for a miracle.

It happened on the third morning, when he stumbled out onto the porch to see if the world was still there. There was a dog roving about on the lawn.

The second it heard him open the front door, it stopped snuffling over the grass, its head jerked up in sudden fright, and it bounded off to the side with a twitch of scrawny limbs.

For a moment Robert Neville was so shocked he couldn't move. He stood petrified, staring at the dog, which was limping quickly across the street, its ropelike tail pulled between its legs.

It was alive! In the daytime! He lurched forward with a dull cry and almost pitched on his face on the lawn. His legs pistoned, his arms flailed for balance. Then he caught himself and started running after thedog.

"Hey!" he called, his hoarse voice breaking the silence of Cimarron Street. "Come back here!"

His shoes thudded across the sidewalk and off the curb, every step driving a battering ram into his head. His heart pulsed heavily.

"Hey!" he called again. "Come 'ere, boy."

Across the street, the dog scrambled unsteadily along the sidewalk, its right hind leg curled up, its dark claws clicking on the cement.

"Come 'ere, boy, I won't hurt you!" Robert Neville called out.

Already he had a stitch in his side and his head throbbed with pain as he ran. The dog stopped a moment and looked back. Then it darted in between two houses, and for a moment Neville saw it from the side. It was brown and white, breedless, its left ear hanging in shreds, its gaunt body wobbling as it ran.

"Don't run away!"

He didn't hear the shrill quiver of hysteria in his voice as he screamed out the words. His throat choked up as the dog disappeared between the houses. With a grunt of fear he hobbled on faster, ignoring the pain of hangover, everything lost in the need to catch that dog.

But when he got into the back yard the dog was gone.

He ran to the redwood fence and looked over. Nothing. He twisted back suddenly to see if the dog were going back out the way it had entered.

There was no dog.

For an hour he wandered around the neighborhood on trembling legs, searching vainly, calling out every few moments, "Come 'ere, boy, come 'ere."

At last he stumbled home, his face a mask of hopeless dejection. To come across a living being, after all this time to find a companion, and then to lose it. Even if it was only a dog. Only a dog? To Robert Neville that dog was the peak of a planet's evolution.

He couldn't eat or drink anything. He found himself so ill and trembling at the shock and the loss that he had to lie down. But he couldn't sleep. He lay there shaking feverishly, his head moving from side to side on the flat pillow.

"Come 'ere, boy," he kept muttering without realizing it. "Come 'ere, boy, I won't hurt you." In the afternoon he searched again. For two blocks in each direction from his house hesearched each yard, each street, each individual house. But he found nothing.

When he got home, about five, he put out a bowl of milk and a piece of hamburger. He put a ring of garlic bulbs around it, hoping the vampires wouldn't touch it.

But later it came to him that the dog must be afflicted too, and the garlic would keep it away also. He couldn't understand that. If the dog had the germ,how could it roam outdoors during the daylight hours? Unless it had

such a small dosing of bacilli in its veins that it wasn't reallyaffected yet. But, if that were true, how had it survived the nightly attacks?

Oh, my God, the thought came then, what if it comes back tonight for the meat and they kill it? What if he went out the next morning and found the dog's body on the lawn and knew that he was responsible for its death? I couldn't take that, he thought miserably. I'll blow out my brains if that happens, I swear Iwill.

The thought dredged up again the endless enigma of why he went on. All right, there were a few possibilities for experiment now, but life was still a barren, cheerless trial. Despite everything he had or might have (except, of course, another human being), life gave no promise of improvement or even of change. The way things shaped up, he would live out his life with no more than he already had. And how many years was that? Thirty, maybe forty if he didn't drink himself to death.

The thought of forty more years of living as he was made him shudder.

And yet he hadn't killed himself. True, he hardly treated his body welfare with reverence. He didn't eat properly, drink properly, sleep properly, or do anything properly. His health wasn't going to last indefinitely; he was already cheating the percentages, he suspected.

But using his body carelessly wasn't suicide. He'd never even approached suicide. Why? There seemed no answer. He wasn't resigned to anything, he hadn't accepted or adjusted to

the life he'd been forced into. Yet here he was, eight months after the plague's last victim, nine since he'd spoken to another human being, ten since Virginia had died. Here he was with no future and a virtually hopeless present. Still plodding on.

Instinct? Or was he just stupid? Too unimaginative to destroy himself? Why hadn't he done it in the beginning, when he was in the very depths? What had impelled him to enclose the house, install a freezer, a generator, an electric stove, a water tank, build a hothouse, a workbench, burn down the houses on each side of his, collect records and books and mountains of canned supplies, even—it was fantastic when you thought about it—even put a fancy mural on the wall?

Was the life force something more than words, a tangible, mind-controlling potency? Was nature somehow, in him, maintaining its spark against its own encroachments?

He closed his eyes. Why think, why reason? There was no answer. His continuance was an accident and an attendant bovinity. He was just too dumb to end it all, and that was about the size of it.

Later he glued up the sliced mural and put it back into place. The slits didn't show too badly unless he stood very close to the paper.

He tried briefly to get back to the problem of the bacilli, but he realized that he couldn't concentrate on anything except the dog. To his complete astonishment, he later found himself offering up a stumbling prayer that the dog would be protected. It was a moment in which he felt a desperate need to believe in a God that shepherded his own creations. But, even praying, he felt a twinge of self-reproach, and knew he might start mocking his own prayer at any second.

Somehow, though, he managed to ignore his iconoclastic self and went on praying

anyway. Because he wanted the dog, because he needed the dog.

Chapter Thirteen

IN THE MORNING WHEN he went outside he found that the milk and hamburger were gone.

His eyes rushed over the lawn. There were two women crumpled on the grass but the dog wasn't there. A breath of relief passed his lips. Thank God for that, he thought. Then he grinned to himself. If I were religious now, he thought, I'd find in this a vindication of my prayer.

Immediately afterward he began berating himself for not being awake when the dog had come. It must have been after dawn, when the streets were safe. The dog must have evolved a system to have lived so long. But he should have been awake to watch.

He consoled himself with the hope that he was winning the dog over, if only with food. He was briefly worried by the idea that the vampires had taken the food, and not the dog. But a quick check ended that fear. The hamburger had not been lifted over the garlic ring, but dragged through it along the cement of the porch.

And all around the bowl were tiny milk splashes, still moist, that could have been made only by a dog's lapping tongue.

Before he had breakfast he put out more milk and more hamburger, placing them in the shade so the milk wouldn't get too warm. After a moment's deliberation he also put out a bowl of cold water.

Then, after eating, he took the two women to the fire and, returning, stopped at a market and picked up two dozen cans of the best dog food as well as boxes of dog biscuit, dog candy, dog soap, flea powder, and a wire brush.

Lord, you'd think I was having a baby or something, he thought as he struggled back to the car with his arms full. A grin faltered on his lips. Why pretend? he thought. I'm more excited than I've been in a year. The eagerness he'd felt upon seeing the germ in his microscope was nothing compared with what he felt about the dog.

He drove home at eighty miles an hour, and he couldn't help a groan of disappointment when he saw that the meat and drink were untouched. Well, what the hell do you expect? he asked himself sarcastically. The dog can't eat every hour on the hour.

Putting down the dog food and equipment on the kitchen table, he looked at his watch. Ten fifteen. The dog would be back when it got hungry again. Patience, he told himself. Get yourself at least one virtue, anyway.

He put away the cans and boxes. Then he checked the outside of the house and the hothouse. There was a loose board to fasten and a pane to repair on the hothouse roof.

While he collected garlic bulbs, he wondered once again why the vampires had never set fire to his house. It seemed such an obvious tactic. Was it possible they were afraid of matches? Or was it that they were just too stupid? After all, their brains could not be so fully operative as they had been before. The change from life to mobile death must have involved some tissue deterioration.

No, that theory wasn't any good, because there were living ones around his house at night too. Nothing was wrong with their brains, was there?

He skipped it. He was in no mood for problems. He spent the rest of the morning preparing and hanging garlic strands. Once he wondered about the fact that garlic bulbs worked. In legend it was always the blossoms of the garlic plant. He shrugged. What was the difference? The proof of the garlic was in its chasing ability. He imagined that the blossoms would work too.

After lunch he sat at the peephole looking out at the bowls and the plate. There was no sound anywhere except for the almost inaudible humming of the air-conditioning units in the bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen. The dog came at four. Neville had almost fallen into a doze as he sat there before the peephole. Then his eyes blinked and focused as the dog came hobbling slowly across the street, looking at the house with white- rimmed, cautious eyes. He wondered what was wrong with the dog's paw. He wanted very much to fix it and get the dog's affection. Shades of Androcles, he thought in the gloom of his house.

He forced himself to sit still and watch. It was incredible, the feeling of warmth and normality it gave him to see the dog slurping up the milk and eating the hamburger, its jaws snapping and popping with relish. He sat there with a gentle smile on his face, a smile he wasn't conscious of. It was such a nice dog. His throat swallowed convulsively as the dog finished eating and started away from the porch. Jumping up from the stool, he moved quickly for the front door.

Then he held himself back. No, that wasn't the way, he decided reluctantly. You'll just scare him if you go out. Let him go now, let him go.

He went back to the peephole and watched the dog wobbling across the street and moving in between those two houses again. He felt a tightness in his throat as he watched it leave. It's all right, he soothed himself, he'll be back.

He turned away from the peephole and made himself a mild drink. Sitting in the chair and sipping slowly, he wondered where the dog went at night. At first he'd been worried about not having it in the house with him. But then he'd realized that the dog must be a master at hiding itself to have lasted so long. It was probably, he thought, one of those freak accidents that followed no percentage law.

Somehow, by luck, by coincidence, maybe by a little skill, that one dog had survived the plague and the grisly victims of the plague.

That started him thinking. If a dog, with its limited intelligence, could manage to subsist through it all, wouldn't a person with a reasoning brain have that much more chance for survival?

He made himself think about something else. It was dangerous to hope. That was a truism he had long accepted.

The next morning the dog came again. This time Robert Neville opened the front door and went out. The dog immediately bolted away from the dish and bowls, right ear flattened back, legs scrambling frantically across the street.

Neville twitched with the repressed instinct to pursue.

As casually as he could manage, he sat down on the edge of the porch.

Across the street the dog ran between the houses again and disappeared. After fifteen minutes of sitting, Neville went in again.

After a small breakfast he put out more food.

The dog came at four and Neville went out again, this time making sure that the dog was finished eating. Once more the dog fled. But this time, seeing that it was not pursued, it stopped across thestreet and looked back for a moment.

"It's all right, boy," Neville called out, but at the sound of his voice the dog ran away again. Neville sat on the porch stiffly, teeth gritted with impatience. Goddamn it, what's the matterwith him? he thought. The damn mutt!

He forced himself to think of what the dog must have gone through. The endless nights of groveling in the blackness, hidden God knew where, its gaunt chest laboring in the night while all around its shivering form the vampires walked. The foraging for food and water, the struggle for life in a world without masters, housed in a body that man had made dependent on himself.

Poor little fella, he thought, I'll be good to you when you come and live with me.

Maybe, the thought came then, a dog had more chance of survival than a human. Dogs were smaller, they could hide in places the vampires couldn't go. They could probably sense the alien nature of those about them, probably smell it.

That didn't make him any happier. For always, in spite of reason, he had clung to the hope that someday he would find someone like himself—a man, a woman, a child, it didn't matter. Sex was fast losing its meaning without the endless prodding of mass hypnosis. Loneliness he still felt.

Sometimes he had indulged in daydreams about finding someone. More often, though, he had tried to adjust to what he sincerely believed was the inevitable—that he was actually the only one left in the world. At least in as much of the world as he could ever hope to know.

Thinking about it, he almost forgot that nightfall was approaching.

With a start he looked up and saw Ben Cortman running at him from across the street. "Neville!"

He jumped up from the porch and ran into the house, locking and bolting the door behind him with shaking hands.

For a certain period he went out on the porch just as the dog had finished eating. Every time he went out the dog ran away, but as the days passed it ran with decreasing speed, and soon it was stopping halfway across the street to look back and bark at him. Neville never followed, but sat down on the porch and watched. It was a game they played.

Then one day Neville sat on the porch before the dog came. And, when it appeared across the street, he remained seated.

For about fifteen minutes the dog hovered near the curb suspiciously, unwilling to approach the food. Neville edged as far away from the food as he could in order to encourage the dog. Unthinking, he crossed his legs, and the dog shrank away at the unexpected motion. Neville held himself quietly then and the dog kept moving around restlessly in the street, its eyes moving from Neville to the food and back again.

"Come on, boy," Neville said to it. "Eat your food, that's a good dog."

Another ten minutes passed. The dog was now on the lawn, moving in concentric arcs that became shorter and shorter.

The dog stopped. Then slowly, very slowly, one paw at a time, it began moving up on the dish and bowls, its eyes never leaving Neville for a second.

"That's the boy," Neville said quietly.

This time the dog didn't flinch or back away at the sound of his voice. Still Neville made sure he sat motionless so that no abrupt movement would startle the dog.

The dog moved yet closer, stalking the plate, its body tense and waiting for the least motionfrom Neville. "That's right," Neville told the dog.

Suddenly the dog darted in and grabbed the meat. Neville's pleased laughter followed its frantically erratic wobble across the street.

"You little son of a gun," he said appreciatively.

Then he sat and watched the dog as it ate. It crouched down on a yellow lawn across the street, its eyes on Neville while it wolfed down the hamburger. Enjoy it, he thought, watching the dog. From now on you get dog food. I can't afford to let you have any more fresh meat. When the dog had finished it straightened up and came across the street again, a little less hesitantly. Neville still sat there, feeling his heart thud nervously. The dog was beginning to

trust him, and somehow it made him tremble. He sat there, his eyes fastened on the dog. "That's right, boy," he heard himself saying aloud. "Get your water now, that's a good dog." A sudden smile of delight raised his lips as he saw the dog's good ear stand up. He'slistening! he thought excitedly. He hears what I say, the little son of a gun!

"Come on, boy." He went on talking eagerly. "Get your water and your milk now, that's a good boy. I won't hurt you. Atta boy."

The dog went to the water and drank gingerly, its head lifting with sudden jerks to watch him, then dipping down again.

"I'm not doing anything," Neville told the dog.

He couldn't get over how odd his voice sounded. When a man didn't hear the sound of his own voice for almost a year, it sounded very strange to him. A year was a long time to live in silence. When you come live with me, he thought, I'll talk your ear off. The dog finished the water.

"Come 'ere, boy." Neville said invitingly, patting his leg. "Comeon."

The dog looked at him curiously, its good ear twitching again. Those eyes, Neville thought. What a world of feeling in those eyes! Distrust, fear, hope, loneliness—all etched in those big brown eyes. Poor little guy. "Come on, boy, I won't hurt you," he said gently.

Then he stood up and the dog ran away. Neville stood there looking at the fleeing dog shaking his head slowly.

More days passed. Each day Neville sat on the porch while the dog ate, and before long the dog approached the dish and bowls without hesitation, almost boldly, with the assurance of the dog that knows its human conquest.

And all the time Neville would talk to it.

"That's a good boy. Eat up the food. That's good food, isn't it? Sure it is. I'm your friend. I gave you that food. Eat it up, boy, that's right. That's a good dog," endlessly cajoling, praising, pouring soft words into the dog's frightened mind as it ate.

And every day he sat a little bit closer to it, until the day came when he could have reachedout and touched the dog if he'd stretched a little. He didn't, though. I'm not taking any chances, he told himself. I don't want to scare him.

But it was hard to keep his hands still. He could almost feel them twitching empathically with his strong desire to reach out and stroke the dog's head. He had such a terrible yearning to love something again, and the dog was such a beautifully ugly dog.

He kept talking to the dog until it became quite used to the sound of his voice. It hardly looked up now when he spoke. It came and went without trepidation, eating and barking its curt acknowledgment from across the

street. Soon now, Neville told himself, I'll be able to pat hishead. The days passed into pleasant weeks, each hour bringing him closer to a companion.
Then one day the dog didn't come.

Neville was frantic. He'd got so used to the dog's coming and going that it had become the fulcrum of his daily schedule, everything fitting around the dog's mealtimes, investigation forgotten, everything pushed aside but his desire to have the dog in his house.

He spent a nerve-racked afternoon searching the neighborhood, calling out in a loud voice for the dog. But no amount of searching helped, and he went home to a tasteless dinner. The dog didn't come for dinner that night or for breakfast the next morning. Again Neville searched, but with less hope. They've got him, he kept hearing the words in his mind, the dirty bastards have got him. But he couldn't really believe it. He wouldn't let himself believe it.

On the afternoon of the third day he was in the garage when he heard the sound of the metal bowl clinking outside. With a gasp he ran out into the daylight.
"You're back!" he cried.
The dog jerked away from the plate nervously, water dripping from its jaws.

Neville's heart leaped. The dog's eyes were glazed and it was panting for breath, its dark tongue hanging out.
"No," he said, his voice breaking. "Oh, no."

The dog still backed across the lawn on trembling stalks of legs. Quickly Neville sat down on the porch steps and stayed there trembling. Oh, no, he thought in anguish, oh, God, no.
He sat there watching it tremble fitfully as it lapped up the water. No. No. It's not
true. "Not true," he murmured without realizing it.

Then, instinctively, he reached out his hand. The dog drew back a little, teeth bared in a throaty snarl. "It's all right, boy," Neville said quietly. "I won't hurt you." He didn't even know what he was saying.

He couldn't stop the dog from leaving. He tried to follow it, but it was gone before he could discover where it hid. He'd decided it must be under a house somewhere, but that didn't do him any good.

He couldn't sleep that night. He paced restlessly, drinking pots of coffee and cursing the sluggishness of time. He had to get hold of the dog, he had to. And soon. He had to cure it.

But how? His throat moved. There had to be a way. Even with the little he knew there must be a way.

The next morning he sat tight beside the bowl and he felt his lips shaking as the dog came limping slowly across the street. It didn't eat anything. Its eyes were more dull and listless than they'd been the day before. Neville wanted to jump at it and try to grab hold of it, take it in the house, nurse it.

But he knew that if he jumped and missed he might undo everything. The dog might never return.

All through the meal his hand kept twitching out to pat the dog's head. But every time it did, the dog cringed away with a snarl. He tried being forceful. "Stop that!" he said in a firm, angry tone, but that only frightened the dog more and it drew away farther from him. Neville had to talk to it for fifteen minutes, his voice a hoarse, trembling sound, before the dog would return to the water.
This time he managed to follow the slow- moving dog and saw which house it squirmed under. There was a little metal screen he could have put up over the opening, but he didn't. He didn't want to frighten the dog. And besides, there would be no way of getting the dog thenexcept through the floor, and that would take too long. He had to get the dog fast.

When the dog didn't return that afternoon, he took a dish of milk and put it under the house where the dog was. The next morning the bowl was empty. He was going to put more milk in it when he realized that the dog might never leave his lair then. He put the bowl back in front of his house and prayed that the dog was strong enough to reach it. He was too warned even to criticize his inept prayer.

When the dog didn't come that afternoon he went back and looked in. He paced back and forth outside the opening and almost put milk there anyway. No, the dog would never leave then.

He went home and spent a sleepless night. The dog didn't come in the morning. Again he went to the house. He listened at the opening but couldn't hear any sound of breathing. Either it was too far back for him to hear or…

He went back to the house and sat on the porch. He didn't have breakfast or lunch. He just sat there.

That afternoon, late, the dog came limping out between the houses, moving slowly on its bony legs. Neville forced himself to sit there without moving until the dog had reached the food. Then, quickly, he reached down and picked up the dog.

Immediately it tried to snap at him, but he caught its jaws in his tight hand and held them together. its lean, almost hairless body squirmed feebly in his grasp and pitifully terrified whines pulsed in its throat.

"It's all tight," he kept saying. "It's all right, boy."

Quickly he took it into his room and put it down on the little bed of blankets he'd arranged for the dog. As soon as he took his hand off its jaws the dog snapped at him and he jerked his hand back. The dog lunged over the linoleum with a violent scrabbling of paws, heading for the door. Neville jumped up and blocked its way. The dog's legs slipped on the smooth surface, then it got a little traction and disappeared under the bed.

Neville got on his knees and looked under the bed. In the gloom there he saw the two glowing coals of eyes and heard the fitful panting.

"Come on, boy," he pleaded unhappily. "I won't hurt you. You're sick. You need help." The dog wouldn't budge. With a groan Neville got up finally and went out, closing the door behind him. He went and got the bowls and filled them with milk and water. He put them in thebedroom near the dog's bed.

He stood by his own bed a moment, listening to the panting dog, his face lined with pain. "Oh," he muttered plaintively, "why don't you trust me?"

He was eating dinner when he heard the horrible crying and whining.

Heart pounding, he jumped up from the table and raced across the living room. He threw open the bedroom door and flicked on the light.

Over in the corner by the bench the dog was trying to dig a hole in the floor.

Terrified whines shook its body as its front paws clawed frenziedly at the linoleum, slipping futilely on the smoothness of it.

"Boy, it's all right!" Neville said quickly.

The dog jerked around and backed into the corner, hackles rising, jaws drawn back all the way from its yellowish-white teeth, a half- mad sound quivering in its throat.

Suddenly Neville knew what was wrong. It was nighttime and the terrified dog was trying todig itself a hole to bury itself in.

He stood there helplessly, his brain refusing to work properly as the dog edged away from the corner, then scuttled underneath the workbench.

An idea finally came. Neville moved to his bed quickly and pulled off the top blanket. Returning to the bench, he crouched down and looked under it.

The dog was almost flattened against the wall, its body shaking violently, guttural snarls bubbling in its throat.

"All right, boy," he said. "All right."

The dog shrank back as Neville stuck the blanket underneath the bench and then stood up. Neville went over to the door and remained there a minute looking back. If only I could do something, he thought helplessly. But I can't even get close to him.

Well, he decided grimly, if the dog didn't accept him soon, he'd have to try a little chloroform. Then he could at least work on the dog, fix its paw and try somehow to cure it.

He went back to the kitchen but he couldn't eat. Finally he dumped the contents of his plate into the garbage disposal and poured the coffee back into the pot. In the living room he made himself a drink and downed it. It tasted flat and unappetizing. He put down the glass and. went back to the bedroom with a somber face.

The dog had dug itself under the folds of the blanket and there it was still shaking, whining ceaselessly. No use trying to work on it now, he thought; it's too frightened.

He walked back to the bed and sat down. He ran his hands through his hair and then put them over his face. Cure it, cure it, he thought, and one of his hands bunched into a fist to strike feebly at the mattress.

Reaching out abruptly, he turned off the light and lay down fully clothed. Still lying down, he worked off his sandals and listened to them thump on the floor.

Silence. He lay there staring at the ceiling. Why don't I get up? he wondered. Why don't I try to do something?

He turned on his side. Get some sleep. The words came automatically. He knew he wasn't going to sleep, though. He lay in the darkness listening to the dog's whimpering.

Die, it's going to die, he kept thinking, there's nothing in the world I can do.

At last, unable to bear the sound, he reached over and switched on the bedside lamp. As he moved across the room in his stocking feet, he heard the dog trying suddenly to jerk loose from the blanketing. But it got all tangled up in the folds and began yelping, terror-stricken, while its body flailed wildly under the wool.

Neville knelt beside it and put his hands on its body. He heard the choking snarl and the muffled click of its teeth as it snapped at him through the blanket.

"All right," he said. "Stop it now."

The dog kept struggling against him, its high-pitched whining never stopping, its gaunt body shaking without control. Neville kept his hands firmly on its body, pinning it down, talking to it quietly, gently.

"It's all right now, fella, all right. Nobody's going to hurt you. Take it easy, now. Come on, relax, now. Come on, boy. Take it easy. Relax. That's right, relax. That's it. Calm down. Nobody's going to hurt you. We'll take care of you."

He went on talking intermittently for almost an hour, his voice a low, hypnotic murmuring in the silence of the room. And slowly, hesitantly, the dog's trembling eased off. A smile faltered on Neville's lips as he went on talking, talking.

"That's right. Take it easy, now. We'll take care of you."

Soon the dog lay still beneath his strong hands, the only movement its harsh breathing.

Neville began patting its head, began running his right hand over its body, stroking and soothing.

"That's a good dog," he said softly. "Good dog. I'll take care of you now. Nobody will hurt you.

You

understand, don't you, fella? Sure you do. Sure. You're my dog, aren't

you?" Carefully he sat down on the cool linoleum, still patting the dog.

"You're a good dog, a good dog."

His voice was calm, it was quiet with resignation.

After about an hour he picked up the dog. For a moment it struggled and started whining, but Neville talked to it again and it soon calmed down.

He sat down on his bed and held the blanket-covered dog in his lap. He sat there for hours holding the dog, patting and stroking and talking. The dog lay immobile in his lap, breathing easier.

It was about eleven that night when Neville slowly undid the blanket folds and exposed the dog's head.

For a few minutes it cringed away from his hand, snapping a little. But he kept talking to it quietly, and after a while his hand rested on the warm neck and he was moving his fingers gently, scratching and caressing.

He smiled down at the dog, his throat moving.

"You'll be all better soon," he whispered. "Real soon." The dog looked up at him with its dulled, sick eyes and then its tongue faltered out and licked roughly and moistly across the palm of Neville's hand.

Something broke in Neville's throat. He sat there silently while tears ran slowly down his cheeks.

In a week the dog was dead.

Chapter Fourteen

THERE WAS NO DEBAUCH of drinking. Far from it. He found that he actually drank less. Something had changed. Trying to analyze it, he came to the conclusion that his last drunk had put him on the bottom, at the very nadir of frustrated despair. Now, unless he put himself under the ground, the only way he could go was up.

After the first few weeks of building up intense hope about the dog, it had slowly dawned on him that intense hope was not the answer and never had been. In a world of monotonous horror there could be no salvation in wild dreaming. Horror he had adjusted to. But monotony was the greater obstacle, and he realized it now, understood it at long last. And understanding it seemed to give him a sort of quiet peace, a sense of having spread all the cards on his mental table, examined them, and settled conclusively on the desired hand.

Burying the dog had not been the agony he had supposed it would be. In a way, it was almost like burying threadbare hopes and false excitements. From that day on he learned to accept the dungeon he existed in, neither seeking to escape with sudden derring-do nor beating his pate bloody on its walls.
And, thus resigned, he returned to work.

It had happened almost a year before, several days after he had put Virginia to her second and final rest.

Hollow and bleak, a sense of absolute loss in him, he was walking the streets late one afternoon, hands listless at his sides, feet shuffling with the rhythm of despair. His face mirrored nothing of the helpless agony he felt. His face was a blank.

He had wandered through the streets for hours, neither knowing nor caring where he was going. All he knew was that he couldn't return to the empty rooms of the house, couldn't look at the things they had touched and held and known with him. He couldn't look at Kathy's empty bed, at her clothes hanging still and useless in the closet, couldn't look at the bed that he and Virginia had slept in, at Virginia's clothes, her jewelry, all her perfumes on the bureau. He couldn't go near the house.

And so he walked and wandered, and he didn't know where he was when the people started milling past him, when the man caught his arm and breathed garlic in his face.

"Come, brother, come," the man said, his voice a grating rasp. He saw the man's throat moving like clammy turkey skin, the red-splotched cheeks, the feverish eyes, the black suit, unpressed, unclean. "Come and be saved, brother, saved."

Robert Neville stared at the man. He didn't understand. The man pulled him on, his fingers like skeleton fingers on Neville's arm.
"It's never too late, brother," said the man. "Salvation comes to him who . . ."

The last of his words were lost now in the rising murmur of sound from the great tent they were approaching. It sounded like the sea imprisoned under canvas, roaring to escape. Robert Neville tried to loose his arm.
"I don't want to—"

The man didn't hear. He pulled Neville on with him and they walked toward the waterfall of crying and stamping. The man did not let go. Robert Neville felt as if he were being dragged into a tidal wave.
"But I don't—"

The tent had swallowed him then, the ocean of shouting, stamping, hand-clapping sound engulfed him. He flinched instinctively and felt his heart begin pumping heavily. He was surrounded now by people, hundreds of them, swelling and gushing around him like waters closing in. And yelling and clapping and crying out words Robert Neville couldn't understand.

Then the cries died down and he heard the voice that stabbed through the half- light like knifing doom, that crackled and bit shrilly over the loud -speaker system.

"Do you want to fear the holy cross of God? Do you want to look into the mirror and not see the face that Almighty God has given you? Do you want to come crawling back from the grave like a monster out of hell?" The voice enjoined hoarsely, pulsing, driving.

"Do you want to be changed into a black unholy animal? Do you want to stain the evening sky with hell-born bat wings? I ask you—do you want to be turned into godless, night-cursed husks, into creatures of eternal damnation?"
"No!" the people erupted, terror-stricken. "No, save us!"

Robert Neville backed away, bumping into flailing- handed, white-jawed true believers screaming out for succor from the lowering skies.

“Well, I’m telling you! I’m telling you, so listen to the word of God! Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation and the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth! Is that a lie, is that a lie?”

“No! No!”

“I tell you that unless we become as little children, stainless and pure in the eyes of Our Lord—unless we stand up and shout out the glory of Almighty God and of His only begotten son, Jesus Christ, our Savior— unless we fall on our knees and beg forgiveness for our grievous offenses—we are damned! I’ll say it again, so listen! We are damned, we are damned, we are damned!

“Amen!”

“Save us!"

The people twisted and moaned and smote their brows and shrieked in mortal terror and screamed out terrible hallelujahs.

Robert Neville was shoved about, stumbling and lost in a treadmill of hopes, in a crossfire of frenzied worship.

“God has punished us for our great transgressions! God has unleashed the terrible force of His almighty wrath! God has set loose the second deluge upon us—a deluge, a flood, a world - consuming torrent of creatures from hell! He has opened the grave, He has unsealed the crypt, He has turned the dead from their black tombs—and set them upon us! And death and helldelivered up the dead which were in them! That’s the word of God! 0 God, You have punished us, 0 God, You have seen the terrible face of our transgressions, 0 God, You have struck us with the might of Your almighty wrath!”

Clapping hands like the spatter of irregular rifle fire, swaying bodies like stalks in a terrible wind, moans of the great potential dead, screams of the fighting living. Robert Neville strained through their violent ranks, face white, hands before him like those of a blind man seeking shelter.

He escaped, weak and trembling, stumbling away from them. Inside the tent the people screamed. But night had already fallen.

He thought about that now as he sat in the living room nursing a mild drink, a psychology text resting on his lap.

A quotation had started the train of thought, sending him back to that evening ten months before, when he’d been pulled into the wild revival meeting.

“This condition, known as hysterical blindness, may be partial or complete, including one, several, or all objects.”

That was the quotation he’d read. It had started him working on the problem again. A new approach now. Before, he had stubbornly persisted in attributing all vampire phenomena to the germ. If certain of these phenomena did not fit in with the bacilli, he felt inclined to judge their cause as superstition. True, he’d vaguely considered psychologicalexplanations, but he’d never really given much credence to such a possibility. Now, released at last from unyielding preconceptions, he did.

There was no reason, he knew, why some of the phenomena could not be physically caused, the rest psychological. And, now that he accepted it, it seemed one of those patent answers that only a blind man would miss. Well, I always was the blind-man type, he thought in quiet amusement.

Consider, he thought then, the shock undergone by a victim of the plague.

Toward the end of the plague, yellow journalism had spread a cancerous dread of vampires to all corners of the nation. He could remember himself the rash of pseudoscientific articles that veiled an out- and -out fright campaign designed to sell papers.

There was something grotesquely amusing in that; the frenetic attempt to sell papers while the world died. Not that all newspapers had done that. Those papers that had lived in honesty and integrity died the same way.

Yellow journalism, though, had been rampant in the final days. And, in addition, a great upsurge in revivalism had occurred. In a typical desperation for quick answers, easily understood, people had turned to primitive worship as the solution. With less than success. Not only had they died as quickly as the rest of the people, but they had died with terror in their hearts, with a mortal dread flowing in their very veins.

And then, Robert Neville thought, to have this hideous dread vindicated. To regain consciousness beneath hot, heavy soil and know that death had not brought rest. To find themselves clawing up through the earth, their bodies driven now by a strange, hideous need.

Such traumatic shocks could undo what mind was left. And such shocks could explain much. The cross, first of all.

Once they were forced to accept vindication of the dread of being repelled by an object that had been a focal point of worship, their minds could have snapped. Dread of the cross sprang up. And, driven on despite already created dreads, the vampire could have acquired an intense mental loathing, and this self-hatred could have set up a block in their weakened mindscausing them be blind to their own abhorred image. It could make them lonely, soul- lost slaves of the night, afraid to approach anyone, living a solitary existence, often seeking solace in the soil of their native land, struggling to gain a sense of communion with something, with anything. The water? That he did accept as superstition, a carryover of the traditional legend that witches were incapable of crossing running water, as written down in the story of TamO'Shanter. Witches, vampires—in all these feared beings there was a sort of interwoven kinship. Legends and superstitions could overlap, and did.

And the living vampires? That was simple too, now.

In life there were the deranged, the insane. What better hold than vampirism for these to catch on to? He was certain that all the living who came to his house at night were insane, thinking themselves true vampires although actually they were only demented sufferers. And that would explain the fact that they'd never taken the obvious step of burning his house. They simply could not think that logically.

He remembered the man who one night had climbed to the top of the light post in front of the house and, while Robert Neville had watched through the peephole, had leaped into space, waving his arms frantically. Neville hadn't been able to explain it at the time, but now the answer seemed obvious. The man had thought he was a bat.

Neville sat looking at the half- finished drink, a thin smile fastened to his lips.

So, he thought, slowly, surely, we find out about them. Find out that they are no invincible race. Far from it; they are a highly perishable race requiring the strictest of physical conditions for the furtherance of their Godforsaken existence.

He put the drink down on the table.

I don't need it, he thought. My emotions don't need feeding any more. I don't need liquor for forgetting or for escaping. I don't have to escape from anything. Not now.

For the first time since the dog had died he smiled and felt within himself a quiet, well-modulated satisfaction. There were still many things to learn, but not so many as before. Strangely, life was becoming almost bearable. I don the robe of hermit without a cry, he thought.

On the phonograph, music played, quiet and unhurried. Outside, the vampires waited.

PART III: June 1978

Chapter Fifteen

HE WAS OUT HUNTING for Cortman. It had become a relaxing hobby, hunting for Cortman; one of the few diversions left to him. On those days when he didn't care to leave the neighborhood and there was no demanding work to be done on the house, he would search. Under cars, behind bushes, under houses, up fireplaces, in closets, under beds, in refrigerators; any place into which a moderately corpulent male body could conceivably be squeezed.

Ben Cortman could be in any one of those places at one time or another. He changed his hiding place constantly. Neville felt certain that Cortman knew he was singled out for capture. He felt, further, that Cortman relished the peril of it. If the phrase were not such an obvious anachronism, Neville would have said

that Ben Cortman had a zest for life. Sometimes he thought Cortman was happier now than he ever had been before.

Neville ambled slowly up Compton Boulevard toward the next house he meant to search. An uneventful morning had passed. Cortman was not found, even though Neville knew he was somewhere in the neighborhood. He had to be, because he was always the first one at the house at night. The other ones were almost always strangers. Their turnover was great, because they invariably stayed in the neighborhood and Neville found them and destroyed them. Not Cortman.

As he strolled, Neville wondered again what he'd do if he found Cortman. True, his plan had always been the same: immediate disposal. But that was on the surface. He knew it wouldn't be that easy. Oh, it wasn't that he felt anything toward Cortman. It wasn't even that Cortman represented a part of the past. The past was dead and he knew it and accepted it.

No, it wasn't either of those things. What it probably was, Neville decided, was that he didn't want to cut off a recreational activity. The rest were such dull, robot- like creatures. Ben, at least, had some imagination. For some reason, his brain hadn't weakened like the others. It could be, Neville often theorized, that Ben Cortman was born to be dead. Undead, that is, he thought, a wry smile playing on his full lips.

It no longer occurred to him that Cortman was out to kill him. That was a negligible menace. Neville sank down on the next porch with a slow groan. Then, reaching lethargically into his pocket, he took out his pipe. With an idle thumb he tamped rough tobacco shreds down into the pipe bowl. In a few moments smoke swirls were floating lazily, about his head in the warm, still
air.

It was a bigger, more relaxed Neville that gazed out across the wide field on the other side of the boulevard. An evenly paced hermit life had increased his weight to 230 pounds. His face was full, his body broad and muscular underneath the loose-fitting denim he wore. He had long before given up shaving. Only rarely did he crop his thick blond beard, so that it remained twoto three inches from his skin. His hair was thinning and was long and straggly. Set in the deep tan of his face, his blue eyes were calm andunexcitable. He leaned back against the brick step, puffing out slow clouds of smoke. Far out across thatfield he knew there was still a depression in the ground where he had buried Virginia, where she had unburied herself. But knowing it brought no glimmer of reflective sorrow to his eyes. Rather than go on suffering, he had learned to stultify himself to introspection. Time had lost its multidimensional scope. There was only the present for Robert Neville; a present based on day-to-day survival, marked by neither heights of joy nor depths of despair. I am predominantly vegetable, he often thought to himself. That was the way he wantedit.

Robert Neville sat gazing at the white spot out in the field for several minutes before he realized that it was moving.

His eyes blinked once and the skin tightened over his face. He made a slight sound in his throat, a sound of doubting question. Then, standing up, he raised his left hand to shade the sunlight from his eyes.
His teeth bit convulsively into the
pipestem. A woman.

He didn't even try to catch the pipe when it fell from his mouth as his jaw went slack. For a long, breathless moment, he stood there on the porch step, staring.

He closed his eyes, opened them. She was still there. Robert Neville felt the increasing thud in his chest as he watched the woman.

She didn't see him. Her head was down as she walked across the long field. He could see her reddish hair blowing in the breeze, her arms swinging loosely at her sides. His throat moved. It was such an incredible sight after three years that his mind could not assimilate it. He kept blinking and staring as he stood motionless in the shade of the house.
A woman. Alive. In the daylight.

He stood, mouth partly open, gaping at the woman. She was young, he could see now as she came closer; probably in her twenties. She wore a wrinkled and dirty white dress. She was very tan, her hair was red. In the dead silence of the afternoon Neville thought he heard the crunch of her shoes in the long grass.

I've gone mad. The words presented themselves abruptly. He felt less shock at that possibility than he did at the notion that she was real. He had, in fact, been vaguely preparing himself for just such a delusion. It seemed feasible. The man who died of thirst saw mirages of lakes. Why shouldn't a man who thirsted for companionship see a woman walking in the sun?

He started suddenly. No, it wasn't that. For, unless his delusion had sound as well as sight, he now heard her walking through the grass. He knew it was real. The movement of her hair, of her arms. She still looked at the ground. Who was she? Where was she going? Where had she been?

He didn't know what welled up in him. It was too quick to analyze, an instinct that broke through every barrier of time-erected reserve.

His left arm went up.

"Hi!" he cried. He jumped down to the sidewalk. "Hi, there!"

A moment of sudden, complete silence. Her head jerked up and they looked at each other. Alive, he thought. Alive!

He wanted to shout more, but he felt suddenly choked up. His tongue felt wooden, his brain refused to function. Alive. The word kept repeating itself in his mind, Alive, alive, alive.

With a sudden twisting motion the young woman turned and began running wildly back across the field. For a moment Neville stood there twitching, uncertain of what to do. Then his heart seemed to burst and he lunged across the sidewalk. His boots jolted down into the street and thuddedacross.

"Wait!" he heard himself cry.

The woman did not wait. He saw her bronze legs pumping as she fled across the uneven surface of the field. And suddenly he realized that words could not stop her. He thought of how shocked he had been at seeing her. How much more shocked she must have felt hearing a sudden shout end long silence and seeing a great, bearded man waving at her!

His legs drove him up over the other curb and into the field. His heart was pounding heavily now. She's alive! He couldn't stop thinking that. Alive. A woman alive!

She couldn't run as fast as he could. Almost immediately Neville began catching up with her. She glanced back over her shoulder with terrified eyes.

"I won't hurt you!" he cried, but she kept running.

Suddenly she tripped and went crashing down on one knee. Her face turned again and he saw the twisted fright on it.

"I won't hurt you!" he yelled again.

With a desperate lunge she regained her footing and ran on.

No sound now but the sound of her shoes and his boots thrashing through the heavy grass. He began jumping over the grass to avoid its impending height and gained more ground. The skirt of her dress whipped against the grass, holding her back.

"Stop!" he cried, again, but more from instinct than with any hope that she would stop. She didn't. She ran still faster and, gritting his teeth, Neville put another burst of speed intohis pursuit. He followed in a straight line as the girl weaved across the field, her light reddish hair billowing behind her.

Now he was so close he could hear her tortured breathing. He didn't like to frighten her, but he couldn't stop now. Everything else in the world seemed to have fallen from view but her. He had to catch her.

His long, powerful legs pistoned on, his boots thudded on the earth.

Another stretch of field. The two of them ran, panting. She glanced back at him again to see how close he was. He didn't realize how frightening he looked; six foot three in his boots, a gigantic bearded man with an intent look.

Now his hand lurched out and he caught her by the right shoulder.

With a gasping scream the young woman twisted away and stumbled to the side. Losing balance, she fell on one hip on the rocky ground. Neville jumped forward to help her up. She scuttled back over the ground and tried to get up, but she slipped and fell again, this time on her back. Her skirt jerked up over her knees. She shoved herself up with a breathless whimper, her dark eyes terrified.

"Here," he gasped, reaching out his hand.

She slapped it aside with a slight cry and struggled to her feet. He caught her by the arm and her free hand lashed out, raking jagged nails across his forehead and right temple. With a grunt he jerked back his arm and she whirled and began running again.

Neville jumped forward again and caught her by the shoulders. “What are you afraid—”

He couldn’t finish. Her hand drove stingingly across his mouth. Then there was only the sound of gasping and struggling, of their feet scrabbling and slipping on the earth, crackling down the thick grass.

“Will you stop!” he cried, but she kept battling.

She jerked back and his taut fingers ripped away part of her dress. He let go and the materialfluttered down to her waist. He saw her tanned shoulder and the white brassiere cup over her left breast.

She clawed out at him and he caught her wrists in an iron grip. Her right foot drove a bone-numbing kick to his skin.

“Damn it!”

With a snarl of rage he drove his right palm across her face. She staggered back, then looked at him dizzily. Abruptly she started crying helplessly. She sank to her knees before him, holding her arms over her head as if to ward off further blows.

Neville stood there gasping, looking down at her cringing form. He blinked, then took a deep breath. “Get up,” he said. “I’m not going to hurt you.”

She didn’t raise her head. He looked down confusedly at her. He didn’t know what to say. “I said I’m not going to hurt you,” he told her again.

She looked up. But his face seemed to frighten her again, for she shrank back. She crouched there looking up at him fearfully.

“What are you afraid of?” he asked.

He didn’t realize that his voice was devoid of warmth, that it was the harsh, sterile voice ofa man who had lost all touch with humanity.

He took a step toward her and she drew back again with a frightened gasp. He extended his hand. “Here,” he said. “Stand up.”

She got up slowly but without his help. Noticing suddenly her exposed breast, she reached down and held up the torn material of her dress.

They stood there breathing harshly and looking at each other. And, now that the first shock had passed, Neville didn’t know what to say. He’d been dreaming of this moment for years. His dreams had never been like this.

“What ... what’s your name?” he asked.

She didn’t answer. Her eyes stayed on his face, her lips kept trembling.

“Well?” he asked loudly, and she flinched.

“R-Ruth.” Her voice faltered.

A shudder ran through Robert Neville’s body. The sound of her voice seemed to loosen everything in him. Questions disappeared. He felt his heart beating heavily. He almost felt as if he were going to cry.

His hand moved out, almost unconsciously. Her shoulder trembled under his palm.

“Ruth,” he said in a flat, lifeless voice.

His throat moved as he stared at her. “Ruth,” he said again.

The two of them, the man and the woman, stood facing each other in the great, hot field.

Chapter Sixteen

THE WOMAN LAY MOTIONLESS on his bed, sleeping. It was past four in the afternoon. At least twenty times Neville had stolen into the bedroom to look at her and see if she were awake. Now he sat in the kitchen drinking coffee and worrying.

What if she is infected, though? he argued with himself. The worry had started a few hours before, while Ruth was sleeping. Now, he couldn't rid himself of the fear. No matter how he reasoned, it didn't help. All right, she was tanned from the sun, she had been walking in the daylight. The dog had been in the daylight too.

Neville's fingers tapped restlessly on the table.

Simplicity had departed; the dream had faded into disturbing complexity. There had been no wondrous embrace, no magic words spoken. Beyond her name he had got nothing from her. Getting her to the house had been a battle. Getting her to enter had been even worse. She had cried and begged him not to kill her. No matter what he said to her, she kept crying and begging. He had visualized something on the order of a Hollywood production; stars in their eyes, entering the house, arms about each other, fade-out. Instead he had been forced to tug and cajole and argue and scold while she held back. The entrance had been less than romantic. He had to drag her in.

Once in the house, she had been no less frightened. He'd tried to act comfortingly, but all she did was cower in one corner the way the dog had done. She wouldn't eat or drink anything he gave her. Finally he'd been compelled to take her in the bedroom and lock her in. Now she was asleep.

He sighed wearily and fingered the handle of his cup. All these years, he thought, dreaming about a companion. Now I meet one and the first thing I do is distrust her, treat her crudely and impatiently.

And yet there was really nothing else he could do. He had accepted too long the proposition that he was the only normal person left. It didn't matter that she looked normal. He'd seen too many of them lying in their coma that looked as healthy as she. They weren't, though, and he knew it. The simple fact that she had been walking in the sunlight wasn't enough to tip the scales on the side of trusting acceptance. He had doubted too long. His concept of the society had become ironbound. It was almost impossible for him to believe that there were others like him. And, after the first shock had diminished, all the dogma of his long years alone had asserted itself.

With a heavy breath he rose and went back to the bedroom. She was still in the same position. Maybe, he thought, she's gone back into coma again.

He stood over the bed, staring down at her. Ruth. There was so much about her he wanted to know. And yet he was almost afraid to find out. Because if she were like the others, there was only one course open. And it was better not to know anything about the people you killed.

His hands twitched at his sides, his blue eyes gazed flatly at her. What if it had been a freak occurrence? What if she had snapped out of coma for a little while and gone wandering? It seemed possible. And yet, as far as he knew, daylight was the one thing the germ could notendure. Why wasn't that enough to convince him she was normal?

Well, there was only one way to make sure.

He bent over and put his hand on her shoulder. "Wake up," he said.

She didn't stir. His mouth tightened and his fingers drew in on her soft shoulder.

Then he noticed the thin golden chain around her throat. Reaching in with rough fingers, he drew it out of the bosom of her dress.

He was looking at the tiny gold cross when she woke up and recoiled into the pillow. She's not in coma; that was all he thought.

"What are you d-doing?" she asked faintly.

It was harder to distrust her when she spoke. The sound of the human voice was so strange to him that it had a power over him it had never had before.

"I'm—nothing," he said.

Awkwardly he stepped back and leaned against the wall. He looked at her a moment longer. Then he asked, "Where are you from?"

She lay there looking blankly at him.

"I asked you where you were from," he said. Again she said nothing. He pushed himself away from the wall with a tight look on his face.

“Ing-Inglewood,” she said hastily.
He looked at her coldly for a moment, then leaned back against the wall. “I see,” he said. “Did—did you live alone?”
“I was married.”
“Where is your husband?”
Her throat moved. “He’s dead.” “For how long?”
“Last week.”
“And what did you do after he died?”
“Ran.” She bit into her lower lip. “I ran away.” “You mean you’ve been wandering all this time?” “Y-yes.”

He looked at her without a word. Then abruptly he turned and his boots thumped loudly as he walked into the kitchen. Pulling open a cabinet door, he drew down a handful of garlic cloves. He put them on a dish, tore them into pieces, and mashed them to a pulp. The acrid fumes assailed his nostrils.

She was propped up on one elbow when he came back. Without hesitation he pushed the dish almost to her face.
She turned her head away with a faint cry.
“What are you doing?” she asked, and coughed once. “Why do you turn away?”
“Please—”
“Why do you turn away?”
“It smells!” Her voice broke into a sob. “Don’t! You’re making me sick!”

He pushed the plate still closer to her face. With a gagging sound she backed away and pressed against the wall, her legs drawn up on the bed.
“Stop it! Please!" she begged.
He drew back the dish and watched her body twitching as her stomach convulsed. “You’re one of them,” he said to her, quietly venomous.

She sat up suddenly and ran past him into the bathroom. The door slammed behind her and he could hear the sound of her terrible retching.
Thin- lipped, he put the dish down on the bedside table. His throat moved as he swallowed. Infected. It had been a clear sign. He had learned over a year before that garlic was anallergen to any system infected with the vampiris bacillus. When the system was exposed to garlic, the stimulated tissues sensitized the cells, causing an abnormal reaction to any further contact with garlic. That was why putting it into their veins had accomplished little. They had to be exposed to the odor.
He sank down on the bed. And the woman had reacted in the wrong way.

After a moment Robert Neville frowned. If what she had said was true, she’d been wandering around for a week. She would naturally be exhausted and weak, and under those conditions the smell of so much garlic could have made her retch.

His fists thudded down onto the mattress. He still didn’t know, then, not for certain. And, objectively, he knew he had no right to decide on inadequate evidence. It was something he’d learned the hard way, something he knew and believed absolutely.

He was still sitting there when she unlocked the bathroom door and came out. She stood in the hall a moment looking at him, then went into the living room. He rose and followed. When he came into the living room she was sitting on the couch.
“Are you satisfied?” she asked.
“Never mind that,” he said. “You’re on trial, not me.”

She looked up angrily as if she meant to say something. Then her body slumped and she shook her head. He felt a twinge of sympathy for a moment. She looked so helpless, her thin hands resting on her lap. She didn’t seem to care any more about her torn dress. He looked at the slight swelling of her breast. Her figure was very slim, almost curveless. Not at all like the woman he’d used to envision. Never mind that, he told himself, that doesn’t matter any more.

He sat down in the chair and looked across at her. She didn't return his gaze.
"Listen to me," he said then. "I have every reason to suspect you of being infected.
Especially now that you've reacted in such a way to garlic." She said nothing.
"Haven't you anything to say?" he asked.
She raised her eyes.
"You think I'm one of them," she
said. "I think you might be."
"And what about this?" she asked, holding up her cross.
"That means nothing," he said.
"I'm awake," she said. "I'm not in a coma."
He said nothing. It was something he couldn't argue with, even though it didn't assuage doubt.
"I've been in Inglewood many times," he said finally, "Why didn't you hear my car?" "Inglewood is a big place," she said.
He looked at her carefully, his fingers tapping on the arm of the
chair. "I'd—like to believe you," he said.
"Would you?" she asked. Another stomach contraction hit her and she bent over with a gasp, teeth clenched. Robert Neville sat there wondering why he didn't feel more compassion for her. Emotion was a difficult thing to summon from the dead, though. He had spent it all and felthollow now, without feeling.
After a moment she looked up. Her eyes were hard.
"I've had a weak stomach all my life," she said. "I saw my husband killed last week. Torn to pieces. Right in front of my eyes I saw it. I lost two children to the plague. And for the past week I've been wandering all over. Hiding at night, not eating more than a few scraps of food. Sick with fear, unable to sleep more than a couple of hours at a time. Then I hear someone shout at me. You chase me over a field, hit me, drag me to your house. Then when I get sick because you shove a plate of reeking garlic in my face, you tell me I'm infected!"
Her hands twitched in her lap. "What do you expect to happen?" she said angrily.
She slumped back against the couch back and closed her eyes. Her hands picked nervously at her skirt. For a moment she tried to tuck in the torn piece, but it fell down again and she sobbed angrily.
He leaned forward in the chair. He was beginning to feel guilty now, in spite of suspicions and doubts. He couldn't help it. He had forgotten about sobbing women. He raised a hand slowly to his beard and plucked confusedly as he watched her.
"Would . . ." he started. He swallowed. "Would you let me take a sample of your blood?" he asked. "I could—"
She stood up suddenly and stumbled toward the
door. He got up quickly.
"What are you doing?" he asked.
She didn't answer. Her hands fumbled, awkwardly with the lock.
"You can't go out there," he said, surprised. "The street will be full of them in a little while." "I'm not staying here," she sobbed. "What's the difference if they kill me?"
His hands closed over her arm. She tried to pull away. "Leave me alone!" she cried. "I didn't ask to come here. You dragged me here. Why don't you leave me alone?"
He stood by her awkwardly, not knowing what to
say. "You can't go out," he said again.
He led her back to the couch. Then he went and got her a small tumbler of whisky at the bar. Never mind whether she's infected or not, he thought, never mind.
He handed her the tumbler. She shook her
head. "Drink it," he said. "It'll calm you
down."
She looked up angrily. "So you can shove more garlic in my face?" He shook his
head. "Drink it now," he said.

After a few moments she took the glass and took a sip of the whisky. It made her cough. She put the tumbler on the arm of the couch and a deep breath shook her body.
"Why do you want me to stay?" she asked unhappily.

He looked at her without a definite answer in his mind. Then he said, "Even if you are infected, I can't let you go out there. You don't know what they'd do to you."
Her eyes closed. "I don't care," she said.

Chapter Seventeen

"I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT," he told her over supper. "Almost three years now, and still there are some of them alive. Food supplies are 'being used up. As far as I know, they still lie in a coma during the day." He shook his head. "But they're not dead. Three years and they're not dead. What keeps them going?"

She was wearing his bathrobe. About five she had relented, taken a bath, and changed. Her slender body was shapeless in the voluminous terry-cloth folds. She'd borrowed his comb and drawn her hair back into a pony tail fastened with a piece of twine.
Ruth fingered her coffee cup.

"We used to see them sometimes," she said. "We were afraid to go near them, though. We didn't think we should touch them."
"Didn't you know they'd come back after they died?" She shook her head.
"No." "Didn't you wonder about the people who attacked your house at night?"

"It never entered our minds that they were—" She shook her head slowly. "It's hard to believe something like that."
"I suppose," he said.

He glanced at her as they sat eating silently. It was hard too to believe that here was a normal woman. Hard to believe that, after all these years, a companion had come. It was more than just doubting her. It was doubting that anything so remarkable could happen in such a lost world.
"Tell me more about them," Ruth said.

He got up and took the coffeepot off the stove. He poured more into her cup, into his, then replaced the pot and sat down.
"How do you feel now?" he asked her. "I feel better, thank you."

He nodded and spooned sugar into his coffee. He felt her eyes on him as he stirred. What's she thinking? he wondered. He took a deep breath, wondering why the tightness in him didn't break. For a while he'd thought that he trusted her. Now he wasn't sure.
"You still don't trust me," she said, seeming to read his mind. He looked up quickly, then shrugged.
"It's—not that," he said.

"Of course it is," she said quietly. She sighed. "Oh, very well. If you have to check my blood, check it."

He looked at her suspiciously, his mind questioning: Is it a trick? He hid the movement of his throat in swallowing coffee. It was stupid, he thought, to be so suspicious.
He put down the cup.
"Good," he said. "Very good."
He looked at her as she stared into the coffee.
"If you are infected," he told her, "I'll do everything I can to cure you." Her eyes met his. "And if you can't?" she said.

Silence a moment.
"Let's wait and see," he said then.

They both drank coffee. Then he asked, “Shall we do it now?” “Please,” she said, “in the morning. I—still feel a little ill.” “All right,” he said, nodding. “In the morning.”

They finished their meal in silence. Neville felt only a small satisfaction that she was going to let him check her blood. He was afraid he might discover that she was infected. In the meantime he had to pass an evening and a night with her, perhaps get to know her and be attracted to her. When in the morning he might have to—

Later, in the living room, they sat looking at the mural, sipping port, and listening to Schubert’s Fourth Symphony.

“I wouldn’t have believed it,” she said, seeming to cheer up. “I never thought I’d be listening to music again. Drinking wine.”

She looked around the room.

“You’ve certainly done a wonderful job,” she

said. “What about your house?’ he asked.

“It was nothing like this,” she said. “We didn’t have a—” “How did you protect your house?” he interrupted. “Oh.—” She thought a moment. “We had it boarded up, of course. And we used crosses.” “They don’t always work,” he said quietly, after a moment of looking at her.

She looked blank. “They don’t?”

“Why should a Jew fear the cross?” he said. “Why should a vampire who had been a Jew fear it? Most people were afraid of becoming vampires. Most of them suffer from hysterical blindness before mirrors. But as far as the cross goes—well, neither a Jew nor a Hindu nor a Mohammedan nor an atheist, for that matter, would fear the cross.”

She sat holding her wineglass and looking at him with expressionless

eyes. “That’s why the cross doesn’t always work,” he said.

“You didn’t let me finish,” she said. “We used garlic too.” “I thought it made you sick.”

“I was already sick. I used to weigh a hundred and twenty. I weigh ninety-eight pounds now.”

He nodded. But as he went into the kitchen to get another bottle of wine, he thought, she would have adjusted to it by now. After three years.

Then again, she might not have. What was the point in doubting her now? She was going to let him check her blood. What else could she do? It’s me, he thought. I’ve been by myself too long. I won’t believe anything unless I see it in a microscope. Heredity triumphs again. I’m my father’s son, damn his moldering bones.

Standing in the dark kitchen, digging his blunt nail under the wrapping around the neck of the bottle, Robert Neville looked into the living room at Ruth.

His eyes ran over the robe, resting a moment on the slight prominence of her breasts, dropping then to the bronzed calves and ankles, up to the smooth kneecaps. She had a body like a young girl’s. She certainly didn’t look like the mother of two.

The most unusual feature of the entire affair, he thought, was that he felt no physical desire for her.

If she had come two years before, maybe even later, he might have violated her. There had been some terrible moments in those days, moments when the most terrible of solutions to hisneed were considered, were often dwelt upon until they drove him half mad.

But then the experiments had begun. Smoking had tapered off, drinking lost its compulsive nature.

Deliberately and with surprising success, he had submerged himself in investigation.

His sex drive had diminished, had virtually disappeared. Salvation of the monk, he thought. The drive had to go sooner or later, or no normal man could dedicate himself to any life that excluded sex.

Now, happily, he felt almost nothing; perhaps a hardly discernible stirring far beneath the rocky strata of abstinence. He was content to leave it at that. Especially since there was no certainty that Ruth was the companion he had waited for. Or even the certainty that he could allow her to live beyond tomorrow. Cure her?

Curing was unlikely.

He went back into the living room with the opened bottle. She smiled at him briefly as he poured more wine for her.

"I've been admiring your mural," she said. "It almost makes you believe you're in the woods." He grunted.

"It must have taken a lot of work to get your house like this," she said. "You should know," he said. "You went through the same thing."

"We had nothing like this," she said. "Our house was small. Our food locker was half the size of yours." "You must have run out of food," he said, looking at her carefully.

"Frozen food," she said. "We were living out of cans." He nodded. Logical, his mind had to admit. But he still didn't like it. It was all intuition, he knew, but he didn't like it.

"What about water?" he asked then.

She looked at him silently for a moment. "You don't believe a word I've said, do you?" she said. "It's not that," he said. "I'm just curious how you lived."

"You can't hide it from your voice," she said. "You've been alone too long. You've lost the talent for deceit."

He grunted, getting the uncomfortable feeling that she was playing with him. That's ridiculous, he argued. She's just a woman. She was probably right. He probably was a gruff and graceless hermit. What did it matter?

"Tell me about your husband," he said abruptly.

Something flitted over her face, a shade of memory. She lifted the glass of dark wine to her lips. "Not now," she said. "Please."

He slumped back on the couch, unable to analyze the formless dissatisfaction he felt. Everything she said and did could be a result of what she'd been through. It could also be a lie.

Why should she lie? he asked himself. In the morning he would check her blood. What could lying tonight profit her when, in a matter of hours, he'd know the truth?

"You know," he said, trying to ease the moment, "I've been thinking. If three people could survive the plague, why not more?"

"Do you think that's possible?" she asked.

"Why not? There must have been others who were immune for one reason or another." "Tell me more about the germ," she said.

He hesitated a moment, then put down his wineglass. What if he told her everything? Whatif she escaped and came back after death with all the knowledge that he had?

"There's an awful lot of detail," he said.

"You were saying something about the cross before," she said. "How do you know it's true?" "You remember what I said about Ben Cortman?" he said, glad to restate something she already knew rather than go into fresh material. "You mean that man you—"

He nodded. "Yes. Come here," he said, standing. "I'll show him to you."

As he stood behind her looking out the peephole, he smelled the odor of her hair and skin. It made him draw back a little. Isn't that remarkable? he thought. I don't like the smell. Like Gulliver returning from the logical horses, I find the human smell offensive.

"He's the one by the lamppost," he said.

She made a slight sound of acknowledgment. Then she said, "There are so few. Where are they?"

"I've killed off most of them," he said, "but they manage to keep a few ahead of me." "How come the lamp is on out there?" she said. "I thought they destroyed the electrical system."

"I connected it with my generator," he said, "so I could watch them." "Don't they break the bulb?" "I have a very strong globe over the bulb."

"Don't they climb up and try to break it?" "I have garlic all over the post."

She shook her head. "You've thought of everything."

Stepping back, he looked at her a moment. How can she look at them so calmly, he wondered, ask me questions, make comments, when only a week ago she saw their kind tear her husband to pieces? Doubts again, he thought. Won't they ever stop?

He knew they wouldn't until he knew about her for sure. She turned away from the window then.

"Will you excuse me a moment?" she said.

He watched her walk into the bathroom and heard her lock the door behind her. Then he went back to the couch after closing the peephole door. A wry smile played on his lips. He looked down into the tawny wine depths and tugged abstractedly at his beard.

'Will you excuse me a moment?'

For some reason the words seemed grotesquely amusing, the carry-over from a lost age. Emily Post mincing through the graveyard. Etiquette for Young Vampires.

The smile was gone.

And what now? What did the future hold for him? In a week would she still be here with him, or crumpled in the never cooling fire?

He knew that, if she were infected, he'd have to try to cure her whether it worked or not. But what if she were free of the bacillus? In a way, that was a more nerve-racking possibility. The other way he would merely go on as before, breaking neither schedule nor standards. But if she stayed, if they had to establish a relationship, perhaps become husband and wife, have children—

Yes, that was more terrifying.

He suddenly realized that he had become an ill-tempered and inveterate bachelor again. He no longer thought about his wife, his child, his past life. The present was enough. And he was afraid of the possible demand that he make sacrifices and accept responsibility again. He was afraid of giving out his heart, of removing the chains he had forged around it to keep emotionprisoner. He was afraid of loving again.

When she came out of the bathroom he was still sitting there, thinking. The record player, unnoticed by him, let out only a thin scratching sound.

Ruth lifted the record from the turntable and turned it. The third movement of the symphony began.

"Well, what about Cortman?" she asked, sitting down.

He looked at her blankly. "Cortman?"

"You were going to tell me something about him and the cross." "Oh. Well, one night I got him in here and showed him the cross." "What happened?"

Shall I kill her now? Shall I not even investigate, but kill her and burn her?

His throat moved. Such thoughts were a hideous testimony to the world he had accepted; a world in which murder was easier than hope.

Well, he wasn't that far gone yet, he thought. I'm a man, not a destroyer. "What's wrong?" she said nervously.

"What?"

"You're staring at me."

"I'm sorry," he said coldly. "I—I'm just thinking."

She didn't say any more. She drank her wine and he saw her hand shake as she held the glass. He forced down all introspection. He didn't want her to know what he felt.

"When I showed him the cross," he said, "he laughed in my face." She nodded once. "But when I held a torah before his eyes, I got the reaction I wanted." "A what?"

"A torah. Tablet of law, I believe it is." "And that—got a reaction?"

"Yes. I had him tied up, but when he saw the torah he broke loose and attacked me." "What happened?"

She seemed to have lost her fright again.

"He struck me on the head with something. I don't remember what. I was almost knocked out. But, using the torah, I backed him to the door and got rid of him."

"So you see, the cross hasn't the power the legend says it has. My theory is that, since the legend came into its own in Europe, a continent predominantly Catholic, the cross would naturally become the symbol of defense against powers of darkness."

"Couldn't you use your gun on Cortman?" she asked. "How do you know I had a gun?"

"I—assumed as much," she said. "We had guns."

"Then you must know bullets have no effect on vampires.

"We were . . . never sure," she said, then went on quickly: "Do you know why that's so? Why don't bullets affect them?"

He shook his head. "I don't know," he said. They sat in silence listening to the music.

He did know, but, doubting again, he didn't want to tell her.

Through experiments on the dead vampires he had discovered that the bacilli effected the creation of a powerful body glue that sealed bullet openings as soon as they were made. Bullets were enclosed almost immediately, and since the system was activated by germs, a bullet couldn't hurt it. The system could, in fact, contain almost an indefinite amount of bullets, sincethe body glue prevented a penetration of more than a few fractions of an inch. Shooting vampires was like throwing pebbles into tar.

As he sat looking at her, she arranged the folds of the robe around her legs and he got a momentary glimpse of brown thigh. Far from being attracted, he felt irritated. It was a typical feminine gesture, he thought, an artificial movement.

As the moments passed he could almost sense himself drifting farther and farther from her. In a way he almost regretted having found her at all. Through the years he had achieved a certain degree of peace. He had accepted solitude, found it not half bad. Now this—ending it all.

In order to fill the emptiness of the moment, he reached for his pipe and pouch. He stuffed tobacco into the bowl and lit it. For a second he wondered if he should ask if she minded. He didn't ask.

The music ended. She got up and he watched her while she looked through his records. She seemed like a young girl, she was so slender. Who is she? he thought. Who is she really?

"May I play this?" she asked, holding up an album. He didn't even look at it. "If you like," he said.

She sat down as Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto began. Her taste isn't remarkably advanced, he thought, looking at her without expression.

"Tell me about yourself," she said.

Another typical feminine question, he thought. Then he berated himself for being so critical. What was the point in irritating himself by doubting her?

"Nothing to tell," he said.

She was smiling again. Was she laughing at him?

"You scared the life out of me this afternoon," she said. "You and your bristly beard. And those wild eyes."

He blew out smoke. Wild eyes? That was ridiculous. What was she trying to do? Break down his reserve with cuteness?

"What do you look like under all those whiskers?" she asked. He tried to smile at her but he couldn't.

"Nothing," he said. "Just an ordinary face." "How old are you, Robert?"

His throat moved. It was the first time she'd spoken his name. It gave him a strange, restless feeling to hear a woman speak his name after so long. Don't call me that, he almost said to her. He didn't want to lose the distance between them. If she were infected and he couldn't cure her, he wanted it to be a stranger that he put away.

She turned her head away.

"You don't have to talk to me if you don't want to," she said quietly. "I won't bother you. I'll go tomorrow."

His chest muscles tightened. "But . . ." he said.

"I don't want to spoil your life," she said. "You don't have to feel any obligation to me just because— we're the only ones left."

His eyes were bleak as he looked at her, and he felt a brief stirring of guilt at her words. Why should I doubt her? he told himself. If she's infected, she'll never get away alive. What's there to fear?

"I'm sorry," he said. "I—I have been alone a long time." She didn't look up. "If you'd like to talk," he said, "I'll be glad to—tell you anything I can."

She hesitated a moment. Then she looked at him, her eyes not committing themselves at all. "I would like to know about the disease," she said. "I lost my two girls because of it. And itcaused my husband's death."

He looked at her and then spoke.

"It's a bacillus," he said, "a cylindrical bacterium. It creates an isotonic solution in the blood, circulates the blood slower than normal, activates all bodily functions, lives on fresh blood, and provides energy. Deprived of blood, it makes self-killing bacteriophages or else sporulates."

She looked blank. He realized then that she couldn't have understood. Terms so common to him now were completely foreign to her.

"Well," he said, "most of those things aren't so important. To sporulate is to create an oval body that has all the basic ingredients of the vegetative bacterium. The germ does that when it gets no fresh blood. Then, when the vampire host decomposes, these spores go flying out and seek new hosts. They find one, germinate—and one more system is infected."

She shook her head incredulously.

"Bacteriophages are inanimate proteins that are also created when the system gets no blood. Unlike the spores, though, in this case abnormal metabolism destroys the cells."

Quickly he told her about the imperfect waste disposal of the lymphatic system, the garlic as allergen causing anaphylaxis, the various vectors of the disease.

"Then why are we immune?" she asked.

For a long moment he looked at her, withholding any answer. Then, with a shrug, he said, "I don't know about you. As for me, while I was stationed in Panama during the war I was bitten by a vampire bat. And, though I can't prove it, my theory is that the bat had previously encountered a true vampire and acquired the vampiris germ. The germ caused the bat to seek human rather than animal blood. But, by the time the germ had passed into my system, it had been weakened in some way by the bat's system. It made me terribly ill, of course, but it didn't kill me, and as a result, my body built up an immunity to it. That's my theory, anyway. I can't find any better reason."

"But—didn't the same thing happen to others down there?"

"I don't know," he said quietly. "I killed the bat." He shrugged. "Maybe I was the first human it had attacked."

She looked at him without a word, her surveillance making Neville feel restive. He went on talking even though he didn't really want to.

Briefly he told her about the major obstacle in his study of the vampires.

"At first I thought the stake had to hit their hearts," he said. "I believed the legend. I found out that wasn't so. I put stakes in all parts of their bodies and they died. That made me think it was hemorrhage. But then one day—"

And he told her about the woman who had decomposed before his eyes.

"I knew then it couldn't be hemorrhage," he went on, feeling a sort of pleasure in reciting his discoveries. "I didn't know what to do. Then one day it came to me."

"What?" she asked.

"I took a dead vampire. I put his arm into an artificial vacuum. I punctured his arm inside that vacuum. Blood spurted out." He paused. "But that's all."

She stared at him.
"You don't see," he said. "I—No," she admitted.
"When I let air back into the tank, the arm decomposed," he said. She still stared.

"You see," he said, "the bacillus is a facultative saprophyte. It lives with or without oxygen; but with a difference. Inside the system, it is anaerobic and sets up a symbiosis with the system. The vampire feeds it fresh blood, the bacteria provides the energy so the vampire can get more fresh blood. The germ also causes, I might add, the growth of the canine teeth."
"Yes?" she said.

"When air enters," he said, "the situation changes instantaneously. The germ becomes aerobic and, instead of being symbiotic, it becomes virulently parasitic." He paused. "It eats the host," he said.
"Then the stake—" she started.

"Lets air in. Of course. Lets it in and keeps the flesh open so that the body glue can't function. So the heart has nothing to do with it. What I do now is cut the wrists deep enough so that the body glue can't work." He smiled a little. "When I think of all the time I used to spend making stakes!"
She nodded and, noticing the wineglass in her hand, put it down.

"That's why the woman I told you about broke down so rapidly," he said. "She'd been dead so long that as soon as air struck her system the germs caused spontaneous dissolution."
Her throat moved and a shudder ran down through her. "It's horrible," she said.
He looked at her in surprise. Horrible? Wasn't that odd? He hadn't thought that for years. For him the word 'horror' had become obsolete. A surfeiting of terror soon made terror a cliché. To Robert Neville the situation merely existed as natural fact. It had no adjectives.
"And what about the—the ones who are still alive?" she asked.

"Well," he said, "when you cut their wrists the germ naturally becomes parasitic. But mostly they die from simple hemorrhage."
"Simple—"
She turned away quickly and her lips were pressed into a tight, thin line. "What's the matter?" he asked.
"N-nothing. Nothing," she said.
He smiled. "One gets used to these things," he said. "One has to." Again she shuddered, the smooth column of her throat contracting.

"You can't abide by Robert's Rules of Order in the jungle," he said. "Believe me, it's the only thing I can do. Is it better to let them die of the disease and return—in a far more terrible way?"
She pressed her hands together.

"But you said a lot of them are—are still living," she said nervously. "How do you know they're not going to stay alive?"

"I know," he said. "I know the germ, know how it multiplies. No matter how long their systems fight it, in the end the germ will win. I've made antibiotics, injected dozens of them. But it doesn't work, it can't work. You can't make vaccines work when they're already deep in the disease. Their bodies can't fight germs and make antibodies at the same time. It can't be done, believe me. It's a trap. If I didn't kill them, sooner or later they'd die and come after me. I have no choice; no choice at all."
They were silent then and the only sound in the room was the rasping of the needle on the inner grooves of the record. She wouldn't look at him, but kept staring at the floor with bleakeyes. It was strange, he thought, to find himself vaguely on the defensive for what yesterday was accepted necessity. In the years that had passed he had never once considered the possibility that he was wrong. It took her presence to bring about such thoughts: And they were strange, alien thoughts.
"Do you actually think I'm wrong?" he asked in an incredulous voice. She bit into her lower lip.
"Ruth," he said.
"It's not for me to say," she answered.

Chapter Eighteen

"VIRGE!"

The dark form recoiled against the wall as Robert Neville's hoarse cry ripped open the silent blackness.

He jerked his body up from the couch and stared with sleep-clouded eyes across the room, his chest pulsing with heartbeats like maniac fists on a dungeon wall.

He lurched up to his feet, brain still foggy with sleep; unable to define time or place. "Virge?" he said again, weakly, shakily. "Virge?'

"It—it's me," the faltering voice said in the darkness. He took a trembling step toward the thin stream of light spearing through the open peephole. He blinked dully at the light.

She gasped as he put his hand out and clutched her shoulder.

"It's Ruth. Ruth," she said in a terrified whisper. He stood there rocking slowly in the darkness, eyes gazing without comprehension at the dark form before him.

"It's Ruth," she said again, more loudly. Waking came like a hose blast of numbing shock. Something twisted cold knots into his chest and stomach. It wasn't Virge. He shook his head suddenly, rubbed shaking fingers across his eyes.

Then he stood there staring, weighted beneath a sudden depression. "Oh," he muttered faintly. "Oh, I—"

He remained there, feeling his body weaving slowly in the dark as the mists cleared from his brain.

He looked at the open peephole, then back at her.

"What are you doing?" he asked, voice still thick with sleep. "Nothing," she said nervously. "I—couldn't sleep."

He blinked his eyes suddenly at the flaring lamplight. Then his hands dropped down from the lamp switch and he turned around. She was against the wall still, blinking at the light, her hands at her sides drawn into tight fists.

"Why are you dressed?" he asked in a surprised voice. Her throat moved and she stared at him. He rubbed his eyes again and pushed back the long hair from his temples.

"I was—just looking out," she said. "But why are you dressed?"

"I couldn't sleep."

He stood looking at her, still a little groggy, feeling his heartbeat slowly diminish. Through the open peephole he heard them yelling outside, and he heard Cortman shout, "Come out, Neville!" Moving to the peephole, he pushed the small wooden door shut and turned to her.

"I want to know why you're dressed," he said again. "No reason," she said.

"Were you going to leave while I was asleep?" ''No, I—"

"Were you?"

She gasped as he grabbed her wrist.

"No, no," she said quickly. "How could I, with them out there?"

He stood breathing heavily, looking at her frightened face. His throat moved slowly as he remembered the shock of waking up and thinking that she was Virge.

Abruptly he dropped her arm and turned away. And he'd thought the past was dead. How long did it take for a past to die?

She said nothing as he poured a tumblerful of whisky and swallowed it convulsively. Virge, Virge, he thought miserably, still with me. He closed his eyes and jammed his teeth together.

"Was that her name?" he heard Ruth ask. His muscles tightened, then went slack. "It's all right," he said in a dead voice. "Go to bed."

She drew back a little. "I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't mean—"

Suddenly he knew he didn't want her to go to bed. He wanted her to stay with him. He didn't know why, he just didn't want to be alone.

"I thought you were my wife," he heard himself saying. "I woke up and I thought—" He drank a mouthful of whisky, coughing as part of it went down the wrong way. Ruth stayed in the shadows, listening.

"She came back, you see," he said. "I buried her, but one night she came back. She looked like—like you did. An outline, a shadow. Dead. But she came back. I tried to keep her with me. I tried, but she wasn't the same any more—you see. All she wanted was—"

He forced down the sob in his throat.

"My own wife," he said in a trembling voice, "coming back to drink my blood!"

He jammed down the glass on the bar top. Turning away, he paced restlessly to the peephole, turned, and went back and stood again before the bar. Ruth said nothing; she just stood in the darkness, listening.

"I put her away again," he said. "I had to do the same thing to her I'd done to the others. My own wife." There was a clicking in his throat. "A stake," he said in a terrible voice. "I had to put a stake in her. It was the only thing I knew to do. I—"

He couldn't finish. He stood there a long time, shivering helplessly, his eyes tightly shut. Then he spoke again.

"Almost three years ago I did that. And I still remember it, it's still with me. What can you do? What can you do?" He drove a fist down on the bar top as the anguish of memory swept over him again. "No matter how you try, you can't forget or—or adjust or—ever get away from it!"

He ran shaking fingers through his hair.

"I know what you feel, I know. I didn't at first, I didn't trust you. I was safe, secure in my little shell. Now—He shook his head slowly, defeatedly. "In a second, it's all gone. Adjustment, security, peace—all gone."

"Robert."

Her voice was as broken and lost as his.

"Why were we punished like this?" she asked. He drew in a shuddering breath.

"I don't know," he answered bitterly. "There's no answer, no reason. It just is."

She was close to him now. And suddenly, without hesitation or drawing back, he drew her against him, and they were two people holding each other tightly in the lost measure of night.

"Robert, Robert."

Her hands rubbed over his back, stroking and clutching, while his arms held her firmly and he pressed his eyes shut against her warm, soft hair.

Their mouths held together for a long time and her arms gripped with desperate tightness around his neck.

Then they were sitting in the darkness, pressing close together, as if all the heat in the world were in their bodies and they would share the warmth between them. He felt the shuddering rise and fall of her breasts as she held close to him, her arms tight around his body, her face against his neck. His big hands moved roughly through her hair, stroking and feeling the silky strands.

"I'm sorry, Ruth." "Sorry?"

"For being so cruel to you, for not trusting you." She was silent, holding tight.

"Oh, Robert," she said then, "it's so unfair. So unfair. Why are we still alive? Why aren't we all dead? It would be better if we were all dead."

"Shhh, shhh," he said, feeling emotion for her like a released current pouring from his heart and mind. "It'll be all right."

He felt her shaking her head slowly against him. "It will, it will," he said.

"How can it?"

"It will," he said, even though he knew he really couldn't believe it, even though he knew it was only released tension forming words in his mind.

"No," she said. "No."

"Yes, it will. It will, Ruth."

He didn't know how long it was they sat there holding each other close. He forgot everything, time and place; it was just the two of them together, needing each other, survivors of a black terror embracing because they had found each other.

But then he wanted to do something for her, to help her. "Come," he said. "We'll check you."

She stiffened in his arms.

"No, no," he said quickly. "Don't be afraid. I'm sure we won't find anything. But if we do, I'll cure you. I swear I'll cure you, Ruth."

She was looking at him in the darkness, not saying a word. He stood and pulled her up with him, trembling with an excitement he hadn't felt in endless years. He wanted to cure her, to help her.

"Let me," he said. "I won't hurt you. I promise I won't. Let's know—Let's find out for sure. Then we can plan and work. I'll save you, Ruth. I will. Or I'll die myself."

She was still tense, holding back. "Come with me, Ruth."

Now that the strength of his reserve had gone, there was nothing left to brace himself on, and he was shaking like a palsied man.

He led her into the bedroom. And when he saw in the lamplight how frightened she was, he pulled her close and stroked her hair.

"It's all right," he said. "All right, Ruth. No matter what we find, it'll be all right. Don't you understand?"

He sat her down on the stool and her face was completely blank, her body shuddering as he heated the needle over a Bunsen flame.

He bent over and kissed her on the cheek.

"It's all right now," he said gently. "It's all right."

She closed her eyes as he jabbed in the needle. He could feel the pain in his own finger as he pressed out blood and rubbed it on the slide.

"There. There," he said anxiously, pressing a little cotton to the nick on her finger. He felt himself trembling helplessly. No matter how he tried to control it, he couldn't. His fingers were almost incapable of making the slide, and he kept looking at Ruth and smiling at her, trying to take the look of taut fright from her features.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "Please don't. I'll cure you if you're infected. I will Ruth, I will." She sat without a word, looking at him with listless eyes as he worked. Her hands keptstirring restlessly in her lap.

"What will you do if—if I am," she said then.

"I'm not sure," he said. "Not yet. But there are a lot of things we can do."

"What?" "Vaccines, for one."

"You said vaccines didn't work," she said, her voice shaking a little. "Yes, but—" He broke off as he slid the glass slide onto the microscope. "Robert, what could you do?"

She slid off the stool as he bent over the microscope.

"Robert, don't look!" she begged suddenly, her voice pleading. But he'd already seen.

He didn't realize that his breath had stopped. His blank eyes met hers. "Ruth," he whispered in a shocked voice.

The wooden mallet crashed down on his forehead.

A burst of pain filled Robert Neville's head and he felt one leg give way. As he fell to one side he knocked over the microscope. His right knee hit the floor and he looked up in dazed bewilderment at her fright-twisted face. The mallet came down again and he cried out in pain. He fell to both knees and his palms struck the floor as he toppled forward. A hundred miles away he heard her gaspingsob.

“Ruth,” he mumbled.
“I told you not to!” she cried.

He clutched out at her legs and she drove the mallet down a third time, this time on the back of his skull. “Ruth!”

Robert Neville’s hands went limp and slid off her calves, rubbing away part of the tan. He fell on his face and his fingers drew in convulsively as night filled his brain.

Chapter Nineteen

WHEN HE OPENED HIS eyes there was no sound in the house.

He lay there a moment looking confusedly at the floor. Then, with a startled grunt, he sat up. A package of needles exploded in his head and he slumped down on the cold floor, hands pressed to his throbbing skull. A clicking sound filled his throat as he lay there.

After a few minutes he pulled himself up slowly by gripping the edge of the bench. The floor undulated beneath him as he held on tightly, eyes closed, legs wavering.

A minute later he managed to stumble into the bathroom. There he threw cold water in his face and sat on the bathtub edge pressing a cold, wet cloth to his forehead.

What had happened? He kept blinking and staring at the white-tiled floor.

He stood up and walked slowly into the living room. It was empty. The front door stood half open in the gray of early morning. She was gone.

Then he remembered. He struggled back to the bedroom, using the walls to guide him. The note was on the bench next to the overturned microscope. He picked up the paper withnumbed fingers and carried it to the bed. Sinking down with a groan, he held the letter before his eyes. But the letters blurred and ran. He shook his head and pressed his eyes shut. After a little while he read:

Robert:

Now you know. Know that I was spying on you, know that almost everything I told you was a lie. I’m writing this note, though, because I want to save you if I can.

When I was first given the job of spying on you, I had no feelings about your life. Because I did have a husband, Robert. You killed him.

But now it’s different. I know now that you were just as much forced into your situation as we were forced into ours. We are infected. But you already know that. What you don’t understand yet is that we’re going to stay alive. We’ve found a way to do that and we’re going to set up society again slowly but surely. We’re going to do away with all those wretched creatures whom death has cheated. And, even though I pray otherwise, we may decide to kill you and those like you.

Those like me? he thought with a start. But he kept reading.

I’ll try to save you. I’ll tell them you’re too well armed for us to attack now. Use the time I’m giving you, Robert! Get away from your house, go into the mountains and save yourself. There are only a handful of us now. But sooner or later we’ll be too well organized, and nothing I say will stop the rest from destroying you. For God’s sake, Robert, go now, while you can!

I know you may not believe this. You may not believe that we can live in the sun forshort periods now. You may not believe that my tan was only make-up. You may not believe that we can live with the germ now. That’s why I’m leaving one of my pills.

I took them all the time I was here. I kept them in a belt around my waist. You’ll discover that they’re a combination of defebrinated blood and a drug. I don’t know myself just what it is. The blood feeds the germs, the drug prevents its multiplication. It was the discovery of this pill that saved us from dying, that is helping to set up society again slowly.

Believe me, it’s true. And escape!

Forgive me, too. I didn’t mean to hit you, it nearly killed me to do it. But I was so terribly frightened of what you’d do when you found out.

Forgive me for having to lie to you about so many things. But please believe this: When we were together in the darkness, close to each other, I wasn't spying on you. I was loving you.
Ruth

He read the letter again. Then his hands fell forward and he sat there staring with empty eyes at the floor. He couldn't believe it. He shook his head slowly and tried to understand, but adjustment eluded him.

He walked unsteadily to the bench. He picked up the small amber pill and held it in his palm, smelled it, tasted it. He felt as if all the security of mason were ebbing away from him. The framework of his life was collapsing and it frightened him.

Yet how did he refute the evidence? The pill, the tan coming off her leg, her walking in the sun, her reaction to garlic.

He sank down on the stool and looked at the mallet lying on the floor. Slowly, ploddingly, his mind went over the evidence.

When he'd first seen her she'd run from him. Had it been a ruse? No, she'd been genuinely frightened. She must have been startled by his cry, then, even though she'd been expecting it, and forgotten all about her job. Then later, when she'd calmed down, she'd talked him into thinking that her reaction to garlic was the reaction of a sick stomach. And she had lied and smiled and feigned hopeless acceptance and carefully got all the information she'd been sent after. And, when she'd wanted to leave, she couldn't because of Cortman and the others. He had awakened then. They had embraced, they had—

His white-knuckled fist jolted down on the bench. "I was loving you." Lie. Lie! His fingers crumpled up the letter and flung it away bitterly.

Rage made the pain in his head flare hotly and he pressed both hands against it and closed his eyes with a groan.

Then he looked up. Slowly he slid off the stool and placed the microscope back on its base. The rest of her letter wasn't a lie, he knew that. Without the pill, without any evidence ofword or memory, he knew. He knew what even Ruth and her people didn't seem to know. He looked into the eyepiece for a long time. Yes, he knew. And the admission of what hesaw changed his entire world. How stupid and ineffective he felt for never having foreseen it! Especially after reading the phrase a hundred, a thousand times. But then he'd never really appreciated it. Such a short phrase it was, but meaning so much.

Bacteria can mutate.

PART IV: January 1979

Chapter Twenty

THEY CAME BY NIGHT. Came in their dark cars with their spotlights and their guns and their axes and pikes. Came from the blackness with a great sound of motors, the long white arms of their spotlights snapping around the boulevard corner and clutching out at Cimarron Street.

Robert Neville was sitting at the peephole when they came. He had put down a book and was sitting there watching idly when the beams splashed white across the bloodless vampire faces and they whirled with a gasp, their dark animal eyes staring at the blinding lights.

Neville jumped back from the peephole, his heart thudding with the abrupt shock. For a moment he stood there trembling in the dark room, unable to decide what to do. His throat contracted and he heard the roar of the car motors even through the soundproofing on his house. He thought of the pistols in his bureau, the sub- machine gun on his workbench, thought of defending his house against them.

Then he pressed his fingers in until the nails dug at his palms. No, he'd made his decision, he'd worked it out carefully through the past months. He would not fight.

With a heavy, sinking sensation in the pit of his stomach he stepped back to the peephole and looked out. The street was a scene of rushing, violent action illuminated by the bald glare of the spotlights. Men rushed at men, the sound of running boots covered the pavement. Then a shot rang out, echoing hollowly; more shots.

Two male vampires went thrashing down onto their sides. Four men grabbed them by the arms and jerked them up while two other men drove the glittering lance points of their pikes into the vampires' chests. Neville's face twitched as screams filled the night. He felt his chest shuddering with labored breath as he watched from his house.

The dark-suited men knew exactly what they were doing. There were about seven vampires visible, six men and a woman. The men surrounded the seven, held their flailing arms, and drove razor-tipped pikes deep into their bodies. Blood spouted out on the dark pavement and the vampires perished one by one. Neville felt himself shivering more and more. Is this the new society? The words flashed across his mind. He tried to believe that the men were forced into what they were doing, but shock brought terrible doubt. Did they have to do it like this, with such a black and brutal slaughtering? Why did they slay with alarum by night, when by day the vampires could be dispatched in peace?

Robert Neville felt tight fists shaking at his sides. He didn't like the looks of them, he didn't like the methodical butchery. They were more like gangsters than men forced into a situation.

There were looks of vicious triumph on their faces, white and stark in the spotlights. Their faces were cruel and emotionless.

Suddenly Neville felt himself shudder violently, remembering. Where was Ben Cortman? His eyes fled over the street but he couldn't see Cortman. He pressed against the peepholeand looked up and down the street. He didn't want them to get Cortman, he realized, didn't wantthem to destroy Cortman like that. With a sense of inward shock he could not analyze in the rush of the moment, he realized that he felt more deeply toward the vampires than he did toward their executioners.

Now the seven vampires lay crumpled and still in their pools of stolen blood. The spotlights were moving around the street, flaying open the night. Neville turned his head away as the brilliant glare blazed across the front of his house. Then the spotlight had turned about and he looked again.

A shout. Neville's eyes jumped toward the focus of the spotlights. He stiffened.

Cortman was on the roof of the house across the street. He was pulling himself up toward the chimney, body flattened on the shingles.

Abruptly it came to Neville that it was in that chimney that Ben Cortman had hidden most of the time, and he felt a wrench of despair at the knowledge. His lips pressed together tightly. Why hadn't he looked more carefully? He couldn't fight the sick apprehension he felt at the thought of Cortman's being killed by these brutal strangers. Objectively, it was pointless, but he could not repress the feeling. Cortman was not theirs to put to rest.

But there was nothing he could do.

With bleak, tortured eyes he watched the spotlights cluster on Cortman's wriggling body. He watched the white hands reaching out slowly for handholds on the roof. Slowly, slowly, as if Cortman had all the time in the world. Hurry up! Neville felt himself twitch with the unspoken words as he watched. He felt himself straining with Cortman's agonizingly slow movements.

The men did not shout, they did not command. They raised their rifles now and the night was torn open again with their exploding fire.

Neville almost felt the bullets in his own flesh. His body jerked with convulsive shudders as he watched Cortman's body jerk under the impact of the bullets.

Still Cortman kept crawling, and Neville saw his white face, his teeth gritted together. The end of Oliver Hardy, he thought, the death of all comedy and all laughter. He didn't hear the continuous fusillade of shots. He didn't even feel the tears running down his cheeks. His eyes were riveted on the ungainly form of his old friend inching up the brightly lit roof.

Now Cortman rose up on his knees and clutched at the chimney edge with spasmodic fingers. His body lurched as more bullets struck. His dark eyes glared into the blinding spotlights, his lips were drawn back in a soundless snarl.

Then he was standing up beside the chimney and Neville's face was white and taut as he watched Cortman start to raise his right leg.

And then the hammering machine gun splattered Cortman's flesh with lead. For a moment Cortman stood erect in the hot blast, palsied hands raised high over his head, a look of berserk defiance twisting his white features.

"Ben," Neville muttered in a croaking whisper.

Ben Cortman's body folded, slumped forward, fell. It slid and rolled slowly down the shingled incline, then dropped into space. In the sudden silence Neville heard the thump of it from across the street. Sick-eyed, he watched the men rush at the writhing body with their pikes.

Then Neville closed his eyes and his nails dug furrows in the flesh of his palms.

A clumping of boots. Neville jerked back into the darkness. He stood in the middle of the room, waiting for them to call to him and tell him to come out. He held himself rigidly. I'm not going to fight, he told himself strongly. Even though he wanted to fight, even though he already hated the dark men with their guns and their bloodstained pikes.

But he wasn't going to fight. He had worked out his decision very carefully. They were doing what they had to do, albeit with unnecessary violence and seeming relish. He had killed their people and they had to capture him and save themselves. He would not fight. He'd throw himself upon the justice of their new society. When they called to him he would go out and surrender, it was his decision.

But they didn't call. Neville lurched back with a gasp as the ax blade bit deeply into the front door. He stood trembling in the dark living room. What were they doing? Why didn't they call on him to surrender? He wasn't a vampire, he was a man like them. What were they doing?

He whirled and stared at the kitchen. They were chopping at the boarded- up back door too. He took a nervous step toward the hallway. His frightened eyes rushed from the back to the front door. He felt his heart pumping. He didn't understand, he didn't understand!

With a grunt of shocked surprise he jumped into the hall as the enclosed house rang with the gun explosion. The men were shooting away the lock on the front door. Another reverberating shot made his ears ring.

And, suddenly, he knew. They weren't going to take him to their courts, to their justice. They were going to exterminate him.

With a frightened murmur he ran into the bedroom. His hands fumbled in the bureau drawer. He straightened up on trembling legs, the guns in his hands. But what if they were going totake him prisoner? He'd only judged by the fact that they hadn't called on him to come out.

There were no lights in the house; maybe they thought he was already gone.

He stood shivering in the darkness of the bedroom, not knowing what to do, mutters of terror filling his throat Why hadn't he left! Why hadn't he listened to her and left? Fool!

One of his guns fell from nerveless fingers as the front door was crushed in. Heavy feet thudded into the living room and Robert Neville shuffled back across the floor, his remaining pistol held out with rigid, blood- drained fingers. They weren't going to kill him without a fight!

He gasped as he collided with the bench. He stood there tautly. In the front room a man said something he couldn't understand, then flashlight beams shone into the hall. Neville caught his breath. He felt the room spinning around him. So this is the end. It was the only thing he could think. So this is the end.

Heavy shoes thumped in the hall. Neville's fingers tightened still more on the pistol and his eyes stared with wild fright at the doorway.

Two men came in.

Their white beams played around the room, struck his face. The two men recoiled abruptly. "He's got a gun!" one of them cried, and fired his pistol.

Neville heard the bullet smash into the wall over his head. Then the pistol was jolting in his hand, splashing his face with bursts of light. He didn't fire at any one of them; he just kept pulling the trigger automatically. One of the men cried out in pain.

Then Neville felt a violent club blow across his chest. He staggered back, and jagged,burning pain exploded in his body. He fired once more, then crashed to his knees, the pistol slipping from his fingers.

"You got him!" he heard someone cry as he fell on his face. He tried to reach out for the pistol but a dark boot stamped on his hand and broke it. Neville drew in his hand with a rattling gasp and stared through pain- glazed eyes at the floor.

Rough hands slid under his armpits and pulled him up. He kept wondering when they would shoot him again. Virge, he thought, Virge, I'm coming with you now. The pain in his chest was like molten lead poured over him from a great height. He felt and heard his boot tips scrapingover the floor and waited for death. I want to die in my own house, he thought. He struggled feebly but they didn't stop. Hot pain raked saw-toothed nails through his chest as they dragged him through the front room.

"No," he groaned. "No!"

Then pain surged up from his chest and drove a barbed club into his brain. Everything began spinning away into blackness.

"Virge," he muttered in a hoarse whisper.

And the dark men dragged his lifeless body from the house. Into the night. Into the world that was theirs and no longer his.

Chapter Twenty-One

SOUND; A MURMURED RUSTLE in the air. Robert Neville coughed weakly, then grimaced as the pain filled his chest. A bubbling groan passed his lips and his head rolled slightly on the flat pillow. The sound grew stronger, it became a rumbling mixture of noises. His hands drew in slowly at his sides. Why didn't they take the fire off his chest? He could feel hot coals dropping through openings in his flesh. Another groan, agonized and breathless, twitched his graying lips. Then his eyes fluttered open.

He stared at the rough plaster ceiling for a full minute without blinking. Pain ebbed and swelled in his chest with an endless, nerve-clutching throb. His face remained a taut, lined mask of resistance to the pain. If he relaxed for a second, it enveloped him completely; he had to fight it. For the first few minutes he could only struggle with the pain, suffering beneath its hot stabbing. Then, after a while, his brain began to function; slowly, like a machine faltering, starting and stopping, turning and jamminggears.

Where am I? It was his first thought. The pain was awful. He looked down at his chest and saw that it was bound with a wide bandage, a great, moist spot of red rising and falling jerkily in the middle of it. He closed his eyes and swallowed. I'm hurt, he thought. I'm hurt badly. His mouth and throat felt powdery dry. Where am I, what am I—

Then he remembered; the dark men and the attack on his house. And he knew where he was even before he turned his head slowly, achingly, and saw the barred windows across the tiny cubicle. He looked at the windows for a long time, face tight, teeth clenched together. The sound was outside; the rushing, confused sound.

He let his head roll back on the pillow and lay staring at the ceiling. It was hard to understand the moment on its own terms. Hard to believe it wasn't all a nightmare. Over three years alone in his house. Now this.

But he couldn't doubt the sharp, shifting pain in his chest and he couldn't doubt the way the moist, red spot kept getting bigger and bigger. He closed his eyes. I'm going to die, hethought

He tried to understand that. But that didn't work either. In spite of having lived with death all these years, in spite of having walked a tightrope of bare existence across an endless maw of death—in spite of that he couldn't understand it. Personal death still was a thing beyond comprehension.

He was still on his back when the door behind him opened.

He couldn't turn; it hurt too much. He lay there and listened to footsteps approach the bed, then stop. He looked up but the person hadn't come into view yet. My executioner, he thought, the justice of this new society. He closed his eyes and waited.

The shoes moved again until he knew the person was by the cot. He tried to swallow but his throat was too dry. He ran his tongue over his lips.

"Are you thirsty?"

He looked up with dulled eyes at her and suddenly his heart began throbbing. The increased blood flow made the pain billow up and swallow him for a moment. He couldn't cut off the groan of agony. He twisted his head on the pillow, biting his lips and clutching at the blanketfeverishly. The red spot grew bigger.

She was on her knees now, patting perspiration from his brow, touching his lips with a cool, wet cloth. The pain began to subside slowly and her face came into gradual focus. Neville lay motionless, staring at her with pain- filled eyes.

"So," he finally said.

She didn't answer. She got up and sat on the edge of the bed. She patted his brow again. Then she reached over his head and he heard her pouring water into a glass.

The pain dug razors into him as she lifted his head a little so he could drink. This is what they must have felt when the pikes went into them, he thought. This cutting, biting agony, the escape of life's blood.

His head fell back on the pillow. "Thank you," he murmured.

She sat looking down, at him, a strange mixture of sympathy and detachment on her face. Her reddish hair was drawn back into a tight cluster behind her head and clipped there. She looked very clean-cut and self- possessed.

"You wouldn't believe me, would you?" she said.

A little cough puffed out his cheeks. His mouth opened and he sucked in some of the damp morning air. "I—believed you," he said.

"Then why didn't you go?"

He tried, to speak but the words jumbled together. His throat moved and he drew in another faltering breath.

"I—couldn't," he muttered. "I almost went several times. Once I even packed and —started out. But I couldn't, I couldn't—go. I was too used to the—the house. It was a habit, just—just like the habit of living. I got—used to it."

Her eyes ran over his sweat- greased face and she pressed her lips, together as she patted his forehead again.

"It's too late now," she said then. "You know that, don't you?" Something clicked in his throat as he swallowed.

"I know," he said.

He tried to smile but his lips only twitched.

"Why did you fight them?" she said. "They had orders to bring you in unharmed. If you hadn't fired at them they wouldn't have harmed you."

His throat, contracted.

"What difference—" he gasped.

His eyes closed and he gritted his teeth tightly to force back the pain.

When he opened them again she was still there. The expression on her face had not changed. His smile was weak and tortured.

"Your—your society is—certainly a fine one," he gasped. "Who are those—those gangsters who came to get me? The—the council of justice?"

Her look was dispassionate. She's changed, he thought suddenly.

"New societies are always primitive," she answered. "You should know that. In a way we're like a revolutionary group—repossessing society by violence. It's inevitable. Violence is no stranger to you. You've killed. Many times."

"Only to—to survive."

"That's exactly why we're killing," she said calmly. "To survive. We can't allow the dead toexist beside the living. Their brains are impaired, they exist for only one purpose. They have to be destroyed. As one who killed the dead and the living, you know that."

The deep breath he took made the pain wrench at his insides. His eyes were stark with pain as he shuddered. It's got to end soon, he thought. I can't stand much more of this. No, death did not frighten him. He didn't understand it, but he didn't fear it either.

The swelling pain sank down and the clouds passed from his eyes. He looked up at her calm face.

"I hope so," he said. "But—but did you see their faces when they—they killed?" His throat moved convulsively. "Joy," he mumbled. "Pure joy."

Her smile was thin and withdrawn. She has changed, he thought, entirely.

"Did you ever see your face," she asked, "when you killed?" She patted his brow with the cloth. "I saw it—remember? It was frightening. And you weren't even killing then, you were just chasing me."

He closed his eyes. Why am I listening to her? he thought. She's become a brainless convert to this new violence.

"Maybe you did see joy on their faces," she said. "It's not surprising. They're young. And they are killers—assigned killers, legal killers. They're respected for their killing, admired for it. What can you expect from them? They're only fallible men. And men can learn to enjoy killing. That's an old story, Neville. You know that."

He looked up at her. Her smile was the tight, forced smile of a woman who was trying to forgo being a woman in favor of her dedication.

"Robert Neville," she said, "the last of the old race." His face tightened. "Last?' he muttered, feeling the heavy sinking of utter loneliness in him.

"As far as we know," she said casually. "You're quite unique, you know. When you're gone, there won't be anyone else like you within our particular society."

He looked toward the window.

"Those are—people—outside," he said. She nodded. "They're waiting."

"For my death?'

"For your execution," she said.

He felt himself tighten as he looked up at her.

"You'd better hurry," he said, without fear, with a sudden defiance in his hoarse voice. They looked at each other for a long moment. Then something seemed to give in her. Herface grew blank.

"I knew it," she said softly. "I knew you wouldn't be afraid." Impulsively she put her hand over his.

"When I first heard that they were ordered to your house, I was going to go there and warnyou. But then I knew that if you were still there, nothing would make you go. Then I was going to try to help you escape after they brought you in. But they told me you'd been shot and I knew that escape was impossible too."

A smile flitted over her lips.

"I'm glad you're not afraid," she said. "You're very brave." Her voice grew soft. "Robert." They were silent and he felt her hand tighten on his.

"How is it you can—come in here?" he asked then. "I'm a ranking officer in the new society," she said. His hand stirred under hers.

"Don't—let it get—" He coughed up blood. "Don't let it get—too brutal. Too heartless." "What can I—" she started, then stopped. She smiled at him. "I'll try," she said.

He couldn't go on. The pain was getting worse. It twisted and turned like a clutching animal in his body. Ruth leaned over him.

"Robert," she said, "listen to me. They mean to execute you. Even though you're wounded. They have to. The people have been out there all night, waiting. They're terrified of you, Robert, they hate you. And they want your life."

She reached up quickly and unbuttoned her blouse. Reaching under her brassiere, she took out a tiny packet and pressed it into his right palm.

"It's all I can do, Robert," she whispered, "to make it easier. I warned you, I told you to go." Her voice broke a little. "You just can't fight so many, Robert."

“I know.” The words were gagging sounds in his throat.

For a moment she stood over his bed, a look of natural compassion on her face. It was all a pose, he thought, her coming in and being so official. She was afraid to be herself. I can understand that.

Ruth bent over him and her cool lips pressed on his. “You’ll be with her soon,” she murmured hastily.

Then she straightened up, her lips pressed together tightly. She buttoned the two top buttons of her blouse. A moment longer she looked down at him. Then her eyes glanced at his right hand. “Take them soon,” she murmured, and turned away quickly.

He heard her footsteps moving across the floor. Then the door was shutting and he heard the sound of it being locked. He closed his eyes and felt warm tears pushing out from beneath the lids. Good-by, Ruth. Good-by, everything.

Then, suddenly, he drew in a quick breath. Bracing himself, he pushed himself up to a sitting position. He refused to let himself collapse at the burning pain that exploded in his chest. Teeth grating together, he stood up on his feet. For a moment he almost fell, but, catching his balance, he stumbled across the floor on vibrating legs he could hardly feel.

He fell against the window and looked out.

The street was filled with people. They milled and stirred in the gray light of morning, the sound of their talking like the buzzing of a million insects.

He looked out over the people, his left hand gripping the bars with bloodless fingers, his eyes fever- lit. Then someone saw him.

For a moment there was an increased babbling of voices, a few startled cries.

Then sudden silence, as though a heavy blanket had fallen over their heads. They all stood looking up at him with their white faces. He stared back. And suddenly he thought, I’m the abnormal one now. Normalcy was a majority concept, the standard of many and not the standard of just one man.

Abruptly that realization joined with what he saw on their faces—awe, fear, shrinking horror—and he knew that they were afraid of him. To them he was some terrible scourge they had never seen, a scourge even worse than the disease they had come to live with. He was an invisible specter who had left for evidence of his existence the bloodless bodies of their lovedones. And he understood what they felt and did not hate them. His right hand tightened on the tiny envelope of pills. So long as the end did not come with violence, so long as it did not have to be a butchery before their eyesRobert Neville looked out over the new people of the earth. He knew he did not belong to them; he knew that, like the vampires, he was anathema and black terror to be destroyed. And, abruptly, the concept came, amusing to him even in hispain.

A coughing chuckle filled his throat. He turned and leaned against the wall while he swallowed the pills. Full circle, he thought while the final lethargy crept into his limbs. Full circle. A new terror born in death, a new superstition entering the unassailable fortress of forever.

I am legend.

Exercises:

Descriptive answer type questions:

1. Write a short summary of *I Am Legend*.
2. Explain, is the title *I Am Legend* related to the novella?

Short answer type questions:

1. How old is Robert? How does he look?
2. What is the new method of killing Vampire that Neville discovers?
3. What symptoms did victim of the plague suffer from?
4. What happens when Robert looks at Ruth's blood sample?"
5. Why do bullets have no effect on Vampires?
6. What warning does Ruth offer Neville?
7. What does the last line of the story mean? How is this true?

Classroom activities:

1. Describe how this novella is different from other you have read.
2. What's one thing of the story that has happened to you (or someone you know) Explain with support from the story.

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Unit-II

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

-Charles Dickens

Introduction:

Charles John Huffam Dickens (February 07, 1812-June 09, 1870) was an English writer and social critic.He was born at Landport in Portsea Island(Portsmouth), the second of eight children of Elizabeth Dickens and John Dickens. His father was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office and was temporarily stationed in the district. He left school to work in a factory when his father was incarcerated in a debtor's prison. He has been created some of the world's best known fictional characters and is regarded by many as the greatest novelists of the Victorian era. By the end of 1842 Dickens was a well-established author, having written six major works such as *Sketches by Boz* (1836), *The Pickwick Papers* (1836), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1837), *Oliver Twist* (1838), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) as well as several short stories, novellas and other pieces. His novels*A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Great Expectations* (1861) which were resounding successes in English literature. His regency novella *A Christmas Carol* (1843) is regarded as one of the most influential Christmas stories in the history of English literature.

Dickens wrote a novella *A Christmas Carol*in the early Victorian period, which was a fearful time for the British population. Dickens introduces Bob Cratchit's son, Tiny Tim as a small and disabled boy to prompt his readers into the feelings of empathy and compassion towards children but also towards the entire underprivileged population. The main protagonist of the story, Ebenzer Scrooge is merely old person who values wealth above all else, a miserly London-based money lender. It is the story about hope and importance of restoring kindness and generosity within society, particularly at Christmas time. Dickens was a firm supporter of children's rights, but in Victorian times poor children were either ignored or put to work in factories. He had often observed and cricized the heartless treatment of working children.

It depicts his childhood fear of poverty and impoverishment. He criticized the large divide between the rich and poor in British society, where the wealthy were only interested in their financial gain and the poor ended up in workhouse of debtor's prison. Poverty is one of the most prominent themes in the novel alongwith other three main themes are poverty, ignorance and happiness. Dickens exposes the immense gap between the rich and the poor and shows the moral values within the Victorian society. He portrayed a merciless and unkind image of the upperclasses. It is not merely a novella about Christmas, but rather a harsh criticism of the population at the time and Dickens's disappointment with the lack of humanity. He describes the poor, how they were treated unfairly and how they were thought as animals rather than human beings.

Text:

Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever aboutthat. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail. Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door- nail.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnized it with an undoubted bargain.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names: it was all the same to him.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind- stone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogsappeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge.

Once upon a time – of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve – old Scrooge sat busy in his counting- house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already – it had not been light all day: and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box

in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again.

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure."

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

"Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. "What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

Scrooge having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said "Bah!" again; and followed it up with "Humbug."

"Don't be cross, uncle!" said the nephew.

"What else can I be," returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will," said Scrooge indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

"Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

"Nephew!" returned the uncle, sternly, "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine." "Keep it!" repeated Scrooge's nephew. "But you don't keep it."

"Let me leave it alone, then," said Scrooge. "Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!"

"There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say," returned the nephew. "Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round – apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that – as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!" The clerk in the tank involuntarily applauded: becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark forever.

"Let me hear another sound from you," said Scrooge, "and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. You're quite a powerful speaker, sir," he added, turning to his nephew. "I wonder you don't go into Parliament."

"Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow."

Scrooge said that he would see him – yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him in that extremity first.

"But why?" cried Scrooge's nephew.

"Why?" "Why did you get married?" said Scrooge. "Because I fell in love."

“Because you fell in love!” growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. “Good afternoon!”
“Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?”
“Good afternoon,” said Scrooge.
“I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?” “Good afternoon,” said Scrooge.
“I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I’ll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!”
“Good afternoon,” said Scrooge. “And A Happy New Year!” “Good afternoon!” said Scrooge.
His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the clerk, who cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returned them cordially.
“There’s another fellow,” muttered Scrooge; who overheard him: “my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I’ll retire to Bedlam.”
This lunatic, in letting Scrooge’s nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge’s office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.
“Scrooge and Marley’s, I believe,” said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. “Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?”
“Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years,” Scrooge replied. “He died seven years ago, this very night.” “We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner,” said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.
It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word “liberality,” Scrooge frowned, and shook his head, and handed the credentials back.
“At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge,” said the gentleman, taking up a pen, “it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and Destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.”
“Are there no prisons?” asked Scrooge.
“Plenty of prisons,” said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.
“And the Union workhouses?” demanded Scrooge. “Are they still in operation?” “They are. Still,” returned the gentleman, “I wish I could say they were not.” “The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?” said Scrooge.
“Both very busy, sir.”
“Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course,” said Scrooge. “I’m very glad to hear it.”
“Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude,” returned the gentleman, “a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?”
“Nothing!” Scrooge replied.
“You wish to be anonymous?”
“I wish to be left alone,” said Scrooge. “Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don’t make merry myself at Christmas and I can’t afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned – they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there.”
“Many can’t go there; and many would rather die.”

“If they would rather die,” said Scrooge, “they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides – excuse me – I don’t know that.”
“But you might know it,” observed the gentleman.
“It’s not my business,” Scrooge returned. “It’s enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people’s. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!”
Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge returned his labours with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.
Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links, proffering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a Gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterwards as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there. The cold became intense. In the main street at the corner of the court, some labourers were repairing the gas-pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round which a party of ragged men and boys were gathered: warming their hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture. The water-plug being left in solitude, its overflowing sullenly congealed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The brightness of the shops where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp heat of the windows, made pale faces ruddy as they passed. Poulterers’ and grocers’ trades became a splendid joke; a glorious pageant, with which it was next to impossible to believe that such dull principles as bargain and sale had anything to do. The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House, gave orders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor’s household should; and even the little tailor, whom he had fined five shillings on the previous Monday for being drunk and bloodthirsty in the streets, stirred up to- morrow’s pudding in his garret, while his lean wife and the baby sallied out to buy thebeef.
Foggier yet, and colder! Piercing, searching, biting cold. If the good Saint Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Spirit’s nose with a touch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar weapons, then indeed he would have roared to lusty purpose. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge’s keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at the first sound of –
“God bless you, merry gentleman! May nothing you dismay!” Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of action, that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more congenial frost.
At length the hour of shutting up the counting house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the Tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.
“You’ll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?” said
Scrooge. “If quite convenient, sir.”
“It’s not convenient,” said Scrooge, “and it’s not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you’d think yourself ill-used, I’ll be bound?”
The clerk smiled faintly.
“And yet,” said Scrooge, “you don’t think me ill-used, when I pay a day’s wages for no work.” The clerk observed that it was only once a year.
“A poor excuse for picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December!” said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin. “But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning.”
The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas Eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman’s-buff.
Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker’s-book, went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of building up a yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could scarcely help fancying it must have runthere when it

was a young house, playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and forgotten the way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, was fain to grope with his hands. The fog and frost so hung about the black old gateway of the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold.

Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the city of London, even including – which is a bold word – the corporation, aldermen, and livery. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven years' dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change – not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air; and, though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face and beyond its control, rather than a part or its own expression.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.

To say that he was not startled, or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a stranger from infancy, wouldbe untrue. But he put his hand upon the key he had relinquished, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle.

He did pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut the door; and he did look cautiously behind it first, as if he half-expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on, so he said "Pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every room above, and every cask in the wine-merchant's cellars below, appeared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs; slowly too: trimming his candle as he went.

You may talk vaguely about driving a coach-and-six up a good old flight of stairs, or through a bad young Act of Parliament; but I mean to say you might have got a hearse up that staircase, and taken it broadwise, with the splinter-bar towards the wall and the door towards the balustrades: and done it easy. There was plenty of width for that, and room to spare; which is perhaps the reason why Scrooge thought he saw a locomotive hearse going on before him in the gloom. Half a dozen gas-lamps out of the street wouldn't have lighted the entry too well, so you may suppose that it was pretty dark with Scrooge's dip.

Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for that. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. He had just enough recollection of the face to desire to do that.

Sitting-room, bedroom, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-room as usual. Old fire-guards, old shoes, two fish-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he took off his cravat; put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his nightcap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before he could extract the least sensation of warmth from such a handful of fuel. The fireplace was an old

one, built by some Dutch merchant long ago, and paved all round with quaint Dutch tiles, designed to illustrate the Scriptures. There were Cains and Abels, Pharaohs' daughters; Queens of Sheba, Angelic messengers descending through the air on clouds like feather-beds, Abrahams, Belshazzars, Apostles putting off to sea in butter-boats, hundreds of figures to attract his thoughts – and yet that face of Marley, seven years dead, came like the ancient Prophet's rod, and swallowed up the whole. If each smooth tile had been a blank at first, with power to shape some picture on its surface from the disjointed fragments of his thoughts, there would have been a copy of old Marley's head on every one.

"Humbug!" said Scrooge; and walked across the room.

After several turns, he sat down again. As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room, and communicated for some purpose now forgotten with a chamber in the highest story of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, together. They weresucceeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

The cellar-door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

"It's humbug still!" said Scrooge. "I won't believe it."

His colour changed though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried, "I know him; Marley's Ghost!" and fell again.

The same face: the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like his pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent, so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind. Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now.

No, nor did he believe it even now. Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and marked the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had not observed before: he was still incredulous, and fought against his senses.

"How now!" said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever. "What do you want with me?" "Much!" – Marley's voice, no doubt about it.

"Who are you?"

"Ask me who I was."

"Who were you then?" said Scrooge, raising his voice. "You're particular, for a shade." He was going to say "to a shade," but substituted this, as more appropriate.

"In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley."

"Can you – can you sit down?" asked Scrooge, looking doubtfully at him. "I can."

"Do it then."

Scrooge asked the question, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair; and felt that in the event of its being impossible, it might involve the necessity of an embarrassing explanation. But the ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it.

"You don't believe in me," observed the Ghost. "I don't." said Scrooge.

"What evidence would you have of my reality, beyond that of your senses?"

“I don’t know,” said Scrooge.
“Why do you doubt your senses?”
“Because,” said Scrooge, “a little thing affects them. A slight disorder ofthe stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There’s more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!”
Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre’s voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones.
To sit, staring at those fixed glazed eyes, in silence for a moment, would play, Scrooge felt, the very deuce with him. There was something very awful, too, in the spectre’s being provided with an infernal atmosphere of its own. Scrooge could not feel it himself, but this was clearly the case; for though the Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels, were still agitated as by the hot vapour from anoven.
“You see this toothpick?” said Scrooge, returning quickly to the charge, for the reason just assigned; and wishing, though it were only for a second, to divert the vision’s stony gaze from himself.
“I do,” replied the Ghost.
“You are not looking at it,” said Scrooge.
“But I see it,” said the Ghost, “notwithstanding.”
“Well!” returned Scrooge, “I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you! humbug!”
At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how much greater was his horror, when the phantom taking off the bandage round its head, as if it were too warm to wear indoors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!
Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face. “Mercy!” he said. “Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?”
“Man of the worldly mind!” replied the Ghost, “do you believe in me or not?”
“I do,” said Scrooge. “I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?”
“It is required of every man,” the Ghost returned, “that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world – oh, woe is me! – and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!”
Again the specter raised a cry, and shook its chain and wrung its shadowy hands. “You are fettered,” said Scrooge, trembling. “Tell me why?”
“I wear the chain I forged in life,” replied the Ghost. “I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?”
Scrooge trembled more and more.
“Or would you know,” pursued the Ghost, “the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!”
Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of findinghimself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable: but he could see nothing.
“Jacob,” he said, imploringly. “Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob!”
“I have none to give,” the Ghost replied. “It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more, is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house
– mark me! – in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!”
It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtful, to put his hands in his breeches pockets. Pondering on what the Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his knees.

“You must have been very slow about it, Jacob,” Scrooge observed, in a business-like manner, though with humility and deference.
“Slow!” the Ghost repeated.
“Seven years dead,” mused Scrooge. “And travelling all the time!”
“The whole time,” said the Ghost. “No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.”
“You travel fast?” said Scrooge.
“On the wings of the wind,” replied the Ghost.
“You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years,” said Scrooge.
The Ghost, on hearing this, set up another cry, and clanked its chain so hideously in the dead silence of the night, that the Ward would havebeen justified in indicting it for a nuisance.
“Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed,” cried the phantom, “not to know, that ages of incessant labour, by immortal creatures, for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed. Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life’s opportunity misused! Yet such was I! Oh! such was I!”
“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.
“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!”
It held up its chain at arm’s length, as if that were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again.
“At this time of the rolling year,” the spectre said “I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode! Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me!”
Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.
“Hear me!” cried the Ghost. “My time is nearly gone.”
“I will,” said Scrooge. “But don’t be hard upon me! Don’t be flowery, Jacob! Pray!”
“How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day.”
It was not an agreeable idea. Scrooge shivered, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.
“That is no light part of my penance,” pursued the Ghost. “I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.”
“You were always a good friend to me,” said Scrooge. “Thank `ee!” “You will be haunted,” resumed the Ghost, “by Three Spirits.” Scrooge’s countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost’s had done.
“Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?” he demanded, in a faltering voice. “It is.”
“I – I think I’d rather not,” said Scrooge.
“Without their visits,” said the Ghost, “you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow, when the bell tolls one.”
“Couldn’t I take `em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?” hinted Scrooge.
“Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!”
When it had said these words, the spectre took its wrapper from the table, and bound it round its head, as before. Scrooge knew this, by the smart sound its teeth made, when the jaws were brought together bythe bandage. He ventured to raise his eyes again, and found his supernatural visitor confronting him in an erect attitude, with its chain wound over and about its arm.

The apparition walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectre reached it, it was wide open. It beckoned Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two paces of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped.

Not so much in obedience, as in surprise and fear: for on the raising of the hand, he became sensible of confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailings inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory. The spectre, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge; and floated out upon the bleak, dark night.

Scrooge followed to the window: desperate in his curiosity. He looked out.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; some few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He had been quite familiar with one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever.

Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded together; and the night became as it had been when he walked home.

Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say "Humbug!" butstopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the Invisible World, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, much in need of repose; went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.

Exercises:

Descriptive answer type questions:

1. How Dicken's presents the theme of charity and Christmas in *A Christmas Carol*?
2. Explain Scrooge as a fearful character.

Short answer type questions:

1. Why does Scrooge keep the carol in his office?
2. Who is Fred, and what happens when he comes to visit Scrooge?
3. What is the role of Timy Tin in thestory?
4. What does the term 'bah!humbug!' mean?
5. How does Dickens present posivity and happiness in *A Christmas Carol*?
6. How does Dickens present idea about guilt and blame in *A Christmas Carol*?
7. How does Dickens show the transformation in *A Christmas Carol*?

Classroom activities:

1. What message is Dickens sending about greed? Do you think this message is still relevant to modern society? Why or Why not?
2. Does the novel end the way you expected? How? Why?

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Unit-III

Remedial Grammar- Common Errors

(Articles, Adjectives, Adverbs, Gerund/ Infinitive, Nouns, Pronouns)

Most of the persons who use English as their second language make mistakes while using this language. The mistakes which commonly occur, and which can be avoided by all, are given in this unit. An 'error' in the use of any language indicates a deviation from the standard usage. Errors occur due to confusion. Many times two words look similar, many times we do not have the correct idea of the tense to be used, and in most of the instances we do not even realize that we are committing a mistake in the usage of English. The following unit gives information about the instances of language use where people generally make mistakes. Once these instances are understood, we would not make these mistakes. Correct use of language is very essential in the advancement of any career. The norms and rules of a language have been designed in order to make the communication clear. Our improper or erroneous usage of English makes people unable to understand our language. Therefore, one should make attempt to use the English language according to its accepted norms and rules of grammar. Effective communication, whether written or spoken, always involves proper use of language.

1. Articles:

Articles are a class of words which decide the reference of noun. Such reference is of definiteness or indefiniteness. That is how we have two articles in English i.e. Definite (The) and Indefinite (a/an). When you say "a doctor" "an engineer" it means any doctor/ any engineer because the reference to them is not definite. But by saying "the doctor" " the engineer" you are talking about some particular or specific person. The notion of calling A, E, I, O, U as vowels is misleading because there are many words that begin with U but take article "a" before them. (a university, a unit) "A" as an Indefinite article is used before any singular countable noun (a light, a table, a boy, a friend etc). "An" is used before words that begin with a vowel sound regardless of their spelling (an ant, an elephant, an LCD screen, an uncle, an onion, an heir). "The" is the most frequently used word in the English language. It is used with countable as well as uncountable nouns. Learners find it quite difficult to use appropriate article when required. Let's see some examples and correct our mistakes:

Incorrect: I hope you all have a enjoyable journey.

Correct: I hope you all have an enjoyable journey**.**

Reason: Always use **an** (NOT a) before a word beginning with a vowel sound. Here the article refers to journey but an adjective comes before it and it begins with a vowel sound so "an" is required.

Incorrect: My friend is doing a M.Sc in Chemical Engineering.

Correct: My brother is doing an M.Sc in Chemical Engineering.

Reason: Here the abbreviation begins with a vowel sound though the spelling begins with "M" it is pronounced with a vowel sound.

Incorrect: Many times it is difficult to live a honest life.

Correct: Many times it is difficult to live an honest life.

Reason: when the letter "h" is not pronounced as in 'an honour', 'an hour' the words begin with vowel sound

Incorrect: The lady had been a deaf since birth.

Correct: The lady had been deaf since birth.

Reason: Deaf is an adjective so no article is required. Articles go only with noun

Incorrect: One of the boys I share with is aGerman.

Correct: One of the boys I share with isGerman.

Reason: Nationality words like Indian, British, and Spanish etc are adjectives so no article is requiredunless theadjective is followed by a noun.

Incorrect: Adam found one ring in the street.

Correct: Adam found a ring in the street

Reason: Article "a" stands for singular countable entity so "one" sounds odd. Also it looks like a literal translation from Marathi/ Hindi

Fill in the blanks with a or an where necessary.

1 Swimming is -------- great fun.

2 The plane made----------terrible noise.

3 What sort of -------- man is he?

4 My aunt made----------fortune in America.

5 He saved up more than----------thousand pounds.

6 The train left---------- half hour ago.

7 She's made----------great progress in English.

8 She's ---------- clever girl.

9 He tried without success to find----------work.

10 Vitamins are necessary for---------- good health.

Fill in the blanks with the where necessary:

1 My little brother will go to ---------- school next year.

2 My father left----------school many years ago.

3 ---------red,---------- blue, and----------green are beautiful colours.

4cotton of Egypt is exported to many countries,

5 ----------Nile flows into---------- Mediterranean.

6 What time is----------lunch?

7 She can speak---------- French.

8 She speaks ----------German better than ---------- English.

9flies are harmful insects.

10 The boy was sent to ------- post office to post a letter.

2. **Adjectives:**

Adjectives are the words that modify the meaning of a noun or a pronoun. They give extra information like size, shape, colour, substance, origin etc. Degree of comparison is another area where learners may commit mistakes. Comparative degree is used when two entities are compared and superlative degree is used when one is compared with many. Let's look at some examples and understand them:

Incorrect: She is more tall than Simran

Correct: She is taller than Simran.

Reason: Comparative degree of many adjectives is formed by adding –er to them. This is the case when the adjective is of one/ two syllables. If the adjective has three or more syllables then more is added.

Examples:

She is shorter than

Ram. He is smarter

than David.

Incorrect: Who's the best performer, John or Mary?

Correct: Who's the better performer, John or Mary?

Reason: Better is used for comparing two people or things and best is used to compare three or more people or things.

Examples

Which colour is better, pink or yellow?
Suman is the best student in the class.
Incorrect: Mohan is the tallest of the two boys.
Correct: Mohan is the taller of the two boys.

Reason: Here the comparison is between two boys so comparative degree is needed. Incorrect: Pune is the larger city in Maharashtra.
Correct: Pune is the largest city in Maharashtra.

Reason: We use the superlative degree when more than two persons or things are compared

Rewrite the following with the correct adjectives in brackets:

1 He's the (strong) boy in the whole school. 2 Of the two sisters, Mary is the (beautiful). 3 Ann is the (young) of four sisters.
4 John is the (old) of all my friends.
5 This is the (good) novel I've ever read.
6 Which do you think is (good), tea or coffee? 7 Iron is the (useful) of all metals.
8 The Nile is the (long) river in Africa. 9 Which of the two girls is (tall)?
10 David is (bad) than his brother.
Correct the following, giving reasons for your corrections:
1 Alexandria is smaller from Cairo.
2 New York is the larger city in the United States. 3 He's the better student from all.
4 John is more stronger than his brother.
5 My handwriting is more bad than my sister's. 6 Which is the heaviest you or I?
7 Which of these three girls is the elder?
8 This boy's manners are more good than his brother's. 9 Which of the girls is the taller in the class?
10 Mount Everest is the higher mountain of the world.

3. **Adverb:**

Adverbs are the words that modify verb or another adverb. They provide circumstantial information like manner, place, time, duration and direction etc. They are optional and mobile elements in a clause structure. Sometimes learners find it difficult to use adverbs properly. Let's understand

Incorrect: they felt well.

Correct: They felt good.

Reason: We use "good" for expressing happiness.

Incorrect: She drives good.

Correct: She drives well.

Reason: We use "well" for expressing a quality of someone or something.

Examples

The machine runs well. She paints well.

Incorrect: He almost washed all of the cars.

Correct: He washed almost all of the cars.

Reason: One should be very careful about the placement of adverb. Both the sentences are grammatically correct but they differ in meaning because of placement of adverb "almost."

Rewrite the following sentences, placing the adverbs or adverbial phrases in the right position:

1 I can speak very well English. 2 I like very much music.

3 A beginner can't speak correctly English.

4 The teacher explained very well the problem.

5 Michael recorded with his video camera the concert. 6 He put into his pocket the money.

7 He likes very much tea.

8 She learnt by heart the poem.

9 I received from my aunt a nice present. 10 He shut quickly the book.

Correct the following sentences, giving reasons for your corrections:

1 I always am on time.

2 It rains seldom in the desert. 3 We went yesterday there.

4 I'm not enough tall.

5 He begged the teacher to not punish him. 6 I could have not arrived sooner.

7 She will have not finished her work by tomorrow. 8 I prefer usually coffee to tea.

9 They are leaving for London this evening at seven o'clock. 10 Peter yesterday did not come to school.

4. **Gerund and Infinitive:**

A gerund is a verb form which functions as a noun. In other words, a gerund is a noun made from a verb by adding "-ing." Infinitive is a form of verb which has specific usage. Many times learners find it difficult to use infinitive form of verb properly. Consider the following examples:

Incorrect: We enjoy to go for walk after dinner.

Correct: We enjoy going for walk after dinner.
Reason: There are some verbs like dislike, love, enjoy etc. which are always followed by a gerund.
Examples
We, enjoy playing on this
ground. I love eating ice cream.

Incorrect: I went there for learning English.
Correct: I went there to learn English.
Reason: We express purpose by using the infinitive and not the gerund

Misuse of the infinitive

a) after prepositions or preposition phrases:

Incorrect: Did your work without to speak?.
Correct: Did your work without speaking?

Incorrect: He has gone away instead to wait.
Correct: He has gone away instead of waiting.

b) After words which regularly take a preposition:

Incorrect: We're quite capable to do this.
Correct: We're quite capable of doing this.

Incorrect: She's sometimes fond to talk.
Correct: She's sometimes fond of talking.

Incorrect: John insisted to go to London.
Correct: John insisted on going to London.

c) After certain adjectives:

Incorrect: They were busy to revise the exams.
Correct: They were busy revising for the exams.

Incorrect: Is this film worth to see?
Correct: Is this film worth seeing?

d) After certain phrases:

Incorrect:: I have no difficulty to do it.
Correct: I have no difficulty in doing it.

Incorrect: We had the pleasure to meet him.
Correct: We had the pleasure of meeting him.

Put a suitable gerund in the following:
1 Do this without ---------- any
mistakes. 2 We don't enjoy - ---- -- .
3 He succeeded in_____the
door. 4 1 can't prevent you from_____

5 It's no use ---------- about everything.
6 She stopped---------- in class.
7 I was busy---------- ready for dinner. 8 It's worth-------- well.
9 I'm thinking of ---------- to London next year.
10 It's no use---------- over spilt milk.

Make sentences of your own, using a gerund after each of the following:

1 avoid	4 finish	7 instead of	9 tired
2 stop	5 prevent	8 interested	10 insist
3 worth	6 can't help		

5. Noun:

Noun as a word class belongs to Open Class of words. It is a major class of words. Noun has certain properties like Number, Person, Gender and Case. Most of the non-native learners find it challenging to deal with the number property of noun because their mother tongue may have a different system. In English Noun functions in a particular way and is used with certain conventions. Let's have a look at some of those areas where students may commit mistakes.

1. Incorrect: One of the bus is late.

Correct: One of the buses is late.

Reason: The singular countable noun bus follows the expression 'one of.' It means one from many so it requires plural countable noun

Other Examples:

Taj Mahal is one of the Seven Wonders of the World. He is one of my best friends.

2. Police is / police are

Incorrect: The police is searching him.

Correct: The police are searching him.

Reason: Use plural form 'are' when referring to police in general. The word police is an aggregate noun, it represents an indefinite number of parts; aggregate nouns have a plural form. When referring to a single person or a specific department, use singular 'is'.

Examples

The police are blocking off the street where the murder took place. The police department is at the corner of the main building.

3. Mathematics is/Mathematics are

Incorrect: Mathematics are my favourite subject. **Correct: Mathematics is my favourite subject.**

Reason: The plural verb (are) does not agree with the singular subject Mathematics. There are some nouns that appear to be plural but in actual they are singular. For example, Physics, Civics, Diabetes, Billiards, Gymnastics, Phonetics

Examples

Robotics is the emerging branch of engineering. She thinks Physics is a difficult subject.

4. Using the possessive 's with inanimate objects. Incorrect: My room's window is close.

Correct: The window of my room is close.

Reason: With inanimate objects we usually use the 'of structure.' The door of my car,
The leg of his table
The surface of the water

With the names of places and organisations we can use either- London's streets = The streets of London.
Italy's climate. = The climate of Italy.
The school 's main office = The main office of the school .

Confusion of number

The following can't be used in the plural:

1. **Advice.**

Incorrect: Mary gave me some good advices.

Correct: Mary gave me some good advice.

Note: When we mean only one thing we say a piece of advice:
Let me give you 3 piece of advice.

2. **Information.**

Incorrect: Can I give them any informations?

Correct: Can I give them any information?

Note: When we mean only one thing we say an item or a bit of information He gave me a useful item of information.

3. **Furniture.**

Incorrect: Furnitures are often made of wood.

Correct: Furniture is often made of wood.

Note : Furniture is a singular noun and always takes a singular verb and pronoun. A piece of furniture means one thing only

4. **Luggage.**

Incorrect: His luggages are stolen.

Correct: His luggage is stolen.

Note : Baggage, another word for luggage, can't b e used in the plural either The baggage is ready for the tram.

5. **Work.**

Incorrect: Today they've many works to do.

Correct: Today they've a lot of work to do.

Note: The plural form works means a factory or the writings of an author The works of Milton are many
They visited the steel works.

6. **Character.**

Incorrect: The College builds good characters.

Correct: The College builds good character.

Note. The plural form ‘characters’ denotes the letters of the alphabet or the people in a book or play.

7. **Hair.**

Incorrect: That girl has long hairs.

Correct: That girl has long hair.

Note: Hair is always presented collectively. When we use hair to denote a single thread, the plural form is hairs
I found two long hairs in my food.

8. **Sheep.**

Incorrect: Five sheeps are grazing in the field.

Correct: Five sheep are grazing in the held.

Note: Sheep, deer, salmon, and a few other nouns have the same form for singular and plural . We may say two sheep or twelve sheep.

9. **Knowledge.**

Incorrect: Kiran has good knowledges of politics. Correct: Kiran has a good knowledge of politics.

10. Scissors, etc. + plural verb.

Incorrect: The scissor is lying on the sofa.

Correct: The scissors are lying on the sofa.

Note: All names of things consisting of two parts (like scissors, trousers, spectacles, shears, pliers) take a plural verb after them. **We can say: a pair of (scissors, etc.) is lying on the sofa.**

Correct the following sentences, giving reasons for your corrections:

1 Her advices were very wise. 2 You was the first to do it.
3 The class wasn't able to agree.
4 I've many works to do this morning.
5 The thunders and lightnings frightened the little girl. 6 I've more than two dozens of books at home.
7 The poors say that riches does not make a man happy. 8 She waited at the terminal for her luggages.
9 You should go and have your hairs cut, they're too long. 10 I'm waiting for more informations about this matter.

Fill in the blanks with one of the nouns in brackets:

1 The ancient of Greece is an interesting subject. {story, history)
2 His_____was swollen and he couldn't get his shoe on. (foot, leg) 3 The strong spoilt the game, (wind, air)
4 Mr Brown is my lawyer and I've been his for many years, {customer, client) 5 We've been given a long to learn by heart. {poem, poetry)
6 She can play the violin and other. (organs, instruments) 7 The of Switzerland is very beautiful. (scene, scenery)
8 There wasn't much anywhere, (shade, shadow)
9 The ship was sunk in the of the Atlantic. (middle, centre)
10 The students will do a at the end of the year. (theatre, play)

6. Pronoun:

Pronoun is a word that is used instead of noun. It must be of the same number, person, gender and case like the noun to which it replaces. Some of the problem areas are noted here to help you understand the use of pronoun.

1. It's/ its

Incorrect: Its Monday morning.

Correct: It's Monday morning.

Reason: "It's" is a contraction for it is. "Its" is a possessive pronoun for things.

Examples

The floor looks great with its new mattress. It's raining outside.

2. Me/ I

Incorrect: Asmita and me went to the mall.

Correct: Asmita and I went to the mall.

Reason: When talking about doing some activity with someone else, use his/her name followed by I. Here we have a compound subject so subjective case of the pronoun is required.

Examples
My sister and I love ice cream.
Manisha and I are planning a trip.

3. **His/hers/its**

Incorrect: The dog lost his bone. (The gender is unknown.)
Correct: The dog lost its bone.
Reason: Use "it" if you don't know the gender of an animal.

Example
Their dog participates in many dog shows. It has won several prizes.

4. **Each is/ Each are**

Incorrect: Each of the cars are fast. **Correct: Each of the cars is fast.**
Reason: Though the noun 'cars' is plural the actual subject is **each** which is singular so a singular verb is required. We use singular verb (is) with indefinite pronouns such as each, none, neither)
Example
Each of the bikes is fast.
Neither of them is my relative.

5. **These/those**

Incorrect: Do you visit these buildings over there?
Correct: Do you visit those buildings over there?
Reason: The plural of this is these. Use these for nearby things or people. The plural of that is those. Use those for things or people at a distance.
Examples
You can purchase these glasses now. Later, we may not visit the same mall. I will visit those students next week.

6. **Whom/who**

Incorrect: The person whom we met yesterday was John's father.
Correct: The person who we met yesterday was John's father.
Rule: Who is used to refer to the subject of a sentence and whom is used to refer to the object of a verb or preposition.

7. **Using the objective case after the verb to be.**

Incorrect: It was her.
Correct: It was she.
Rule: It in this case is a dummy subject so the pronoun coming after the verb to be must be in the nominative case, and not in the objective in written composition. However, the objective case is now usually used in conversation. 'It's me. lt was him/her/them, etc

8. **Using the objective case after the conjunction than.**

Incorrect: My brother is taller than me.
Correct: My brother is taller than I (am).
Rule: The word than is a conjunction, and can only be followed by a pronoun in the nominative case. The verb coming after the pronoun is generally omitted.
Note: Use the objective case in spoken English. You're much taller than me

9. **Using the relative pronoun which for pens.**

Incorrect: I've a sister which is at school.

Correct: I've a sister who is at school.
Rule: Only use which as a relative pronoun for animals or things. The right pronoun to use for people is who (whose, whom) .

10. Using what or which after everything, etc.
Incorrect: I listened to everything which (or what) he said. **Correct: I listened to everything (that) he said**.
Rule: We don't use the relative pronouns which and what after everything, something, anything, little, or nothing W e can use that after these words, or we can omitted it.

Rewrite the following sentences, leaving out unnecessary pronouns and making other necessary changes:
1 The prizes they were given to the boys. 2 The girl she said nothing.
3 The teacher gave us an exercise to do it. 4 He went home and he got his book.
5 The book which it is on the table is mine.
6 Students who are good at their lessons they get good marks. 7 She gave us a football to play with it.
8 The people, having seen the game, they went away. 9 The headmaster I have seen him just now.
10 The scorpion it has a sting in its tail.

Correct the following sentences, giving reasons for your corrections:
1 One should mind his own business.
2 The most of the people are fond of the cinema. 3 This is the boy which is always late.
4 I speak English better than him.
5 She told her mother all what had been said. 6 This cake is for you and myself.
7 I want to give me your book, please. 8 Is a very good girl.
9 It is them.
11 I and Stephen are friends.

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This text offers a close range of a variety of the choicest English short fiction along with lessons in Remedial Grammar to develop the English Language usage skills of the students.

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