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**Анализируем британские и американские рассказы**

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## THE CUT-GLASS BOWL

by F. Scott Fitzgerald

### I

There was a rough stone age and a smooth stone age and a bronze age, and many years afterward a cut-glass age. In the cut-glass age, when young ladies had persuaded young men with long, curly mustaches to marry them, they sat down several months afterward and wrote thank-you notes for all sorts of cut-glass presents – punch-bowls, finger-bowls, dinner-glasses, wine-glasses, ice-cream dishes, bonbon dishes, decanters, and vases – for, though cut glass was nothing new in the nineties, it was then especially busy reflecting the dazzling light of fashion from the Back Bay to the fastnesses of the Middle West. –

After the wedding the punch-bowls were arranged in the sideboard with the big bowl in the centre; the glasses were set up in the china-closet; the candlesticks were put at both ends of things – and then the struggle for existence began. The bonbon dish lost its little handle and became a pin-tray upstairs; a promenading cat knocked the little bowl off the sideboard, and the hired girl chipped the middle-sized one with the sugar-dish; then the wine-glasses succumbed to leg fractures, and even the dinner-glasses disappeared one by one like the ten little niggers, the last one ending up, scarred and maimed as a tooth-brush holder among other shabby genteels on the bathroom shelf. But by the time all this had happened the cut-glass age was over, anyway.

It was well past its first glory on the day the curious Mrs. Roger Fairboalt came to see the beautiful Mrs. Harold Piper.

“My dear,” said the curious Mrs. Roger Fairboalt, “I love your house. I think it’s quite artistic.”

“I’m so glad,” said the beautiful Mrs. Harold Piper, lights appearing in her young, dark eyes; “and you must come often. I’m almost always alone in the afternoon.”

Mrs. Fairboalt would have liked to remark that she didn’t believe this at all and couldn’t see how she’d be expected to – it was all over town that Mr. Freddy Gedney had been dropping in on Mrs. Piper five afternoons a week for the past six months. Mrs. Fairboalt was at that ripe age where she distrusted all beautiful women –

“I love the dining-room most,” she said, “all that marvellous china, and that huge cut-glass bowl.”

Mrs. Piper laughed, so prettily that Mrs. Fairboalt’s lingering reservations about the Freddy Gedney story quite vanished.

“Oh, that big bowl!” Mrs. Piper’s mouth forming the words was a vivid rose petal. “There’s a story about that bowl –”

“Oh –”

“You remember young Carleton Canby? Well, he was very attentive at one time, and the night I told him I was going to marry Harold, seven years ago in ninety-two, he drew himself way up and said: ‘Evylyn, I’m going to give a present that’s as hard as you are and as beautiful and as empty and as easy to see through.’ He frightened me a little – his eyes were so black. I thought he was going to deed me a haunted house or something that would explode when you opened it. That bowl came, and of course it’s beautiful. Its diameter or circumference or something is two and a half feet – or perhaps it’s three and a half. Anyway, the sideboard is really too small for it; it sticks way out.”

“My dear, wasn’t that odd! And he left town about then, didn’t he?” Mrs. Fairboalt was scribbling italicized notes on her memory – “hard, beautiful, empty, and easy to see through.”

“Yes, he went West – or South – or somewhere,” answered Mrs. Piper, radiating that divine vagueness that helps to lift beauty out of time.

Mrs. Fairboalt drew on her gloves, approving the effect of largeness given by the open sweep from the spacious music-room through the library, disclosing a part of the dining-room beyond. It was really the nicest smaller house in town, and Mrs. Piper had talked of moving to a larger one on Devereaux Avenue. Harold Piper must be coining money.

As she turned into the sidewalk under the gathering autumn dusk she assumed that disapproving, faintly unpleasant expression that almost all successful women of forty wear on the street.

If I were Harold Piper, she thought, I’d spend a little less time on business and a little more time at home. Some friend should speak to him.

But if Mrs. Fairboalt had considered it a successful afternoon she would have named it a triumph had she waited two minutes longer. For while she was still a black receding figure a hundred yards down the street, a very good-looking distraught young man turned up the walk to the Piper house. Mrs. Piper answered the door-bell herself, and with a rather dismayed expression led him quickly into the library.

“I had to see you,” he began wildly; “your note played the devil with me. Did Harold frighten you into this?”

She shook her head.

“I’m through, Fred,” she said slowly, and her lips had never looked to him so much like tearings from a rose. “He came home last night sick with it. Jessie Piper’s sense of duty was too much for her, so she went down to his office and told him. He was hurt and – oh, I can’t help seeing it his way, Fred. He says we’ve been club gossip all summer and he didn’t know it, and now he understands snatches of conversation he’s caught and veiled hints people have dropped about me. He’s mighty angry, Fred, and he loves me and I love him – rather.”

Gedney nodded slowly and half closed his eyes.

“Yes,” he said, “yes, my trouble’s like yours. I can see other people’s points of view too plainly.” His gray eyes met her dark ones frankly. “The blessed thing’s over. My God, Evylyn, I’ve been sitting down at the office all day looking at the outside of your letter, and looking at it and looking at it –”

“You’ve got to go, Fred,” she said steadily, and the slight emphasis of hurry in her voice was a new thrust for him. “I gave him my word of honor I wouldn’t see you. I know just how far I can go with Harold, and being here with you this evening is one of the things I can’t do.”

They were still standing, and as she spoke she made a little movement toward the door. Gedney looked at her miserably, trying, here at the end, to treasure up a last picture of her – and then suddenly both of them were stiffened into marble at the sound of steps on the walk outside. Instantly her arm reached out grasping the lapel of his coat – half urged, half swung him through the big door into the dark dining-room.

“I’ll make him go up-stairs,” she whispered close to his ear; “don’t move till you hear him on the stairs. Then go out the front way.”

Then he was alone listening as she greeted her husband in the hall.

Harold Piper was thirty-six, nine years older than his wife. He was handsome—with marginal notes: these being eyes that were too close together, and a certain woodenness when his face was in repose. His attitude toward this Gedney matter was typical of all his attitudes. He had told Evylyn that he considered the subject closed and would never reproach her nor allude to it in any form; and he told himself that this was rather a big way of looking at it – that she was not a little impressed. Yet, like all men who are preoccupied with their own broadness, he was exceptionally narrow.

He greeted Evylyn with emphasized cordiality this evening.

“You’ll have to hurry and dress, Harold,” she said eagerly; “we’re going to the Bronsons’.”

He nodded.

“It doesn’t take me long to dress, dear,” and, his words trailing off, he walked on into the library. Evylyn’s heart clattered loudly.

“Harold –” she began, with a little catch in her voice, and followed him in. He was lighting a cigarette. “You’ll have to hurry, Harold,” she finished, standing in the doorway.

“Why?” he asked a trifle impatiently; “you’re not dressed yourself yet, Evie.”

He stretched out in a Morris chair and unfolded a newspaper. With a sinking sensation Evylyn saw that this meant at least ten minutes – and Gedney was standing breathless in the next room. Supposing Harold decided that before he went upstairs he wanted a drink from the decanter on the sideboard. Then it occurred to her to forestall this contingency by bringing him the decanter and a glass. She dreaded calling his attention to the dining-room in any way, but she couldn’t risk the other chance.

But at the same moment Harold rose and, throwing his paper down, came toward her.

“Evie, dear,” he said, bending and putting his arms about her, “I hope you’re not thinking about last night –” She moved close to him, trembling. “I know,” he continued, “it was just an imprudent friendship on your part. We all make mistakes.”

Evylyn hardly heard him. She was wondering if by sheer clinging to him she could draw him out and up the stairs. She thought of playing sick, asking to be carried up – unfortunately she knew he would lay her on the couch and bring her whiskey.

Suddenly her nervous tension moved up a last impossible notch. She had heard a very faint but quite unmistakable creak from the floor of the dining room. Fred was trying to get out the back way.

Then her heart took a flying leap as a hollow ringing note like a gong echoed and re-echoed through the house. Gedney’s arm had struck the big cut-glass bowl.

“What’s that!” cried Harold. “Who’s there?”

She clung to him but he broke away, and the room seemed to crash about her ears. She heard the pantry-door swing open, a scuffle, the rattle of a tin pan, and in wild despair she rushed into the kitchen and pulled up the gas. Her husband’s arm slowly unwound from Gedney’s neck, and he stood there very still, first in amazement, then with pain dawning in his face.

“My golly!” he said in bewilderment, and then repeated: “My golly!”

He turned as if to jump again at Gedney, stopped, his muscles visibly relaxed, and he gave a bitter little laugh.

“You people – you people –” Evylyn’s arms were around him and her eyes were pleading with him frantically, but he pushed her away and sank dazed into a kitchen chair, his face like porcelain. “You’ve been doing things to me, Evylyn. Why, you little devil! You little devil!”

She had never felt so sorry for him; she had never loved him so much.

“It wasn’t her fault,” said Gedney rather humbly. “I just came.” But Piper shook his head, and his expression when he stared up was as if some physical accident had jarred his mind into a temporary inability to function. His eyes, grown suddenly pitiful, struck a deep, unsounded chord in Evylyn – and simultaneously a furious anger surged in her. She felt her eyelids burning; she stamped her foot violently; her hands scurried nervously over the table as if searching for a weapon, and then she flung herself wildly at Gedney.

“Get out!” she screamed, dark eyes blazing, little fists beating helplessly on his outstretched arm. “You did this! Get out of here – get out – get out! Get out!”

## II

Concerning Mrs. Harold Piper at thirty-five, opinion was divided – women said she was still handsome; men said she was pretty no longer. And this was probably because the qualities in her beauty that women had feared and men had followed had vanished. Her eyes were still as large and as dark and as sad, but the mystery had departed; their sadness was no longer eternal, only human, and she had developed a habit, when she was startled or annoyed, of twitching her brows together and blinking several times. Her mouth also had lost: the red had receded and the faint down-turning of its corners when she smiled, that had added to the sadness of the eyes and been vaguely mocking and beautiful, was quite gone. When she smiled now the corners of her lips turned up. Back in the days when she revelled in her own beauty Evylyn had enjoyed that smile of hers—she had accentuated it. When she stopped accentuating it, it faded out and the last of her mystery with it.

Evylyn had ceased accentuating her smile within a month after the Freddy Gedney affair. Externally things had gone on very much as they had before. But in those few minutes during which she had discovered how much she loved her husband Evylyn had realized how indelibly she had hurt him. For a month she struggled against aching silences, wild reproaches and accusations – she pled with him, made quiet, pitiful little love to him, and he laughed at her bitterly – and then she, too, slipped gradually into silence and a shadowy, impenetrable barrier dropped between them. The surge of love that had risen in her she lavished on Donald, her little boy, realizing him almost wonderingly as a part of her life.

The next year a piling up of mutual interests and responsibilities and some stray flicker from the past brought husband and wife together again – but after a rather pathetic flood of passion Evylyn realized that her great opportunity was gone. There simply wasn't anything left. She might have been youth and love for both – but that time of silence had slowly dried up the springs of affection and her own desire to drink again of them was dead.

She began for the first time to seek women friends, to prefer books she had read before, to sew a little where she could watch her two children to whom she was devoted. She worried about little things – if she saw crumbs on the dinner-table her mind drifted off the conversation: she was receding gradually into middle age.

Her thirty-fifth birthday had been an exceptionally busy one, for they were entertaining on short notice that night, as she stood in her bedroom window in the late afternoon she discovered that she was quite tired. Ten years before she would have lain down and slept, but now she had a feeling that things needed watching: maids were cleaning down-stairs, bric-a-brac was all over the floor, and there were sure to be grocery-men that had to be talked to imperatively – and then there was a letter to write Donald, who was fourteen and in his first year away at school.



She had nearly decided to lie down, nevertheless, when she heard a sudden familiar signal from little Julie down-stairs. She compressed her lips, her brows twitched together, and she blinked.

“Julie!” she called.

“Ah-h-h-ow!” prolonged Julie plaintively. Then the voice of Hilda, the second maid, floated up the stairs.

“She cut herself a little, Mis’ Piper.”

Evylyn flew to her sewing-basket, rummaged until she found a torn handkerchief, and hurried downstairs. In a moment Julie was crying in her arms as she searched for the cut, faint, disparaging evidences of which appeared on Julie’s dress.

“My thu-umb!” explained Julie. “Oh-h-h-h, t’urts.”

“It was the bowl here, the he one,” said Hilda apologetically. “It was waitin’ on the floor while I polished the sideboard, and Julie come along an’ went to foolin’ with it. She yust scratch herself.”

Evylyn frowned heavily at Hilda, and twisting Julie decisively in her lap, began tearing strips of the handkerchief.

“Now – let’s see it, dear.”

Julie held it up and Evelyn pounced.

“There!”

Julie surveyed her swathed thumb doubtfully. She crooked it; it waggled. A pleased, interested look appeared in her tear-stained face. She sniffled and waggled it again.

“You precious!” cried Evylyn and kissed her, but before she left the room she levelled another frown at Hilda. Careless! Servants all that way nowadays. If she could get a good Irishwoman – but you couldn’t any more – and these Swedes –

At five o’clock Harold arrived and, coming up to her room, threatened in a suspiciously jovial tone to kiss her thirty-five times for her birthday. Evylyn resisted.

“You’ve been drinking,” she said shortly, and then added qualitatively, “a little. You know I loathe the smell of it.”

“Evie,” he said after a pause, seating himself in a chair by the window, “I can tell you something now. I guess you’ve known things haven’t been going quite right down-town.”

She was standing at the window combing her hair, but at these words she turned and looked at him.

“How do you mean? You’ve always said there was room for more than one wholesale hardware house in town.” Her voice expressed some alarm.

“There was,” said Harold significantly, “but this Clarence Ahearn is a smart man.”

“I was surprised when you said he was coming to dinner.”

“Evie,” he went on, with another slap at his knee, “after January first ‘The Clarence Ahearn Company’ becomes ‘The Ahearn, Piper Company’ – and ‘Piper Brothers’ as a company ceases to exist.”

Evylyn was startled. The sound of his name in second place was somehow hostile to her; still he appeared jubilant.

“I don’t understand, Harold.”

“Well, Evie, Ahearn has been fooling around with Marx. If those two had combined we’d have been the little fellow, struggling along, picking up smaller orders, hanging back on risks. It’s a question of capital, Evie, and ‘Ahearn and Marx’ would have had the business just like ‘Ahearn and Piper’ is going to now.” He paused and coughed and a little cloud of whiskey floated up to her nostrils. “Tell you the truth, Evie, I’ve suspected that Ahearn’s wife had something to do with it. Ambitious little lady, I’m told. Guess she knew the Marxes couldn’t help her much here.”

“Is she – common?” asked Evie.

“Never met her, I’m sure – but I don’t doubt it. Clarence Ahearn’s name’s been up at the Country Club five months – no action taken.” He waved his hand disparagingly. “Ahearn and I had lunch together to-day and just about clinched it, so I thought it’d be nice to have him and his wife up to-night – just have nine, mostly family. After all, it’s a big thing for me, and of course we’ll have to see something of them, Evie.”

“Yes,” said Evie thoughtfully, “I suppose we will.”

Evylyn was not disturbed over the social end of it – but the idea of “Piper Brothers” becoming “The Ahearn, Piper Company” startled her. It seemed like going down in the world.

Half an hour later, as she began to dress for dinner, she heard his voice from down-stairs.

“Oh, Evie, come down!”

She went out into the hall and called over the banister:

“What is it?”

“I want you to help me make some of that punch before dinner.”

Hurriedly rehooking her dress, she descended the stairs and found him grouping the essentials on the dining-room table. She went to the sideboard and, lifting one of the bowls, carried it over.

“Oh, no,” he protested, “let’s use the big one. There’ll be Ahearn and his wife and you and I and Milton, that’s five, and Tom and Jessie, that’s seven: and your sister and Joe Ambler, that’s nine. You don’t know how quick that stuff goes when you make it.”

“We’ll use this bowl,” she insisted. “It’ll hold plenty. You know how Tom is.”

Tom Lowrie, husband to Jessie, Harold’s first cousin, was rather inclined to finish anything in a liquid way that he began.

Harold shook his head.

“Don’t be foolish. That one holds only about three quarts and there’s nine of us, and the servants’ll want some—and it isn’t strong punch. It’s so much more cheerful to have a lot, Evie; we don’t have to drink all of it.”

“I say the small one.”

Again he shook his head obstinately.

“No; be reasonable.”

“I am reasonable,” she said shortly. “I don’t want any drunken men in the house.”

“Who said you did?”

“Then use the small bowl.”

“Now, Evie —”

He grasped the smaller bowl to lift it back. Instantly her hands were on it, holding it down. There was a momentary struggle, and then, with a little exasperated grunt, he raised his side, slipped it from her fingers, and carried it to the sideboard.

She looked at him and tried to make her expression contemptuous, but he only laughed. Acknowledging her defeat but disclaiming all future interest in the punch, she left the room.

### III

At seven-thirty, her cheeks glowing and her high-piled hair gleaming with a suspicion of brilliantine, Evylyn descended the stairs. Mrs. Ahearn, a little woman concealing a slight nervousness under red hair and an extreme Empire gown, greeted her volubly. Evelyn disliked her on the spot, but the husband she rather approved of. He had keen blue eyes and a natural gift of pleasing people that might have made him, socially, had he not so obviously committed the blunder of marrying too early in his career.

“I’m glad to know Piper’s wife,” he said simply. “It looks as though your husband and I are going to see a lot of each other in the future.”

She bowed, smiled graciously, and turned to greet the others: Milton Piper, Harold’s quiet, unassertive younger brother; the two Lowries, Jessie and Tom; Irene, her own unmarried sister; and finally Joe Ambler, a confirmed bachelor and Irene’s perennial beau.

Harold led the way into dinner.

“We’re having a punch evening,” he announced jovially – Evylyn saw that he had already sampled his concoction—“so there won’t be any cocktails except the punch. It’s m’ wife’s greatest achievement, Mrs. Ahearn; she’ll give you the recipe if you want it; but owing to a slight” – he caught his wife’s eye and paused – “to a slight indisposition, I’m responsible for this batch. Here’s how!”

All through dinner there was punch, and Evylyn, noticing that Ahearn and Milton Piper and all the women were shaking their heads negatively at the maid, knew she had been right about the bowl; it was still half full. She resolved to

caution Harold directly afterward, but when the women left the table Mrs. Ahearn cornered her, and she found herself talking cities and dressmakers with a polite show of interest.

"We've moved around a lot," chattered Mrs. Ahearn, her red head nodding violently. "Oh, yes, we've never stayed so long in a town before – but I do hope we're here for good. I like it here; don't you?"

"Well, you see, I've always lived here, so, naturally –"

"Oh, that's true," said Mrs. Ahearn and laughed. "Clarence always used to tell me he had to have a wife he could come home to and say: 'Well, we're going to Chicago to-morrow to live, so pack up.' I got so I never expected to live anywhere." She laughed her little laugh again; Evylyn suspected that it was her society laugh.

"Your husband is a very able man, I imagine."

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Ahearn assured her eagerly. "He's brainy, Clarence is. Ideas and enthusiasm, you know. Finds out what he wants and then goes and gets it."

Evylyn nodded. She was wondering if the men were still drinking punch back in the dining-room. Mrs. Ahearn's history kept unfolding jerkily, but Evylyn had ceased to listen. The first odor of massed cigars began to drift in. It wasn't really a large house, she reflected; on an evening like this the library sometimes grew blue with smoke, and next day one had to leave the windows open for hours to air the heavy staleness out of the curtains. Perhaps this partnership might... she began to speculate on a new house...

Mrs. Ahearn's voice drifted in on her:

"I really would like the recipe if you have it written down somewhere –"

Then there was a sound of chairs in the dining-room and the men strolled in. Evylyn saw at once that her worst fears were realized. Harold's face was flushed and his words ran together at the ends of sentences, while Tom Lowrie lurched when he walked and narrowly missed Irene's lap when he tried to sink onto the couch beside her. He sat there blinking dazedly at the company. Evylyn found herself blinking back at him but she saw no humor in it. Joe Ambler was smiling contentedly and purring on his cigar. Only Ahearn and Milton Piper seemed unaffected.

"It's a pretty fine town, Ahearn," said Ambler, "you'll find that."

"I've found it so," said Ahead pleasantly.

"You find it more, Ahearn," said Harold, nodding emphatically "'f I've an'thin' do 'th it."

He soared into a eulogy of the city, and Evylyn wondered uncomfortably if it bored every one as it bored her. Apparently not. They were all listening attentively. Evylyn broke in at the first gap.

"Where've you been living, Mr. Ahearn?" she asked interestedly. Then she remembered that Mrs. Ahearn had told her, but it didn't matter. Harold

mustn't talk so much. He was such an ass when he'd been drinking. But he plopped directly back in.

"Tell you, Ahearn. Firs' you wanna get a house up here on the hill. Get Stearne house or Ridgeway house. Wanna have it so people say: 'There's Ahearn house.' Solid, you know, tha's effec' it gives."

Evylyn flushed. This didn't sound right at all. Still Ahearn didn't seem to notice anything amiss, only nodded gravely.

"Have you been looking —" But her words trailed off unheard as Harold's voice boomed on.

"Get house — tha's start. Then you get know people. Snobbish town first toward outsider, but not long—after know you. People like you"—he indicated Ahearn and his wife with a sweeping gesture — "all right. Cordial as an'thin' once get by first barrer — bar — barrer —" He swallowed, and then said "barrier," repeated it masterfully.

Evylyn looked appealingly at her brother-in-law, but before he could intercede a thick mumble had come crowding out of Tom Lowrie, hindered by the dead cigar which he gripped firmly with his teeth.

"Huma uma ho huma ahdy um —"

"What?" demanded Harold earnestly.

Resignedly and with difficulty Tom removed the cigar—that is, he removed part of it, and then blew the remainder with a whut sound across the room, where it landed liquidly and limply in Mrs. Ahearn's lap.

"Beg pardon," he mumbled, and rose with the vague intention of going after it. Milton's hand on his coat collapsed him in time, and Mrs. Ahearn not ungracefully flounced the tobacco from her skirt to the floor, never once looking at it.

"I was sayin'," continued Tom thickly, "'fore 'at happened," — he waved his hand apologetically toward Mrs. Ahearn — "I was sayin' I heard all truth that Country Club matter."

Milton leaned and whispered something to him.

"Lemme 'lone," he said petulantly; "know what I'm doin'. 'Ats what they came for."

Evylyn sat there in a panic, trying to make her mouth form words. She saw her sister's sardonic expression and Mrs. Ahearn's face turning a vivid red. Ahearn was looking down at his watch-chain, fingering it.

"I heard who's been keepin' y' out, an' he's not a bit better'n you. I can fix whole damn thing up. Would've before, but I didn't know you. Harol' tol' me you felt bad about the thing —"

Milton Piper rose suddenly and awkwardly to his feet. In a second every one was standing tensely and Milton was saying something very hurriedly about having to go early, and the Ahearns were listening with eager intentness. Then Mrs. Ahearn swallowed and turned with a forced smile toward Jessie. Evylyn saw Tom lurch forward and put his hand on Ahearns shoulder — and suddenly

she was listening to a new, anxious voice at her elbow, and, turning, found Hilda, the second maid.

“Please, Mis’ Piper, I tank Yulie got her hand poisoned. It’s all swole up and her cheeks is hot and she’s moanin’ an’ groanin’ —”

“Julie is?” Evylyn asked sharply. The party suddenly receded. She turned quickly, sought with her eyes for Mrs. Ahearn, slipped toward her.

“If you’ll excuse me, Mrs. —” She had momentarily forgotten the name, but she went right on: “My little girl’s been taken sick. I’ll be down when I can.” She turned and ran quickly up the stairs, retaining a confused picture of rays of cigar smoke and a loud discussion in the centre of the room that seemed to be developing into an argument.

Switching on the light in the nursery, she found Julie tossing feverishly and giving out odd little cries. She put her hand against the cheeks. They were burning. With an exclamation she followed the arm down under the cover until she found the hand. Hilda was right. The whole thumb was swollen to the wrist and in the centre was a little inflamed sore. Blood-poisoning! her mind cried in terror. The bandage had come off the cut and she’d gotten something in it. She’d cut it at three o’clock — it was now nearly eleven. Eight hours. Blood-poisoning couldn’t possibly develop so soon.

She rushed to the ’phone.

Doctor Martin across the street was out. Doctor Foulke, their family physician, didn’t answer. She racked her brains and in desperation called her throat specialist, and bit her lip furiously while he looked up the numbers of two physicians. During that interminable moment she thought she heard loud voices down-stairs—but she seemed to be in another world now. After fifteen minutes she located a physician who sounded angry and sulky at being called out of bed. She ran back to the nursery and, looking at the hand, found it was somewhat more swollen.

“Oh, God!” she cried, and kneeling beside the bed began smoothing back Julie’s hair over and over. With a vague idea of getting some hot water, she rose and stared toward the door, but the lace of her dress caught in the bed-rail and she fell forward on her hands and knees. She struggled up and jerked frantically at the lace. The bed moved and Julie groaned. Then more quietly but with suddenly fumbling fingers she found the pleat in front, tore the whole pannier completely off, and rushed from the room.

Out in the hall she heard a single loud, insistent voice, but as she reached the head of the stairs it ceased and an outer door banged.

The music-room came into view. Only Harold and Milton were there, the former leaning against a chair, his face very pale, his collar open, and his mouth moving loosely.

“What’s the matter?”

Milton looked at her anxiously.

“There was a little trouble —”

Then Harold saw her and, straightening up with an effort, began to speak.  
“Sult m’own cousin m’own house. God damn common nouveau rish.  
’Sult m’own cousin –”

“Tom had trouble with Ahearn and Harold interfered,” said Milton.

“My Lord Milton,” cried Evylyn, “couldn’t you have done something?”

“I tried; I –”

“Julie’s sick,” she interrupted; “she’s poisoned herself. Get him to bed if you can.”

Harold looked up.

“Julie sick?”

Paying no attention, Evylyn brushed by through the dining-room, catching sight, with a burst of horror, of the big punch-bowl still on the table, the liquid from melted ice in its bottom. She heard steps on the front stairs – it was Milton helping Harold up – and then a mumble: “Why, Julie’s a’righ’.”

“Don’t let him go into the nursery!” she shouted.

The hours blurred into a nightmare. The doctor arrived just before midnight and within a half-hour had lanced the wound. He left at two after giving her the addresses of two nurses to call up and promising to return at half past six. It was blood-poisoning.

At four, leaving Hilda by the bedside, she went to her room, and slipping with a shudder out of her evening dress kicked it into a corner. She put on a house dress and returned to the nursery while Hilda went to make coffee.

Not until noon could she bring herself to look into Harold’s room, but when she did it was to find him awake and staring very miserably at the ceiling. He turned blood-shot hollow eyes upon her. For a minute she hated him, couldn’t speak. A husky voice came from the bed.

“What time is it?”

“Noon.”

“I made a damn fool –”

“It doesn’t matter,” she said sharply. “Julie’s got blood-poisoning. They may” – she choked over the words – “they think she’ll have to lose her hand.”

“What?”

“She cut herself on that – that bowl.”

“Last night?”

“Oh, what does it matter?” she cried; “she’s got blood-poisoning. Can’t you hear?” He looked at her bewildered – sat half-way up in bed.

“I’ll get dressed,” he said.

Her anger subsided and a great wave of weariness and pity for him rolled over her. After all, it was his trouble, too.

“Yes,” she answered listlessly, “I suppose you’d better.”

#### IV

If Evylyn's beauty had hesitated in her early thirties it came to an abrupt decision just afterward and completely left her. A tentative outlay of wrinkles on her face suddenly deepened and flesh collected rapidly on her legs and hips and arms. Her mannerism of drawing her brows together had become an expression—it was habitual when she was reading or speaking and even while she slept. She was forty-six.

As in most families whose fortunes have gone down rather than up, she and Harold had drifted into a colorless antagonism. In repose they looked at each other with the toleration they might have felt for broken old chairs; Evylyn worried a little when he was sick and did her best to be cheerful under the wearying depression of living with a disappointed man.

Family bridge was over for the evening and she sighed with relief. She had made more mistakes than usual this evening and she didn't care. Irene shouldn't have made that remark about the infantry being particularly dangerous. There had been no letter for three weeks now, and, while this was nothing out of the ordinary, it never failed to make her nervous; naturally she hadn't known how many clubs were out.

Harold had gone up-stairs, so she stepped out on the porch for a breath of fresh air. There was a bright glamour of moonlight diffusing on the sidewalks and lawns, and with a little half yawn, half laugh, she remembered one long moonlight affair of her youth. It was astonishing to think that life had once been the sum of her current love-affairs. It was now the sum of her current problems.

There was the problem of Julie – Julie was thirteen, and lately she was growing more and more sensitive about her deformity and preferred to stay always in her room reading. A few years before she had been frightened at the idea of going to school, and Evylyn could not bring herself to send her, so she grew up in her mother's shadow, a pitiful little figure with the artificial hand that she made no attempt to use but kept forlornly in her pocket. Lately she had been taking lessons in using it because Evylyn had feared she would cease to lift the arm altogether, but after the lessons, unless she made a move with it in listless obedience to her mother, the little hand would creep back to the pocket of her dress. For a while her dresses were made without pockets, but Julie had moped around the house so miserably at a loss all one month that Evylyn weakened and never tried the experiment again.

The problem of Donald had been different from the start. She had attempted vainly to keep him near her as she had tried to teach Julie to lean less on her – lately the problem of Donald had been snatched out of her hands; his division had been abroad for three months.

She yawned again – life was a thing for youth. What a happy youth she must have had! She remembered her pony, Bijou, and the trip to Europe with her mother when she was eighteen –



“Very, very complicated,” she said aloud and severely to the moon, and, stepping inside, was about to close the door when she heard a noise in the library and started.

It was Martha, the middle-aged servant: they kept only one now.

“Why, Martha!” she said in surprise.

Martha turned quickly.

“Oh, I thought you was up-stairs. I was just –”

“Is anything the matter?”

Martha hesitated.

“No; I –” She stood there fidgeting. “It was a letter, Mrs. Piper, that I put somewhere.”

“A letter? Your own letter?” asked Evylyn.

“No, it was to you. ’Twas this afternoon, Mrs. Piper, in the last mail. The postman give it to me and then the back door-bell rang. I had it in my hand, so I must have stuck it somewhere. I thought I’d just slip in now and find it.”

“What sort of a letter? From Mr. Donald?”

“No, it was an advertisement, maybe, or a business letter. It was a long narrow one, I remember.”

They began a search through the music-room, looking on trays and mantelpieces, and then through the library, feeling on the tops of rows of books. Martha paused in despair.

“I can’t think where. I went straight to the kitchen. The dining-room, maybe.” She started hopefully for the dining-room, but turned suddenly at the sound of a gasp behind her. Evylyn had sat down heavily in a Morris chair, her brows drawn very close together, eyes blanking furiously.

“Are you sick?”

For a minute there was no answer. Evylyn sat there very still and Martha could see the very quick rise and fall of her bosom.

“Are you sick?” she repeated.

“No,” said Evylyn slowly, “but I know where the letter is. Go ’way, Martha. I know.”

Wonderingly, Martha withdrew, and still Evylyn sat there, only the muscles around her eyes moving – contracting and relaxing and contracting again. She knew now where the letter was – she knew as well as if she had put it there herself. And she felt instinctively and unquestionably what the letter was. It was long and narrow like an advertisement, but up in the corner in large letters it said “War Department” and, in smaller letters below, “Official Business.” She knew it lay there in the big bowl with her name in ink on the outside and her soul’s death within.

Rising uncertainly, she walked toward the dining-room, feeling her way along the bookcases and through the doorway. After a moment she found the light and switched it on.

There was the bowl, reflecting the electric light in crimson squares edged with black and yellow squares edged with blue, ponderous and glittering, grotesquely and triumphantly ominous. She took a step forward and paused again; another step and she would see over the top and into the inside – another step and she would see an edge of white – another step – her hands fell on the rough, cold surface –

In a moment she was tearing it open, fumbling with an obstinate fold, holding it before her while the typewritten page glared out and struck at her. Then it fluttered like a bird to the floor. The house that had seemed whirring, buzzing a moment since, was suddenly very quiet; a breath of air crept in through the open front door carrying the noise of a passing motor; she heard faint sounds from upstairs and then a grinding racket in the pipe behind the bookcases – her husband turning of a water-tap –

And in that instant it was as if this were not, after all, Donald's hour except in so far as he was a marker in the insidious contest that had gone on in sudden surges and long, listless interludes between Evylyn and this cold, malignant thing of beauty, a gift of enmity from a man whose face she had long since forgotten. With its massive, brooding passivity it lay there in the centre of her house as it had lain for years, throwing out the ice-like beams of a thousand eyes, perverse glitterings merging each into each, never aging, never changing.

Evylyn sat down on the edge of the table and stared at it fascinated. It seemed to be smiling now, a very cruel smile, as if to say:

“You see, this time I didn't have to hurt you directly. I didn't bother. You know it was I who took your son away. You know how cold I am and how hard and how beautiful, because once you were just as cold and hard and beautiful.”

The bowl seemed suddenly to turn itself over and then to distend and swell until it became a great canopy that glittered and trembled over the room, over the house, and, as the walls melted slowly into mist, Evylyn saw that it was still moving out, out and far away from her, shutting off far horizons and suns and moons and stars except as inky blots seen faintly through it. And under it walked all the people, and the light that came through to them was refracted and twisted until shadow seemed light and light seemed shadow – until the whole panoply of the world became changed and distorted under the twinkling heaven of the bowl.

Then there came a far-away, booming voice like a low, clear bell. It came from the centre of the bowl and down the great sides to the ground and then bounced toward her eagerly.

“You see, I am fate,” it shouted, “and stronger than your puny plans; and I am how-things-turn-out and I am different from your little dreams, and I am the flight of time and the end of beauty and unfulfilled desire; all the accidents and imperceptions and the little minutes that shape the crucial hours are mine. I am the exception that proves no rules, the limits of your control, the condiment in the dish of life.”

The booming sound stopped; the echoes rolled away over the wide land to the edge of the bowl that bounded the world and up the great sides and back to the centre where they hummed for a moment and died. Then the great walls began slowly to bear down upon her, growing smaller and smaller, coming closer and closer as if to crush her; and as she clinched her hands and waited for the swift bruise of the cold glass, the bowl gave a sudden wrench and turned over—and lay there on the side-board, shining and inscrutable, reflecting in a hundred prisms, myriad, many-colored glints and gleams and crossings and interlaces of light.

The cold wind blew in again through the front door, and with a desperate, frantic energy Evylyn stretched both her arms around the bowl. She must be quick – she must be strong. She tightened her arms until they ached, tautened the thin strips of muscle under her soft flesh, and with a mighty effort raised it and held it. She felt the wind blow cold on her back where her dress had come apart from the strain of her effort, and as she felt it she turned toward it and staggered under the great weight out through the library and on toward the front door. She must be quick – she must be strong. The blood in her arms throbbed dully and her knees kept giving way under her, but the feel of the cool glass was good.

Out the front door she tottered and over to the stone steps, and there, summoning every fibre of her soul and body for a last effort, swung herself half around – for a second, as she tried to loose her hold, her numb fingers clung to the rough surface, and in that second she slipped and, losing balance, toppled forward with a despairing cry, her arms still around the bowl... down...

Over the way lights went on; far down the block the crash was heard, and pedestrians rushed up wonderingly; up-stairs a tired man awoke from the edge of sleep and a little girl whimpered in a haunted doze. And all over the moonlit sidewalk around the still, black form, hundreds of prisms and cubes and splinters of glass reflected the light in little gleams of blue, and black edged with yellow, and yellow, and crimson edged with black.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Part I

#### ***I. Read Part I and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. What information is given in the introduction of the story? What does the life of cut-glass things symbolize? Does it give the readers any clues about the development of the plot?
2. Why did Mrs Fairboalt visit Mrs Piper? What were their relationships?
3. Why did Mrs Fairboalt distrust Evylyn?
4. What story did Evylyn tell her guest about the cut-glass bowl?
5. What happened to the man who had presented Evylyn with the cut-glass bowl?

6. What was Mrs Fairboalt's reaction to that story?
7. What impression did the Pipers' house produce on the visitor?
8. Why did she think that Harold Piper must have been coining money?
9. Why did Evelyn feel dismayed when she answered the door bell?
10. What caused Fred's unexpected visit?
11. Why did Evylyn decide to break up with Fred?
11. Why did Evylyn grasp the lapel of Fred's coat?
12. What instructions did she give Freddy?
13. What did Harold Piper look like?
14. What were his views on life?
15. What conversation did he have with Evylyn the previous night?
16. Why did Evylyn want her husband go upstairs?
17. What put Harold on guard when he was talking with his wife?
18. What did Evylyn see when she followed her husband?
19. What did Harold feel when he discovered Fred in his house?
20. Why did Evylyn fling herself violently at Freddy?
21. Do you think Evy would settle the matter with her husband?

## ***II. Say it in Russian.***

Cut glass, decanter, side-board, china closet, to maim, circumference, to coin money, receding figure, distraught, to answer the door bell, to be in repose, to allude to smb, cordiality, to forestall this contingency, to move up a notch, to surge, scurry

## ***III. Say it in English.***

Борьба за выживание, стакан для зубных щеток, находиться в зрелом возрасте, дом с привидениями, смятение, обрывки разговора, дать честное слово, лацкан, близко посаженные глаза, считать вопрос закрытым, глухо биться, бояться привлечь внимание к чему-либо, гневно топнуть ногой

## ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To succumb to leg fractures, to be well past its first glory, her lingering reservations vanished, to draw oneself way up, to assume some expression, to be club gossip, to know how far you can go with smb, handsome with marginal notes, with a little catch in smb's voice, to sink dazed into a chair, to strike a deep chord in smb

## ***V. Insert Prepositions.***

One ... one, to be all ... town, to drop ... smb, to stick way ..., to scribble italicized notes ... her memory, to drop hints ... smb, to be stiffened ... marble, to be typical ... smb, to be preoccupied ... smth, to put his arms ... her, to be an imprudent friendship ... smb's part, to rush ... the kitchen and pull ... the gass, to say ... bewilderment, to fling oneself ... smb

***VI. Insert Articles and Explain Your Choice.***

To be going to ... Bronsons, to be ... imprudent friendship on smb's part, to get out ... back way, to give ... little bitter laugh, to jar one's mind into ... temporary inability to function

***VII. Explain the Difference in Meaning that the Following Synonyms Reveal.***

To clutter – to rattle

To cry – to scream

To dread – to be afraid of

To linger – to stay

***VIII. Say What Might Have Happened if...***

- 1) Mrs Fairboalt had stayed at Mrs Piper's some minutes longer
- 2) Jessie Piper had not spoken with Harold about his wife's relationship with Gedney
- 3) Harold had returned home after Gedney had left it
- 4) Evylyn had made her husband go upstairs
- 5) Gedney had not touched the cut-glass bowl
- 6) Gedney had escaped unnoticed by Harold

**Part II**

***I. Read Part II and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. Describe the way Mrs Piper's appearance had changed by the time she turned thirty five.
2. How did The Freddy Gedney affair affect Evylyn's life?
3. How did her attitude o her little son change?
4. What brought husband and wife together again?
5. What things indicate that Evylyn was receding gradually into middle age?
6. Why was her thirty-fifth birthday an exceptionally busy one?
7. What happened to Julie before the party?
8. What did Evylyn do to attend to the injury?
9. Why was Harold so uplifted before the party?
10. What did Evylyn think about the prospective merger?
11. What advantage did Harold have over his competitor Marx, in Harold's view?
12. What did Evylyn mean when she called Mrs Ahearn common?
13. Why was not Mr Ahearn accepted in the local community?
14. Why did the Pipers have a disagreement over the punch bowl?
15. What guests did they expect to have at the party?
16. Why did Evylyn look contemptuous after her struggle with Harold?

## ***II. Say it in Russian.***

To startle, to twitch one's brows together, to pile up, on short notice, to talk imperatively, plaintive, to pounce, down-town, wholesale hardware house, disparaging, to clinch it, banister, a momentary struggle, exasperated grunt

## ***III. Say it in English.***

Внешний, непроницаемый барьер, безделушки, поджать губы, рыться, отрывать полоски от носового платка, заплаканное лицо, прекратить существование, мелкая сошка, принадлежать к низшему классу, быть вместительным, крепкий пунш, упрямо покачать головой, презрительный, признать собственное поражение

## ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To hurt smb indelibly, to lavish her love on Donald, to recede gradually into middle age, to survey one's thumb doubtfully, to appear jubilant, to go down in the world, to say smth shortly, to disclaim any future interest in the punch

## ***V. Insert Prepositions.***

To revel ... her beauty, to plead ... smb, to frown heavily ... smb, to level a frown ... smb, to be hostile ... smb, to slip the bowl ... her fingers

## ***VI. Explain the Difference in Meaning that the Following Synonyms Reveal.***

Handsome – pretty

To blink – to wince

To stop – to cease

To survey – to examine

To hate – to loathe

To descend – to go down

## **Part III**

### ***I. Read Part III and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. Why did Evylyn dislike Mrs Ahearn on the spot?
2. What did she think of Mr Ahearn?
3. What other guests arrived at the party?
4. What did Eylyn want to caution her husband against?
5. What did Mrs Ahearn tell the hostess about Mr Ahearn?
6. Was her manner of speech different from Avylyn's?
7. What preoccupied the hostess while Mrs Ahearn was talking to her?
8. How could the Pipers profit from the new partnership, in Evylyn's view?
9. What did Harold think about Ahearn's position in the town?
10. Why did Mrs Piper look appealingly at her brother-in-law?
11. What blunder did Tom Lowrie commit?

12. In what way did Mrs Ahearn behave when Tom spit tobacco on her skirt?
13. What caused Mrs Ahearn to turn red?
14. What did Mrs Ahearn feel when Tom started to speak about the Country Club matter?
15. Why did Evylyn have to leave her guests?
16. In what condition was Julie when her mother entered the nursery?
17. What actions did Evylyn undertake when she realized that it might be blood-poisoning?
18. What did she learn when she came downstairs?
19. Describe the doctor's visit.
20. Comment on the way Harold looked when Evylyn entered his room at noon.
21. Why did Evylyn show little interest in the row with the Ahearns?
22. Why did her anger subside when she talked to her husband?

## ***II. Say it in Russian.***

To greet smb volubly, to commit the blunder, unassertive, to resolve, to reflect, smb's worst fears were realized, to blink dazedly at the company, to nod gravely, to hinder, petulant, to flounce, to recede, an inflamed sore, to fall on your hands and knees, bloodshot eyes, to subside

## ***III. Say it in English.***

Партия (товара), предостеречь, запах сигар, неспешно прогуливаться, расплыться в улыбке от удовольствия, потухшая сигара, прежде чем он смог вмешаться, теребить цепочку от часов, приложить руку к щеке, заражение крови, нескончаемый, с усилием выпрямиться, вскрыть рану, хриплый голос

## ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

Perennial beau, to sample one's concoction, to unfold jerkily, to soar into a eulogy of the city, to wave one's hand apologetically toward smb, to rack one's brains, to toss feverishly, to jerk frantically at smth, to answer listlessly

## ***V. Insert Prepositions.***

To dislike smb ... the spot, to marry too early ... his career, to air the heavy staleness ... the curtains, to speculate ... a new house, to purr ... one's cigar, to break ... the first gap, to seek ... one's eyes ... smb, to develop ... an argument, to look ... the numbers of two physicians, to be sulky ... being called ... bed, to stare ... the ceiling, to choke ... the words, to cut oneself ... the bowl

## ***VI. Insert Articles and Explain your Choice.***

To see a lot of each other in ... future, to commit ... blunder of marrying too early, to remove ... cigar resignedly, to catch sight of ... big punch bowl

***VII. Explain the Difference in Meaning that the Following Synonyms Reveal.***

Little – small

To subside – to abate

To look – to stare – to gaze

To bewilder – to confuse

Husky – hoarse

**Part IV**

***I. Read Part IV and Put Questions to it.***

***II. Say it in Russian.***

Tentative, repose, forlorn, to fidget, to feel on the tops of rows of books, to contract, ominous, to tear it open, to fumble with a fold, enmity, to clinch one's hands, inscrutable, to totter

***III. Say it in English.***

Пехота, карточная масть, трефы, смягчиться, отчаянно моргать, передвигаться ощупью, закрывать водопроводный кран, нереализованные желания, исключение подтверждает правило, с огромным трудом, осколки стекла

***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To drift into a colorless antagonism, to flutter like a bird to the floor, puny plans, to summon every fibre of her soul and body for the last effort

***V. Insert Prepositions.***

There was nothing ... the ordinary, to grow sensitive ... her deformity, to pause ... despair, to stretch both her arms ... the bowl. Her knees kept giving way ... her.

***VI. Explain the Difference in Meaning that the Following Synonyms Reveal.***

To glitter – to glow

To walk – to stagger

To fall – to topple

To cry – to whimper

**The Short Story Analysis**

***Using the following key points get ready to speak about the setting of the story, its central conflict, its problems and controlling ideas. Characterize Evylyn and Harold, comment on the title of the story.***



To interpret a short story you must analyze it. The following questions will help you when analyzing a short story.

1. **Author:** who is the author of the story?
2. **Title:** what is the story's title? Does the title suggest the story's subject or theme?
3. **Setting:** where and when does the story take place? What details does the writer use to create the setting? Does the setting create a particular mood or feeling? Is the setting a symbol for an important idea that the writer wants to convey? Does the setting play a role in the central conflict?
4. **Point of view:** is the story told from the first person or from the third person point of view? What effect does the point of view have on the way the reader experiences the story?
5. **Central conflict:** what struggle is the main character involved in? is the central conflict internal – within the protagonist's mind – or external – between the protagonist and another character, society or a non-human force? How is the conflict resolved?
6. **Plot:** what events take place in the story? Does the story have an introduction? If so, what does the reader learn in the introduction? What is the inciting incident? What happens during the development? When does the climax occur? What event marks the resolution of the conflict? Does the story have a denouement? Does the writer make use of special plot devices such a foreshadowing, flashbacks or a surprise ending? Is the story suspenseful? If so, how does the writer create suspense?
7. **Characterization:** who is the main character or protagonist? Who are the other major or minor characters? How does the writer reveal what each of the characters is like? Which characters are in conflict with each other? Do any of the characters change in the course of the work? If so, how and why do they change?
8. **Theme:** what is the theme or the central idea of the story? How is the theme revealed?

### *Analyzing the Setting*

The writer of a narrative work establishes setting – a time and place in which the action occurs.

Often the information provided about the setting includes images of sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. The following chart describes some of the functions setting can perform in a literary work.

#### Uses of Setting

- to make a story seems more believable
- to help establish a story's mood

- to act as a force against which the protagonist struggles, the source of the central conflict
- to symbolize the idea the writer wants to reinforce in the mind of the reader
- to reflect or contrast with other elements of the story, such as a character's feelings or a theme

### *Analyzing the Plot*

The series of events or actions in a narrative work is called the plot. The basis of the plot is the conflict or struggle. Some plots contain more than one conflict but most narratives focus on one central conflict involving the protagonist. Conflicts may be internal and external.

### *The Parts of the Plot*

The plot may be logically divided into six parts, as follows:

1. **Exposition:** also called the introduction, the exposition is the opening part of the narrative in which the writer gives background information about the setting, the characters, and the basic situation
2. **Inciting incident;** the inciting incident is the event that sets the story in motion, it introduces the central conflict.
3. **Development:** the development includes all the events that follow from the inciting incident up to the climax. In this part of the narrative the main character normally struggles to overcome obstacles to achieve some goal.
4. **Climax:** the climax is the highest point of interest or suspense in the work
5. **Resolution;** the resolution is the point in the narrative when the central conflict is ended. In many stories the resolution and the climax are identical.
6. **Denouement:** the denouement includes all the events that take place after the central conflict has been resolved. In this part of the plot, less important conflicts may be resolved and questions still left in the mind of the reader may be answered.

### *Analyzing Characters*

The protagonist is the most important character in a work, the character who faces the central conflict. Other characters who play significant roles in the story are called major characters and those, who play less important roles, are called minor characters. A major character who is in direct conflict with the protagonist, is called antagonist.

Characterization is a process by which the writer reveals the nature of a particular character. By describing what the character looks like the author creates certain expectations in the reader about what the character's personality is like

In creating a believable character a writer may use a number of different techniques of characterization. Direct characterization is the simplest method. It involves merely stating what the character is like. (ex. Tim had a mischievous streak)

A more subtle of revealing the character is through indirect characterization. In this case the writer shows what the character is like by describing how the character appears, what the character says and if and how other characters react to the character.

When a writer uses indirect characterization it is up to the readers to gather the clues about the character and to draw conclusions based on those clues.

### *Elements of Character*

A well-developed character in a literary work has many facets, just as a real person does. When you analyze a character, ask yourself the following questions about the portrayal of the character

1. **Appearance:** how does the character look and dress? What do these aspects of appearance reveal about the character?
2. **Words and actions:** what kind of things does the character say and do? What kind of language does the character use? What can the reader learn about the character from his or her words and actions?
3. **Background:** where did the character grow up? What kind of educational background does the character have? What past experience has the character had? How does the character's background affect his or her thoughts and actions in the present?
4. **Personality:** does the character tend to be emotional or rational? Principled or unscrupulous? Obstinate or open-minded? Caring or cold?
5. **Motivation:** what makes the character act and speak as he or she does? What does the character value? What are the character's goals, dreams, desires, needs?
6. **Relationships:** how does the character interact with other: characters in the work? Friends and enemies?
7. **Conflict:** is the character involved in some conflict? If so, is the conflict internal – within the protagonist's mind – or external –

between the protagonist and an outside force? How is the conflict resolved?

- 8. Change:** does the character change or grow in course of the story? If so, how? How does the reader know that the character has changed?

## **BACK FOR CHRISTMAS**

**by John Collier**

“Doctor,” said Major Sinclair, “we certainly must have you with us for Christmas”. Tea was being poured, and the Carpenters' living-room was filled with friends who had come to say last-minute farewells to the Doctor and his wife. “He shall be back,” said Mrs. Carpenter. “I promise you.”

“It's hardly certain,” said Dr. Carpenter. “I'd like nothing better, of course.”

“After all,” said Mr. Hewitt, “you've contracted to lecture only for three months.”

“Anything may happen,” said Doctor Carpenter. “Whatever happens,” said Mrs. Carpenter, beaming at them, “he shall be back in England for Christmas. You may all believe me.”

They all believed her. The Doctor himself almost believed her. For ten years she had been promising him for dinner parties, garden parties, committees, heaven knows what, and the promises had always been kept.

The farewells began. There was a fluting of compliments on dear Hermione's marvellous arrangements. She and her husband would drive to Southampton that evening. They would embark the following day. No trains, no bustle, no last-minute worries. Certain the Doctor was marvellously looked after. He would be a great success in America. Especially with Hermione to see to everything. She would have a wonderful time, too. She would see the skyscrapers. Nothing like that in Little Godwearing. But she must be very sure to bring him back. “Yes, I will bring him back. You may rely upon it.” He mustn't be persuaded. No extensions. No wonderful post at some super-American hospital. Our infirmary needs him. And he must be back by Christmas. “Yes,” Mrs. Carpenter called to the last departing guest, “I shall see to it. He shall be back by Christmas.”

The final arrangements for closing the house were very well managed. The maids soon had the tea things washed up; they came in, said goodbye, and were in time to catch the afternoon bus to Devizes.

Nothing remained but odds and ends, locking doors, seeing that everything was tidy. “Go upstairs,” said Hermione, “and change into your brown tweeds. Empty the pockets of that suit before you put it in your bag. I'll see to everything else. All you have to do is not to get in the way.”

The Doctor went upstairs and took off the suit he was wearing, but instead of the brown tweeds, he put on an old dirty bath gown, which he took from the back of his wardrobe. Then, after making one or two little arrangements, he leaned over the head of the stairs and called to his wife, "Hermione! Have you a moment to spare?"

"Of course, dear. I'm just finished."

"Just come up here for a moment. There's something rather extraordinary up here."

Hermione immediately came up. "Good heavens, my dear man!" she said when she saw her husband. "What are you lounging about in that filthy old thing for? I told you to have it burned long ago."

"Who in the world," said the Doctor, "has dropped a gold chain down the bathtub drain?"

"Nobody has, of course," said Hermione. "Nobody wears such a thing."

"Then what is it doing there?" said the Doctor. "Take this flashlight. If you lean right over, you can see it shining, deep down."

"Some Woolworth's bangle off one of the maids," said Hermione. "It can be nothing else." However, she took the flashlight and leaned over, squinting into the drain. The Doctor, raising a short length of lead pipe, struck two or three times with great force and precision, and tilting the body by the knees, tumbled it into the tub.

He then slipped off the bathrobe and, standing completely naked, unwrapped a towel full of implements and put them into the washbasin. He spread several sheets of newspaper on the floor and turned once more to his victim.

She was dead, of course – horribly doubled up, like a somersaulter, at one end of the tub. He stood looking at her for a very long time, thinking of absolutely nothing at all. Then he saw how much blood there was and his mind began to move again.

First he pushed and pulled until she lay straight in the bath, then he removed her clothing. In a narrow bathtub this was an extremely clumsy business, but he managed it at last and then turned on the taps. The water rushed into the tub, then dwindled, then died away, and the last of it gurgled down the drain.

"Good God!" he said. "She turned it off at the main."

There was only one thing to do: the Doctor hastily wiped his hands on a towel, opened the bathroom door with a clean corner of the towel, threw it back onto the bath stool, and ran downstairs, barefoot, light as a cat. The cellar door was in a corner of the entrance hall, under the stairs. He knew just where the cut-off was. He had reason to: he had been pottering about down there for some time past — trying to scrape out a bin for wine, he had told Hermione. He pushed open the cellar door, went down the steep steps, and just before the closing door plunged the cellar into pitch darkness, he put his hands on the tap and turned it

on. Then he felt his way back along the grimy wall till he came to the steps. He was about to ascend them when the bell rang.

The Doctor was scarcely aware of the ringing as a sound. It was like a spike of iron pushed slowly up through his stomach. It went on until it reached his brain. Then something broke. He threw himself down in the coal dust on the floor and said, "I'm through. I'm through!"

"They've got no right to come," he said. Then he heard himself panting. "None of this," he said to himself. «None of this."

He began to revive. He got to his feet, and when the bell rang again the sound passed through him almost painlessly. "Let them go away," he said. Then he heard the front door open. He said, "I don't care." His shoulder came up, like that of a boxer, to shield his face. "I give up," he said.

He heard people calling. "Herbert!" "Hermione!" It was the Wallingfords. "Damn them! They come butting in. People anxious to get off. All naked! And blood and coal dust! I'm done! I'm through! I can't do it."

"Herbert!"

"Hermione!"

"Where the dickens can they be?"

"The car's there."

"Maybe they've popped round to Mrs. Liddell's."

"We must see them."

"Or to the shops, maybe. Something at the last minute."

"Not Hermione. I say, listen! Isn't that someone having a bath? Shall I shout? What about whanging on the door?"

"Sh-h-h! Don't. It might not be tactful."

"No harm in a shout."

"Look, dear. Let's come in on our way back. Hermione said they wouldn't be leaving before seven. They're dining on the way, in Salisbury."

"Think so? All right. Only I want a last drink with old Herbert. He'd be hurt."

"Let's hurry. We can be back by half-past six."

The Doctor heard them walk out and the front door close quietly behind them. He thought, "Half-past six. I can do it."

He crossed the hall, sprang the latch of the front door, went upstairs, and taking his instruments from the washbasin, finished what he had to do. He came down again, clad in his bath gown, carrying parcel after parcel of towelling or newspaper neatly secured with safety pins. These he packed carefully into the narrow, deep hole he had made in the corner of the cellar, shovelled in the soil, spread coal dust over all, satisfied himself that everything was in order, and went upstairs again. He then thoroughly cleansed the bath, and himself, and the bath again, dressed, and took his wife's clothing and his bath gown to the incinerator.

One or two more like touches and everything was in order. It was only quarter past six. The Wallingfords were always late; he had only to get into the car and drive off. It was a pity he couldn't wait till after dusk, but he could make a detour to avoid passing through the main street, and even if he was seen driving alone, people would only think Hermione had gone on ahead for some reason and they would forget about it.

Still, he was glad when he had finally got away, entirely unobserved, on the open road, driving into the gathering dusk. He had to drive very carefully; he found himself unable to judge distances, his reactions were abnormally delayed, but that was a detail. When it was quite dark he allowed himself to stop the car on the top of the downs, in order to think.

The stars were superb. He could see the lights of one or two little towns far away on the plain below him. He was exultant. Everything that was to follow was perfectly simple. Marion was waiting in Chicago. She already believed him to be a widower. The lecture people could be put off with a word. He had nothing to do but establish himself in some thriving out-of-the-way town in America and he was safe for ever. There were Hermione's clothes, of course, in the suitcases; they could be disposed of through the porthole. Thank heaven she wrote her letters on the typewriter — a little thing like handwriting might have prevented everything. «But there you are,» he said. “She was up-to-date, efficient all along the line. Managed everything. Managed herself to death, damn her!”

“There's no reason to get excited,” he thought. “I'll write a few letters for her, then fewer and fewer. Write myself — always expecting to get back, never quite able to. Keep the house one year, then another, then another; they'll get used to it. Might even come back alone in a year or two and clear it up properly. Nothing easier. But not for Christmas!” He started up the engine and was off.

In New York he felt free at last, really free. He was safe. He could look back with pleasure — at least after a meal, lighting his cigarette, he could look back with a sort of pleasure — to the minute he had passed in the cellar listening to the bell, the door, and the voices. He could look forward to Marion.

As he strolled through the lobby of his hotel, the clerk, smiling, held up letters for him. It was the first batch from England. Well, what did that matter? It would be fun dashing off the typewritten sheets in Hermione's downright style, signing them with her squiggle, telling everyone what a success his first lecture had been, how thrilled he was with America but how certainly she'd bring him back for Christmas. Doubts could creep in later.

He glanced over the letters. Most were for Hermione. From the Sinclairs, the Wallingfords, the vicar, and a business letter from Holt & Sons, Builders and Decorators.

He stood in the lounge, people brushing by him. He opened the letters with his thumb, reading here and there, smiling. They all seemed very confident he would be back for Christmas. They relied on Hermione. “That's where they

make their big mistake,” said the Doctor, who had taken to American phrases. The builders' letter he kept to the last. Some bill, probably. It was:

Dear Madam,

We are in receipt of your kind acceptance of estimate as below and also of key.

We beg to repeat you may have every confidence in same being ready in ample time for Christmas present as stated. We are setting men to work this week. We are, Madam,

Yours faithfully,

PAUL HOLT & SONS

To excavating, building up, suitably lining one sunken wine bin in cellar as indicated, using best materials, making good, etc.

.....J18/0/0/

## ASSIGNMENTS

### *I. Read the Story and Answer the Following Questions.*

1. Where were the Carpenters going? Why?
2. What did Hermione promise their friends? Why did they believe her?
3. What arrangements for their trip had Hermione made?
4. What was left to do after the last guest departed?
5. What did Hermione ask Herbert to do? What did he do instead? Why?
6. How did he begin to carry out his plan? Provide a detailed description.
7. Why did he have to stop? Where did he have to go? Why?
8. How quickly did he find the cut-off? Why was it easy for him?
9. What unforeseen event happened before he went upstairs?
10. How would you characterize Herbert's psychological state at that moment? Provide some facts from the story.
11. How was his predicament finally resolved?
12. What did Herbert do with the body?
13. How did Herbert leave the town? What precautions did he take?
14. What were his plans for the future?
15. What did Herbert feel when he arrived in New York?
16. What was going through his mind when he was reading letters from the home town?
17. Who was the last letter from? What did he learn from it?
18. What do you think happened afterwards?

### *II. Say it in Russian.*

To beam; heaven knows what; to embark; bustle; call to somebody; odds and ends; get in the way; have some/no time to spare; to lounge about; a flashlight; a bangle; to squint; tumble something somewhere; lead pipe; implements; a



somersault; to pant; to revive; to whang on the door; to make a detour; exultant; to be ready in ample time for something

### ***III. Say it in English.***

Прийти проститься с кем-либо в последнюю минуту; сдержать обещание; изумительный; проследить за тем, чтобы; положиться на кого-либо; добиться большого успеха; переодеться в костюм из твида; наклониться над чем-либо; мешаться под ногами; расстилать что-либо на полу; водопроводный кран; булькать; босиком; заскочить к кому-либо; закорючка; смета

### ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

You've contracted to lecture only for three months; to tilt the body by the knees; his mind began to move again; the closing door plunged the cellar into pitch darkness; to butt in; to put off with a word; to take to something

### ***V. Insert Prepositions.***

The room was filled ... friends; she said, beaming ... them; pay/give somebody compliments ... something; the final arrangements ... something; to catch the afternoon bus ... Devises; to slip ... the bathrobe; to wipe one's hands ... a towel; to be aware ... something; to get ... one's feet; to be secured ... safety pins; to be ... order; to dispose ... something

### ***VI. Insert Articles and Explain your Choice.***

1. She would have ... wonderful time. 2. The Doctor went upstairs, took off ... suit he was wearing and put on ... old dirty bath gown. 3. Nobody wears such ... thing. 4. His shoulder came up, like that of ... boxer, to shield his face. 5. I want ... last drink with Herbert. 6. They're dining on ... way.

### ***VII. Explain the Difference in Meaning and Usage of the Following Words.***

Believe – trust

Persuade – convince

In time – on time

Filthy – dirty – grimy

Drop – fall

Raise – rise

Washbasin – sink

Lie – lay

Dwindle – decrease

Ascend – go up

Cleanse – clean

## **A BAD HEART**

**by Ruth Rendell**

### **I**

They had been very pressing and at last, on the third time of asking, he had accepted. Resignedly, almost fatalistically, he had agreed to dine with them. But as he began the long drive out of London, he thought petulantly that they ought to have had the tact to drop the acquaintance altogether. No other employee he had sacked had ever made such approaches to him. Threats, yes. Several had threatened him and one had tried blackmail, but no one had ever had the effrontery to invite him to dinner. It wasn't done. A discreet man wouldn't have done it. But of course Hugo Crouch wasn't a discreet man and that, among other things, was why he had been sacked.

He knew why they had asked him. They wanted to hold a court of enquiry, to have the whole thing out. Knowing this, he had suggested they meet in a restaurant and at his expense. They couldn't harangue a man in a public restaurant and he wouldn't be at their mercy. But they had insisted he come to their house and in the end he had given way. He was an elderly man with a heart condition; it was sixteen miles slow driving from his flat to their house – monstrous on a filthy February night – but he would show them he could take it, he would be one too many for them. The chairman of Frasers would show them he wasn't to be intimidated by a bumptious do-gooder like Hugo Crouch, and he would cope with the situation just as he had coped in the past with the blackmailer.

By the time he reached the outskirts of the Forest, the rain was coming down so hard that he had to put his windscreen wipers on to top speed, and he felt more than ever thankful that he had got this new car with all its efficient gadgets. Certainly the firm wouldn't have been able to run to it if he had kept Hugo Crouch on a day longer. If he had agreed to all Hugo's demands he would still be stuck with that old Daimler and he would never have managed that winter cruise. Hugo had been a real thorn in his flesh what with his extravagance and his choosing to live in a house in the middle of Epping Forest. And it was in the middle, totally isolated, not even on the edge of one of the Forest villages. The general manager of Frasers had to be within reach, on call. Burying oneself out here was ridiculous.

The car's powerful headlights showed a dark, winding lane ahead the grey tree trunks making it appear like some sombre, pillared corridor. And this picture was cut off every few seconds by a curtain of rain, to reappear with the sweep of the wipers. Fortunately, he had been there once before, otherwise he might have passed the high brick wall and the wooden gates behind which stood the Crouch house, the peak-roofed Victorian villa, drab, shabby, and to his eyes quite hideous. Anyone who put a demolition order on that would be doing a service to the environment, he thought, and then he drove in through the gates.

There wasn't a single light showing. He remembered that they lived in the back, but they might have put a light on to greet him. But for his car headlamps, he wouldn't have been able to see his way at all. Clutching the box of peppermint creams he had bought for Elizabeth Crouch, he splashed across the almost flooded paving, under eaves from which water poured as from a row of taps, and made for the front door, which happened to be – which would be – at the far side of the house. It was hard to tell where their garden ended and the Forest began, for no demarcation was visible. Nothing was visible but black, rain-lashed branches, faintly illuminated by a dim glow showing through the fanlight over the door.

He rang the bell hard, keeping his finger on the push, hoping the rain hadn't got through his coat to his hundred-guinea suit. A jet of water struck the back of his neck, sending a shiver right through him, and then the door was opened.

“Duncan! You must be soaked. Have you had a dreadful journey?”

He gasped out, “Awful, awful!” and ducked into the dry sanctuary of the hall. “What a night!” He thrust the chocolates at her, gave her his hand. Then he remembered that in the old days they always used to kiss. Well, he never minded kissing a pretty woman and it hadn't been her fault. “How are you, Elizabeth?” he said after their cheeks had touched.

“I'm fine. Let me take your coat. I'll take it to the kitchen and dry it. Hugo's in the sitting room. You know your way, don't you?”

Down a long passage, he remembered, that was never properly lighted and wasn't heated at all. The whole place called out for central heating. He was by now extremely cold and he couldn't help thinking of his flat, where the radiators got so hot that you had to open the windows even in February and where, had he been home, his housekeeper would at this moment be placing before him a portion of hot pate to be followed by poulet San Josef. Elizabeth Crouch, he recalled, was rather a poor cook.

Outside the sitting-room door he paused, girding himself for the encounter. He hadn't set eyes on Hugo Crouch since the man had marched out of the office in a huff because he, Duncan Fraser, chairman of Frasers, had tentatively suggested he might be happier in another job. Well, the sooner the first words were over the better. Very few men in his position, he thought, would let the matter weigh on their minds at all or have his sensitivity. Very few, for that matter, would have come.

He would be genial, casual, perhaps a little avuncular. Above all, he would avoid at any cost the subject of Hugo's dismissal. They wouldn't be able to make him talk about it if he was determined not to; ultimately, the politeness of hosts to guest would put up a barrier to stop them. He opened the door, smiling pleasantly, achieving a merry twinkle in his eye. “Well, here I am, Hugo! I've made it.”

Hugo wore a very sour look, the kind of look Duncan had often seen on his face when some more than usually extravagant order or request of his had been countermanded. He didn't smile. He gave Duncan his hand gravely and asked him what he would like to drink.

Duncan looked quickly around the room, which hadn't changed and was still furnished with rather grim Victorian pieces. There was, at any rate, a huge fire of logs burning in the grate. "Ah, yes, a drink," he said, rubbing his hands together. He didn't dare ask for whisky, which he would have liked best, because his doctor had forbidden it. "A little dry Vermouth?"

"I'm afraid I don't have any Vermouth."

This rejoinder, though spoken quite lightly, though he had even expected something of the sort, gave Duncan a slight shock. It put him on his mettle and yet it jolted him. He had known, of course, that they would start on him but he hadn't anticipated the first move coming so promptly. All right, let the man remind him he couldn't afford fancy drinks because he had lost his job. He, Duncan, wouldn't be drawn. "Sherry, then," he said. "You do have sherry?"

"Oh, yes, we have sherry. Come and sit by the fire."

As soon as he was seated in front of those blazing logs and had begun to thaw out, he decided to pursue the conversation along the lines of the weather. It was the only subject he could think of to break the ice until Elizabeth came in, and they were doing quite well at it, moving into such sidelines as floods in East Anglia and crashes in motorway fog, when she appeared and sat next to him.

"We haven't asked anyone else, Duncan. We wanted to have you to ourselves."

A pointless remark, he thought, under the circumstances. Naturally, they hadn't asked anyone else. The presence of other guests would have defeated the exercise. But perhaps it hadn't been so pointless, after all. It could be an opening gambit.

"Delightful," he said.

"We've got such a lot to talk about. I thought it would be nicer this way."

"Much nicer." Such a lot to talk about? There was only one thing she could mean by that. But she needn't think – silent Hugo sitting there with his grim, moody face needn't think – that he would help them along an inch of the way. If they were going to get on to the subject they would have to do all the spadework themselves. "We were just saying," he said, "how tragic all these motorway crashes are. Now I feel all this could be stopped by a very simple method."

He outlined the simple method but he could tell they weren't really interested and he wasn't surprised when Elizabeth said, "That's fascinating, Duncan, but let's talk about you. What have you been doing lately?"

Controlling the business your husband nearly ruined. "Oh, this and that," he said. "Nothing much."

"Did you go on a cruise this winter?"

“Er – yes I did. The Caribbean, as a matter fact.”

“That's nice. I'm sure the change did you good.”

Implying he needed having good done to him, of course. She had only got on to cruises so that she could point out that some people couldn't afford them. “I had a real rest,” he said heartily. “I must tell you about a most amusing thing that happened to me on the way home.” He told them but it didn't sound very amusing, and although Elizabeth smiled half-heartedly, Hugo didn't, “Well, it seemed funny at the time,” he said.

“We can eat in five minutes,” said Elizabeth. “Tell me, Duncan, did you buy that villa you were so keen on in the South of France?”

“Oh, yes, I bought it.” She was looking at him very curiously, very impertinently really, waiting for him to apologize for spending his own money, he supposed. “Listen to that rain,” he said. “It hasn't let up at all.”

They agreed that it hadn't and silence fell. He could tell from the glance they exchanged – he was very astute in these matters – that they knew they had been baulked for the time being. And they both looked pretty fed up, he thought triumphantly. But the woman was weighing in again and a bit nearer the bone this time.

“Who do you think we ran into last week, Duncan? John Churchouse.”

The man who had done that printing for Frasers a couple of years back. He had got the order, Duncan remembered, just about the time of Hugo's promotion. He sat tight, drank the rest of his sherry.

“He told us he'd been in hospital for months and lost quite a lot of business. I felt so...”

“I wonder if I might wash my hands,” Duncan asked firmly. “If you could just tell me where the bathroom is?”

“Of course.” She looked disappointed, as well she might. “It's the door facing you at the top of the stairs.”

Duncan made his way to the bathroom. He mustn't think he was going to get off the hook as easily as that. They would be bound to start on him again during the meal. Very likely they thought a dinner table a good place to hold an inquest. Still, he'd be ready for them, he'd done rather well up to now.

They were both waiting for him at the foot of the stairs to lead him into the dining room and again he saw the woman give her husband one of those looks that are the equivalent of prompting nudges. Hugo was probably getting cold feet. In these cases, of course, it was always the women who were more aggressive. Duncan gave a swift glance at the table and the plate of hors d'oeuvres, sardines and anchovies and artichoke hearts, most unsuitable for the time of the year.

“I'm afraid you've been to a great deal of trouble, Elizabeth,” he said graciously.

She gave him a dazzling smile. He had forgotten that smile of hers, how it lit her whole face, her eyes as flashing blue as a kingfisher's plumage. "The labour we delight in," she said, "physics pain."

"Ah, Macbeth." Good, an excellent topic to get them through the first course. "Do you know, the only time we three ever went to the theatre together was to see Macbeth?"

"I remember," she said. "Bread, Duncan?"

"Thank you. I saw a splendid performance of Macbeth by that Polish company last week. Perhaps you've seen it?"

"We haven't been to the theatre at all this winter," said Hugo.

She must have kicked him under the table to prompt that one. Duncan took no notice. He told them in detail about the Polish Macbeth, although such was his mounting tenseness that he couldn't remember half the names of the characters, or, for that matter, the names of the actors.

"I wish Keith could have seen it," she said. "It's his set play for his exam."

She was going to force him to ask after her sons and be told they had had to take them away from that absurdly expensive boarding school. Well, he wouldn't. Rude it might be, but he wouldn't ask.

"I don't think you ever met our children, Duncan?"

"No, I didn't."

"They'll be home on half-term next week. I'm so delighted that their half-term happens to coincide with mine."

"Yours?" he said suspiciously.

"Elizabeth has gone back to teaching."

"Really?" said Duncan. "No, I won't have any more, thank you. That was delicious. Let me give you a hand. If I could carry something...?"

"Please don't trouble. I can manage." She looked rather offended. "If you two will excuse me I'll see to our main course."

He was left alone with Hugo in the chilly dining room. He shifted his legs from under the cloth to bring them closer to the one-bar electric heater. Hugo began to struggle with the cork of the wine bottle. Unable to extract it, he cursed under his breath.

"Let me try."

"I'll be able to cope quite well, thanks, if you don't watch me," Hugo said sharply, and then, irrelevantly if you didn't know nothing those two said was irrelevant, "I'm doing a course in accountancy."

"As a wine waiter, Hugo," said Duncan, "you make a very good accountant, ha ha!"

Hugo didn't laugh. He got the cork out at last. "I think I'll do all right. I was always reasonably good at figures."

"So you were, so you were. And more than reasonably good." That was true. It had been with personnel that the man was so abysmally bad, giving junior executives and little typists ideas above their station. "I'm sure you will

do well." Why didn't the woman come back? It must have been ten minutes since she had gone off to that kitchen, down those miles of passages. His own wife, long dead, would have got that main course into serving dishes before they had sat down to the hors d'oeuvres. "Get a qualification, that's the thing," he said. In the distance he heard the wheels of a trolley coming. It was a more welcome sound than that of the wheels of the train one has awaited for an hour on a cold platform. He didn't like the woman but anything was better than being alone with Hugo. Why not get it over now, he thought, before they began on the amazingly small roasted chicken which had appeared? He managed a smile. He said, "I can tell you've both fallen on your feet. I'm quite sure, Hugo, you'll look back on all this when you're a successful accountant and thank God you and Frasers parted company."

And that ought to be that. They had put him through their inquisition and now they would perhaps let him eat this overcooked mess that passed for dinner in peace. At last they would talk of something else, not leave it to him who had been making the running all the evening.

But instead of conversation, there was a deep silence. No one seemed to have anything to say. And although Duncan, working manfully at his chicken wing, racked his brains for a topic, he could think of nothing. Their house, his flat, the workpeople at Frasers, his car, the cost of living, her job, Hugo's course, Christmas past, summer to come, all these subjects must inevitably lead by a direct route back to Hugo's dismissal. And Duncan saw with irritable despair that all subjects would lead to it because he was he and they were they and the dismissal lay between them like an unavoidable spectre at their dismal feast. From time to time he lifted his eyes from his plate, hoping that she would respond to that famous smile of his, that smile that was growing stiff with insincere use, but each time he looked at her he saw that she was staring fixedly at him, eating hardly anything, her expression concentrated, dispassionate, and somehow dogged. And her eyes had lost their kingfisher flash. They were dull and dead like smoky glass.

So they hadn't had enough then, she and her subdued, morose husband? They wanted to see him abject, not merely referring with open frankness to the dismissal as he had done, but explaining it, apologizing. Well, they should have his explanation. There was no escape. Carefully, he placed his knife and fork side by side on his empty plate. Precisely, but very politely, he refused his hostess's offer of more. He took a deep breath as he often did at the beginning of a board meeting, as he had so very often done at those board meetings when Hugo Crouch pressed insistently for staff rises.

"My dear Elizabeth," he began, "my dear Hugo, I know why you asked me here tonight and what you've been hinting at ever since I arrived. And because I want to enjoy your very delightful company without any more awkwardness, I'm going to do here and now what you very obviously want me

to do – that is, explain just how it happened that I suggested Hugo would be happier away from Frasers.”

Elizabeth said, “Now, Duncan, listen...”

“You can say your piece in a moment, Elizabeth. Perhaps you'll be surprised when I say I am entirely to blame for what happened. Yes, I admit it, the fault was all mine.” He lifted one hand to silence Hugo who was shaking his head vehemently. “No, Hugo, let me finish. As I said, the fault was mine. I made an error of judgment. Oh, yes, I did. I should have been a better judge of men. I should have been able to see when I promoted you that you weren't up to the job. I blame myself for not understanding – well, your limitations.”

They were silent. They didn't look at him or at each other.

“We men in responsible positions,” he said, “are to blame when the men we appoint can't rise to the heights we envisage for them. We lack vision, that's all. I take the whole burden of it on my shoulders, you see. So shall we forgive and forget?”

He had seldom seen people look so embarrassed, so shamefaced. It just went to show that they were no match for him. His statement had been the last thing they had expected and it was unanswerable. He handed her his plate with its little graveyard of chicken bones among the potato skins and as she took it he saw a look of baulked fury cross her face.

“Well, Elizabeth,” he said, unable to resist, “am I forgiven?”

“It's too late now. It's past,” she said in a cold, stony voice. “It's too late for any of this.”

“I'm sorry if I haven't given you the explanation you wanted, my dear. I've simply told you the truth.”

She didn't say any more. Hugo didn't say anything. And suddenly Duncan felt most uncomfortable. Their condemnatory faces, the way they both seemed to shrink away from him, was almost too much for him. His heart began to pound and he had to tell himself that a racing heart meant nothing, that it was pains and not palpitations he must fear. He reached for one of his little white pills ostentatiously, hoping they would notice what they had done to him.

When still they didn't speak, he said, “I think perhaps I should go now.”

“But you haven't had coffee,” said Elizabeth.

“Just the same it might be better...”

“Please stay and have coffee,” she said firmly, almost sternly, and then she forced a smile. “I insist.”

Back in the sitting room they offered him brandy. He refused it because he had to drive home, and the sooner he could begin that drive the happier he would be. Hugo had a large brandy, which he drank at a gulp, the way brandy should never be drunk unless one had had a shock or were steeling oneself for something, Elizabeth had picked up the evening paper and was talking in a very artificial way about a murder case which appeared on the front page.



"I really must go," said Duncan.

"Have some more coffee? It's not ten yet."

Why did they want him to slay? Or, rather, why did she? Hugo was once more busy with the brandy bottle. He would have thought his company must be as tiresome to them as theirs were to him. They had got what they wanted, hadn't they? He drank his second cup of coffee so quickly that it scalded his mouth and then he got up.

"Thank you." It was over. He was going to make his escape and he need never see them again. And suddenly he felt that he wouldn't be able to get out of that house fast enough. Really, since he had made his little speech, the atmosphere had been completely disagreeable. "Good night, Elizabeth," he said. What platitudes could he think of that weren't too ludicrous? "Thank you for the meal. Perhaps we will meet again some day."

"I hope we shall and soon, Duncan," she said, but she didn't offer him her cheek. Through the open door, the rain was driving in against her long skirt. She stood there, watching him go out with Hugo, letting the light pour out to guide them round the corner of the house.

## II

As soon as he was round that corner, Duncan felt an unpleasant jerk of shock. His car lights were blazing, full on.

"How did I come to do a thing like that?"

"I suppose you left them on to see your way to the door," said Hugo, "and then forgot them."

"I'm sure I did not."

"You must have. Hold the umbrella and I'll try the ignition." Leaving Duncan on the flooded path under the inadequate umbrella, Hugo got into the driving seat and inserted the ignition key. Duncan watched him, stamping his feet impatiently. "Not a spark," said Hugo. "Your battery's flat."

"It can't be."

"I'm afraid it is. Try for yourself."

Duncan tried, getting very wet in the process.

"We'd better go back in the house. We'll get soaked out here."

"What's the matter?" said Elizabeth, who was still standing in the doorway.

"His battery's flat. The car won't start."

Of course it wasn't their fault but somehow Duncan felt that it was. It had happened, after all, at their house, to which they had fetched him for a disgraceful purpose. He didn't bother to soften his annoyance. "I'm afraid I'll just have to borrow your car, Hugo."

Elizabeth closed the door. "We don't have a car anymore. We couldn't afford to run it. It was either keeping a car or taking the boys away from school, so we sold it."

"I see. Then if I might just use your phone, I'll ring for a hired car. I've a mini-cab number in my wallet." One look at her face told him that wasn't going to be possible either. "Now you'll say you've had the phone cut off." Damn her! Damn them both!

"We could have afforded it, of course. We just didn't need it anymore. I'm sorry, Duncan, I just don't know what you can do. But we may as well all go and sit down where it's warmer."

"I don't want to sit down," Duncan almost shouted. "I have to get home." He shook off the hand she had laid on his arm and which seemed to be forcibly detaining him. "I must just walk to the nearest house with a phone."

Hugo opened the door. The rain was more like a wall of water than a series of drops. "In this?"

"Then what am I supposed to do?" Duncan cried fretfully.

"Stay the night," said Elizabeth calmly. "I really don't know what you can do but stay the night."

The bed was just what he would have expected a bed in the Crouch ménage to be – hard, narrow, and cold. She had given him a hot water bottle, which was an object he hadn't set eyes on in ten years. And Hugo had lent him a pair of pajamas. All the time this was going on, he had protested that he couldn't stay, that there must be some other way, but in the end he had yielded. Not that they had been welcoming. They had treated the whole thing as if – well, how had they treated it? Duncan lay in the dark, clutching the bottle between his knees, and tried to assess just what their attitude had been. Fatalistic, he thought, that was it. They had behaved as if this were inevitable, that there was no escape for him, and here, like it or not, he must stay.

Escape was a ridiculous word, of course, but it was the sort of word you used when you were trapped somewhere for a whole night in the home of people who were obviously antagonistic, if not hostile. Why had he been such a fool as to leave those car lights on? He couldn't remember that he had done and yet he must have. Nobody else would have turned them on. Why should they?

He wished they would go to bed too. That they hadn't he could tell by the light, the rectangular outline of dazzlement, that showed round the frame of his bedroom door. And he could hear them talking, not the words but the buzz of conversation. These late Victorian houses were atrociously built, of course. You could hear every sound. The rain drumming on the roof sounded as if it were pounding on cardboard rather than on slates. He didn't think there was much prospect of sleep. How could he sleep with the noise and all that on his mind, the worry of getting the car moved, of finding some way of getting to the office? And it made him feel very uneasy their staying up like that, particularly as she had said, "If you'll go into the bathroom first, Duncan, we'll follow you." Follow him! That must have been all of half an hour ago. He pressed the switch of his bedlamp and saw that it was eleven-thirty. Time they were in bed if she had to get to her school in the morning and he to his accountancy course.

Once more in the dark, but for that gold-edged rectangle, he considered the car lights question again. He was certain he had turned them out. Of course it was hard to be certain of anything when you were as upset as he. The pressure they had put on him had been simply horrible and the worst moments those when he had been alone with Hugo while that woman was fishing the ancient pullet she'd dished up to him out of her oven. Really, she had been a hell of a time getting that main course when you considered what it had amounted to. Could she...? Only a madwoman would do such a thing and what possible motive could she have had? But if you lived in a remote place and you wanted someone to stay in your house overnight, if you wanted to keep him there, how better than to immobilize his car? He shivered, even while he told himself such fancies were absurd.

At any rate, they were coming up now. Every board in the house creaked and the stairs played a tune like a broken old violin. He heard Hugo mumble something – the man had drunk far too much brandy – and then she said, “Leave all the rest to me.”

Another shiver that hadn't very much to do with the cold ran through him. He couldn't think why it had. Surely, that was quite a natural thing for a woman to say on going to bed. She only meant, You go to bed and I'll lock up and turn off the lights. He had often said it when his wife was alive. And yet it was a phrase familiar to him in quite another context. Turning on his side away from the light and into fresh caverns of icy sheet, he tried to think where he had heard it. It came from Macbeth. Lady Macbeth said it when she and her husband were plotting the old king's murder. And what was the old king's name? Douglas? Donald?

Someone had come out of the bathroom and someone else gone in. Did they always take such ages getting to bed? The lavatory flush roared and a torrent rushed through pipes that seemed to pass under his bed. He heard footsteps across the landing and a door closing. Apparently, they slept in the next room to his. He turned over, longing for the light to go out. It was a pity there was no key in that lock so that he could have locked his door.

As soon as the thought had formed and been uttered in his brain, he thought how fantastic it was. What, lock one's bedroom door in a private house? Suppose his hostess came in the morning with a cup of tea? She would think it very odd. And she might come in. She had put this bottle in his bed and had placed a glass of water on the table. Of course he couldn't dream of locking the door, and why should he want to? One of them was in the bathroom again.

Suddenly he found himself thinking about one of the men he had sacked and who had threatened him. The man had said “Don't think you'll get away with this, and if you show your ugly face within a mile of my place you may not live to regret it.” Of course he had got away with it and had nothing to regret. On the other hand, he hadn't shown himself within a mile of the man's place...The light had gone out at last. Sleep now, he told himself. Empty your

mind or think about something nice, your summer holiday in the villa, for instance, think about that.

The gardens would be wonderful with the oleanders and the bougainvillea. And the sun would warm his old bones as he sat on his terrace, looking down through the cleft in the pines at the blue triangle of the Mediterranean which was brighter and gentler than that woman's eyes... Never mind the woman, forget her. Perhaps he should have the terrace raised and extended and set up on it that piece of statuary – surely Roman – which he had found in the pinewoods. It would cost a great deal of money, but it was his money. Why shouldn't he spend his own? He must try to be less sensitive, he thought, less troubled by this absurd social conscience which, for some reason, he had lately developed. Not, he reflected with a faint chuckle, that it actually stopped him spending money or enjoying himself. It was a nuisance, that was all.

He would have the terrace extended and maybe a black marble floor laid in the salon. Frasers' profits looked as if they would hit a new high this year. Why not get that fellow Churchouse to do all their printing for them? If he was really down on his luck and desperate he would be bound to work for a cut rate, jump at the chance, no doubt...

God damn it, it was too much! They were talking in there. He could hear their whisperings, rapid, emotional almost, through the wall. They were an absurd couple, no sense of humor between the pair of them. Intense, like characters out of some tragedy.

“The labour we delight in physics pain” – Macbeth had said that, Macbeth who killed the old king. And she had said it to him, Duncan, when he had apologized for the trouble he was causing. The king was called Duncan too. Of course he was. He was called Duncan and so was the king and he too, in a way, was an old king, the monarch of the Fraser empire. Whisper, whisper, breathed the wall at him.

He sat up and put on the light. With the light on, he felt better. He was sure, though, that he hadn't left those car lights on. “Leave all the rest to me...” Why say that? Why not say what everyone said, “I'll see to everything?” Macbeth and his wife had entertained the old king in their house and murdered him in his bed, although he had done them no harm, done nothing to them but be king. So it wasn't a parallel, was it? For he, Duncan Fraser, had done something, something which might merit vengeance. He had sacked Hugo Crouch and taken away his livelihood. It wasn't a parallel.

He turned off the light, sighed, and lay down again. They were still whispering. He heard the floor creak as one of them came out of the bedroom. It wasn't a parallel – it was much more. Why hadn't he seen that? Lady Macbeth and her husband had no cause, no cause...A sweat broke out on his face and he reached for the glass of water. But he didn't drink. It was stupid not to but...The

morning would soon come. "O, never shall sun that morrow see!" Where did that come from? Need he ask?

Whoever it was in the bathroom had left it and gone back to the other one. But only for a moment. Again he heard the boards creak, again someone was moving about on that dark landing. Dark, yes, pitch dark, for they hadn't switched the light on this time. And Duncan felt then the first thrill of real fear, which didn't subside after the shiver had died but grew and gripped him in a terror the like of which he hadn't known since he was a little boy and had been shut up in the nursery cupboard of his father's manse. He mustn't be afraid, he mustn't. He must think of his heart. Why should they want vengeance? He'd explained. He'd told them the truth, taking the full burden of blame on himself. The room was so dark that he didn't see the door handle turn. He heard it. It creaked very softly. His heart began a slow, steady pounding and he contracted his body, forcing it back against the wall. Whoever it was had come into the room. He could see the shape of him – or her – as a denser blackness in the dark.

"What...? Who...?" he said, quavering, his throat dry. The shape grew fluid, glided away, and the door closed softly. They wanted to see if he was asleep. They would kill him when he was asleep. He sat up, switched on the light, and put his face in his hands. "O, never shall sun that morrow see!" He'd put all that furniture against the door, that chest of drawers, his bed, the chair. His throat was parched now and he reached for the water, taking a long draught. It was icy cold.

They weren't whispering anymore. They were waiting in silence. He got up and put his coat round him. In the bitter cold he began lugging the furniture away from the walls, lifting the iron bedstead that felt so small and narrow when he was in it but was so hideously weighty.

Straightening up from his second attempt, he felt it, the pain in his chest and down his left arm. It came like a clamp, like a clamp being screwed and at the same time slowly heated red-hot. It took his body in hot iron fingers and squeezed his ribs. And sweat began to pour from him as if the temperature in the room had suddenly risen tremendously. Oh God, Oh, God, the water in the glass...! They would have to get him a doctor, they would have to, they couldn't be so pitiless. He was old and tired and his heart was bad.

He pulled the coat round the pain and staggered out into the black passage. Their door – where was their door? He found it by fumbling at the walls, scrabbling like an imprisoned animal, and when he found it he kicked it open and swayed on the threshold, holding the pain in both his hands.

They were sitting on their bed with their backs to him, not in bed but sitting there, the shapes of them silhouetted against the light of a small low-bulbed bedlamp.

"Oh, please," he said, "please help me. Don't kill me, I beg you not to kill me. I'll go on my knees to you. I know I've done wrong, I did a terrible thing. I didn't make an error of judgment. I sacked Hugo because he wanted too much

for the staff, he wanted more money for everyone and I couldn't let them have it. I wanted my new car and my holidays. I had to have my villa – so beautiful, my villa, my gardens. Ah, God, I know I was greedy but I've borne the guilt of it for months, every day – on my conscience – the guilt of it...” They turned, two white faces, implacable, merciless. They rose and came towards him, scrambling across their bed. "Have pity on me," he screamed. "Don't kill me. I'll give you everything I've got, I'll give you a million...”

But they had seized him with their hands and it was too late. She had told him it was too late.

“In our house!” she said.

“Don't,” said Hugo. “That's what Lady Macbeth said. What does it matter whether it was in our house or not?”

“I wish I'd never invited him.”

“Well, it was your idea. You said let's have him here because he's a widower and lonely. I didn't want him. It was ghastly the way he insisted on talking about firing me when we wanted to keep off the subject at any price. I was utterly fed up when he had to stay the night.”

“What do we do now?” said Elizabeth.

“Get the police, I should think, or a doctor. It's stopped raining. I'll get dressed and go.”

“But you're not well! You kept throwing up.”

“I'm okay now. I drank too much brandy. It was such a strain all of it, nobody knowing what to talk about. God, what a business! He was alright when you went into his room just now, wasn't he?”

“Half-asleep, I thought. I was going to apologize for all the racket you were making but he seemed nearly asleep. Did you get any of that he was trying to say when he came in here? I didn't.”

“No, it was just gibberish. We couldn't have done anything for him, darling. We did try to catch him before he fell.”

“I know.”

“He had a bad heart.”

“In more ways than one, poor old man,” said Elizabeth, and she laid a blanket gently over Duncan, though he was past feeling hot or cold or guilt or fear or anything anymore.

(<http://darincragen.blogspot.ru/2011/09/bad-heart-by-ruth-rendell.html>)

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Part I

#### *I. Read Part I and Answer the Following Questions.*

1. What did Duncan think about the Crouches' invitation?
2. How can you characterize the relationships between Duncan and Hugo?

3. What did Duncan think about the reasons for inviting him to the Crouches' house?
4. How was he going to deal with the situation?
5. What were the reasons for Hugo's dismissal?
6. What did Duncan think about the location of the Crouches' house?
7. Why was the drive to the house barely visible?
8. How did the hostess greet Duncan?
9. In what way do you think their relationships developed?
10. What did Duncan think about the Crouches' house as compared to his flat?
11. What elements of the story give the readers a clue about Duncan's social status?
12. How did Duncan intend to deal with his hosts?
13. Describe the way Hugo greeted his guest.
14. What made the atmosphere even more awkward?
15. Why was Duncan the only guest?
16. What implications did Duncan attribute to any questions the hosts asked him?
17. Why did Duncan interrupt Elisabeth when she started to talk about John Churchouse?
18. How did the conversation drift to the topic of Macbeth?
19. What changes did Hugo's dismissal cause his family?
20. What did Duncan think about Hugo's doing a course in accountancy?
21. Why did Duncan raise the question of Hugo's dismissal during the dinner?
22. Why did he say that the fault was all his?
23. Why did the hosts look embarrassed, in Duncan's view?
24. Did Duncan seek their forgiveness? Was he forgiven?
25. Why did he reach for his pill ostentatiously?
26. Why did Hugo drink brandy at a gulp, in Duncan's view?
27. What did Duncan feel while saying good-bye to the hosts?

## ***II. Say it in Russian***

Resigned, petulant, discreet, to harangue, bumptious, to intimidate, drab, hideous, eaves, genial, avuncular, to countermand, fancy drinks, to thaw out, half-hearted, to sit tight, prompting nudges, abysmal, to pass for dinner, dispassionate, dogged, morose, subdued, vision, to make an error of judgment, shamefaced, condemnatory, to shrink away from smb, palpitation, ostentatious, to steel oneself for smth, platitude

## ***III. Say it in English***

Иметь наглость, за чей-то счет, уступить, ветровое стекло, дворники, расточительность, на чей-либо взгляд, направиться к двери, не мог не думать о своей квартире, любой ценой, увольнение, выглядеть недовольным, дерзкий, быть проникательным в таких делах, зимородок,

нарастающее напряжение, извлечь пробку из бутылки, отказаться от дополнительной порции, намекать, полностью чья-то вина, не подходить для занимаемой должности, глухо биться, потянуться за таблетками, выдавить из себя улыбку, выпить залпом, смехотворный

#### ***IV. Paraphrase the Following.***

1. They had been very pressing.
2. He would be too many for them.
3. He had to be within reach, on call.
4. Anyone who put a demolition order on that would be doing a service to the environment.
5. He ducked into the dark sanctuary of the hall.
6. The whole place called out for central heating.
7. He pursued the conversation along the lines of the weather.
8. We wanted to have you to ourselves.
9. It hasn't let up at all.
10. They would be bound to start on him again.
11. He cursed under his breath.
12. He had been making the running all the evening.
13. Hugo pressed insistently for staff rises.
14. He wouldn't be able to get out of that house fast enough.

#### ***V. Explain the Usage of the Verb Forms in the Following Sentences.***

1. But they had instead he come to their house.
2. But for his car headlamps, he wouldn't have been able to see his way at all.
3. You must be soaked.
4. If you two will excuse me, I will see to our main course.
5. He was going to make his escape and he need never see them again.

#### ***VI. Explain the Meaning of the Following Idioms.***

- A thorn in one's flesh
- To weigh on one's mind
- To put smb on his mettle
- To break the ice
- An opening gambit
- To do all the spade work
- To bit nearer the bone
- To get off the hook
- To get cold feet
- To give smb a hand
- To fall on one's feet
- To take the burden on one's shoulders



## Part II

### ***I. Read Part I and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. Why wouldn't Duncan's car start?
2. Why did Duncan have to stay at the Crouches' overnight?
3. Why couldn't Duncan fall asleep?
4. What did he think about the hosts' attitude to him?
5. Why was Duncan troubled by the fact that the Crouches' didn't go to bed?
6. What did Duncan think of the possible reason for his car battery being flat?
7. What parallels did Duncan find with Macbeth?
8. Why did he consider locking the door?
9. Why did he remember one of the men he had sacked?
10. What did he think about social conscience?
11. What offer did he decide to make Churchouse? How does it characterize Duncan?
12. Why did Duncan think that he merited vengeance?
13. What made him feel terror?
14. What did Duncan feel when Elizabeth opened the door of his room?
15. Why did Duncan start lugging the furniture away from the walls?
16. Why did he stagger to the hosts' bedroom?
17. What were the Crouches doing when Duncan appeared in their room?
18. What confession did he make pleading for mercy?
19. What was the cause of his death?
20. Why was Duncan invited to the Crouches?
21. Why did the hosts stay awake that night?
22. What did Elizabeth mean when saying that Duncan had a bad heart in more ways than one?

### ***II. Say it in Russian***

To blaze, a flat battery, fretful, to lent sb a pair of pajamas, like it or not, to be trapped, slate, to amount to smth, to immobilize, to empty one's mind, social conscience, chuckle, to jump at the chance, vengeance, to take away one's livelihood, to be shut up in the nursery cupboard, to fumble at the walls, low-bulbed bed lamp, in more ways than one

### ***III. Say it in English***

Не выключить фары, попробовать включить зажигание, задерживать силой, остаться на ночь, у него не было выхода, отдаленное место, включить свет, сделать долгий глоток, пересохшее горло, сжимать тисками, неумолимый, пожалеть кого-либо.

### ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Sentences.***

1. He didn't bother to soften his annoyance.

2. They were obviously antagonistic, if not hostile.
3. But in the end he had yielded.
4. The house was atrociously built.
5. He didn't think there was much prospect of sleep.
6. He longed for the light to go out.
7. If he was really down on his luck and desperate he would be bound to work for a cut rate.
8. He staggered out into the passage.
9. We wanted to keep off the subject at any price.

***V. Explain the Usage of the Verb Forms in the Following Sentences.***

1. He wished they would go to bed too.
2. If you will go into the bathroom first, we will follow you.
3. Why say that?
4. I wish I had never invited him.

***VI. Explain the Meaning of the Following Idioms.***

- To set eyes on smth
- To get away with smth
- To take the full burden of blame on oneself
- To bare smth on your conscience

***VII. Speak about the story's setting, its problems and themes. How does the title reveal the author's message? Do you think the social conscience issue is still relevant today? What are your views on the so called Gatsby effect which refers to the situation when the rich become even richer and the poor become poorer?***

***VIII. Single out the elements of the plot. Does the author employ such techniques as foreshadowing and flashbacks? With whose eyes do the readers see the situation? Characterize Duncan Fraser.***

**SKIN**  
**by Ronald Dahl**

That winter was a long time going. A freezing wind blew through the streets of the city, and overhead the snow clouds moved across the sky.

The old man who was called Drioli shuffled painfully along the sidewalk of the rue de Rivoli. He was cold and miserable. He moved glancing without any interest at the things in the shop windows – perfume, silk ties and shirts, diamonds, furniture, books. Then a picture gallery. He had always liked picture galleries. This one had a single canvas on display in the window. He stopped to

look at it. Suddenly, there came to him a slight movement of the memory, a distant recollection of something, somewhere, he had seen before. He looked again. It was a landscape, a group of trees leaning over to one side as if blown by wind. Attached to the frame there was a little plaque, and on this it said: CHAIM SOUTINE (1894-1943).

Drioli stared at the picture, wondering vaguely what there was about it that seemed familiar. Crazy painting, he thought. Very strange and crazy – but I like it... Chaim Soutine... Soutine... “By God!” he cried suddenly. “My little friend, with a picture in the finest shop in Paris! Just imagine that!”

The old man pressed his face closer to the window. He could remember the boy – yes, quite clearly he could remember him. But when? The rest of it was not so easy to recollect. It was so long ago. How long? Twenty – no, more like thirty years, wasn't it? Wait a minute. Yes – it was the year before the war, the first war, 1913. That was it. And this Soutine, this ugly little boy whom he had liked – almost loved – for no reason at all that he could think of except that he could paint.

And how he could paint! It was coming back more clearly now. Where was it the boy had lived?

The Cite Falguiere, that was it! Then there was the studio with the single chair in it, and the dirty red sofa that the boy had used for sleeping; the drunken parties, the cheap white wine, the furious quarrels, and always, always the sad face of the boy thinking over his work.

It was odd, Drioli thought, how easily it all came back to him now, how each single small remembered fact seemed instantly to remind him of another.

There was that nonsense with the tattoo, for instance. Now, that was a mad thing if ever there was one. How had it started? Ah, yes – he had got rich one day, that was it, and he had bought lots of wine. He could see himself now as he entered the studio with the parcel of bottles under his arm — the boy sitting before the easel, and his (Drioli's) own wife standing in the centre of the room, posing for her picture.

“Tonight we shall celebrate,” he said. “We shall have a little celebration, us three.”

“What is it that we celebrate?” the boy asked, without looking up. “Is it that you have decided to divorce your wife so she can marry me?”

“No,” Drioli said. “We celebrate because today I have made a great sum of money with my work.”

“And I have made nothing. We can celebrate that also.” The girl came across the room to look at the painting. Drioli came over also holding a bottle in one hand, a glass in the other.

“No!” the boy shouted. “Please – no!” He snatched the canvas from the easel and stood it against the wall. But Drioli had seen it.

“It's marvellous. I like all the others that you do, it's marvellous. I love them all.”

"The trouble is," the boy said, gloomily, "that in themselves they are not nourishing. I cannot eat them."

"But still they are marvellous." Drioli handed him a glass of the pale-yellow wine. "Drink it," he said. "It will make you happy."

Never, he thought, had he known a more unhappy person, or one with a gloomier face.

"Give me some more," the boy said. "If we are to celebrate then let us do it properly."

"Tonight we shall drink as much as we possibly can," Drioli said. "I am exceptionally rich. I think perhaps I should go out now and buy some more bottles. How many shall I get?"

"Six more," the boy said. "Two for each."

"Good. I shall go now and fetch them."

"And I will help you."

In the nearest cafe Drioli bought six bottles of white wine, and they carried them back to the studio. Then they sat down again and continued to drink.

"It is only the very wealthy, who can afford to celebrate in this manner."

"That is true," the boy said. "Isn't that true, Josie?"

"Of course."

"Beautiful wine," Drioli said. "It is a privilege to drink it."

Slowly, methodically, they set about getting themselves drunk. The process was routine, but all the same there was a certain ceremony to be observed.

"Listen," Drioli said at length. "I have a tremendous idea. I would like to have a picture, a lovely picture. – It is this. I want you to paint a picture on my skin, on my back. Then I want you to tattoo over what you have painted so that it will be there always."

"You have crazy ideas," the boy said.

"I will teach you how to use the tattoo. It is easy. A child could do it."

"You are quite mad. What is it you want?"

"I will teach you in two minutes!"

"Impossible!"

"Are you saying I do not know what I am talking about?"

"All I am saying," the boy told him, "is that you are drunk and this is a drunken idea."

"We could have my wife for a model. A study of Josie upon my back."

"It is no good idea," the boy said. "And I could not possibly manage the tattoo."

"It is simple. I will undertake to teach you in two minutes. You will see. I shall go now and bring the instruments."

In half an hour Drioli was back. "I have brought everything," he cried, waving a brown suitcase. "All the necessities of the tattooist are here in this bag."

He placed the bag on the table, opened it, and laid out the electric needles and the small bottles of coloured inks. He plugged in the electric needle, then he took the instrument in his hand and pressed a switch. He threw off his jacket and rolled up his left sleeve. "Now look. Watch me and I will show you how easy it is. I will make a design on my arm, here. See how easy it is. See how I draw a picture of a dog here upon my arm."

The boy was intrigued. "Now let me practise a little – on your arm."

With the buzzing needle he began to draw blue lines upon Drioli's arm. "It is simple," he said. "It is like drawing with pen and ink. There is no difference except that it is slower."

"There is nothing to it. Are you ready? Shall we begin?"

"At once."

"The model!" cried Drioli. "Come on, Josie!" He was in a bustle of enthusiasm now arranging everything, like a child preparing for some exciting game. "Where will you have her? Where shall she stand?"

"Let her be standing there, by my dressing table. Let her be brushing her hair. I will paint her with her hair down over her shoulders and her brushing it." "Tremendous. You are a genius."

"First," the boy said, "I shall make an ordinary painting. Then if it pleases me, I shall tattoo over it." With a wide brush he began to paint upon the naked skin of the man's back.

"Be still now! Be still!" His concentration, as soon as he began to paint, was so great that it appeared somehow to neutralize his drunkenness.

"All right. That's all," he said at last to the girl. Far into the small hours of the morning the boy worked. Drioli could remember that when the artist finally stepped back and said, "It is finished," there was daylight outside and the sound of people walking in the street.

"I want to see it," Drioli said. The boy held up a mirror, and Drioli craned his neck to look.

"Good God!" he cried. It was a startling sight. The whole of his back was a blaze of colour – gold and green and blue and black and red. The tattoo was applied so heavily it looked almost like an impasto. The portrait was quite alive; it contained so much characteristic of Soutine's other works.

"It's tremendous!"

"I rather like it myself." The boy stood back, examining it critically. "You know," he added, "I think it's good enough for me to sign." And taking up the machine again, he inscribed his name in red ink on the right-hand side, over the place where Drioli's kidney was.

The old man who was called Drioli was standing in a sort of trance, staring at the painting in the window of the picture-dealer's shop. It had been so long ago, all that – almost as though it had happened in another life.

And the boy? What had become of him? He could remember now that after returning from the war – the first war – he had missed him and had questioned Josie.

“Where is my little painter?”

“He is gone,” she had answered. “I do not know where.”

“Perhaps he will return.”

“Perhaps he will. Who knows?”

That was the last time they had mentioned him. Shortly afterwards they had moved to Le Havre where there were more sailors and business was better. Those were the pleasant years, the years between the wars, with the small shop near the docks and the comfortable rooms and always enough work.

Then had come the second war, and Josie being killed, and the Germans arriving, and that was the finish of his business. No one had wanted pictures on their arms any more after that. And by that time he was too old for any other kind of work. In desperation he had made his way back to Paris, hoping vaguely that things would be easier in the big city. But they were not.

And now, after the war was over, he possessed neither the means nor the energy to start up his small business again. It wasn't very easy for an old man to know what to do, especially when one did not like to beg. Yet how else could he keep alive?

Well, he thought, still staring at the picture. So that is my little friend. He put his face closer to the window and looked into the gallery. On the walls he could see many other pictures and all seemed to be the work of the same artist. There were a great number of people strolling around. Obviously it was a special exhibition.

On a sudden impulse, Drioli turned, pushed open the door of the gallery and went in.

It was a long room with a thick wine-coloured carpet, and by God how beautiful and warm it was! There were all these people strolling about looking at the pictures, well-washed dignified people, each of whom held a catalogue in the hand. He heard a voice beside him saying, “What is it you want?”

Drioli stood still.

“If you please,” the man in a black suit was saying, “take yourself out of my gallery.”

“Am I not permitted to look at the pictures?”

“I have asked you to leave.”

Drioli stood his ground. He felt suddenly, overwhelmingly outraged.

“Let us not have trouble,” the man was saying. “Come on now, this way.” He put a fat white hand on Drioli's arm and began to push him firmly to the door.

That did it. "Take your goddam hands off me!" Drioli shouted. His voice rang clear down the long gallery and all the heads turned around as one – all the startled faces stared down the length of the room at the person who had made this noise. The people stood still, watching the struggle. Their faces expressed only a mild interest, and seemed to be saying. "It's all right. There's no danger to us. It's being taken care of."

"I, too!" Drioli was shouting. "I, too, have a picture by this painter! He was my friend and I have a picture which he gave me!" "He's mad."

"Someone should call the police."

With a twist of the body Drioli suddenly shook off the man and before anyone could stop him he was running down the gallery shouting, "I'll show you! I'll show you! I'll show you!" He flung off his overcoat, then his jacket and shirt, and he turned so that his naked back was towards the people.

"There!" he cried, breathing quickly. "You see? There it is!" There was a sudden absolute silence in the room, each person arrested in what he was doing, standing motionless in a kind of shocked, uneasy surprise. They were staring at the tattooed picture. It was still there, the colours as bright as ever.

Somebody said, "My God, but it is!"

"His early manner, yes?"

"It is fantastic, fantastic!"

"And look, it is signed!"

"Old one, when was this done?"

"In 1913," Drioli said, without turning around. "In the autumn of 1913."

"Who taught Soutine to tattoo?"

"I taught him."

"And the woman?"

"She was my wife."

The gallery owner was pushing through the crowd towards Drioli. He was calm now, deadly serious, making a smile with his mouth. "Monsieur," he said, "I will buy it. I said I will buy it, Monsieur."

"How can you buy it?" Drioli asked softly.

"I will give two hundred thousand francs for it."

"Don't do it!" someone murmured in the crowd. "It is worth twenty times as much."

Drioli opened his mouth to speak. No words came, so he shut it; then he opened it again and said slowly, "But how can I sell it?" He lifted his hands, let them drop helplessly to his sides. "Monsieur, how can I possibly sell it?" All the sadness in the world was in his voice.

"Yes!" they were saying in the crowd. "How can he sell it? It is part of himself!"

"Listen!" the dealer said, coming up close. "I will help you. I will make you rich. Together we shall make some private arrangement over this picture, no?"

Drioli watched him with worried eyes. "But how can you buy it, Monsieur? What will you do with it when you have bought it? Where will you keep it? Where will you keep it tonight? And where tomorrow?"

"Ah, where will I keep it? Yes, where will I keep it? Well, now. It would seem," he said, "that if I take the picture, I take you also. That is a disadvantage. The picture itself is of no value until you are dead. How old are you, my friend?" "Sixty-one."

"But you are perhaps not very healthy, no?" The dealer looked Drioli up and down, slowly, like a farmer examining an old horse.

"I do not like this," Drioli said moving away. "Quite honestly, Monsieur, I do not like it." He moved straight into the arms of a tall man who put out his hands and caught him gently by the shoulders.

"Listen, my friend," the stranger said, still smiling. "Do you like to swim and to lie in the sun?"

Drioli looked up at him, rather startled.

"Do you like fine food and red wine from the great chateaux of Bordeaux?" The man was still smiling, showing strong white teeth with a flash of gold among them. He spoke in a soft manner, one gloved hand still resting on Drioli's shoulder. "Do you like such things?"

"Well, yes," Drioli answered, still greatly puzzled. "Of course."

"Have you ever had a shoe made especially for your own foot?" "No." "You would like that?"

"Well."

"And a man who will shave you in the mornings and trim your hair?"

Drioli simply stood and stared.

"And a plump attractive girl to manicure the nails of your fingers?"

Someone in the crowd giggled.

"And a bell beside your bed to call a maid to bring you breakfast in the morning? Would you like these things, my friend? Do they appeal to you?"

Drioli stood still and looked at him.

"You see, I am the owner of the Hotel Bristol in Cannes. I now invite you to come down there and live as my guest for the rest of your life in luxury and comfort." The man paused, allowing his listener time to digest this cheerful prospect.

"Your only duty – shall I call it your pleasure – will be to spend your time on my beach in bathing trunks, walking among my guests, sunning yourself, swimming, drinking cocktails. You would like that?" There was no answer.

"Don't you see – all the guests will thus be able to observe this fascinating picture by Soutine. You will become famous," and men will say, "Look, there is the fellow with ten million francs upon his back. You like this idea, Monsieur? It pleases you?"

Drioli looked up at the tall man in the canary gloves. He said slowly, "But do you really mean it?"



"Of course I mean it."

"Wait," the dealer interrupted. "See here, old one. Here is the answer to our problem. I will buy the picture, and I will arrange with a surgeon to remove the skin from your back, and then you will be able to go off on your own and enjoy the great sum of money I shall give you for it."

"With no skin on my back?"

"No, no, please! You misunderstand. This surgeon will put a new piece of skin in the place of the old one. It is simple."

"Could he do that?"

"There is nothing to it."

"Impossible!" said the man with the canary gloves. "He's too old for such a major skin-removing operation. It would kill him. It would kill you, my friend."

"It would kill me?"

"Naturally. You would never survive. Only the picture would come through."

"In the name of God!" Drioli cried. He looked around terrified at the faces of the people watching him, and in the silence that followed, another man's voice, speaking quietly from the back of the group, could be heard saying, "Perhaps, if one were to offer this old man enough money, he might consent to kill himself on the spot. Who knows?" A few people laughed. The dealer moved his feet uneasily on the carpet.

"Come on," the tall man said, smiling his broad white smile. "You and I will go and have a good dinner and we, can talk about it some more while we eat. How's that? Are you hungry?"

Drioli watched him, frowning. He didn't like the man's long flexible neck, or the way he craned it forward at you, when he spoke, like a snake.

"Roast duck and Chambertin," the man was saying. "And perhaps a soufflé aux marrons, light and frothy."

Drioli's eyes turned up towards the ceiling, his mouth watered.

"How do you like your duck?" the man went on. "Do you like it very brown and crisp outside, or shall it be..."

"I am coming," Drioli said quickly. Already he had picked up his shirt and was pulling it hurriedly over his head. "Wait for me, Monsieur. I am coming." And within a minute he had disappeared out of the gallery with his new patron.

It wasn't more than a few weeks later that a picture by Soutine, of a woman's head, painted in an unusual manner, nicely framed and heavily varnished, turned up for sale in Buenos Aires. That – and the fact that there is no hotel in Cannes called Bristol – causes one to wonder a little, and to pray for the old man's health, and to hope strongly that wherever he may be at this moment, there is a plump attractive girl to manicure the nails of his fingers, and a maid to bring him his breakfast in bed in the mornings.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### ***I. Read the Story and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. What did Drioli feel walking along the rue de Rivoli? Why?
2. Why did he stop in front of a picture gallery?
3. How did Drioli know Chaim Soutine? When had he first met him?
4. What had Drioli's and Soutine's life been like at that time?
5. Why had they decided to get drunk one day?
6. What had Drioli asked Soutine to do? What had come out of it?
7. What had happened to Soutine, Drioli and his wife some years later?
8. Why did Drioli decide to enter the picture gallery?
9. How was he received at first?
10. Why did he decide to show his tattoo? How did it change the people's attitude to him?
11. Who started to fight over Drioli's tattoo? What arguments did they give to win him over?
12. How did Drioli feel during the conversation?
13. What made him take his final decision?
13. What must have happened to Drioli and his tattoo in the end?

### ***II. Say it in Russian.***

A landscape; lean over to one side; a plaque; to snatch something from somewhere; to nourish; exceptionally rich; to fetch; to observe a ceremony; to undertake to do something; ink; to buzz; to startle somebody; an impasto; to inscribe; start up a business; keep alive; dignified people; overwhelmingly; uneasy surprise; to come up close; appeal to somebody; bathing trunks; to arrange with somebody to do something; to consent to do something; turn up for sale; to stand one's ground

### ***III. Say it in English.***

Идти, шаркая ногами; витрина; рама; мольберт; позировать художнику; сказать, угрюмо; протянуть бокал; делать что-либо, как полагается; напиваться; необходимые принадлежности; разложить; закатать рукава; наносить татуировку; в отчаянии; попрошайничать; стоять неподвижно; разгневанный; смерить взглядом; озадаченный; радужная перспектива; убить на месте; хмуриться; приносить завтрак в постель

### ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

It was coming back more clearly now; to set about doing something; a tremendous idea; there's nothing to it; far into the small hours of the morning; the whole of his back was a blaze of colour; to make one's way back to; to fling off one's coat; each person arrested in what he was doing; to digest information; his mouth watered

***V. Insert prepositions.***

To stare ... something; to pose ... a picture; to remind somebody ... something; to make a great sum of money ... one's work; to stand something ... the wall; to be back ... half an hour; what has become ... him?; to be ... no value; to lie ... the sun; an answer ... a problem; to do something... one's own

***VI. Explain the Difference in Meaning and Usage of the Following Words .***

Glance – stare – observe

Remember – recollect – recall

Remember – remind

Draw – paint

Walk – stroll

Foam – froth

**PHILOMEL COTTAGE**

**by Agatha Christie**

"Good-bye, darling."

"Good-bye, sweetheart."

Alix Martin stood leaning over the small rustic gate, watching the retreating figure of her husband, as he walked down the road in the direction of the village.

Presently he turned a bend and was lost to sight, but Alix still stayed in the same position, absent-mindedly smoothing a lock of the rich brown hair which had blown across her face, her eyes far-away and dreamy.

Alix Martin was not beautiful, nor even, strictly speaking, pretty. But her face, the face of a woman no longer in her first youth, was irradiated and softened until her former colleagues of the old office days would hardly have recognized her. Miss Alix King had been a trim business-like young woman, efficient, slightly brusque in manner, obviously capable and matter-of-fact.

Alix had graduated in a hard school. For fifteen years, from the age of eighteen until she was thirty-three, she had kept herself (and for seven years of the time, an invalid mother) by her work as a shorthand-typist. It was the struggle for existence which had hardened the soft lines of her girlish face.

True, there had been romance – of a kind – Dick Windyford, a fellow-clerk. Very much of a woman at heart, Alix had always known without seeming to know that he cared. Outwardly they had been friends, nothing more. Out of his slender salary, Dick had been hard put to it to provide for the schooling of a younger brother. For the moment, he could not think of marriage.

And then suddenly deliverance from daily toil had come to the girl in the most unexpected manner. A distant cousin had died leaving her money to Alix –

a few thousand pounds, enough to bring in a couple of hundred a year. To Alix, it was freedom, life, independence. Now she and Dick need wait no longer.

Nevertheless, when Alix envisaged the future, it was with the half acknowledged certainty that she would one day be Dick's wife. They cared for one another, so she would have put it, but they were both sensible people. Plenty of time, no need to do anything rash. So the years had gone on.

But Dick reacted unexpectedly. He had never directly spoken of his love to Alix, now he seemed less inclined to do so than ever. He avoided her, became morose and gloomy. Alix was quick to realize the truth. She had become a woman of means. Delicacy and pride stood in the way of Dick's asking her to be his wife. She liked him none the worse for it and was indeed deliberating as to whether herself might not take the first step when for the second time the unexpected descended upon her.

She met Gerald Martin at a friend's house. He fell violently in love with her and within a week they were engaged. Alix, who had always considered herself "not the falling-in-love kind," was swept clean off her feet.

Unwittingly she had found the way to arouse her former lover. Dick Windyford had come to her stammering with rage and anger.

"The man's a perfect stranger to you! You know nothing about him!"

"I know that I love him."

"How can you know – in a week?"

"It doesn't take everyone eleven years to find out that they're in love with a girl," cried Alix angrily.

His face went white.

"I've cared for you ever since I met you. I thought that you cared also."

Alix was truthful.

"I thought so, too," she admitted, "But that was because I didn't know what love was."

Then Dick had burst out again. Prayers, entreaties, even threats. Threats against the man who had supplanted him. It was amazing to Alix to see the volcano that existed beneath the reserved exterior of the man she thought she knew so well.

Her thoughts had gone back to that interview now, on this sunny morning, as she leaned on the gate of the cottage. She had been married a month, and she was idyllically happy. Yet, in the momentary absence of the husband who was everything to her, a tinge of anxiety invaded her perfect happiness, and the cause of that anxiety was Dick Windyford.

Three times since her marriage she had dreamed the same dream. The environment differed, but the main facts were always the same. She saw her husband lying dead and Dick Windyford standing over him, and she knew clearly and distinctly that his was the hand which had dealt the fatal blow.

But horrible though that was, there was something more horrible still – horrible that was, on awakening, for in the dream it seemed perfectly natural and

inevitable. She, Alix Martin, was glad that her husband was dead – she stretched out grateful hands to the murderer, sometimes she thanked him. The dream always ended the same way, with herself clasped in Dick Windyford's arms.

She had said nothing of this dream to her husband, but secretly it had perturbed her more than she liked to admit. Was it a warning – a warning against Dick Windyford?

Alix was roused from her thoughts by the sharp ringing of the telephone bell from within the house. She entered the cottage, and picked up the receiver. Suddenly she swayed, and put out a hand against the wall. "Who did you say was speaking?"

"Why, Alix, what's the matter with your voice? I wouldn't have known it. It's Dick."

"Oh!" said Alix. "Oh! Where – are you?"

"At the Traveller's Arms – that's the right name, isn't it? Or don't you even know of the existence of your village pub? I'm on my holiday – doing a bit of fishing here. Any objection to my looking you two good people up this evening after dinner?"

"No," said Alix sharply. "You mustn't come."

There was a pause, and Dick's voice, with a subtle alteration in it, spoke again.

"I beg your pardon," he said formally. "Of course I won't bother you – "

Alix broke in hastily. Of course he must think her behaviour too extraordinary. It was extraordinary. Her nerves must be all to pieces.

"I only meant that we were – engaged tonight," she explained, trying to make her voice sound as natural as possible. "Won't you – won't you come to dinner tomorrow night?"

But Dick evidently noticed the lack of cordiality in her tone.

"Thanks very much," he said, in the same formal voice. "But I may be moving on any time. Depends upon whether a pal of mine turns up or not. Good-bye, Alix." He paused, and then added hastily, in a different tone: "Best of luck to you, my dear."

Alix hung up the receiver with a feeling of relief.

"He mustn't come here," she repeated to herself. "He mustn't come here. Oh! what a fool I am! To imagine myself into a state like this. All the same, I'm glad he's not coming."

She caught up a rustic rush hat from a table, and passed out into the garden again, pausing to look up at the name carved over the porch: Philomel Cottage.

"Isn't it a very fanciful name?" she had said to Gerald once before they were married. He had laughed.

"You little Cockney," he had said, affectionately. "I don't believe you have ever heard a nightingale. I'm glad you haven't. Nightingales should sing

only for lovers. We'll hear them together on a summer's evening outside our own home."

And at the remembrance of how they had indeed heard them, Alix, standing in the doorway of her home, blushed happily.

It was Gerald who had found Philomel Cottage. He had come to Alix bursting with excitement. He had found the very spot for them – unique – a gem – the chance of a lifetime. And when Alix had seen it, she too was captivated. It was true that the situation was rather lonely – they were two miles from the nearest village – but the cottage itself was so exquisite with its Old World appearance, and its solid comfort of bathrooms, hot-water system, electric light and telephone, that she fell a victim to its charm immediately. And then a hitch occurred. The owner, a rich man who had made it his whim, declined to rent it. He would only sell.

Gerald Martin, though possessed of a good income, was unable to touch his capital. He could raise at most a thousand pounds. The owner was asking three. But Alix, who had set her heart on the place, came to the rescue. Her own capital was easily realized, being in bearer bonds. She would contribute half of it to the purchase of the home. So Philomel Cottage became their choice. It was true that servants did not appreciate the rural solitude – indeed at the moment they had none at all – but Alix, who had been starved of domestic life, thoroughly enjoyed cooking dainty little meals and looking after the house.

The garden, which was magnificently stocked with flowers, was attended to by an old man from the village who came twice a week.

As she rounded the corner of the house, Alix was surprised to see the old gardener in question busy over the flower beds. She was surprised because his days for work were Mondays and Fridays, and today was Wednesday.

"Why, George, what are you doing here?" she asked, as she came towards him.

The old man straightened up with a chuckle, touching the brim of an aged cap.

"I thought as how you'd be surprised, ma'am. But 'tis this way. There be a fete over to Squire's on Friday, and

I sez to myself, I sez, neither Mr. Martin nor yet his good lady won't take it amiss if I comes for once on a Wednesday instead of a Friday."

"That's quite all right," said Alix. "I hope you'll enjoy yourself at the fete."

"I reckon to," said George simply. "It's a fine thing to be able to eat your fill and know all the time as it's not you as is paying for it. Squire allus has a proper sit-down tea for 'is tenants. Then I thought too, ma'am, as I might as well see you before you goes away so as to learn your wishes for the borders. You'll have no idea when you'll be back, ma'am, I suppose?"

"But I'm not going away."

George stared at her.

"Bain't you going to Lunnon tomorrow?"

"No. What put such an idea into your head?"

George jerked his head over his shoulder.

"Met Maister down to village yesterday. He told me you was both going away to Lunnon tomorrow, and it was uncertain when you'd be back again."

"Nonsense," said Alix, laughing. "You must have misunderstood him."

All the same, she wondered exactly what it could have been that Gerald had said to lead the old man into such a curious mistake. Going to London? She never wanted to go to London again.

"I hate London," she said suddenly and harshly.

"Ah!" said George placidly. "I must have been mistook somehow, and et he said it plain enough it seemed to me. I'm glad you're stopping on here – I don't hold with all this gallivanting about, and I don't think nothing of Lunnon. I've never needed to go there. Too many moty cars – that's the trouble nowadays. Once people have got a moty car, blessed if they can stay still anywheres. Mr. Ames, wot used to have this house – nice peaceful sort of gentleman he was until he bought one of them things. Hadn't'ad it a month before he put up this cottage for sale. A tidy lot he'd spent on it, too, with taps in all the bedrooms, and the electric light and all. 'You'll never see your money back,' I sez to him. 'It's not everyone as'll have your fad for washing themselves in every room in the house, in a manner of speaking. 'But 'George,' he sez to me, 'I'll get every penny of two thousand pounds for this house.' And sure enough, he did."

"He got three thousand," said Alix, smiling.

"Two thousand," repeated George. "The sum he was asking was talked of at the time. And a very high figure it was thought to be."

"It really was three thousand," said Alix.

"Ladies never understand figures," said George, unconvinced. "You'll not tell me that Mr. Ames had the face to stand up to you, and say three thousand brazen like in a loud voice."

"He didn't say it to me," said Alix. "He said it to my husband."

George stooped again to his flower bed.

"The price was two thousand," he said obstinately.

Alix did not trouble to argue with him. Moving to one of the further beds, she began to pick an armful of flowers.

As she moved with her fragrant posy towards the house, Alix noticed a small dark green object, peeping from between some leaves in one of the beds. She stooped and picked it up, recognizing it for her husband's pocket diary. It must have fallen from his pocket when he was weeding.

She opened it, scanning the entries with some amusement. Almost from the beginning of their married life, she had realised that the impulsive and emotional Gerald had the uncharacteristic virtues of neatness and method. He was extremely fussy about meals being punctual, and always planned his day ahead with the accuracy of a timetable.

Looking through the diary, she was amused to notice the entry on the date of May 14th. "marry Alix St. Peter's 2:30."

"The big silly," murmured Alix to herself, turning the pages. Suddenly she stopped.

"Thursday, June 18th – why that's today."

In the space for that day was written in Gerald's neat precise hand: "9 p.m." Nothing else. What had Gerald planned to do at 9 p.m.? Alix wondered. She smiled to herself as she realised that had this been a story, like those she had so often read, the diary would doubtless have furnished her with some sensational revelation. It would have had in it for certain the name of another woman. She fluttered the back pages idly. There were dates, appointments, cryptic references to business deals, but only one woman's name – her own.

Yet as she slipped the book into her pocket and went on with her flowers to the house, she was aware of a vague uneasiness. Those words of Dick Windyford's recurred to her, almost as though he had been at her elbow repeating them: "The man's a perfect stranger to you. You know nothing about him."

It was true. What did she know about him. After all, Gerald was forty. In forty years there must have been women in his life ...

Alix shook herself impatiently. She must not give way to these thoughts. She had a far more instant preoccupation to deal with. Should she, or should she not, tell her husband that Dick Windyford had rung her up?

There was the possibility to be considered that Gerald might have already run across him in the village. But in that case he would be sure to mention it to her immediately upon his return and matters would be taken out of her hands. Otherwise – what? Alix was aware of a distinct desire to say nothing about it.

If she told him, he was sure to suggest asking Dick Windyford to Philomel Cottage. Then she would have to explain that Dick had proposed it himself, and that she had made an excuse to prevent his coming. And when he asked her why she had done so, what could she say? Tell him her dream? But he would laugh – or worse, see that she attached an importance to it which he did not.

In the end, rather shamefacedly, Alix decided to say nothing. It was the first secret she had ever kept from her husband, and the consciousness of it made her feel ill at ease.

## II

When she heard Gerald returning from the village shortly before lunch, she hurried into the kitchen and pretended to be busy with the cooking so as to hide her confusion.

It was evident at once that Gerald had seen nothing of Dick Windyford. Alix felt at once relieved and embarrassed. She was definitely committed now to a policy of concealment.

It was not until after their simple evening meal, when they were sitting in the oak beamed living room with the windows thrown open to let in the sweet



night air scented with the perfume of the mauve and white stocks that grew outside, that Alix remembered the pocket diary.

"Here's something you've been watering the flowers with," she said, and threw it into his lap.

"Dropped it in the border, did I?"

"Yes; I know all your secrets now."

"Not guilty," said Gerald, shaking his head.

"What about your assignation at nine o'clock tonight?"

"Oh! that – " he seemed taken back for a moment, then he smiled as though something afforded him particular amusement. "It's an assignation with a particularly nice girl, Alix. She's got brown hair and blue eyes and she's particularly like you."

"I don't understand," said Alix, with mock severity. "You're evading the point."

"No, I'm not. As a matter of fact, that's a reminder that I'm going to develop some negatives tonight, and I want you to help me."

Gerald Martin was an enthusiastic photographer. He had a somewhat old-fashioned camera, but with an excellent lens, and he developed his own plates in a small cellar which he had fitted up as a dark room.

"And it must be done at nine o'clock precisely," said Alix teasingly.

Gerald looked a little vexed.

"My dear girl," he said, with a shade of testiness in his manner, "one should always plan a thing for a definite time. Then one gets through one's work properly."

Alix sat for a minute or two in silence watching her husband as he lay in his chair smoking, his dark head flung back and the clear-cut lines of his clean-shaven face showing up against the sombre background. And suddenly, from some unknown source, a wave of panic surged over her, so that she cried out before she could stop herself. "Oh! Gerald, I wish I knew more about you."

Her husband turned an astonished face upon her.

"But, my dear Alix, you do know all about me. I've told you of my boyhood in Northumberland, of my life in South Africa, and these last ten years in Canada which have brought me success."

"Oh, business!"

Gerald laughed suddenly.

"I know what you mean – love affairs. You women are all the same. Nothing interests you but the personal element."

Alix felt her throat go dry, as she muttered indistinctly: "Well, but there must have been – love affairs. I mean – If I only knew – "

There was silence again for a minute or two. Gerald Martin was frowning, a look of indecision on his face. When he spoke, it was gravely, without a trace of his former bantering manner.

"Do you think it wise, Alix – this – Bluebeard's chamber business? There have been women in my life, yes. I don't deny it. You wouldn't believe me if I did deny it. But I can swear to you truthfully that not one of them meant anything to me."

There was a ring of sincerity in his voice which comforted the listening wife.

"Satisfied, Alix?" he asked, with a smile. Then he looked at her with a shade of curiosity.

"What has turned your mind onto these unpleasant subjects tonight of all nights? You never mentioned them before."

Alix got up and began to walk about restlessly.

"Oh! I don't know," she said. "I've been nervy all day."

"That's odd," said Gerald, in a low voice, as though speaking to himself. "That's very odd."

"Why is it odd?"

"Oh, my dear girl, don't flash out at me so. I only said it was odd because as a rule you're so sweet and serene."

Alix forced a smile.

"Everything's conspired to annoy me today," she confessed. "Even old George had got some ridiculous idea into his head that we were going away to London. He said you had told him so."

"Where did you see him?" asked Gerald sharply.

"He came to work today instead of Friday."

"Damned old fool," said Gerald angrily.

Alix stared in surprise. Her husband's face was convulsed with rage. She had never seen him so angry. Seeing her astonishment, Gerald made an effort to regain control of himself.

"Well, he is a damned old fool," he protested.

"What can you have said to make him think that?"

"I? I never said anything. At least – Oh, yes, I remember. I made some weak joke about being 'off to London in the morning' and I suppose he took it seriously. Or else he didn't hear properly. You undeceived him, of course?"

He waited anxiously for her reply.

"Of course, but he's the sort of old man who if once he gets an idea in his head – well, it isn't so easy to get it out again."

Then she told him of the gardener's insistence on the sum asked for the cottage.

Gerald was silent for a minute or two, then he said slowly:

"Ames was willing to take two thousand in cash and the remaining thousand on mortgage. That's the origin of that mistake, I fancy."

"Very likely," agreed Alix.

Then she looked up at the clock, and pointed to it with a mischievous finger.

"We ought to be getting down to it, Gerald. Five minutes behind schedule."

A very peculiar smile came over Gerald Martin's face.

"I've changed my mind, he said quietly. "I shall not do any photography tonight."

A woman's mind is a curious thing. When she went to bed that Thursday night, Alix's mind was contented and at rest. Her momentarily assailed happiness reasserted itself, triumphant as of yore.

But by the evening of the following day, she realised that some subtle forces were at work undermining it. Dick Windyford had not rung up again, nevertheless, she felt what she supposed to be his influence at work. Again and again those words of his recurred to her. "The man's a perfect stranger. You know nothing about him." And with them came the memory of her husband's face, photographed clearly on her brain as she said: "'Do you think it wise, Alix, this – Bluebeard's chamber business?" Why had he said that?

There had been warning in them – a hint of menace. It was as though he had said in effect – "You had better not pry into my life, Alix. You may get a nasty shock if you do." True, a few minutes later, he had sworn to her that there had been no woman in his life that mattered – but Alix tried in vain to recapture her sense of his sincerity: Was he not bound to swear that?

By Friday morning, Alix had convinced herself that there had been a woman in Gerald's life – a Bluebeard's chamber that he had sedulously sought to conceal from her. Her jealousy, slow to awaken, was now rampant. Was it a woman he had been going to meet that night, at 9 p.m.? Was his story of photographs to develop a lie invented upon the spur of the moment?

Three days ago she would have sworn that she knew her husband through and through. Now it seemed to her that he was a stranger of whom she knew nothing. She remembered his unreasonable anger against old George, so at variance with his usual good-tempered manner. A small thing, perhaps, but it showed her that she did not really know the man who was her husband.

There were several little things required on Friday from the village to carry them over the week-end. In the afternoon Alix suggested that she should go for them whilst Gerald remained in the garden, but somewhat to her surprise he opposed this plan vehemently, and insisted on going himself whilst she remained at home. Alix was forced to give way to him, but his insistence surprised and alarmed her. Why was he so anxious to prevent her going to the village?

Suddenly an explanation suggested itself to her which made the whole thing clear. Was it not possible that, whilst saying nothing to her, Gerald had indeed come across Dick Windyford? Her own jealousy, entirely dormant at the time of their marriage, had only developed afterwards. Might it not be the same with Gerald? Might he not be anxious to prevent her seeing Dick Windyford

again? This explanation was so consistent with the facts, and so comforting to Alix's perturbed mind, that she embraced it eagerly.

Yet when tea-time had come and past, she was restless and ill at ease. She was struggling with a temptation that had assailed her ever since Gerald's departure. Finally, pacifying her conscience with the assurance that the room did need a thorough tidying, she went upstairs to her husband's dressing room. She took a duster with her to keep up the pretence of housewifery.

"If I were only sure," she repeated to herself. "If I could only be sure."

In vain she told herself that anything compromising would have been destroyed ages ago. Against that she argued that men do sometimes keep the most damning piece of evidence through an exaggerated sentimentality.

In the end Alix succumbed. Her cheeks burning with the shame of her action, she hunted breathlessly through packets of letters and documents, turned out the drawers, even went through the pockets of her husband's clothes. Only two drawers eluded her – the lower drawer of the chest of drawers and the small right-hand drawer of the writing desk were both locked. But Alix was by now lost to all shame. In one of those drawers she was convinced that she would find evidence of this imaginary woman of the past who obsessed her.

She remembered that Gerald had left his keys lying carelessly on the sideboard downstairs. She fetched them and tried them one by one. The third key fitted the writing-table drawer. Alix pulled it open eagerly. There was a cheque-book and a wallet well stuffed with notes, and at the back of the drawer a packet of letters tied up with a piece of tape.

Her breath coming unevenly, Alix untied the tape. Then a deep burning blush overspread her face, and she dropped the letters back into the drawer, closing and relocking it. For the letters were her own, written to Gerald Martin before she married him.

She turned now to the chest of drawers, more with a wish to feel that she had left nothing undone, than from any expectation of finding what she sought.

To her annoyance none of the keys on Gerald's bunch fitted the drawer in question. Not to be defeated, Alix went into the other rooms and brought back a selection of keys with her. To her satisfaction, the key of the spare room wardrobe also fitted the chest of drawers. She unlocked the drawer and pulled it open. But there was nothing in it but a roll of newspaper clippings already dirt and discoloured with age.

Alix breathed a sigh of relief. Nevertheless she glanced at the clippings, curious to know what subject had interested Gerald so much that he had taken the trouble to keep the dusty roll. They were nearly all American papers, dated some seven years ago, and dealing with the trail of the notorious swindler and bigamist, Charles Lemaitre. Lemaitre had been suspected of doing away with his women victims. A skeleton had been found beneath the floor of one of the houses he had rented, and most of the women he had "married" had never been heard of again.

He had defended himself from the charge with consummate skill, aided by some of the best legal talent in the United States. The Scottish verdict of "Non proven" might perhaps have stated the case best. In its absence, eh was found Not Guilty on the capital charge, though sentenced to a long term of imprisonment on the other charges preferred against him.

Alix remembered the excitement caused by the case at the time, and also the sensation aroused by the escape of Lemaitre some three years later. He had never been recaptured. The personality of the man and his extraordinary power over women had been discussed at great length in the English papers at the time, together with an account of his excitability in court, his passionate protestations, and his occasional sudden physical collapses, due to the fact that he had a weak heart, though the ignorant accredited it to his dramatic powers.

There was a picture of him in one of the clippings Alix held, and she studied it with some interest – a long-bearded scholarly-looking gentleman.

Who was it the face reminded her of? Suddenly, with a shock, she realised that it was Gerald himself. The eyes and brows bore a strong resemblance to him. Perhaps he had kept the cutting for that reason. Her eyes went on to the paragraph beside the picture. Certain dates, it seemed, had been entered in the accused's pocket-book, and it was contended that these were dates when he had done away with his victims. Then a woman gave evidence and identified the prisoner positively by the fact that he had a mole on his left wrist, just below the palm of the left hand.

Alix dropped the papers from a nerveless hand, and swayed as she stood. On his left wrist, just below the palm, Gerald had a small scar...

The room whirled round her. Afterwards it struck her as strange that she should have leaped at once to such absolute certainty. Gerald Martin was Charles Lemaitre! She knew it and accepted it in a flash. Disjointed fragments whirled through her brain, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle fitting into place.

The money paid for the house – her money – her money only; the bearer bonds she had entrusted to his keeping. Even her dream appeared in its true significance. Deep down in her, her subconscious self had always feared Gerald Martin and wished to escape from him. And it was to Dick Windyford this self of hers had looked for help. That, too, was why she was able to accept the truth so easily, without doubt or hesitation. She was to have been another of Lemaitre's victims. Very soon, perhaps ...

A half cry escaped her as she remembered something. Wednesday 9p.m. The cellar, with the flagstones that were so easily raised! Once before, he had buried one of his victims in a cellar. It had been all planned for Thursday night. But to write it down beforehand in that methodical manner – insanity! No, it was logical. Gerald always made a memorandum of his engagements – murder was, to him, a business proposition like any other.

But what had saved her? What could possibly have saved her? Had she relented at the last minute? No – in a flash the answer came to her. Old George.

She understood now her husband's uncontrollable anger. Doubtless he had paved the way by telling everyone he met that they were going to London the next day. Then George had come to work unexpectedly, had mentioned London to her, and she had contradicted the story. Too risky to do away with her that night, with old George repeating that conversation. But what an escape! If she had not happened to mention that trivial matter – Alix shuddered.

### III

And then she stayed motionless as though frozen to stone. She had heard the creak of the gate into the road.

Her husband had returned.

For a moment Alix stayed as though petrified, then she crept on tiptoe to the window, looking out from behind the shelter of the curtain.

Yes, it was her husband. He was smiling to himself and humming a little tune. In his hand he held an object which almost made the terrified girl's heart stop beating. It was a brand-new spade.

Alix leaped to a knowledge born of instinct. It was to be tonight...

But there was still a chance. Gerald, still humming his little tune, went round to the back of the house. Without hesitating a moment, she ran down the stairs and out of the cottage. But just as she emerged from the door, her husband came round the other side of the house.

"Hallo," he said. "Where are you running off to in such a hurry?"

Alix strove desperately to appear calm and as usual. Her chance was gone for the moment, but if she was careful not to arouse his suspicions, it would come again later. Even now, perhaps ...

"I was going to walk to the end of the lane and back," she said, in a voice that sounded weak and uncertain to her own ears.

"Right," said Gerald, "I'll come with you."

"No – please, Gerald. I'm – nervy, headachy – I'd rather go alone."

He looked at her attentively. She fancied a momentary suspicion gleamed in his eye.

"What's the matter with you, Alix? You're pale – trembling."

"Nothing," she forced herself to be brusque – smiling. "I've got a headache, that's all. A walk will do me good."

"Well, it's no good you're saying you don't want me," declared Gerald with his easy laugh. "I'm coming whether you want me or not."

She dared not protest further. If he suspected that she knew ...

With an effort she managed to regain something of her normal manner. Yet she had an uneasy feeling that he looked at her sideways every now and then, as though not quite satisfied. She felt that his suspicions were not completely allayed.

When they returned to the house, he insisted on her lying down, and brought some eau-de-Cologne to bathe her temples. He was, as ever, the devoted

husband, yet Alix felt herself as helpless as though bound hand and foot in a trap.

Not for a minute would he leave her alone. He went with her into the kitchen and helped her to bring in the simple cold dishes she had already prepared. Supper was a meal that choked her, yet she forced herself to eat, and even to appear gay and natural. She knew now that she was fighting for her life. She was alone with this man, miles from help, absolutely at his mercy. Her only chance was so to lull his suspicions that he would leave her alone for a few moments – long enough for her to get to the telephone in the hall and summon assistance. That was her only hope now.

A momentary hope flashed over her as she remembered how he had abandoned his plan before. Suppose she told him that Dick Windyford was coming up to see them that evening?

The words trembled on her lips – then she rejected them hastily. This man would not be balked a second time. There was a determination, an elation underneath his calm bearing that sickened her. She would only precipitate the crime. He would murder her there and then, and calmly ring up Dick Windyford with a tale of having been suddenly called away. Oh! if only Dick Windyford were coming to the house this evening. If Dick ...

A sudden idea flashed into her mind. She looked sharply sideways at her husband as though she feared that he might read her mind. With the forming of a plan, her courage was reinforced. She became so completely natural in manner that she marvelled at herself.

She made the coffee and took it out to the porch where they often sat on fine evenings.

"By the way," said George suddenly, "we'll do those photographs later."

Alix felt a shiver run through her, but she replied nonchalantly, "Can't you manage alone? I'm rather tired tonight."

"It won't take long." He smiled to himself. "And I can promise you you won't be tired afterwards."

The words seemed to amuse him. Alix shuddered. Now or never was the time to carry out her plan.

She rose to her feet.

"I'm just going to telephone to the butcher," she announced nonchalantly. "Don't you bother to move."

"To the butcher? At this time of night?"

"His shop's shut, of course, silly. But he's in his house all right. And tomorrow's Saturday, and I want him to bring me some veal cutlets early, before someone else grabs them from him. The old dear will do anything for me."

She passed quickly into the house, closing the door behind her. She heard Gerald say, "Don't shut the door," and was quick with her light reply. "It keeps the moths out. I hate moths. Are you afraid I'm going to make love to the butcher, silly?"

Once inside she snatched down the telephone receiver and gave the number of the Traveller's Arms. She was put through at once.

"Mr. Windyford? Is he still there? May I speak to him?"

Then her heart gave a sickening thump. The door was pushed open and her husband came into the hall.

"Do go away, Gerald," she said pettishly. "I hate anyone listening when I'm telephoning."

He merely laughed and threw himself into a chair.

"Sure it really is the butcher you're telephoning to?" he quizzed.

Alix was in despair. Her plan had failed. In a minute Dick Windyford would come to the phone. Should she risk all and cry out an appeal for help?

And then, as she nervously depressed and released the little key in the receiver she was holding, which permits the voice to be heard or not heard at the other end, another plan flashed into her head.

"It will be difficult," she thought. "It means keeping my head, and thinking of the right words, and not faltering for a moment, but I believe I could do it. I must do it."

And at that minute she heard Dick Windyford's voice at the other end of the phone.

Alix drew a deep breath. Then she depressed the key firmly and spoke.

"Mrs. Martin speaking – from Philomel Cottage. Please come (she released the key) tomorrow morning with six nice veal cutlets (she released the key again) It's very important (she released the key) Thank you so much, Mr. Hexworthy: you don't mind my ringing you up so late, I hope, but those veal cutlets are really a matter of (she depressed the key again) life or death (she released it) Very well – tomorrow morning – (she depressed it) as soon as possible."

She replaced the receiver on the hook and turned to face her husband, breathing hard.

"So that's how you talk to your butcher, is it?" said Gerald.

"It's the feminine touch," said Alix lightly.

She was simmering with excitement. He had suspected nothing. Surely Dick, even if he didn't understand, would come.

She passed into the sitting room and switched on the electric light. Gerald followed her.

"You seem very full of spirits now," he said, watching her curiously.

"Yes," said Alix, "my headache's gone."

She sat down in her usual seat and smiled at her husband, as he sank into his own chair opposite her. She was saved. It was only five and twenty past eight. Long before nine o'clock Dick would have arrived.

"I didn't think much of that coffee you gave me," complained Gerald. "It tasted very bitter."



"It's a new kind I was trying. We won't have it again if you don't like it, dear."

Alix took up a piece of needlework and began to stitch. Gerald read a few pages of his book. Then he glanced up at the clock and tossed the book away.

"Half-past eight. Time to go down to the cellar and start work."

The sewing slipped from Alix's fingers.

"Oh, not yet. Let us wait until nine o'clock."

"No, my girl – half-past eight. That's the time I fixed. You'll be able to get to bed all the earlier."

"But I'd rather wait until nine."

"You know when I fix a time, I always stick to it. Come along, Alix. I'm not going to wait a minute longer." Alix looked up at him, and in spite of herself she felt a wave of terror slide over her. The mask had been lifted. Gerald's hands were twitching; his eyes were shining with excitement; he was continually passing his tongue over his dry lips. He no longer cared to conceal his excitement.

Alix thought: "It's true – he can't wait – he's like a madman."

He strode over to her, and jerked her onto her feet with a hand on her shoulder.

"Come on, my girl – or I'll carry you there."

His tone was gay, but there was an undisguised ferocity behind it that appalled her. With a supreme effort she jerked herself free and clung cowering against the wall. She was powerless. She couldn't get away – she couldn't do anything – and he was coming towards her.

"Now, Alix – "

"No – no."

She screamed, her hands held out impotently to ward him off.

"Gerald – stop – I've got something to tell you, something to confess – "

He did stop.

"To confess?" he said curiously.

"Yes, to confess." She went on desperately, seeking to hold his arrested attention.

A look of contempt swept over his face. The spell was broken.

"A former lover, I suppose," he sneered.

"No," said Alix. "Something else. You'd call it, I expect – yes, you'd call it a crime."

And at once she saw that she had struck the right note. Again his attention was arrested, held. Seeing that, her nerve came back to her. She felt mistress of the situation once more.

"You had better sit down again," she said quietly.

She herself crossed the room to her old chair and sat down. She even stooped and picked up her needlework. But behind her calmness she was

thinking and inventing feverishly. For the story she invented must hold his interest until help arrived.

"I told you," she said, "that I had been a short-hand-typist for fifteen years. That was not entirely true. There were two intervals. The first occurred when I was twenty-two. I came across a man, an elderly man with a little property. He fell in love with me and asked me to marry him. I accepted." She paused. "I induced him to insure his life in my favour."

She saw a sudden keen interest spring up in her husband's face, and went on with renewed assurance.

"During the war I worked for a time in a Hospital Dispensary. There I had the handling of all kinds of rare drugs and poisons. Yes, poisons."

She paused reflectively. He was keenly interested now, not a doubt of it. The murderer is bound to have an interest in murder. She had gambled on that, and succeeded. She stole a glance at the clock. It was five and twenty to nine.

"There is one poison – it is a little white powder. A pinch of it means death. You know something about poisons perhaps?"

She put the question in some trepidation. If he did, she would have to be careful.

"No," said Gerald, "I know very little about them."

She drew a breath of relief.

"You have heard of hyoscine, of course? This is a drug that acts much the same way, but it is absolutely untraceable. Any doctor would give a certificate of heart failure. I stole a small quantity of this drug and kept it by me."

She paused, marshalling her forces.

"Go on," said Gerald.

"No. I'm afraid. I can't tell you. Another time."

"Now," he said impatiently. "I want to hear."

"We had been married a month. I was very good to my elderly husband, very kind and devoted. He spoke in praise of me to all the neighbours. Everyone knew what a devoted wife I was. I always made his coffee myself every evening. One evening, when we were alone together, I put a pinch of the deadly alkaloid in his cup –"

Alix paused, and carefully re-threaded her needle. She, who had never acted in her life, rivalled the greatest actress in the world at this moment. She was actually living the part of the cold-blooded poisoner.

"It was very peaceful. I sat watching him. Once he gasped a little and asked for air. I opened the window. Then he said he could not move from his chair. Presently he died"

She stopped, smiling. It was a quarter to nine. Surely they would come soon.

"How much," said Gerald, "was the insurance money?"

"About two thousand pounds. I speculated with it, and lost it. I went back to my office work. But I never meant to remain there long. Then I met another

man. I had stuck to my maiden name at the office. He didn't know I had been married before. He was a younger man, rather good-looking, and quite well off. We were married quietly in Sussex. He didn't want to insure his life, but of course he made a will in my favour. He liked me to make his coffee myself also, just as my first husband had done."

Alix smiled reflectively, and added simply, "I make very good coffee."

Then she went on.

"I had several friends in the village where we were living. They were very sorry for me, with my husband dying suddenly of heart failure one evening after dinner. I didn't quite like the doctor. I don't think he suspected me, but he was certainly very surprised at my husband's sudden death. I don't quite know why I drifted back to the office again. Habit, I suppose. My second husband left about four thousand pounds. I didn't speculate with it this time. I invested it. Then, you see – "

But she was interrupted. Gerald Martin, his face suffused with blood, half-choking, was pointing a shaking forefinger at her.

"The coffee – my God! the coffee!"

She stared at him.

"I understand now why it was bitter. You devil! You've been up to your tricks again."

His hands gripped the arms of his chair. He was ready to spring upon her.

"You've poisoned me."

Alix had retreated from him to the fireplace. Now, terrified, she opened her lips to deny – and then paused. In another minute he would spring upon her. She summoned all her strength. Her eyes held his steadily, compellingly.

"Yes," she said, "I poisoned you. Already the poison is working. At this minute you can't move from your chair – you can't move – "

If she could him three – even a few minutes ...

Ah! what was that? Footsteps on the road. The creak of the gate. Then footsteps on the path outside. The outer door opening.

"You can't move," she said again.

Then she slipped past him and fled headlong from the room to fall, half fainting, into Dick Windyford's arms. "My God! Alix!" he cried.

Then he turned to the man with him, a tall stalwart figure in policeman's uniform.

"Go and see what's been happening in that room."

He laid Alix carefully down on a couch and bent over her.

"My little girl," he murmured. "My poor little girl. What have they been doing to you?"

Her eyelids fluttered and her lips just murmured his name.

Dick was aroused from tumultuous thoughts by the policeman's touching him on the arm.

"There's nothing in that room, sir, but a man sitting in a chair. Looks as though he'd had some kind of bad fright, and –"

"Yes?"

"Well, sir, he's – dead."

They were startled by hearing Alix's voice. She spoke as though in some kind of dream, her eyes still closed. "And presently" she said, almost as though she were quoting from something, "he died –"

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Part I

#### *I. Read Part I and Answer the Following Questions.*

1. What was Alex's family background?
2. How did she keep herself and her invalid mother?
3. What was her life like?
4. Comment on the romance she had at work.
5. Why didn't Dick propose to Alex?
6. What event changed Alex's life completely?
7. What did the inheritance mean to her?
8. Why did Dick become morose?
9. Why was her falling in love with Jerald Martin so strange?
10. Why did Dick try to make Alex change her mind?
11. What did Alex think about Dick's arguments?
12. What invaded her happiness during the first month of her married life?
13. What element of Alex's dream troubled her most of all?
14. Why did she sway when she picked up the telephone receiver?
15. Why did Alex refuse to see Dick that day?
16. Why did Dick decline to visit them the following day?
17. Why did Alex move from London to settle in the Philomel cottage?
18. Why didn't they have any servants?
19. Why couldn't they rent that house?
20. Why couldn't Gerald pay the whole sum for the house?
21. What did Alex feel about living in Philomel cottage?
22. Why was she surprised to see their gardener that day?
23. Why did the gardener change his routine?
24. What did the gardener tell Alex about the previous owner of the house?
25. What did Alex learn about her husband's decision to go to London?
26. What object did she find in the flower bed?
27. What virtues did Gerald appreciate most of all?
28. What entries of the pocket diary arrested Alex's attention?

## ***II. Say it in Russian.***

To invade one's happiness, to envisage the future, deliverance from a daily toil, to deliberate, tinge of anxiety, to perturb, to sway, to captivate, exquisite, bearer bonds, to jerk one's head over one's shoulder, to put an idea into smb's head, virtue, hitch, morose, shamefaced, to supplant, trim, preoccupation

## ***III. Say it in English.***

Сельское уединение, скромное жалованье, не стоит делать что-либо поспешно, сделать первый шаг, возражения против чего-либо, слегка изменившийся голос, повесить трубку, ухаживать за садом, необычное имя, обогнуть угол дома, выставить на продажу, выглядывать из-под чего-либо, пропалывать, быстро пролистать, аккуратность, нанести смертельный удар, опереться о стену, стенографистка, найти предлог

## ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To set a heart on smth, to be friends outwardly, to arouse her former lover, lack of cordiality, to fall a victim to one's charm, to be starved of domestic life, her nerves were all to pieces, to be matter-of-fact, to feel ill at ease

## ***V. Insert Prepositions.***

To lean ... the small rustic gate, to graduate ... a hard school, a woman no longer ... her first youth, to stammer ... rage and anger, to love smb none the less ... it, to stretch ... one's hands, to come ... smb's rescue, to sweep clean ... one's feet, to be brusque ... manner, to smile ... oneself, to be fussy ... meals being punctual, to attach an importance ... smth

## ***VI. Explain the Difference in Meaning that the Following Synonyms Reveal.***

To decline – to refuse

To offer – to suggest

To clasp – to hold

Virtue – merit

To recur – to occur

## **Part II**

### ***I. Read Part II and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. Why did Alex feel embarrassed when Gerald returned home?
2. What explanation did Gerald provide when Alex asked him about his pocket diary entry?
3. Why did a wave of panic surge her when she was looking at her husband?
4. What did Gerald mean when he spoke about Bluebeard's chamber business?
5. What was Gerald's reaction to Alex's story about meeting their gardener?

6. According to the gardener's words, the sum asked for the cottage was lower than that claimed by Gerald. How did Gerald explain it?
7. What evidence was Alex determined to discover in her husband's room?
8. Why did Gerald oppose her plan to go to the village so vehemently?
9. What did Alex discover in Gerald's writing-table drawer?
10. Why did Alex flush on seeing the letters?
11. Why did Gerald keep old newspaper clippings locked in the chest of drawers?
12. What did Alex remember about Lemaitre's case?
13. Why did Alex sway while reading about a woman giving evidence against Lemaitre?
14. What made her understand the truth about her husband?
15. What had saved her life, in Alex's view?

## ***II. Say it in Russian.***

To be committed to the policy of concealment, assignation, bantering manner, to develop some negatives, somber, to mutter, grave, serene, to conspire, to undeceive, mortgage, mischievous, to undermine, dormant, to go through the pockets, piece of evidence, to succumb, to obsess, swindler, bigamist, consummate skill, scholarly-looking, the ignorant, flagstones, business proposition

## ***III. Say it in English.***

Уклоняться от ответа, нерешительность, натянуто улыбнуться, напрасно стараться, оттенок угрозы, отпечататься в памяти, категорически возражать против чего-либо, быть вынужденным уступить, столкнуться с кем-либо, успокоить совесть, утратить всякий стыд, связка ключей, газетные вырезки, перевязанные лентой письма, вздохнуть с облегчением, взять на себя труд, давать свидетельские показания, сжалиться в последний момент

## ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To be taken aback, to look vexed, with a shade of testiness in his manner, to be interested in personal element, bantering manner, to recapture her sense of his sincerity, to know smb through and through

## ***V. Insert Prepositions.***

To fit smth ... as a dark room, to say smth ... a low voice, to be convulsed ... rage, to regain control ... himself, to be five minutes ... schedule, to invent ... the spur ... the moment, to be consistent ... the facts, to keep ... the pretence ... housewifery, discoloured ... age, to try them one ... one, to do away ... his women victims, to accredit smth ... his dramatic powers, to bare a strong resemblance ... smb

***VI. Explain the Difference in Meaning that the Following Synonyms Reveal.***

To conceal – to hide

To mutter – to murmur

To arouse – to cause

**Part III**

***I. Read Part III and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. Why did Alex stay as though petrified?
2. What did she realize when she saw her husband approaching the house?
3. Why did Alex fail to escape from the house?
4. What did she do not to arouse Gerald's suspicion?
5. Why couldn't she say that Dick was to visit them that night?
6. What plan did Alex have and how did she manage to carry it out?
7. Why was Alex sure that Dick would come to her rescue?
8. Why did Gerald want her to go to the cellar at eight thirty?
9. What did Alex do to delay Gerald?
10. Why did her story strike the right note?
11. Why was Gerald sure that Alex was up to her tricks again?
12. What was the cause of Gerald's death?
13. What parallels did Alex's dream and real events have?
14. What saved Alex?
15. Why did she see the recurring dream?
16. What is effect of the subconscious on our life, in your view?
17. Comment on the title of the story. What did Gerald say about the name given to the cottage? Why did he choose that house? What was it meant to become for Alex?
18. How does the author create suspense in the story?
19. Give a character sketch of Alex.

***II. Say it in Russian.***

To hum a little tune, to bathe her temples, to precipitate the crime, to lull one's suspicions, to reinforce, nonchalant, to be put through at once, to depress and release a little key in the receiver, to falter, to appall, to induce, dispensary, trepidation, untraceable, to rival the greatest actresses, to flee headlong from the room

***III. Say it in English.***

Окаменеть, новая лопата, отчаянно пытаться, вызвать подозрения, быть связанным по рукам и ногам, позвать на помощь, прочитать мысли, быть в отчаянии, дело жизни или смерти, сбросить маску, облизывать губы, неприкрытая ярость, завладеть вниманием, умереть в результате сердечного приступа, вжиться в роль, девичья фамилия, составить

завещание в чью-либо пользу, отступить, собраться с силами, скрипки

#### ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To regain something of her normal manner, to allay suspicions, to keep the moths out, to keep one's head, to strike the right note, to feel mistress of the situation, to marshal one's forces, to speculate with the money, to be up to one's tricks

#### ***V. Insert Prepositions.***

To be frozen ... stone, to marvel ... oneself, to cry ... an appeal ... help, to simmer ... excitement, to stick ... the fixed time, to hold ... hands to ward smb ..., to insure one's life ... smb's favour, to gamble ... that, to steal a glance ... clock, to speak ... praise ... smb, to be suffused ... blood, to point a finger ... smb, to spring ... smb

#### ***VI. Explain the Difference in Meaning that the Following Synonyms Reveal.***

To compel – to induce

To gamble – to play

To glance – to look

Help – assistance – aid

### **BERNICE BOBS HER HAIR**

**By F. Scott Fitzgerald**

After dark on Saturday night one could stand on the first tee of the golf-course and see the country-club windows as a yellow expanse over a very black and wavy ocean. The waves of this ocean, so to speak, were the heads of many curious caddies, a few of the more ingenious chauffeurs, the golf professional's deaf sister-and there were usually several stray, diffident waves who might have rolled inside had they so desired. This was the gallery.

The balcony was inside. It consisted of the circle of wicker chairs that lined the wall of the combination clubroom and ballroom. At these Saturday-night dances it was largely feminine; a great babel of middle-aged ladies with sharp eyes and icy hearts behind lorgnettes and large bosoms. The main function of the balcony was critical. It occasionally showed grudging admiration, but never approval, for it is well known among ladies over thirty-five that when the younger set dance in the summer-time it is with the very worst intentions in the world, and if they are not bombarded with stony eyes stray couples will dance weird barbaric interludes in the corners, and the more popular, more dangerous, girls will sometimes be kissed in the parked limousines of unsuspecting dowagers.



But, after all, this critical circle is not close enough to the stage to see the actors' faces and catch the subtler byplay. It can only frown and lean, ask questions and make satisfactory deductions from its set of postulates, such as the one which states that every young man with a large income leads the life of a hunted partridge. It never really appreciates the drama of the shifting, semicruel world of adolescence.

No; boxes, orchestra-circle, principals, and chorus are represented by the medley of faces and voices that sway to the plaintive African rhythm of Dyer's dance orchestra.

From sixteen-year-old Otis Ormonde, who has two more years at Hill School, to G. Reece Stoddard, over whose bureau at home hangs a Harvard law diploma; from little Madeleine Hogue, whose hair still feels strange and uncomfortable on top of her head, to Bessie MacRae, who has been the life of the party a little too long-more than ten years – the medley is not only the centre of the stage but contains the only people capable of getting an un-obstructed view of it.

With a flourish and a bang the music stops. The couples exchange artificial, effortless smiles, facetiously repeat "la-de-da-da dum-dum," and then the clatter of young feminine voices soars over the burst of clapping.

A few disappointed stags caught in midfloor as they had been about to cut in subsided listlessly back to the walls, because this was not like the riotous Christmas dances – these summer hops were considered just pleasantly warm and exciting, where even the younger marrieds rose and performed ancient waltzes and terrifying fox trots to the tolerant amusement of their younger brothers and sisters.

Warren McIntyre, who casually attended Yale, being one of the unfortunate stags, felt in his dinner-coat pocket for a cigarette and strolled out onto the wide, semidark veranda, where couples were scattered at tables, filling the lantern – hung night with vague words and hazy laughter. He nodded here and there at the less absorbed and as he passed each couple some half-forgotten fragment of a story played in his mind, for it was not a large city and every one was Who's Who to every one else's past. There, for example, were Jim Strain and Ethel Demorest, who had been privately engaged for three years. Every one knew that as soon as Jim managed to hold a job for more than two months she would marry him. Yet how bored they both looked, and how wearily Ethel regarded Jim sometimes, as if she wondered why she had trained the vines of her affection on such a wind-shaken poplar.

Warren was nineteen and rather pitying with those of his friends who hadn't gone East to college. But, like most boys, he bragged tremendously about the girls of his city when he was away from it. There was Genevieve Ormonde, who regularly made the rounds of dances, house-parties, and football games at Princeton, Yale, Williams, and Cornell; there was black-eyed Roberta Dillon, who was quite as famous to her own generation as Hiram Johnson or Ty Cobb;

and, of course, there was Marjorie Harvey, who besides having a fairylike face and a dazzling, bewildering tongue was already justly celebrated for having turned five cart-wheels in succession during the last pump-and-slipper dance at New Haven.

Warren, who had grown up across the street from Marjorie, had long been "crazy about her." Sometimes she seemed to reciprocate his feeling with a faint gratitude, but she had tried him by her infallible test and informed him gravely that she did not love him. Her test was that when she was away from him she forgot him and had affairs with other boys. Warren found this discouraging, especially as Marjorie had been making little trips all summer, and for the first two or three days after each arrival home he saw great heaps of mail on the Harveys' hall table addressed to her in various masculine handwritings. To make matters worse, all during the month of August she had been visited by her cousin Bernice from Eau Claire, and it seemed impossible to see her alone. It was always necessary to hunt round and find some one to take care of Bernice. As August waned this was becoming more and more difficult.

Much as Warren worshipped Marjorie, he had to admit that Cousin Bernice was sorta dopeless. She was pretty, with dark hair and high color, but she was no fun on a party.

Every Saturday night he danced a long arduous duty dance with her to please Marjorie, but he had never been anything but bored in her company.

"Warren" – a soft voice at his elbow broke in upon his thoughts, and he turned to see Marjorie, flushed and radiant as usual. She laid a hand on his shoulder and a glow settled almost imperceptibly over him.

"Warren," she whispered, "do something for me – dance with Bernice. She's been stuck with little Otis Ormonde for almost an hour."

Warren's glow faded.

"Why – sure," he answered half-heartedly.

"You don't mind, do you? I'll see that you don't get stuck." "Sail right."

Marjorie smiled – that smile that was thanks enough.

"You're an angel, and I'm obliged loads."

With a sigh the angel glanced round the veranda, but Bernice and Otis were not in sight. He wandered back inside, and there in front of the women's dressing-room he found Otis in the centre of a group of young men who were convulsed with laughter. Otis was brandishing a piece of timber he had picked up, and discoursing volubly.

"She's gone in to fix her hair," he announced wildly. "I'm waiting to dance another hour with her."

Their laughter was renewed.

"Why don't some of you cut in?" cried Otis resentfully. "She likes more variety."

"Why, Otis," suggested a friend, "you've just barely got used to her."

"Why the two-by-four, Otis?" inquired Warren, smiling.

"The two-by-four? Oh, this? This is a club. When she comes out I'll hit her on the head and knock her in again."

Warren collapsed on a settee and howled with glee.

"Never mind, Otis," he articulated finally. "I'm relieving you this time."

Otis simulated a sudden fainting attack and handed the stick to Warren.

"If you need it, old man," he said hoarsely.

No matter how beautiful or brilliant a girl may be, the reputation of not being frequently cut in on makes her position at a dance unfortunate. Perhaps boys prefer her company to that of the butterflies with whom they dance a dozen times an evening, but youth in this jazz-nourished generation is temperamentally restless, and the idea of fox-trotting more than one full fox trot with the same girl is distasteful, not to say odious. When it comes to several dances and the intermissions between she can be quite sure that a young man, once relieved, will never tread on her wayward toes again.

Warren danced the next full dance with Bernice, and finally, thankful for the intermission, he led her to a table on the veranda. There was a moment's silence while she did unimpressive things with her fan.

"It's hotter here than in Eau Claire," she said.

Warren stifled a sigh and nodded. It might be for all he knew or cared. He wondered idly whether she was a poor conversationalist because she got no attention or got no attention because she was a poor conversationalist.

"You going to be here much longer?" he asked, and then turned rather red. She might suspect his reasons for asking.

"Another week," she answered, and stared at him as if to lunge at his next remark when it left his lips.

Warren fidgeted. Then with a sudden charitable impulse he decided to try part of his line on her. He turned and looked at her eyes.

"You've got an awfully kissable mouth," he began quietly.

This was a remark that he sometimes made to girls at college proms when they were talking in just such half dark as this. Bernice distinctly jumped. She turned an ungraceful red and became clumsy with her fan. No one had ever made such a remark to her before.

"Fresh!" – the word had slipped out before she realized it, and she bit her lip. Too late she decided to be amused, and offered him a flustered smile.

Warren was annoyed. Though not accustomed to have that remark taken seriously, still it usually provoked a laugh or a paragraph of sentimental banter. And he hated to be called fresh, except in a joking way. His charitable impulse died and he switched the topic.

"Jim Strain and Ethel Demorest sitting out as usual," he commented.

This was more in Bernice's line, but a faint regret mingled with her relief as the subject changed. Men did not talk to her about kissable mouths, but she knew that they talked in some such way to other girls.

"Oh, yes," she said, and laughed. "I hear they've been mooning round for years without a red penny.

Isn't it silly?"

Warren's disgust increased. Jim Strain was a close friend of his brother's, and anyway he considered it bad form to sneer at people for not having money. But Bernice had had no intention of sneering. She was merely nervous.

## II

When Marjorie and Bernice reached home at half after midnight they said good night at the top of the stairs. Though cousins, they were not intimates. As a matter of fact Marjorie had no female intimates – she considered girls stupid. Bernice on the contrary all through this parent-arranged visit had rather longed to exchange those confidences flavored with giggles and tears that she considered an indispensable factor in all feminine intercourse. But in this respect she found Marjorie rather cold; felt somehow the same difficulty in talking to her that she had in talking to men. Marjorie never giggled, was never frightened, seldom embarrassed, and in fact had very few of the qualities which Bernice considered appropriately and blessedly feminine.

As Bernice busied herself with tooth-brush and paste this night she wondered for the hundredth time why she never had any attention when she was away from home. That her family were the wealthiest in Eau Claire; that her mother entertained tremendously, gave little dinners for her daughter before all dances and bought her a car of her own to drive round in, never occurred to her as factors in her home-town social success. Like most girls she had been brought up on the warm milk prepared by Annie Fellows Johnston and on novels in which the female was beloved because of certain mysterious womanly qualities, always mentioned but never displayed.

Bernice felt a vague pain that she was not at present engaged in being popular. She did not know that had it not been for Marjorie's campaigning she would have danced the entire evening with one man; but she knew that even in Eau Claire other girls with less position and less pulchritude were given a much bigger rush. She attributed this to something subtly unscrupulous in those girls. It had never worried her, and if it had her mother would have assured her that the other girls cheapened themselves and that men really respected girls like Bernice.

She turned out the light in her bathroom, and on an impulse decided to go in and chat for a moment with her aunt Josephine, whose light was still on. Her soft slippers bore her noiselessly down the carpeted hall, but hearing voices inside she stopped near the partly opened door. Then she caught her own name, and without any definite intention of eavesdropping lingered – and the thread of the conversation going on inside pierced her consciousness sharply as if it had been drawn through with a needle.

"She's absolutely hopeless!" It was Marjorie's voice. "Oh, I know what you're going to say! So many people have told you how pretty and sweet she is, and how she can cook! What of it? She has a bum time. Men don't like her."

"What's a little cheap popularity?"

Mrs. Harvey sounded annoyed.

"It's everything when you're eighteen," said Marjorie emphatically. "I've done my best. I've been polite and I've made men dance with her, but they just won't stand being bored. When I think of that gorgeous coloring wasted on such a ninny, and think what Martha Carey could do with it – oh!"

"There's no courtesy these days."

Mrs. Harvey's voice implied that modern situations were too much for her. When she was a girl all young ladies who belonged to nice families had glorious times.

"Well," said Marjorie, "no girl can permanently bolster up a lame-duck visitor, because these days it's every girl for herself. I've even tried to drop her hints about clothes and things, and she's been furious – given me the funniest looks. She's sensitive enough to know she's not getting away with much, but I'll bet she consoles herself by thinking that she's very virtuous and that I'm too gay and fickle and will come to a bad end. All unpopular girls think that way. Sour grapes! Sarah Hopkins refers to Genevieve and Roberta and me as gardenia girls! I'll bet she'd give ten years of her life and her European education to be a gardenia girl and have three or four men in love with her and be cut in on every few feet at dances."

"It seems to me," interrupted Mrs. Harvey rather wearily, "that you ought to be able to do something for Bernice. I know she's not very vivacious."

Marjorie groaned.

"Vivacious! Good grief! I've never heard her say anything to a boy except that it's hot or the floor's crowded or that she's going to school in New York next year. Sometimes she asks them what kind of car they have and tells them the kind she has. Thrilling!"

There was a short silence, and then Mrs. Harvey took up her refrain:

"All I know is that other girls not half so sweet and attractive get partners. Martha Carey, for instance, is stout and loud, and her mother is distinctly common. Roberta Dillon is so thin this year that she looks as though Arizona were the place for her. She's dancing herself to death."

"But, mother," objected Marjorie impatiently, "Martha is cheerful and awfully witty and an awfully slick girl, and Roberta's a marvellous dancer. She's been popular for ages!"

Mrs. Harvey yawned.

"I think it's that crazy Indian blood in Bernice," continued Marjorie. "Maybe she's a reversion to type. Indian women all just sat round and never said anything."

"Go to bed, you silly child," laughed Mrs. Harvey. "I wouldn't have told you that if I'd thought you were going to remember it. And I think most of your ideas are perfectly idiotic," she finished sleepily.

There was another silence, while Marjorie considered whether or not convincing her mother was worth the trouble. People over forty can seldom be permanently convinced of anything. At eighteen our convictions are hills from which we look; at forty-five they are caves in which we hide.

Having decided this, Marjorie said good night. When she came out into the hall it was quite empty.

### III

While Marjorie was breakfasting late next day Bernice came into the room with a rather formal good morning, sat down opposite, stared intently over and slightly moistened her lips.

"What's on your mind?" inquired Marjorie, rather puzzled.

Bernice paused before she threw her hand-grenade.

"I heard what you said about me to your mother last night."

Marjorie was startled, but she showed only a faintly heightened color and her voice was quite even when she spoke.

"Where were you?"

"In the hall. I didn't mean to listen – at first."

After an involuntary look of contempt Marjorie dropped her eyes and became very interested in balancing a stray corn-flake on her finger.

"I guess I'd better go back to Eau Claire – if I'm such a nuisance." Bernice's lower lip was trembling violently and she continued on a wavering note: "I've tried to be nice, and – and I've been first neglected and then insulted. No one ever visited me and got such treatment."

Marjorie was silent.

"But I'm in the way, I see. I'm a drag on you. Your friends don't like me." She paused, and then remembered another one of her grievances. "Of course I was furious last week when you tried to hint to me that that dress was unbecoming. Don't you think I know how to dress myself?"

"No," murmured Marjorie less than half-aloud.

"What?"

"I didn't hint anything," said Marjorie succinctly. "I said, as I remember, that it was better to wear a becoming dress three times straight than to alternate it with two frights."

"Do you think that was a very nice thing to say?"

"I wasn't trying to be nice." Then after a pause: "When do you want to go?"

Bernice drew in her breath sharply.

"Oh!" It was a little half-cry.

Marjorie looked up in surprise.

"Didn't you say you were going?"

"Yes, but –"

"Oh, you were only bluffing!"

They stared at each other across the breakfast-table for a moment. Misty waves were passing before Bernice's eyes, while Marjorie's face wore that rather hard expression that she used when slightly intoxicated undergraduates were making love to her.

"So you were bluffing," she repeated as if it were what she might have expected.

Bernice admitted it by bursting into tears. Marjorie's eyes showed boredom.

"You're my cousin," sobbed Bernice. "I'm v-v-visiting you. I was to stay a month, and if I go home my mother will know and she'll wah-wonder –"

Marjorie waited until the shower of broken words collapsed into little sniffles.

"I'll give you my month's allowance," she said coldly, "and you can spend this last week anywhere you want. There's a very nice hotel –"

Bernice's sobs rose to a flute note, and rising of a sudden she fled from the room.

An hour later, while Marjorie was in the library absorbed in composing one of those non-committal, marvellously elusive letters that only a young girl can write, Bernice reappeared, very red-eyed and consciously calm. She cast no glance at Marjorie but took a book at random from the shelf and sat down as if to read. Marjorie seemed absorbed in her letter and continued writing. When the clock showed noon Bernice closed her book with a snap.

"I suppose I'd better get my railroad ticket."

This was not the beginning of the speech she had rehearsed up-stairs, but as Marjorie was not getting her cues – wasn't urging her to be reasonable; it's all a mistake – it was the best opening she could muster.

"Just wait till I finish this letter," said Marjorie without looking round. "I want to get it off in the next mail."

After another minute, during which her pen scratched busily, she turned round and relaxed with an air of "at your service." Again Bernice had to speak.

"Do you want me to go home?"

"Well," said Marjorie, considering, "I suppose if you're not having a good time you'd better go. No use being miserable."

"Don't you think common kindness –"

"Oh, please don't quote 'Little Women'!" cried Marjorie impatiently. "That's out of style."

"You think so?"

"Heavens, yes! What modern girl could live like those inane females?"

"They were the models for our mothers."

Marjorie laughed.

"Yes, they were – not! Besides, our mothers were all very well in their way, but they know very little about their daughters' problems."

Bernice drew herself up.

"Please don't talk about my mother."

Marjorie laughed.

"I don't think I mentioned her."

Bernice felt that she was being led away from her subject.

"Do you think you've treated me very well?"

"I've done my best. You're rather hard material to work with."

The lids of Bernice's eyes reddened.

"I think you're hard and selfish, and you haven't a feminine quality in you."

"Oh, my Lord!" cried Marjorie in desperation. "You little nut! Girls like you are responsible for all the tiresome colorless marriages; all those ghastly inefficiencies that pass as feminine qualities. What a blow it must be when a man with imagination marries the beautiful bundle of clothes that he's been building ideals round, and finds that she's just a weak, whining, cowardly mass of affectations!"

Bernice's mouth had slipped half open.

"The womanly woman!" continued Marjorie. "Her whole early life is occupied in whining criticisms of girls like me who really do have a good time."

Bernice's jaw descended farther as Marjorie's voice rose.

"There's some excuse for an ugly girl whining. If I'd been irretrievably ugly I'd never have forgiven my parents for bringing me into the world. But you're starting life without any handicap –" Marjorie's little fist clinched. "If you expect me to weep with you you'll be disappointed. Go or stay, just as you like." And picking up her letters she left the room.

Bernice claimed a headache and failed to appear at luncheon. They had a matinee date for the afternoon, but the headache persisting, Marjorie made explanation to a not very downcast boy. But when she returned late in the afternoon she found Bernice with a strangely set face waiting for her in her bedroom.

"I've decided," began Bernice without preliminaries, "that maybe you're right about things – possibly not. But if you'll tell me why your friends aren't – aren't interested in me I'll see if I can do what you want me to."

Marjorie was at the mirror shaking down her hair.

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes."

"Without reservations? Will you do exactly what I say?"

"Well, I –"

"Well nothing! Will you do exactly as I say?"

"If they're sensible things."

"They're not! You're no case for sensible things."



"Are you going to make – to recommend –"

"Yes, everything. If I tell you to take boxing – lessons you'll have to do it. Write home and tell your mother you're going to stay another two weeks."

"If you'll tell me –"

"All right – I'll just give you a few examples now. First, you have no ease of manner. Why? Because you're never sure about your personal appearance. When a girl feels that she's perfectly groomed and dressed she can forget that part of her. That's charm. The more parts of yourself you can afford to forget the more charm you have."

"Don't I look all right?"

"No; for instance, you never take care of your eyebrows. They're black and lustrous, but by leaving them straggly they're a blemish. They'd be beautiful if you'd take care of them in one-tenth the time you take doing nothing. You're going to brush them so that they'll grow straight."

Bernice raised the brows in question.

"Do you mean to say that men notice eyebrows?"

"Yes – subconsciously. And when you go home you ought to have your teeth straightened a little. It's almost imperceptible, still –"

"But I thought," interrupted Bernice in bewilderment, "that you despised little dainty feminine things like that."

"I hate dainty minds," answered Marjorie. "But a girl has to be dainty in person. If she looks like a million dollars she can talk about Russia, ping-pong, or the League of Nations and get away with it."

"What else?"

"Oh, I'm just beginning! There's your dancing."

"Don't I dance all right?"

"No, you don't – you lean on a man; yes, you do – ever so slightly. I noticed it when we were dancing together yesterday. And you dance standing up straight instead of bending over a little. Probably some old lady on the side-line once told you that you looked so dignified that way. But except with a very small girl it's much harder on the man, and he's the one that counts."

"Go on." Bernice's brain was reeling.

"Well, you've got to learn to be nice to men who are sad birds. You look as if you'd been insulted whenever you're thrown with any except the most popular boys. Why, Bernice, I'm cut in on every few feet – and who does most of it? Why, those very sad birds. No girl can afford to neglect them. They're the big part of any crowd. Young boys too shy to talk are the very best conversational practice. Clumsy boys are the best dancing practice. If you can follow them and yet look graceful you can follow a baby tank across a barb-wire sky-scraper."

Bernice sighed profoundly, but Marjorie was not through.

"If you go to a dance and really amuse, say, three sad birds that dance with you; if you talk so well to them that they forget they're stuck with you, you've done something. They'll come back next time, and gradually so many sad birds will dance with you that the attractive boys will see there's no danger of being stuck – then they'll dance with you."

"Yes," agreed Bernice faintly. "I think I begin to see."

"And finally," concluded Marjorie, "poise and charm will just come. You'll wake up some morning knowing you've attained it, and men will know it too."

Bernice rose.

"It's been awfully kind of you – but nobody's ever talked to me like this before, and I feel sort of startled."

Marjorie made no answer but gazed pensively at her own image in the mirror.

"You're a peach to help me," continued Bernice.

Still Marjorie did not answer, and Bernice thought she had seemed too grateful.

"I know you don't like sentiment," she said timidly.

Marjorie turned to her quickly.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking about that. I was considering whether we hadn't better bob your hair."

Bernice collapsed backward upon the bed.

#### IV

On the following Wednesday evening there was a dinner – dance at the country club. When the guests strolled in Bernice found her place-card with a slight feeling of irritation. Though at her right sat G. Reece Stoddard, a most desirable and distinguished young bachelor, the all-important left held only Charley Paulson. Charley lacked height, beauty, and social shrewdness, and in her new enlightenment Bernice decided that his only qualification to be her partner was that he had never been stuck with her. But this feeling of irritation left with the last of the soup-plates, and Marjorie's specific instruction came to her. Swallowing her pride she turned to Charley Paulson and plunged.

"Do you think I ought to bob my hair, Mr. Charley Paulson?" Charley looked up in surprise.

"Why?"

"Because I'm considering it. It's such a sure and easy way of attracting attention."

Charley smiled pleasantly. He could not know this had been rehearsed. He replied that he didn't know much about bobbed hair. But Bernice was there to tell him.

"I want to be a society vampire, you see," she announced coolly, and went on to inform him that bobbed hair was the necessary prelude. She added that she wanted to ask his advice, because she had heard he was so critical about girls.

Charley, who knew as much about the psychology of women as he did of the mental states of Buddhist contemplatives, felt vaguely flattered.

"So I've decided," she continued, her voice rising slightly, "that early next week I'm going down to the Sevier Hotel barber-shop, sit in the first chair, and get my hair bobbed." She faltered, noticing that the people near her had paused in their conversation and were listening; but after a confused second Marjorie's coaching told, and she finished her paragraph to the vicinity at large. "Of course I'm charging admission, but if you'll all come down and encourage me I'll issue passes for the inside seats."

There was a ripple of appreciative laughter, and under cover of it G. Reece Stoddard leaned over quickly and said close to her ear: "I'll take a box right now."

She met his eyes and smiled as if he had said something surpassingly brilliant.

"Do you believe in bobbed hair?" asked G. Reece in the same undertone.

"I think it's unmoral," affirmed Bernice gravely. "But, of course, you've either got to amuse people or feed 'em or shock 'em." Marjorie had culled this from Oscar Wilde. It was greeted with a ripple of laughter from the men and a series of quick, intent looks from the girls. And then as though she had said nothing of wit or moment Bernice turned again to Charley and spoke confidentially in his ear.

"I want to ask you your opinion of several people. I imagine you're a wonderful judge of character."

Charley thrilled faintly – paid her a subtle compliment by overturning her water.

Two hours later, while Warren McIntyre was standing passively in the stag line abstractedly watching the dancers and wondering whither and with whom Marjorie had disappeared, an unrelated perception began to creep slowly upon him – a perception that Bernice, cousin to Marjorie, had been cut in on several times in the past five minutes. He closed his eyes, opened them and looked again. Several minutes back she had been dancing with a visiting boy, a matter easily accounted for; a visiting boy would know no better. But now she was dancing with some one else, and there was Charley Paulson headed for her with enthusiastic determination in his eye. Funny – Charley seldom danced with more than three girls an evening.

Warren was distinctly surprised when – the exchange having been effected – the man relieved proved to be none other than G. Reece Stoddard himself. And G. Reece seemed not at all jubilant at being relieved. Next time Bernice danced near, Warren regarded her intently. Yes, she was pretty, distinctly pretty; and to-night her face seemed really vivacious. She had that

look that no woman, however histrionically proficient, can successfully counterfeit – she looked as if she were having a good time. He liked the way she had her hair arranged, wondered if it was brilliantine that made it glisten so. And that dress was becoming – a dark red that set off her shadowy eyes and high coloring. He remembered that he had thought her pretty when she first came to town, before he had realized that she was dull. Too bad she was dull – dull girls unbearable – certainly pretty though.

His thoughts zigzagged back to Marjorie. This disappearance would be like other disappearances. When she reappeared he would demand where she had been – would be told emphatically that it was none of his business. What a pity she was so sure of him! She basked in the knowledge that no other girl in town interested him; she defied him to fall in love with Genevieve or Roberta.

Warren sighed. The way to Marjorie's affections was a labyrinth indeed. He looked up. Bernice was again dancing with the visiting boy. Half unconsciously he took a step out from the stag line in her direction, and hesitated. Then he said to himself that it was charity. He walked toward her – collided suddenly with G. Reece Stoddard.

"Pardon me," said Warren.

But G. Reece had not stopped to apologize. He had again cut in on Bernice.

That night at one o'clock Marjorie, with one hand on the electric-light switch in the hall, turned to take a last look at Bernice's sparkling eyes.

"So it worked?"

"Oh, Marjorie, yes!" cried Bernice.

"I saw you were having a gay time."

"I did! The only trouble was that about midnight I ran short of talk. I had to repeat myself – with different men of course. I hope they won't compare notes."

"Men don't," said Marjorie, yawning, "and it wouldn't matter if they did – they'd think you were even trickier."

She snapped out the light, and as they started up the stairs Bernice grasped the banister thankfully. For the first time in her life she had been danced tired.

"You see," said Marjorie at the top of the stairs, "one man sees another man cut in and he thinks there must be something there. Well, we'll fix up some new stuff to-morrow. Good night."

"Good night."

As Bernice took down her hair she passed the evening before her in review. She had followed instructions exactly. Even when Charley Paulson cut in for the eighth time she had simulated delight and had apparently been both interested and flattered. She had not talked about the weather or Eau Claire or automobiles or her school, but had confined her conversation to me, you, and us.

But a few minutes before she fell asleep a rebellious thought was churning drowsily in her brain – after all, it was she who had done it. Marjorie, to be sure,

had given her her conversation, but then Marjorie got much of her conversation out of things she read. Bernice had bought the red dress, though she had never valued it highly before Marjorie dug it out of her trunk – and her own voice had said the words, her own lips had smiled, her own feet had danced. Marjorie nice girl – vain, though – nice evening – nice boys – like Warren-Warren-Warren – what's-his-name – Warren –

She fell asleep.

## V

To Bernice the next week was a revelation. With the feeling that people really enjoyed looking at her and listening to her came the foundation of self-confidence. Of course there were numerous mistakes at first. She did not know, for instance, that Draycott Deyo was studying for the ministry; she was unaware that he had cut in on her because he thought she was a quiet, reserved girl. Had she known these things she would not have treated him to the line which began "Hello, Shell Shock!" and continued with the bathtub story – "It takes a frightful lot of energy to fix my hair in the summer – there's so much of it – so I always fix it first and powder my face and put on my hat; then I get into the bathtub, and dress afterward. Don't you think that's the best plan?"

Though Draycott Deyo was in the throes of difficulties concerning baptism by immersion and might possibly have seen a connection, it must be admitted that he did not. He considered feminine bathing an immoral subject, and gave her some of his ideas on the depravity of modern society.

But to offset that unfortunate occurrence Bernice had several signal successes to her credit. Little Otis Ormonde pleaded off from a trip East and elected instead to follow her with a puppy-like devotion, to the amusement of his crowd and to the irritation of G. Reece Stoddard, several of whose afternoon calls Otis completely ruined by the disgusting tenderness of the glances he bent on Bernice. He even told her the story of the two-by-four and the dressing-room to show her how frightfully mistaken he and every one else had been in their first judgment of her. Bernice laughed off that incident with a slight sinking sensation.

Of all Bernice's conversation perhaps the best known and most universally approved was the line about the bobbing of her hair.

"Oh, Bernice, when you goin' to get the hair bobbed?"

"Day after to-morrow maybe," she would reply, laughing. "Will you come and see me? Because I'm counting on you, you know."

"Will we? You know! But you better hurry up."

Bernice, whose tonsorial intentions were strictly dishonorable, would laugh again.

"Pretty soon now. You'd be surprised."

But perhaps the most significant symbol of her success was the gray car of the hypercritical Warren McIntyre, parked daily in front of the Harvey house. At

first the parlor-maid was distinctly startled when he asked for Bernice instead of Marjorie; after a week of it she told the cook that Miss Bernice had gotta hold a Miss Marjorie's best fella.

And Miss Bernice had. Perhaps it began with Warren's desire to rouse jealousy in Marjorie; perhaps it was the familiar though unrecognized strain of Marjorie in Bernice's conversation; perhaps it was both of these and something of sincere attraction besides. But somehow the collective mind of the younger set knew within a week that Marjorie's most reliable beau had made an amazing face-about and was giving an indisputable rush to Marjorie's guest. The question of the moment was how Marjorie would take it. Warren called Bernice on the 'phone twice a day, sent her notes, and they were frequently seen together in his roadster, obviously engrossed in one of those tense, significant conversations as to whether or not he was sincere.

Marjorie on being twitted only laughed. She said she was mighty glad that Warren had at last found some one who appreciated him. So the younger set laughed, too, and guessed that Marjorie didn't care and let it go at that.

One afternoon when there were only three days left of her visit Bernice was waiting in the hall for Warren, with whom she was going to a bridge party. She was in rather a blissful mood, and when Marjorie – also bound for the party – appeared beside her and began casually to adjust her hat in the mirror, Bernice was utterly unprepared for anything in the nature of a clash. Marjorie did her work very coldly and succinctly in three sentences.

"You may as well get Warren out of your head," she said coldly.

"What?" Bernice was utterly astounded.

"You may as well stop making a fool of yourself over Warren McIntyre. He doesn't care a snap of his fingers about you."

For a tense moment they regarded each other – Marjorie scornful, aloof; Bernice astounded, half-angry, half-afraid. Then two cars drove up in front of the house and there was a riotous honking. Both of them gasped faintly, turned, and side by side hurried out.

All through the bridge party Bernice strove in vain to master a rising uneasiness. She had offended Marjorie, the sphinx of sphinxes. With the most wholesome and innocent intentions in the world she had stolen Marjorie's property. She felt suddenly and horribly guilty. After the bridge game, when they sat in an informal circle and the conversation became general, the storm gradually broke. Little Otis Ormonde inadvertently precipitated it.

"When you going back to kindergarten, Otis?" some one had asked.

"Me? Day Bernice gets her hair bobbed."

"Then your education's over," said Marjorie quickly. "That's only a bluff of hers. I should think you'd have realized."

"That a fact?" demanded Otis, giving Bernice a reproachful glance.

Bernice's ears burned as she tried to think up an effectual come-back. In the face of this direct attack her imagination was paralyzed.

"There's a lot of bluffs in the world," continued Marjorie quite pleasantly. "I should think you'd be young enough to know that, Otis."

"Well," said Otis, "maybe so. But gee! With a line like Bernice's —"

"Really?" yawned Marjorie. "What's her latest bon mot?"

No one seemed to know. In fact, Bernice, having trifled with her muse's beau, had said nothing memorable of late.

"Was that really all a line?" asked Roberta curiously.

Bernice hesitated. She felt that wit in some form was demanded of her, but under her cousin's suddenly frigid eyes she was completely incapacitated.

"I don't know," she stalled.

"Splush!" said Marjorie. "Admit it!"

Bernice saw that Warren's eyes had left a ukulele he had been tinkering with and were fixed on her questioningly.

"Oh, I don't know!" she repeated steadily. Her cheeks were glowing.

"Splush!" remarked Marjorie again.

"Come through, Bernice," urged Otis. "Tell her where to get off."

Bernice looked round again — she seemed unable to get away from Warren's eyes.

"I like bobbed hair," she said hurriedly, as if he had asked her a question, "and I intend to bob mine."

"When?" demanded Marjorie.

"Any time."

"No time like the present," suggested Roberta.

Otis jumped to his feet.

"Good stuff!" he cried. "We'll have a summer bobbing party. Sevier Hotel barber-shop, I think you said."

In an instant all were on their feet. Bernice's heart throbbed violently.

"What?" she gasped.

Out of the group came Marjorie's voice, very clear and contemptuous.

"Don't worry — she'll back out!"

"Come on, Bernice!" cried Otis, starting toward the door.

Four eyes — Warren's and Marjorie's — stared at her, challenged her, defied her. For another second she wavered wildly.

"All right," she said swiftly, "I don't care if I do."

An eternity of minutes later, riding down-town through the late afternoon beside Warren, the others following in Roberta's car close behind, Bernice had all the sensations of Marie Antoinette bound for the guillotine in a tumbrel.

Vaguely she wondered why she did not cry out that it was all a mistake. It was all she could do to keep from clutching her hair with both hands to protect it from the suddenly hostile world. Yet she did neither. Even the thought of her mother was no deterrent now. This was the test supreme of her sportsmanship; her right to walk unchallenged in the starry heaven of popular girls.

Warren was moodily silent, and when they came to the hotel he drew up at the curb and nodded to Bernice to precede him out. Roberta's car emptied a laughing crowd into the shop, which presented two bold plate-glass windows to the street.

Bernice stood on the curb and looked at the sign, Sevier Barber-Shop. It was a guillotine indeed, and the hangman was the first barber, who, attired in a white coat and smoking a cigarette, leaned nonchalantly against the first chair. He must have heard of her; he must have been waiting all week, smoking eternal cigarettes beside that portentous, too – often – mentioned first chair. Would they blindfold her? No, but they would tie a white cloth round her neck lest any of her blood – nonsense – hair – should get on her clothes.

"All right, Bernice," said Warren quickly.

With her chin in the air she crossed the sidewalk, pushed open the swinging screen-door, and giving not a glance to the uproarious, riotous row that occupied the waiting bench, went up to the first barber.

"I want you to bob my hair."

The first barber's mouth slid somewhat open. His cigarette dropped to the floor.

"Huh?"

"My hair – bob it!"

Refusing further preliminaries, Bernice took her seat on high. A man in the chair next to her turned on his side and gave her a glance, half lather, half amazement. One barber started and spoiled little Willy Schuneman's monthly haircut. Mr. O'Reilly in the last chair grunted and swore musically in ancient Gaelic as a razor bit into his cheek. Two bootblacks became wide-eyed and rushed for her feet. No, Bernice didn't care for a shine.

Outside a passer-by stopped and stared; a couple joined him; half a dozen small boys' noses sprang into life, flattened against the glass; and snatches of conversation borne on the summer breeze drifted in through the screen-door.

"Lookada long hair on a kid!"

"Where'd yuh get 'at stuff? 'At's a bearded lady he just finished shavin'."

But Bernice saw nothing, heard nothing. Her only living sense told her that this man in the white coat had removed one tortoise-shell comb and then another; that his fingers were fumbling clumsily with unfamiliar hairpins; that this hair, this wonderful hair of hers, was going – she would never again feel its long voluptuous pull as it hung in a dark-brown glory down her back. For a second she was near breaking down, and then the picture before her swam mechanically into her vision – Marjorie's mouth curling in a faint ironic smile as if to say:

"Give up and get down! You tried to buck me and I called your bluff. You see you haven't got a prayer."



And some last energy rose up in Bernice, for she clinched her hands under the white cloth, and there was a curious narrowing of her eyes that Marjorie remarked on to some one long afterward.

Twenty minutes later the barber swung her round to face the mirror, and she flinched at the full extent of the damage that had been wrought. Her hair was not curly, and now it lay in lank lifeless blocks on both sides of her suddenly pale face. It was ugly as sin – she had known it would be ugly as sin. Her face's chief charm had been a Madonna – like simplicity. Now that was gone and she was – well, frightfully mediocre – not stagy; only ridiculous, like a Greenwich Villager who had left her spectacles at home.

As she climbed down from the chair she tried to smile – failed miserably. She saw two of the girls exchange glances; noticed Marjorie's mouth curved in attenuated mockery – and that Warren's eyes were suddenly very cold.

"You see" – her words fell into an awkward pause – "I've done

"Yes, you've – done it," admitted Warren.

"Do you like it?"

There was a half-hearted "Sure" from two or three voices, another awkward pause, and then Marjorie turned swiftly and with serpent like intensity to Warren.

"Would you mind running me down to the cleaners?" she asked. "I've simply got to get a dress there before supper. Roberta's driving right home and she can take the others."

Warren stared abstractedly at some infinite speck out the window. Then for an instant his eyes rested coldly on Bernice before they turned to Marjorie.

"Be glad to," he said slowly.

## VI

Bernice did not fully realize the outrageous trap that had been set for her until she met her aunt's amazed glance just before dinner.

"Why, Bernice!"

"I've bobbed it, Aunt Josephine."

"Why, child!"

"Do you like it?"

"Why, Ber-nice!"

"I suppose I've shocked you."

"No, but what'll Mrs. Deyo think tomorrow night? Bernice, you should have waited until after the Deyos' dance – you should have waited if you wanted to do that."

"It was sudden, Aunt Josephine. Anyway, why does it matter to Mrs. Deyo particularly?"

"Why, child," cried Mrs. Harvey, "in her paper on 'The Foibles of the Younger Generation' that she read at the last meeting of the Thursday Club she

devoted fifteen minutes to bobbed hair. It's her pet abomination. And the dance is for you and Marjorie!"

"I'm sorry."

"Oh, Bernice, what'll your mother say? She'll think I let you do it."

"I'm sorry."

Dinner was an agony. She had made a hasty attempt with a curling-iron, and burned her finger and much hair. She could see that her aunt was both worried and grieved, and her uncle kept saying, "Well, I'll be darned!" over and over in a hurt and faintly hostile tone. And Marjorie sat very quietly, intrenched behind a faint smile, a faintly mocking smile.

Somehow she got through the evening. Three boys called; Marjorie disappeared with one of them, and Bernice made a listless unsuccessful attempt to entertain the two others – sighed thankfully as she climbed the stairs to her room at half past ten. What a day!

When she had undressed for the night the door opened and Marjorie came in.

"Bernice," she said, "I'm awfully sorry about the Deyo dance. I'll give you my word of honor I'd forgotten all about it."

"Sail right," said Bernice shortly. Standing before the mirror she passed her comb slowly through her short hair.

"I'll take you down-town to-morrow," continued Marjorie, "and the hairdresser'll fix it so you'll look slick. I didn't imagine you'd go through with it. I'm really mighty sorry."

"Oh, 'sail right!'"

"Still it's your last night, so I suppose it won't matter much."

Then Bernice winced as Marjorie tossed her own hair over her shoulders and began to twist it slowly into two long blond braids until in her cream-colored negligée she looked like a delicate painting of some Saxon princess. Fascinated, Bernice watched the braids grow. Heavy and luxurious they were, moving under the supple fingers like restive snakes – and to Bernice remained this relic and the curling-iron and a to-morrow full of eyes. She could see G. Reece Stoddard, who liked her, assuming his Harvard manner and telling his dinner partner that Bernice shouldn't have been allowed to go to the movies so much; she could see Draycott Deyo exchanging glances with his mother and then being conscientiously charitable to her. But then perhaps by tomorrow Mrs. Deyo would have heard the news; would send round an icy little note requesting that she fail to appear – and behind her back they would all laugh and know that Marjorie had made a fool of her; that her chance at beauty had been sacrificed to the jealous whim of a selfish girl. She sat down suddenly before the mirror, biting the inside of her cheek.

"I like it," she said with an effort. "I think it'll be becoming."

Marjorie smiled.

"It looks all right. For heaven's sake, don't let it worry you!"

"I won't."

"Good night, Bernice."

But as the door closed something snapped within Bernice. She sprang dynamically to her feet, clinching her hands, then swiftly and noiselessly crossed over to her bed and from underneath it dragged out her suitcase. Into it she tossed toilet articles and a change of clothing. Then she turned to her trunk and quickly dumped in two drawerfuls of lingerie and summer dresses. She moved quietly, but with deadly efficiency, and in three-quarters of an hour her trunk was locked and strapped and she was fully dressed in a becoming new travelling suit that Marjorie had helped her pick out.

Sitting down at her desk she wrote a short note to Mrs. Harvey, in which she briefly outlined her reasons for going.

She sealed it, addressed it, and laid it on her pillow. She glanced at her watch. The train left at one, and she knew that if she walked down to the Marlborough Hotel two blocks away she could easily get a taxicab.

Suddenly she drew in her breath sharply and an expression flashed into her eyes that a practised character reader might have connected vaguely with the set look she had worn in the barber's chair – somehow a development of it. It was quite a new look for Bernice and it carried consequences.

She went stealthily to the bureau, picked up an article that lay there, and turning out all the lights stood quietly until her eyes became accustomed to the darkness. Softly she pushed open the door to Marjorie's room. She heard the quiet, even breathing of an untroubled conscience asleep.

She was by the bedside now, very deliberate and calm. She acted swiftly. Bending over she found one of the braids of Marjorie's hair, followed it up with her hand to the point nearest the head, and then holding it a little slack so that the sleeper would feel no pull, she reached down with the shears and severed it. With the pigtail in her hand she held her breath. Marjorie had muttered something in her sleep.

Bernice deftly amputated the other braid, paused for an instant, and then flitted swiftly and silently back to her own room.

Down-stairs she opened the big front door, closed it carefully behind her, and feeling oddly happy and exuberant stepped off the porch into the moonlight, swinging her heavy grip like a shopping-bag. After a minute's brisk walk she discovered that her left hand still held the two blond braids. She laughed unexpectedly – had to shut her mouth hard to keep from emitting an absolute peal. She was passing Warren's house now, and on the impulse she set down her baggage, and swinging the braids like pieces of rope flung them at the wooden porch, where they landed with a slight thud. She laughed again, no longer restraining herself.

"Huh!" she giggled wildly. "Scalp the selfish thing!"

Then picking up her suitcase she set off at a half-run down the moonlit street.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Part I

#### ***I. Read Part I and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. How does the author describe the country club?
2. What were the two categories of people who attended Saturday night summer dances?
3. How does the author contrast them?
4. How does the author introduce Warren McIntire?
5. What background information do we learn about Warren?
6. What were the relations between Warren McIntire and Marjorie Harvey?
7. What difficulty was added to Warren's life that August? Why did he put up with it?
8. What was Warren's attitude to Bernice?
9. What was the attitude of the other young men to her? Why?
10. What did Warren decide to do after his dance with Bernice? Why was it a disaster?
11. Why did Warren feel disgust for her?

#### ***II. Say it in Russian.***

Wicker chairs; a dowager; ingenious; grudging; a medley of something; to get an unobstructed view of something; facetious; listlessly; cannot hold a job; bewildering; infallible; to worship somebody; arduous duty; to brandish something; odious; to lunge; to fidget; to mingle; to moon around

#### ***III. Say it in English.***

Неуверенный в себе; большая грудь; куропатка; жалобный, заунывный; вклиниваться (в разговор и т. д.); тайно помолвленный; хвастаться; делать «колесо» (акробатический трюк); отвечать на чувства; мужской подчёрк; светлый, лучезарный; быть в поле зрения; своенравный, непокорный; подавить вздох / улыбку; покраснеть; прикусить губу; воспринимать всерьёз; насмехаться

#### ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To make deductions from something; a shifting world of adolescence; couples were scattered at tables; to do something in succession; to be no fun at a party; to discourse volubly; to be a poor conversationalist

#### ***V. Insert Prepositions.***

To sway ... the rhythm/music; to feel ... one's pocket ... something; to nod ... somebody; to brag ... something; to be stuck ... somebody; to tread ...

something; to lunge ... something; to become clumsy ... something; to sit out;  
to mingle ... something; to sneer ... somebody ... something

***VI. Explain the Difference.***

Chauffer – driver

Facetious – funny

Look at – regard (something)

Resentful – indignant

**Part II**

***I. Read Part II and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. What were the relations between Marjorie and Bernice? Why?
2. What puzzled Bernice?
3. How did she account for her lack of popularity among men?
4. How did she find out the answer to her question?
5. What did Marjorie think about Bernice and girls like her?
6. What objections to Marjorie's opinion did Mrs. Harvey have?
7. Why didn't Marjorie convince her mother?

***II. Say it in Russian.***

Intimates; to busy oneself with something; pulchritude; unscrupulous; gorgeous;  
courtesy; to bolster up; slick; yawn; worth the trouble

***III. Say it in English.***

Жажда́ть сде́лать что-ли́бо; подслу́шивать; ни́ть разгово́ра; бро́сить наме́к;  
утеше́ть се́бя чем-ли́бо; до́бродете́льный, це́ломудре́нный;  
жизне́радос́тный; остроу́мный; убе́ждения

***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To attribute something to something; to have a bum time; to come to a bad end;  
to be fickle

***V. Insert Prepositions.***

To be brought up ... something; to be engaged ... doing something; eavesdrop  
... somebody; to get away ... something; to object ... something

***VI. Explain the difference.***

Giggle – laugh

## Part III

### ***I. Read Part III and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. What was different about Bernice the following morning?
2. How did Marjorie react when Bernice told her about the overheard conversation?
3. What did Bernice try to explain to Marjorie?
4. How did Marjorie behave during their conversation?
5. How did their conversation end? Why?
6. How did Bernice try to reason with Marjorie the following day?
7. What did Marjorie blame women like Bernice for?
8. What decision did Bernice make after that conversation?
9. What pieces of advice did Marjorie give Bernice?
10. How did Bernice feel about them?

### ***II. Say it in Russian.***

To stare intently; to insult; to say succinctly; to murmur; to wear a hard expression; a month's allowance; elusive; inane; to clinch; to begin without preliminaries; to be a blemish; to despise

### ***III. Say it in English.***

Презрение; жалобы, претензии; неподобающий; блефовать; подвыпивший; скукота; взять наугад; удрученный, понурый; благодарный; коротко стричь волосы

### ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To drop one's eyes; to be a drag; the shower of broken words collapsed into little snuffles; to cast no glance at something; a mass of affectations; to be perfectly groomed; to gaze pensively at something

### ***V. Insert Prepositions.***

To alternate something ... something; to make love ... somebody; to burst ... tears; to flee ... the room; an excuse ... something; to raise one's eyebrows ... question

### ***VI. Explain the difference.***

To urge – to persuade  
To weep – to cry  
To persist – to insist  
Sensible – sensitive

## Part IV

### ***I. Read Part IV and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. Where was Bernice seated at the country-club on the following Wednesday evening?
2. What did she think of the young men sitting next to her?
3. How did Bernice change her attitude? Why?
4. What trick did she use to interest the young men?
5. What surprised Warren McIntyre some hours later?
6. Why did Warren decide to dance with Bernice? Why did he fail to do so?
7. What impressions about the dance did Bernice share with Marjorie later that evening?
8. What did Bernice start to realize before she fell asleep?

### ***II. Say it in Russian.***

Shrewdness; enlightenment; at large; appreciative laughter; whither; to account for something; jubilant; dull; defy somebody to do something; to run short of something; to confine one's conversation to somebody; drowsily

### ***III. Say it in English.***

Поступиться самолюбием; нырнуть; льстить; приветствовать; опрокинуть что-либо; подделывать, имитировать; столкнуться с кем-либо

### ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To charge admission; surpassingly brilliant; to be a wonderful judge of character; histrionically proficient; a dark red set off her shadowy eyes; to bask in the knowledge that; to dig something out

### ***V. Insert prepositions.***

To be critical ... something; to speak ... one's ear; head ... somebody; to be jubilant ... doing something

### ***VI. Explain the Difference between the Following Synonyms.***

To falter – to hesitate

To glisten – to shine

## Part V

### ***I. Read Part V and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. What changed about Bernice in the following week?
2. What mistake did she make? How did she rectify the situation?
3. How did Bernice react when she heard Otis Ormonde's story?
4. What was the best known line in Bernice's conversations?

5. What was the most significant symbol of Bernice's success?
6. How did Marjorie react to Warren's spending time with Bernice?
7. How did the relations between Marjorie and Bernice change?
8. How did Marjorie provoke Bernice to bob her hair?
9. Why couldn't Bernice refuse to do it?
10. How did Bernice feel on the way to the barber-shop?
11. How did people inside and outside the barber-shop react when Bernice was having her hair cut?
12. What did Bernice's friends think of her new haircut?
13. When did Bernice finally understand that her social life was over?

## ***II. Say it in Russian.***

Revelation; devotion; beau; utterly astounded; scornful; inadvertently; reproachful; of late; incapacitated; to back out; to clutch something; hostile; nonchalantly; to fumble; voluptuous; to flinch

## ***III. Say it in English.***

Уверенность в себе; порочность современного общества; перевести в шутку; вызвать чувство ревности у кого-либо; памятный; специально тянуть время; сильно биться (о сердце); мяться в нерешительности; распознать чей-то блеф; обменяться взглядами

## ***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To be in the throes of something; to offset the unfortunate occurrence; to make a face-about; to think up an effectual come-back; to be near breaking down

## ***V. Insert Prepositions.***

To trifle ... something; to tinker ... something; his eyes were fixed ... her; to jump ... one's feet; to be bound ... something; to be attired ... something; to care ... something

## ***VI. Explain the Difference that the Following Synonyms Reveal.***

To precipitate – to cause

Portentous – cautionary

Ridiculous – funny

## **Part VI**

### ***I. Read Part VI and Answer the Following Questions.***

1. Why was Aunt Josephine so upset about Bernice's haircut?
2. How did Bernice feel at dinner and in the evening?
3. What conversation did Bernice and Marjorie have late at night?
4. How did Marjorie show her superiority over Bernice?



5. What decision did Bernice make after Marjorie left?
6. How did Bernice take her revenge on Marjorie?
7. How did she feel about it?

***II. Say it in Russian.***

Outrageous; abomination; to wince; supple; a whim; to sever something; to restrain oneself

***III. Say it in English.***

Опечаленный; давать честное слово; коса (волос); идти, крадучись; искусно

***IV. Paraphrase the Following Expressions.***

To be entrenched behind a faint smile; to spring to one's feet; to clinch one's hands; to feel exuberant

***V. Insert Prepositions.***

To set a trap ... somebody; to go through ... something; to sacrifice something ... something

***VI. Compare and contrast Bernice and Marjorie. Comment on the problems raised in the story. What is its central idea?***

СВЕТЛАНА ЮРЬЕВНА ПАВЛИНА  
АНДРЕЙ ВАДИМОВИЧ УЛЬЯНОВ

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## **Анализируем британские и американские рассказы**

*Учебно-методические материалы для студентов  
III курса отделения английского языка  
переводческого факультета*

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