

# IB Literature – 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Summer Reading

Mrs. Lisa Lacy & Mr. Anthony Mooney

**Welcome to IB Literature 11!** The goal of this summer assignment is just to give us some short pieces to talk about in the fall when we come together for the first weeks of school.

## Directions:

You will be reading four short stories and taking notes on them as you read. **Notes must be written on the printed out stories.** Story packets are available in Room 17. A digital version will be available on the TuHS website, but you must print them out to take your notes.

**You must make at least 12 substantive notations on each short story.**

Remember as you read and take notes that the focus of IB English is looking at writing as an art form, **so your notes should focus on the *artistic features of the writing* and how they have an impact on you, rather than what's happening in the story. So no plot summaries, please!**

**Please use a variety of the following active reading responses:**

1. **BEST OPTION: Identify literary devices AND comment on their effectiveness. (This is great practice for the analysis we'll be doing this year!)**
2. Ask a question of the text or author. **And then try to answer it!**
3. Identify a key word, phrase, sentence or image **and comment on what's interesting about it.**
3. Make a connection between the text and another piece of reading.
5. Relate the text to your own experiences.
4. Make a prediction about what will follow.
5. Make an inference or draw a conclusion about the text.
6. Identify and define a word that you don't know. (**Use this sparingly.**)

Make your notes **thoughtful observations** about character interactions, stylistic techniques, or questions for future discussions. You will earn your score based on both the number and variety of your responses. Quality and quantity count. **Please distribute your responses throughout the stories, beginning to end.**

**You will be turning in your annotated stories on the first class meeting** in the fall.

If you have any questions, please contact either Mrs. Lacy at [llacy@ttsd.k12.or.us](mailto:llacy@ttsd.k12.or.us) or Mr. Mooney at [amooney@ttsd.k12.or.us](mailto:amooney@ttsd.k12.or.us). We will be delighted to help you and look forward to working with you in IB Literature 11!

“The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”  
by Ernest Hemingway

It was now lunch time and they were all sitting under the double green fly of the dining tent pretending that nothing had happened.

“Will you have lime juice or lemon squash?” Macomber asked.

“I’ll have a gimlet,” Robert Wilson told him.

5 “I’ll have a gimlet too. I need something,” Macomber’s wife said.

“I suppose it’s the thing to do,” Macomber agreed. “Tell him to make three gimlets.”

The mess boy had started them already, lifting the bottles out of the canvas cooling bags that sweated wet in the wind that blew through the trees that shaded the tents.

“What had I ought to give them?” Macomber asked.

10 “A quid would be plenty,” Wilson told him. “You don’t want to spoil them.”

“Will the headman distribute it?”

“Absolutely.”

Francis Macomber had, half an hour before, been carried to his tent from the edge of the camp in triumph on the arms and shoulders of the cook, the personal boys, the skinner and the porters. The gun-bearers had taken no part in the demonstration. When the native boys put him down at the door of his tent, he had shaken all their hands, received their congratulations, and then gone into the tent and sat on the bed until his wife came in. She did not speak to him when she came in and he left the tent at once to wash his face and hands in the portable wash basin outside and go over to the dining tent to sit in a comfortable canvas chair in the breeze and the shade.

“You’ve got your lion,” Robert Wilson said to him, “and a damned fine one too.”

20 Mrs. Macomber looked at Wilson quickly. She was an extremely handsome and well kept woman of the beauty and social position which had, five years before, commanded five thousand dollars as the price of endorsing, with photographs, a beauty product which she had never used. She had been married to Francis Macomber for eleven years.

25 “He is a good lion, isn’t he?” Macomber said. His wife looked at him now. She looked at both these men as though she had never seen them before.

One, Wilson, the white hunter, she knew she had never truly seen before. He was about middle height with sandy hair, a stubby mustache, a very red face and extremely cold blue eyes with faint white wrinkles at the corners that grooved merrily when he smiled. He smiled at her now and she looked away from his face at the way his shoulders sloped in the loose tunic he wore with the four big cartridges held in loops where the left breast pocket should have been, at his big brown hands, his old slacks, his very dirty boots and back to his red face again. She noticed where the baked red of his face stopped in a white line that marked the circle left by his Stetson hat that hung now from one of the pegs of the tent pole.

“Well, here’s to the lion,” Robert Wilson said. He smiled at her again and, not smiling, she looked curiously at her husband.

35 Francis Macomber was very tall, very well built if you did not mind that length of bone, dark, his hair cropped like an oarsman, rather thin-lipped, and was considered handsome. He was dressed in the same sort of safari clothes that Wilson wore except that his were new, he was thirty-five years old, kept himself very fit, was good at court games, had a number of big-game fishing records, and had just shown himself, very publicly, to be a coward.

“Here’s to the lion,” he said. “I can’t ever thank you for what you did.”

40 Margaret, his wife, looked away from him and back to Wilson.

“Let’s not talk about the lion,” she said.

Wilson looked over at her without smiling and now she smiled at him.

“It’s been a very strange day,” she said. “Hadn’t you ought to put your hat on even under the canvas at noon? You told me that, you know.”

45 “Might put it on,” said Wilson.

“You know you have a very red face, Mr. Wilson,” she told him and smiled again.

“Drink,” said Wilson.

“I don’t think so,” she said. “Francis drinks a great deal, but his face is never red.”

“It’s red today,” Macomber tried a joke.

50 “No,” said Margaret. “It’s mine that’s red today. But Mr. Wilson’s is always red.

“Must be racial,” said Wilson. “I say, you wouldn’t like to drop my beauty as a topic, would you?”

"I've just started on it."

"Let's chuck it," said Wilson.

"Conversation is going to be so difficult," Margaret said.

55 "Don't be silly, Margot," her husband said.

"No difficulty," Wilson said. "Got a damn fine lion."

Margot looked at them both and they both saw that she was going to cry. Wilson had seen it coming for a long time and he dreaded it. Macomber was past dreading it.

60 "I wish it hadn't happened. Oh, I wish it hadn't happened," she said and started for her tent. She made no noise of crying but they could see that her shoulders were shaking under the rose-colored, sun-proofed shirt she wore.

"Women upset," said Wilson to the tall man. "Amounts to nothing. Strain on the nerves and one thing'n another."

"No," said Macomber. "I suppose that I rate that for the rest of my life now."

"Nonsense. Let's have a spot of the giant killer," said Wilson. "Forget the whole thing. Nothing to it anyway."

65 "We might try," said Macomber. "I won't forget what you did for me though."

"Nothing," said Wilson. "All nonsense."

70 So they sat there in the shade where the camp was pitched under some wide-topped acacia trees with a boulder-strewn cliff behind them, and a stretch of grass that ran to the bank of a boulder-filled stream in front with forest beyond it, and drank their just-cool lime drinks and avoided one another's eyes while the boys all knew about it now and when he saw Macomber's personal boy looking curiously at his master while he was putting dishes on the table he snapped at him in Swahili. The boy turned away with his face blank.

"What were you telling him?" Macomber asked.

"Nothing. Told him to look alive or I'd see he got about fifteen of the best."

"What's that? Lashes?"

"It's quite illegal," Wilson said. "You're supposed to fine them."

75 "Do you still have them whipped?"

"Oh, yes. They could raise a row if they chose to complain. But they don't. They prefer it to the fines."

"How strange!" said Macomber.

"Not strange, really," Wilson said. "Which would you rather do? Take a good birching or lose your pay?"

80 Then he felt embarrassed at asking it and before Macomber could answer he went on, "We all take a beating every day, you know, one way or another."

This was no better. "Good God," he thought. "I am a diplomat, aren't I?"

"Yes, we take a beating," said Macomber, still not looking at him. "I'm awfully sorry about that lion business. It doesn't have to go any further, does it? I mean no one will hear about it, will they?"

85 "You mean will I tell it at the Mathaiga Club?" Wilson looked at him now coldly. He had not expected this. So he's a bloody four-letter man as well as a bloody coward, he thought. I rather liked him too until today. But how is one to know about an American?

"No," said Wilson. "I'm a professional hunter. We never talk about our clients. You can be quite easy on that. It's supposed to be bad form to ask us not to talk though."

90 He had decided now that to break would be much easier. He would eat, then, by himself and could read a book with his meals. They would eat by themselves. He would see them through the safari on a very formal basis—what was it the French called it? Distinguished consideration—and it would be a damn sight easier than having to go through this emotional trash. He'd insult him and make a good clean break. Then he could read a book with his meals and he'd still be drinking their whisky. That was the phrase for it when a safari went bad. You ran into another white hunter and you asked, "How is everything going?" and he answered, "Oh, I'm still drinking their  
95 whisky," and you knew everything had gone to pot.

"I'm sorry," Macomber said and looked at him with his American face that would stay adolescent until it became middle-aged, and Wilson noted his crew-cropped hair, fine eyes only faintly shifty, good nose, thin lips and handsome jaw. "I'm sorry I didn't realize that. There are lots of things I don't know."

100 So what could he do, Wilson thought. He was all ready to break it off quickly and neatly and here the beggar was apologizing after he had just insulted him. He made one more attempt. "Don't worry about me talking," he said. "I have a living to make. You know in Africa no woman ever misses her lion and no white man ever bolts.

"I bolted like a rabbit," Macomber said.

Now what in hell were you going to do about a man who talked like that, Wilson wondered.

105 Wilson looked at Macomber with his flat, blue, machinegunner's eyes and the other smiled back at him. He had a pleasant smile if you did not notice how his eyes showed when he was hurt.

"Maybe I can fix it up on buffalo," he said. "We're after them next, aren't we?"

"In the morning if you like," Wilson told him. Perhaps he had been wrong. This was certainly the way to take it. You most certainly could not tell a damned thing about an American. He was all for Macomber again. If you could forget the morning. But, of course, you couldn't. The morning had been about as bad as they come.

110 "Here comes the Memsahib," he said. She was walking over from her tent looking refreshed and cheerful and quite lovely. She had a very perfect oval face, so perfect that you expected her to be stupid. But she wasn't stupid, Wilson thought, no, not stupid.

"How is the beautiful red-faced Mr. Wilson? Are you feeling better, Francis, my pearl?"

"Oh, much," said Macomber.

115 "I've dropped the whole thing," she said, sitting down at the table. "What importance is there to whether Francis is any good at killing lions? That's not his trade. That's Mr. Wilson's trade. Mr. Wilson is really very impressive killing anything. You do kill anything, don't you?"

120 "Oh, anything," said Wilson. "Simply anything." They are, he thought, the hardest in the world; the hardest, the cruelest, the most predatory and the most attractive and their men have softened or gone to pieces nervously as they have hardened. Or is it that they pick men they can handle? They can't know that much at the age they marry, he thought. He was grateful that he had gone through his education on American women before now because this was a very attractive one.

"We're going after buff in the morning," he told her.

"I'm coming," she said.

125 "No, you're not."

"Oh, yes, I am. Mayn't I, Francis?"

"Why not stay in camp?"

"Not for anything," she said. "I wouldn't miss something like today for anything."

130 When she left, Wilson was thinking, when she went off to cry, she seemed a hell of a fine woman. She seemed to understand, to realize, to be hurt for him and for herself and to know how things really stood. She is away for twenty minutes and now she is back, simply enameled in that American female cruelty. They are the damnedest women. Really the damnedest.

"We'll put on another show for you tomorrow," Francis Macomber said.

"You're not coming," Wilson said.

135 "You're very mistaken," she told him. "And I want so to see you perform again. You were lovely this morning. That is if blowing things' heads off is lovely."

"Here's the lunch," said Wilson. "You're very merry, aren't you?"

"Why not? I didn't come out here to be dull."

140 "Well, it hasn't been dull," Wilson said. He could see the boulders in the river and the high bank beyond with the trees and he remembered the morning.

"Oh, no," she said. "It's been charming. And tomorrow. You don't know how I look forward to tomorrow."

"That's eland he's offering you," Wilson said.

"They're the big cowy things that jump like hares, aren't they?"

"I suppose that describes them," Wilson said.

145 "It's very good meat," Macomber said.

"Yes."

"They're not dangerous, are they?"

"Only if they fall on you," Wilson told her.

"I'm so glad."

150 "Why not let up on the bitchery just a little, Margot," Macomber said, cutting the eland steak and putting some mashed potato, gravy and carrot on the down-turned fork that tined through the piece of meat.

"I suppose I could," she said, "since you put it so prettily."

"Tonight we'll have champagne for the lion," Wilson said. "It's a bit too hot at noon."

"Oh, the lion," Margot said. "I'd forgotten the lion!"

155 So, Robert Wilson thought to himself, she is giving him a ride, isn't she? Or do you suppose that's her idea of putting up a good show? How should a woman act when she discovers her husband is a bloody coward? She's damn cruel but they're all cruel. They govern, of course, and to govern one has to be cruel sometimes. Still, I've seen enough of their damn terrorism.

"Have some more eland," he said to her politely.

160 That afternoon, late, Wilson and Macomber went out in the motor car with the native driver and the two gun-bearers. Mrs. Macomber stayed in the camp. It was too hot to go out, she said, and she was going with them in the

early morning. As they drove off Wilson saw her standing under the big tree, looking pretty rather than beautiful in her faintly rosy khaki, her dark hair drawn back off her forehead and gathered in a knot low on her neck, her face as fresh, he thought, as though she were in England. She waved to them as the car went off through the swale of high grass and curved around through the trees into the small hills of orchard bush.

In the orchard bush they found a herd of impala, and leaving the car they stalked one old ram with long, wide-spread horns and Macomber killed it with a very creditable shot that knocked the buck down at a good two hundred yards and sent the herd off bounding wildly and leaping over one another's backs in long, leg-drawn-up leaps as unbelievable and as floating as those one makes sometimes in dreams.

"That was a good shot," Wilson said. "They're a small target."

"Is it a worth-while head?" Macomber asked.

"It's excellent," Wilson told him. "You shoot like that and you'll have no trouble."

"Do you think we'll find buffalo tomorrow?"

"There's good chance of it. They feed out early in the morning and with luck we may catch them in the open."

"I'd like to clear away that lion business," Macomber said. "It's not very pleasant to have your wife see you do something like that."

I should think it would be even more unpleasant to do it, Wilson thought, wife or no wife, or to talk about having done it. But he said, "I wouldn't think about that any more. Any one could be upset by his first lion. That's all over."

But that night after dinner and a whisky and soda by the fire before going to bed, as Francis Macomber lay on his cot with the mosquito bar over him and listened to the night noises it was not all over. It was neither all over nor was it beginning. It was there exactly as it happened with some parts of it indelibly emphasized and he was miserably ashamed at it. But more than shame he felt cold, hollow fear in him. The fear was still there like a cold slimy hollow in all the emptiness where once his confidence had been and it made him feel sick. It was still there with him now.

It had started the night before when he had wakened and heard the lion roaring somewhere up along the river. It was a deep sound and there were sort of coughing grunts that made him seem just outside the tent, and when Francis Macomber woke in the night to hear it he was afraid. He could hear his wife breathing quietly, asleep. There was no one to tell he was afraid, nor to be afraid with him, and, lying alone, he did not know the Somali proverb that says a brave man is always frightened three times by a lion; when he first sees his track, when he first hears him roar and when he first confronts him. Then while they were eating breakfast by lantern light out in the dining tent, before the sun was up, the lion roared again and Francis thought he was just at the edge of camp.

"Sounds like an old-timer," Robert Wilson said, looking up from his kippers and coffee. "Listen to him cough."

"Is he very close?"

"A mile or so up the stream."

"Will we see him?"

"We'll have a look."

"Does his roaring carry that far? It sounds as though he were right in camp."

"Carries a hell of a long way," said Robert Wilson. "It's strange the way it carries. Hope he's a shootable cat. The boys said there was a very big one about here."

"If I get a shot, where should I hit him," Macomber asked, "to stop him?"

"In the shoulders," Wilson said. "In the neck if you can make it. Shoot for bone. Break him down."

"I hope I can place it properly," Macomber said.

"You shoot very well," Wilson told him. "Take your time. Make sure of him. The first one in is the one that counts."

"What range will it be?"

"Can't tell. Lion has something to say about that. Won't shoot unless it's close enough so you can make sure."

"At under a hundred yards?" Macomber asked.

Wilson looked at him quickly.

"Hundred's about right. Might have to take him a bit under. Shouldn't chance a shot at much over that. A hundred's a decent range. You can hit him wherever you want at that. Here comes the Memsahib."

"Good morning," she said. "Are we going after that lion?"

"As soon as you deal with your breakfast," Wilson said.

"How are you feeling?"

"Marvelous," she said. "I'm very excited."

"I'll just go and see that everything is ready," Wilson went off. As he left the lion roared again.

"Noisy beggar," Wilson said. "We'll put a stop to that."

"What's the matter, Francis?" his wife asked him.

“Nothing,” Macomber said.  
 “Yes, there is,” she said. “What are you upset about?”  
 “Nothing,” he said.  
 220 “Tell me,” she looked at him. “Don’t you feel well?”  
 “It’s that damned roaring,” he said. “It’s been going on all night, you know.”  
 “Why didn’t you wake me,” she said. “I’d love to have heard it.”  
 “I’ve got to kill the damned thing,” Macomber said, miserably.  
 “Well, that’s what you’re out here for, isn’t it?”  
 225 “Yes. But I’m nervous. Hearing the thing roar gets on my nerves.”  
 “Well then, as Wilson said, kill him and stop his roaring.”  
 “Yes, darling,” said Francis Macomber. “It sounds easy, doesn’t it?”  
 “You’re not afraid, are you?”  
 “Of course not. But I’m nervous from hearing him roar all night.”  
 230 “You’ll kill him marvelously,” she said. “I know you will. I’m awfully anxious to see it.”  
 “Finish your breakfast and we’ll be starting.”  
 “It’s not light yet,” she said. “This is a ridiculous hour.”  
 Just then as the lion roared in a deep-chested moaning, suddenly guttural, ascending vibration that seemed to  
 shake the air and ended in a sigh and a heavy, deep-chested grunt.  
 235 “He sounds almost here,” Macomber’s wife said.  
 “My God,” said Macomber. “I hate that damned noise.”  
 “It’s very impressive.”  
 “Impressive. It’s frightful.”  
 Robert Wilson came up then carrying his short, ugly, shockingly big-bored .505 Gibbs and grinning.  
 240 “Come on,” he said. “Your gun-bearer has your Springfield and the big gun. Everything’s in the car. Have you  
 solids?”  
 “Yes.”  
 “I’m ready,” Mrs. Macomber said.  
 “Must make him stop that racket,” Wilson said. “You get in front. The Memsahib can sit back here with me.”  
 245 They climbed into the motor car and, in the gray first day-light, moved off up the river through the trees.  
 Macomber opened the breech of his rifle and saw had metal-cased bullets, shut the bolt and put the rifle on safety. He  
 saw his hand was trembling. He felt in his pocket for more cartridges and moved his fingers over the cartridges in the  
 loops of his tunic front. He turned back to where Wilson sat in the rear seat of the doorless, box-bodied motor car  
 beside his wife, them both grinning with excitement, and Wilson leaned forward and whispered, “See the birds  
 250 dropping. Means the old boy has left his kill.”  
 On the far bank of the stream Macomber could see, above the trees, vultures circling and plummeting down.  
 “Chances are he’ll come to drink along here,” Wilson whispered. Before he goes to lay up. Keep an eye out.”  
 They were driving slowly along the high bank of the stream which here cut deeply to its boulder-filled bed, and  
 they wound in and out through big trees as they drove. Macomber was watching the opposite bank when he felt  
 255 Wilson take hold of his arm. The car stopped.  
 “There he is,” he heard the whisper. “Ahead and to the right. Get out and take him. He’s a marvelous lion.”  
 Macomber saw the lion now. He was standing almost broadside, his great head up and turned toward them. The  
 early morning breeze that blew toward them was just stirring his dark mane, and the lion looked huge, silhouetted on  
 the rise of bank in the gray morning light, his shoulders heavy, his barrel of a body bulking smoothly.  
 260 “How far is he?” asked Macomber, raising his rifle.  
 “About seventy-five. Get out and take him.”  
 “Why not shoot from where I am?”  
 “You don’t shoot them from cars,” he heard Wilson saying in his car. “Get out. He’s not going to stay there all  
 day.”  
 265 Macomber stepped out of the curved opening at the side of the front seat, onto the step and down onto the ground.  
 The lion still stood looking majestically and coolly toward this object that his eyes only showed in silhouette, bulking  
 like some superrhino. There was no man smell carried toward him and he watched the object, moving his great head  
 a little from side to side. Then watching the object, not afraid, but hesitating before going down the bank to drink  
 with such a thing opposite him, he saw a man figure detach itself from it and he turned his heavy head and swung  
 270 away toward the cover for the trees as he heard a cracking crash and felt the slam of a .30-06 220-grain solid bullet  
 that bit his flank and ripped in sudden hot scalding nausea through his stomach. He trotted, heavy, big-footed,

swinging wounded lull-bellied, the trees toward the tall grass and cover, and the crash came again to go past him ripping the air apart. Then it crashed again and he felt the blow as it hit his lower ribs and ripped on through, blood sudden hot and frothy in his mouth, and he galloped toward the high grass where he could crouch and not be seen and make them bring the crashing thing close enough so he could make a rush and get the man that held it.

Macomber had not thought how the lion felt as he got out of the car. He only knew his hands were shaking and as he walked away from the car it was almost impossible for him to make his legs move. They were stiff in the thighs, but he could feel the muscles fluttering. He raised the rifle, sighted on the junction of the lion's head and shoulders and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened though he pulled until he thought his finger would break. Then he knew he had the safety on and as he lowered the rifle to move the safety over he moved another frozen pace forward, and the lion seeing his silhouette now clear of the silhouette of the car, turned and started off at a trot, and, as Macomber fired, he heard a whunk that meant that the bullet was home; but the lion kept on going. Macomber shot again and every one saw the bullet throw a spout of dirt beyond the trotting lion. He shot again, remembering to lower his aim, and they all heard the bullet hit, and the lion went into a gallop and was in the tall grass before he had the bolt pushed forward.

Macomber stood there feeling sick at his stomach, his hands that held the springfield still cocked, shaking, and his wife and Robert Wilson were standing by him. Beside him too were the two gun-bearers chattering in Wakamba.

"I hit him," Macomber said. "I hit him twice."

"You gut-shot him and you hit him somewhere forward," Wilson said without enthusiasm. The gun-bearers looked very grave. They were silent now.

"You may have killed him," Wilson went on. "We'll have to wait a while before we go in to find out."

"What do you mean?"

"Let him get sick before we follow him up."

"Oh," said Macomber.

"He's a hell of a fine lion," Wilson said cheerfully. "He's gotten into a bad place though."

"Why is it bad?"

"Can't see him until you're on him."

"Oh," said Macomber.

"Come on," said Wilson. "The Memsahib can stay here in the car. We'll go to have a look at the blood spoor."

"Stay here, Margot," Macomber said to his wife. His mouth was very dry and it was hard for him to talk.

"Why?" she asked.

"Wilson says so."

"We're going to have a look," Wilson said. "You stay here. You can see even better from here."

"All right."

Wilson spoke in Swahili to the driver. He nodded and said, "Yes, Bwana."

Then they went down the steep bank and across the stream, climbing over and around the boulders and up the other bank, pulling up by some projecting roots, and along it until they found where the lion had been trotting when Macomber first shot. There was dark blood on the short grass that the gun-bearers pointed out with grass stems, and that ran away behind the river bank trees.

"What do we do?" asked Macomber.

"Not much choice," said Wilson. "We can't bring the car over. Bank's too steep. We'll let him stiffen up a bit and then you and I'll go in and have a look for him."

"Can't we set the grass on fire?" Macomber asked.

"Too green."

"Can't we send beaters?"

Wilson looked at him appraisingly. "Of course we can," he said. "But it's just a touch murderous. You see we know the lion's wounded. You can drive an unwounded lion—he'll move on ahead of a noise—but a wounded lion's going to charge. You can't see him until you're right on him. He'll make himself perfectly flat in cover you wouldn't think would hide a hare. You can't very well send boys in there to that sort of a show. Somebody's bound to get mauled."

"What about the gun-bearers?"

"Oh, they'll go with us. It's their shauri. You see, they signed on for it. They don't look too happy though, do they?"

"I don't want to go in there," said Macomber. It was out before he knew he'd said it.

"Neither do I," said Wilson very cheerily. "Really no choice though." Then, as an afterthought, he glanced at Macomber and saw suddenly how he was trembling and the pitiful look on his face.

"You don't have to go in, of course," he said. "that's what I'm hired for, you know. That's why I'm so expensive."

"You mean you'd go in by yourself? Why not leave him there?"

Robert Wilson, whose entire occupation had been with the lion and the problem he presented, and who had not been thinking about Macomber except to note that he was rather windy, suddenly felt as though he had opened the wrong door in a hotel and seen something shameful.

"What do you mean?"

"Why not just leave him?"

"You mean pretend to ourselves he hasn't been hit?"

"No. Just drop it."

"It isn't done."

"Why not?"

"For one thing, he's certain to be suffering. For another, some one else might run on to him."

"I see."

"But you don't have to have anything to do with it."

"I'd like to," Macomber said. "I'm just scared, you know."

"I'll go ahead when we go in," Wilson said, "with Kongoni tracking. You keep behind me and a little to one side. Chances are we'll hear him growl. If we see him we'll both shoot. Don't worry about anything. I'll keep you backed up. As a matter of fact, you know, perhaps you'd better not go. It might be much better. Why don't you go over and join the Memsahib while I just get it over with?"

"No, I want to go."

"All right," said Wilson. "But don't go in if you don't want to. This is my shauri now, you know."

"I want to go," said Macomber.

They sat under a tree and smoked.

"Want to go back and speak to the Memsahib while we're waiting?" Wilson asked.

"No."

"I'll just step back and tell her to be patient."

"Good," said Macomber. He sat there, sweating under his arms, his mouth dry, his stomach hollow feeling, wanting to find courage to tell Wilson to go on and finish off the lion without him. He could not know that Wilson was furious because he had not noticed the state he was in earlier and sent him back to his wife. While he sat there Wilson came up. "I have your big gun," he said. "Take it. We've given him time, I think. Come on."

Macomber took the big gun and Wilson said, "Keep behind me and about five yards to the right and do exactly as I tell you." Then he spoke in Swahili to the two gun-bearers who looked the picture of gloom.

"Let's go," he said.

"Could I have a drink of water?" Macomber asked. Wilson spoke to the older gun-bearer, who wore a canteen on his belt, and the man unbuckled it, unscrewed the top and handed it to Macomber, who took it noticing how heavy it seemed and how hairy and shoddy the felt covering was in his hand. He raised it to drink and looked ahead at the high grass with the flat-topped trees behind it. A breeze was blowing toward them and the grass rippled gently in the wind. He looked at the gun-bearer and he could see the gun-bearer was suffering too with fear.

Thirty-five yards into the grass the big lion lay flattened out along the ground. His ears were back and his only movement was a slight twitching up and down of his long, black-tufted tail. He had turned at bay as soon as he had reached this cover and he was sick with the wound through his full belly, and weakening with the wound through his lungs that brought a thin foamy red to his mouth each time he breathed. His flanks were wet and hot and flies were on the little openings the solid bullets had made in his tawny hide, and his big yellow eyes, narrowed with hate, looked straight ahead, only blinking when the pain came as he breathed, and his claws dug in the soft baked earth. All of him, pain, sickness, hatred and all of his remaining strength, was tightening into an absolute concentration for a rush. He could hear the men talking and he waited, gathering all of himself into this preparation for a charge as soon as the men would come into the grass. As he heard their voices his tail stiffened to twitch up and down, and, as they came into the edge of the grass, he made a coughing grunt and charged.

Kongoni, the old gun-bearer, in the lead watching the blood spoor, Wilson watching the grass for any movement, his big gun ready, the second gun-bearer looking ahead and listening, Macomber close to Wilson, his rifle cocked, they had just moved into the grass when Macomber heard the blood-choked coughing grunt, and saw the swishing rush in the grass. The next thing he knew he was running; running wildly, in panic in the open, running toward the stream.



He heard the ca-ra-wong! of Wilson's big rifle, and again in a second crashing carawong! and turning saw the lion, horrible-looking now, with half his head seeming to be gone, crawling toward Wilson in the edge of the tall grass while the red-faced man worked the belt on the short ugly rifle and aimed carefully as another blasting  
385 carawong! came from the muzzle, and the crawling, heavy, yellow bulk of the lion stiffened and the huge, mutilated head slid forward and Macomber, standing by himself in the clearing where he had run, holding a loaded rifle, while two black men and a white man looked back at him in contempt, knew the lion was dead. He came toward Wilson, his tallness all seeming a naked reproach, and Wilson looked at him and said:

"Want to take pictures?"

"No," he said.

390 That was all any one had said until they reached the motor car. Then Wilson had said:

"Hell of a fine lion. Boys will skin him out. We might as well stay here in the shade."

Macomber's wife had not looked at him nor he at her and he had sat by her in the back seat with Wilson sitting in the front seat. Once he had reached over and taken his wife's hand without looking at her and she had removed her hand from his. Looking across the stream to where the gun-bearers were skinning out the lion he could see that she  
395 had been able to see the whole thing. While they sat there his wife had reached forward and put her hand on Wilson's shoulder. He turned and she had leaned forward over the low seat and kissed him on the mouth.

"Oh, I say," said Wilson, going redder than his natural baked color.

"Mr. Robert Wilson," she said. "The beautiful red-faced Mr. Robert Wilson."

Then she sat down beside Macomber again and looked away across the stream to where the lion lay, with uplifted,  
400 white-muscle, tendon-marked naked forearms, and white bloating belly, as the black men fleshed away the skin. Finally the gun-bearer brought the skin over, wet and heavy, and climbed in behind with it, rolling it up before they got in, and the motor car started. No one had said anything more until they were back in camp.

That was the story of the lion. Macomber did not know how the lion had felt before he started his rush, nor during it when the unbelievable smash of the .505 with a muzzle velocity of two tons had hit him in the mouth, nor what  
405 kept him coming after that, when the second ripping crash had smashed his hind quarters and he had come crawling on toward the crashing, blasting thing that had destroyed him. Wilson knew something about it and only expressed it by saying, "Damned fine lion," but Macomber did not know how Wilson felt about things either. He did not know how his wife felt except that she was through with him.

His wife had been through with him before but it never lasted. He was very wealthy, and would be much  
410 wealthier, and he knew she would not leave him ever now. That was one of the few things that he really knew. He knew about that, about motorcycles—that was earliest—about motor cars, about duck-shooting, about fishing, trout, salmon and big-sea, about sex in books, many books, too many books, about all court games, about dogs, not much about horses, about hanging on to his money, about most of the other things his world dealt in, and about his wife not leaving him. His wife had been a great beauty and she was still a great beauty in Africa, but she was not a great  
415 enough beauty any more at home to be able to leave him and better herself and she knew it and he knew it. She had missed the chance to leave him and he knew it. If he had been better with women she would probably have started to worry about him getting another new, beautiful wife; but she knew too much about him to worry about him either. Also he had always had a great tolerance which seemed the nicest thing about him if it were not the most sinister.

All in all they were known as a comparatively happily married couple, one of those whose disruption is often  
420 rumored but never occurs, and as the society columnist put it, they were adding more than a spice of adventure to their much envied and ever enduring romance by a Safari in what was known as Darkest Africa until the Martin Johnsons lighted it on so many silver screens where they were pursuing Old Simba the lion, the buffalo, Tembo the elephant and as well collecting specimens for the Museum of Natural History. This same columnist had reported them on the verge at least three times in the past and they had been. But they always made it up. They had a sound  
425 basis of union. Margot was too beautiful for Macomber to divorce her and Macomber had too much money for Margot ever to leave him.

It was now about three o'clock in the morning and Francis Macomber, who had been asleep a little while after he had stopped thinking about the lion, wakened and then slept again, woke suddenly, frightened in a dream of the bloody-headed lion standing over him, and listening while his heart pounded, he realized that his wife was not in the  
430 other cot in the tent. He lay awake with the knowledge for two hours.

At the end of that time his wife came into the tent, lifted her mosquito bar and crawled cozily into bed.

"Where have you been?" Macomber asked in the darkness.

"Hello," she said. "Are you awake?"

"Where have you been?"

435 "I just went out to get a breath of air."

“You did, like hell.”  
 “What do you want me to say, darling?”  
 “Where have you been?”  
 “Out to get a breath of air.”  
 440 “That’s a new name for it. You are a bitch.”  
 “Well, you’re coward.”  
 “All right,” he said. “What of it?”  
 “Nothing as far as I’m concerned. But please let’s not talk, darling, because I’m very sleepy.”  
 “You think that I’ll take anything.”  
 445 “I know you will, sweet.”  
 “Well, I won’t.”  
 “Please, darling, let’s not talk. I’m so very sleepy.”  
 “There wasn’t going to be any of that. You promised there wouldn’t be.”  
 “Well, there is now,” she said sweetly.  
 450 “You said if we made this trip that there would be none of that. You promised.”  
 “Yes, darling. That’s the way I meant it to be. But the trip was spoiled yesterday. We don’t have to talk about it, do we?”  
 “You don’t wait long when you have an advantage, do you?”  
 “Please let’s not talk. I’m so sleepy, darling.”  
 455 “I’m going to talk.”  
 “Don’t mind me then, because I’m going to sleep.” And she did.  
 At breakfast they were all three at the table before daylight and Francis Macomber found that, of all the many men that he had hated, he hated Robert Wilson the most.  
 “Sleep well?” Wilson asked in his throaty voice, filling a pipe.  
 460 “Did you?”  
 “Topping,” the white hunter told him.  
 You bastard, thought Macomber, you insolent bastard.  
 So she woke him when she came in, Wilson thought, looking at them both with his flat, cold eyes. Well, why doesn’t he keep his wife where she belongs? What does he think I am, a bloody plaster saint? Let him keep her  
 465 where she belongs. It’s his own fault.  
 “Do you think we’ll find buffalo?” Margot asked, pushing away a dish of apricots.  
 “Chance of it,” Wilson said and smiled at her. “Why don’t you stay in camp?”  
 “Not for anything,” she told him.  
 “Why not order her to stay in camp?” Wilson said to Macomber.  
 470 “Your order her,” said Macomber coldly.  
 “Let’s not have any ordering, nor,” turning to Macomber, “any silliness, Francis,” Margot said quite pleasantly.  
 “Are you ready to start?” Macomber asked.  
 “Any time,” Wilson told him. “Do you want the Memsahib to go?”  
 “Does it make any difference whether I do or not?”  
 475 The hell with it, thought Robert Wilson. The utter complete hell with it. So this is what it’s going to be like. Well, this is what it’s going to be like, then.  
 “Makes no difference,” he said.  
 “You’re sure you wouldn’t like to stay in camp with her yourself and let me go out and hunt the buffalo?”  
 Macomber asked.  
 480 “Can’t do that,” said Wilson. “Wouldn’t talk rot if I were you.”  
 “I’m not talking rot. I’m disgusted.”  
 “Bad word, disgusted.”  
 “Francis, will you please try to speak sensibly!” his wife said.  
 “I speak too damned sensibly,” Macomber said. “Did you ever eat such filthy food?”  
 485 “Something wrong with the food?” asked Wilson quietly.  
 “No more than with everything else.”  
 “I’d pull yourself together, laddybuck,” Wilson said very quietly. “There’s a boy waits at table that understands a little English.”  
 “The hell with him.”

490 Wilson stood up and puffing on his pipe strolled away, speaking a few words in Swahili to one of the gun-bearers who was standing waiting for him. Macomber and his wife sat on at the table. He was staring at his coffee cup.

"If you make a scene I'll leave you, darling," Margot said quietly.

"No, you won't."

"You can try it and see."

495 "You won't leave me."

"No," she said. "I won't leave you and you'll behave yourself."

"Behave myself? That's a way to talk. Behave myself."

"Yes. Behave yourself."

"Why don't you try behaving?"

500 "I've tried it so long. So very long."

"I hate that red-faced swine," Macomber said. "I loathe the sight of him."

"He's really very nice."

"Oh, shut up," Macomber almost shouted. Just then the car came up and stopped in front of the dining tent and the driver and the two gun-bearers got out. Wilson walked over and looked at the husband and wife sitting there at the table.

505 "Going shooting?" he asked.

"Yes," said Macomber, standing up. "Yes."

"Better bring a woolly. It will be cool in the car," Wilson said.

"I'll get my leather jacket," Margot said.

510 "The boy has it," Wilson told her. He climbed into the front with the driver and Francis Macomber and his wife sat, not speaking, in the back seat.

Hope the silly beggar doesn't take a notion to blow the back of my head off, Wilson thought to himself. Women are a nuisance on safari.

515 The car was grinding down to cross the river at a pebbly ford in the gray daylight and then climbed, angling up the steep bank, where Wilson had ordered a way shoveled out the day before so they could reach the parklike wooded rolling country on the far side.

520 It was a good morning, Wilson thought. There was a heavy dew and as the wheels went through the grass and low bushes he could smell the odor of the crushed fronds. It was an odor like verbena and he liked this early morning smell of the dew, the crushed bracken and the look of the tree trunks showing black through the early morning mist, as the car made its way through the untracked, parklike country. He had put the two in the back seat out of his mind now and was thinking about buffalo. The buffalo that he was after stayed in the daytime in a thick swamp where it was impossible to get a shot, but in the night they fed out into an open stretch of country and if he could come between them and their swamp with the car, Macomber would have a good chance at them in the open. He did not want to hunt buff or anything else with Macomber at all, but he was a professional hunter and he had hunted with some rare ones in his time. If they got buff today there would only be rhino to come and the poor man would have gone through his dangerous game and things might pick up. He'd have nothing more to do with the woman and Macomber would get over that too. He must have gone through plenty of that before by the look of things. Poor beggar. He must have a way of getting over it. Well, it was the poor sod's own bloody fault.

525 He, Robert Wilson, carried a double size cot on safari to accommodate any windfalls he might receive. He had hunted for a certain clientele, the international, fast, sporting set, where the women did not feel they were getting their money's worth unless they had shared that cot with the white hunter. He despised them when he was away from them although he liked some of them well enough at the time, but he made his living by them; and their standards were his standards as long as they were hiring him.

530 They were his standards in all except the shooting. He had his own standards about the killing and they could live up to them or get some one else to hunt them. He knew, too, that they all respected him for this. This Macomber was an odd one though. Damned if he wasn't. Now the wife. Well, the wife. Yes, the wife. Hm, the wife. Well he's dropped all that. He looked around at them. Macomber sat grim and furious. Margot smiled at him. She looked younger today, more innocent and fresher and not so professionally beautiful. What's in her heart God knows, Wilson thought. She hadn't talked much last night. At that it was a pleasure to see her.

540 The motor car climbed up a slight rise and went on through the trees and then out into a grassy prairie-like opening and kept in the shelter of the trees along the edge, the driver going slowly and Wilson looking carefully out across the prairie and all along its far side. He stopped the car and studied the opening with his field glasses. Then he motioned to the driver to go on and the car moved slowly along, the driver avoiding wart-hog holes and driving around the mud castles ants had built. Then, looking across the opening, Wilson suddenly turned and said,

"By God, there they are!"

And looking where he pointed, while the car jumped forward and Wilson spoke in rapid Swahili to the driver, Macomber saw three huge, black animals looking almost cylindrical in their long heaviness, like big black tank cars, moving at a gallop across the far edge of the open prairie. They moved at a stiff-necked, stiff bodied gallop and he could see the upswept wide black horns on their heads as they galloped heads out; the heads not moving.

550

"They're three old bulls," Wilson said. "We'll cut them off before they get to the swamp."

The car was going a wild forty-five miles an hour across the open and as Macomber watched, the buffalo got bigger and bigger until he could see the gray, hairless, scabby look of one huge bull and how his neck was a part of his shoulders and the shiny black of his horns as he galloped a little behind the others that were strung out in that steady plunging gait; and then, the car swaying as though it had just jumped a road, they drew up close and he could see the plunging hugeness of the bull, and the dust in his sparsely haired hide, the wide boss of horn and his outstretched, wide-nostrilled muzzle, and he was raising his rifle when Wilson shouted, "Not from the car, you fool!" and he had no fear, only hatred of Wilson, while the brakes clamped on and the car skidded, plowing sideways to an almost stop and Wilson was out on one side and he on the other, stumbling as his feet hit the still speeding-by of the earth, and then he was shooting at the bull as he moved away, hearing the bullets whunk into him, emptying his rifle at him as he moved steadily away, finally remembering to get his shots forward into the shoulder, and as he fumbled to reload, he saw the bull was down. Down on his knees, his big head tossing, and seeing the other two still galloping he shot at the leader and hit him. He shot again and missed and he heard the carawonging roar as Wilson shot and saw the leading bull slide forward onto his nose.

560

"Get that other," Wilson said. "Now you're shooting!"

565

But the other bull was moving steadily at the same gallop and he missed, throwing a spout of dirt, and Wilson missed and the dust rose in a cloud and Wilson shouted, "Come on." He's too far!" and grabbed his arm and they were in the car again, Macomber and Wilson hanging on the sides and rocketing swayingly over the uneven ground, drawing up on the steady, plunging, heavy-necked, straight-moving gallop of the bull.

They were behind him and Macomber was filling his rifle, dropping shells onto the ground, jamming it, clearing the jam, then they were almost up with the bull when Wilson yelled "Stop," and the car skidded so that it almost swung over and Macomber fell forward as he aimed into the galloping, rounded black back, aimed and shot again, then again, then again, and the bullets, all of them hitting, had no effect on the buffalo that he could see. Then Wilson shot, the roar deafening him, and he could see the bull stagger. Macomber shot again, aiming carefully, and down he came, onto his knees.

570

"All right," Wilson said. "Nice work. That's the three."

575

Macomber felt a drunken elation.

"How many times did you shoot?" he asked.

"Just three," Wilson said. "You killed the first bull. The biggest one. I helped you finish the other two. Afraid they might have got into cover. You had them killed. I was just mopping up a little. You shot damn well."

580

"Let's go to the car," said Macomber. "I want a drink."

"Got to finish off that buff first," Wilson told him. The buffalo was on his knees and he jerked his head furiously and bellowed in pig-eyed, roaring rage as they came toward him.

"Watch he doesn't get up," Wilson said. Then, "Get a little broadside and take him in the neck just behind the ear."

585

Macomber aimed carefully at the center of the huge, jerking, rage-driven neck and shot. At the shot the head dropped forward.

"That does it," said Wilson. "Got the spine. They're a hell of a fine-looking thing, aren't they?"

"Let's get the drink," said Macomber. In his life he had never felt so good.

"In the car Macomber's wife sat very white-faced. "You were marvelous, darling," she said to Macomber. "What a ride."

590

"Was it rough?" Wilson asked.

"It was frightful. I've never been more frightened in my life."

"Let's all have a drink," Macomber said.

"By all means," said Wilson. "Give it to the Memsahib." She drank the neat whisky from the flask and shuddered a little when she swallowed. She handed the flask to Macomber who handed it to Wilson.

595

"It was frightfully exciting," she said. "It's given me a dreadful headache. I didn't know you were allowed to shoot them from cars though."

"No one shot from cars," said Wilson coldly.

"I mean chase them from cars."

600 “Wouldn’t ordinarily,” Wilson said. “Seemed sporting enough to me though while we were doing it. Taking more chance driving that way across the plain full of holes and one thing and another than hunting on foot. Buffalo could have charged us each time we shot if he liked. Gave him every chance. Wouldn’t mention it to anyone though. It’s illegal if that’s what you mean.”

605 “It seemed very unfair to me,” Margot said, “chasing those big helpless things in a motor car.”

“Did it?” said Wilson.

“What would happen if they heard about it in Nairobi?”

“I’d lose my license for one thing. Other unpleasantnesses,” Wilson said, taking a drink from the flask. “I’d be out of business.”

“Really?”

610 “Well,” said Macomber, and he smiled for the first time all day. “Now she has something on you.”

“You have such a pretty way of putting things, Francis,” Margot Macomber said. Wilson looked at them both. If a four-letter man marries a five-letter woman, he was thinking, what number of letters would their children be? What he said was, “We lost a gun-bearer. Did you notice it?”

“My God, no,” Macomber said.

615 “Here he comes,” Wilson said. “He’s all right. He must have fallen off when we left the first bull.”

Approaching them was the middle-aged gun-bearer, limping along in his knitted cap, khaki tunic, shorts and rubber sandals, gloomy-faced and disgusted looking. As he came up he called out to Wilson in Swahili and they all saw the change in the white hunter’s face.

“What does he say?” asked Margot.

620 “He says the first bull got up and went into the bush,” Wilson said with no expression in his voice.

“Oh,” said Macomber blankly.

“Then it’s going to be just like the lion,” said Margot, full of anticipation.

“It’s not going to be a damned bit like the lion,” Wilson told her. “Did you want another drink Macomber?”

“Thanks, yes, Macomber said. He expected the feeling he had had about the lion to come back but it did not. For

625 the first time in his life he rally felt wholly without fear. Instead of fear he had a feeling of definite elation.

“We’ll go and have a look at the second bull,” Wilson said. “I’ll tell the driver to put the car in the shade.”

“What are you going to do?” asked Margaret Macomber.

“Take a look at the buff,” Wilson said.

“I’ll come.”

630 “Come along.”

The three of them walked over to where the second buffalo bulked blackly in the open, head forward on the grass, the massive horns swung wide.

“He’s a very good head,” Wilson said. “That’s close to a fifty-inch spread.”

Macomber was looking at him with delight.

635 “He’s hateful looking,” said Margot. “Can’t we go into the shade?”

“Of course,” Wilson said. “Look,” he said to Macomber, and pointed. “See that patch of bush?”

“Yes.”

“That’s where the first bull went in. The gun-bearer said when he fell off the bull was down. He was watching us helling along and the other two buff galloping. When he looked up there was the bull up and looking at him. Gun-bearer ran like hell and the bull went off slowly into the bush.”

640 “Can we go in after him now?” asked Macomber eagerly.

Wilson looked at him appraisingly. Damned if this isn’t a strange one, he thought. Yesterday he’s scared sick and today he’s a ruddy fire eater.

“No, we’ll give him a while.”

645 “Let’s please go into the shade,” Margot said. Her face was white and she looked ill.

They made their way to the car where it stood under a single, wide-spreading tree and all climbed in.

“Chances are he’s dead in there,” Wilson remarked. “After a little we’ll have a look.”

Macomber felt a wild unreasonable happiness that he had never known before.

“By God, that was a chase,” he said. “I’ve never felt any such feeling. Wasn’t it marvelous, Margot?”

650 “I hated it.”

“Why?”

“I hated it,” she said bitterly. “I loathed it.”

“You know I don’t think I’d ever be afraid of anything again,” Macomber said to Wilson. “Something happened in me after we first saw the buff and started after him. Like a dam bursting. It was pure excitement.”

655 “Cleans out your liver,” said Wilson.” Damn funny things happen to people.”  
 Macomber’s face was shining. “You know something did happen to me,” he said. “I feel absolutely different.”  
 His wife said nothing and eyed him strangely. She was sitting far back in the seat and Macomber was sitting forward talking to Wilson who turned sideways talking over the back of the front seat.

660 “You know, I’d like to try another lion,” Macomber said. “I’m really not afraid of them now. After all, what can they do to you?”  
 “That’s it,” said Wilson. “Worst one can do is kill you. How does it go? Shakespeare. Damned good. See if I can remember. Oh, damned good. Used to quote it to myself at one time. Let’s see. ‘By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once; we owe God a death and let it go which way it will he that dies this year is quit for the next.’ Damned fine, oh?”

665 He was very embarrassed, having brought out this thing he had lived by, but he had seen men come of age before and it always moved him. It was not a matter of their twenty-first birthday.

It had taken a strange chance of hunting, a sudden precipitation into action without opportunity for worrying beforehand, to bring this about with Macomber, but regardless of how it had happened it had most certainly happened. Look at the beggar now, Wilson thought. It’s that some of them stay little boys so long, Wilson thought. Sometimes all their lives. Their figures stay boyish when they’re fifty. The great American boy-men. Damned strange people. But he liked this Macomber now. Damned strange fellow. Probably meant the end of cuckoldry too. Well, that would be a damned good thing. Damned good thing. Beggar had probably been afraid all his life. Don’t know what started it. But over now. Hadn’t had time to be afraid with the buff. That and being angry too. Motor car too. Motor cars made it familiar. Be a damn fire eater now. He’d seen it in the war work the same way. More of a change than any loss of virginity. Fear gone like an operation. Something else grew in its place. Main thing a man had. Made him into a man. Women knew it too. No bloody fear.

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675 From the far corner of the seat Margaret Macomber looked at the two of them. There was no change in Wilson. She saw Wilson as she had seen him the day before when she had first realized what his great talent was. But she saw the change in Francis Macomber now.

680 “Do you have that feeling of happiness about what’s going to happen?” Macomber asked, still exploring his new wealth.

“You’re not supposed to mention it,” Wilson said, looking in the other’s face. “Much more fashionable to say you’re scared. Mind you, you’ll be scared too, plenty of times.”

685 “But you have a feeling of happiness about action to come?”

“Yes,” said Wilson. “There’s that. Doesn’t do to talk too much about all this. Talk the whole thing away. No pleasure in anything if you mouth it up too much.

“You’re both talking rot,” said Margot. “Just because you’ve chased some helpless animals in a motor car you talk like heroes.

690 “Sorry,” said Wilson. “I have been gassing too much.” She’s worried about it already, he thought.

“If you don’t know what we’re talking about why not keep out of it?” Macomber asked his wife.

“You’ve gotten awfully brave, awfully suddenly,” his wife said contemptuously, but her contempt was not secure. She was very afraid of something.

Macomber laughed, a very natural hearty laugh. “You know I have,” he said. “I really have.”

695 “Isn’t it sort of late?” Margot said bitterly. Because she had done the best she could for many years back and the way they were together now was no one person’s fault.

“Not for me,” said Macomber.

Margot said nothing but sat back in the corner of the seat.

“Do you think we’ve given him time enough?” Macomber asked Wilson cheerfully.

“We might have a look,” Wilson said. “Have you any solids left?”

700 “The gun-bearer has some.”

Wilson called in Swahili and the older gun-bearer, who was skinning out one of the heads, straightened up, pulled a box of solids out of his pocket and brought them over to Macomber, who filled his magazine and put the remaining shells in his pocket.

705 “You might as well shoot the Springfield,” Wilson said. “You’re used to it. We’ll leave the Mannlicher in the car with the Memsahib. Your gun-bearer can carry your heavy gun. I’ve this damned cannon. Now let me tell you about them.” He had saved this until the last because he did not want to worry Macomber. “When a buff comes he comes with his head high and thrust straight out. The boss of the horns covers any sort of a brain shot. The only shot is straight into the nose. The only other shot is into his chest or, if you’re to one side, into the neck or the shoulders.

After they've been hit once they take a hell of a lot of killing. Don't try anything fancy. Take the easiest shot there is. They've finished skinning out that head now. Should we get started?"

He called to the gun-bearers, who came up wiping their hands, and the older one got into the back. "I'll only take Kongoni," Wilson said. "The other can watch to keep the birds away."

As the car moved slowly across the open space toward the island of brushy trees that ran in a tongue of foliage along a dry water course that cut the open swale, Macomber felt his heart pounding and his mouth was dry again, but it was excitement, not fear.

"Here's where he went in," Wilson said. Then to the gun-bearer in Swahili, "Take the blood spoor."

The car was parallel to the patch of bush. Macomber, Wilson and the gun-bearer got down. Macomber, looking back, saw his wife, with the rifle by her side, looking at him. He waved to her and she did not wave back.

The brush was very thick ahead and the ground was dry. The middle-aged gun-bearer was sweating heavily and Wilson had his hat down over his eyes and his red neck showed just ahead of Macomber. Suddenly the gun-bearer said something in Swahili to Wilson and ran forward.

"He's dead in there," Wilson said. "Good work," and he turned to grip Macomber's hand and as they shook hands, grinning at each other, the gun-bearer shouted wildly and they saw him coming out of the bush sideways, fast as a crab, and the bull coming, nose out, mouth tight closed, blood dripping, missive head straight out, coming in a charge, his little pig eyes bloodshot as he looked at them. Wilson who was ahead was kneeling shooting, and Macomber, as he fired, unhearing his shot in the roaring of Wilson's gun, saw fragments like slate burst from the huge boss of the horns, and the head jerked, he shot again at the wide nostrils and saw the horns jolt again and fragment fly, and he did not see Wilson now and, aiming carefully, shot again with the buffalo's huge bulk almost on him and his rifle almost level with the on-coming head, nose out, and he could see the little wicked eyes and the head started to lower and he felt a sudden white-hot, blinding flash explode inside his head and that was all he ever felt.

Wilson had ducked to one side to get in a shoulder shot. Macomber had stood solid and shot for the nose, shooting a touch high each time and hitting the heavy horns, splintering and chipping them like hitting a slate roof, and Mrs. Macomber, in the car, had shot at the buffalo with the 6.5 Mannlicher as it seemed about to gore Macomber and had hit her husband about two inches up and a little to one side of the base of his skull.

Francis Macomber lay now, face down, not two yards from where the buffalo lay on his side and his wife knelt over him with Wilson beside her.

"I wouldn't turn him over," Wilson said.

The woman was crying hysterically.

"I'd get back in the car," Wilson said. "Where's the rifle?"

She shook her head, her face contorted. The gun-bearer picked up the rifle.

Leave it as it is," said Wilson. Then, "Go get Abdulla so that he may witness the manner of the accident."

He knelt down, took a handkerchief from his pocket, and spread it over Francis Macomber's crew-cropped head where it lay. The blood sank into the dry, loose earth.

Wilson stood up and saw the buffalo on his side, his legs out, his thinly-haired belly crawling with ticks. "Hell of a good bull," his brain registered automatically. "A good fifty inches, or better. Better." He called to the driver and told him to spread a blanket over the body and stay by it. Then he walked over to the motor car where the woman sat crying in the corner.

"That was a pretty thing to do," he said in a toneless voice. "He would have left you too."

"Stop it," she said.

"Of course it's an accident," he said. "I know that."

"Stop it," she said.

"Don't worry," he said. "There will be a certain amount of unpleasantness but I will have some photographs taken that will be very useful at the inquest. There's the testimony of the gun-bearer and the driver too. You're perfectly all right."

"Stop it," she said.

"There's a hell of a lot to be done," he said. "And I'll have to send a truck off to the lake to wireless for a plane to take the three of us into Nairobi. Why didn't you poison him? That's what they do in England."

"Stop it. Stop it. Stop it," the woman cried.

Wilson looked at her with his flat blue eyes.

"I'm through now," he said. "I was a little angry. I'd begun to like your husband."

"Oh, please stop it," she said. "Please, please stop it."

"That's better," Wilson said. "Please is much better. Now I'll stop."

## “The Destructors”

Graham Greene

1

It was the eve of August Bank Holiday\* that the latest recruit became the leader of the Wormsley Common Gang. No one was surprised except Mike, but Mike at the age of nine was surprised by everything. “If you don’t shut your mouth,” somebody once said to him, “you’ll get a frog down it.” After that Mike had kept his teeth tightly clamped except when the surprise was too great.

The new recruit had been with the gang since the beginning of the summer holidays, and there were possibilities about his brooding silence that all recognized. He never wasted a word even to tell his name until that was required of him by the rules. When he said “Trevor” it was a statement of fact, not as it would have been with the others a statement of shame or defiance. Nor did anyone laugh except Mike, who finding himself without support and meeting the dark gaze of the newcomer, opened his mouth and was quiet again. There was every reason why T., as he was afterwards referred to, should have been an object of mockery — there was his name (and they substituted his initial because otherwise they had no excuse not to laugh at it), the fact that his father, a former architect and present clerk, had “come down in the world” and that his mother considered herself better than the neighbors. What but an odd quality of danger, of the unpredictable, established him in the gang without any ignoble ceremony of initiation?

The gang met every morning in an impromptu car-park, the site of the last bomb of the first blitz. The leader, who was known as Blackie, claimed to have heard it fall, and no one was precise enough in his dates to point out that he would have been one year old and fast asleep on the down platform of Wormsley Common Underground Station. On one side of the car-park leant the first occupied house, No. 3, of the shattered Northwood Terrace — literally leant, for it had suffered from the blast of the bomb and the side walls were supported on wooden struts. A smaller bomb and some incendiaries had fallen beyond, so that the house stuck up like a jagged tooth and carried on the further wall relics of its neighbor, a dado, the remains of a fireplace. T., whose words were almost confined to voting “Yes” or “No” to the plan of operations proposed each day by Blackie, once startled the whole gang by saying broodingly, “Wren built that house, father says.”

“Who’s Wren?”

“The man who built St. Paul’s.”

“Who cares?” Blackie said. “It’s only Old Misery’s.”

Old Misery — whose real name was Thomas — had once been a builder and decorator. He lived alone in the crippled house, doing for himself: once a week you could see him coming back across the common with bread and vegetables, and once as the boys played in the car-park he

put his head over the smashed wall of his garden and looked at them.

“Been to the lav,” one of the boys said, for it was common knowledge that since the bombs fell something had gone wrong with the pipes of the house and Old Misery was too mean to spend money on the property. He could do the redecorating himself at cost price, but he had never learnt plumbing. The lav was a wooden shed at the bottom of the narrow garden with a star-shaped hole in the door: it had escaped the blast which had smashed the house next door and sucked out the window-frames of No. 3.

The next time the gang became aware of Mr. Thomas was more surprising. Blackie, Mike and a thin yellow boy, who for some reason was called by his surname Summers, met him on the common coming back from the market. Mr. Thomas stopped them. He said glumly, “You belong to the lot that play in the car-park?”

Mike was about to answer when Blackie stopped him. As the leader he had responsibilities. “Suppose we are?” he said ambiguously.

“I got some chocolates,” Mr. Thomas said. “Don’t like ‘em myself. Here you are. Not enough to go round, I don’t suppose. There never is,” he added with somber conviction. He handed over three packets of Smarties.

The gang were puzzled and perturbed by this action and tried to explain it away. “Bet someone dropped them and he picked ‘em up,” somebody suggested.

“Pinched ‘em and then got in a bleeding funk,” another thought aloud.

“It’s a bribe,” Summers said. “He wants us to stop bouncing balls on his wall.”

“We’ll show him we don’t take bribes,” Blackie said, and they sacrificed the whole morning to the game of bouncing that only Mike was young enough to enjoy. There was no sign from Mr. Thomas.

Next day T. astonished them all. He was late at the rendezvous, and the voting for the day’s exploit took place without him. At Blackie’s suggestion, the gang was to disperse in pairs, take buses at random and see how many free rides could be snatched from unwary conductors (the operation was to be carried out in pairs to avoid cheating). They were drawing lots for their companions when T. arrived.

“Where you been, T.?” Blackie asked. “You can’t vote now. You know the rules.”

“I’ve been *there*,” T. said. He looked at the ground, as though he had thoughts to hide.

“Where?”

“At Old Misery’s.” Mike’s mouth opened and then hurriedly closed again with a click. He had remembered the frog.

“At Old Misery’s?” Blackie said. There was nothing in the rules against it, but he had a sensation that T. was treading on dangerous ground. He asked hopefully, “Did you break in?”

“No. I rang the bell.”

“And what did you say?”

\* **Bank Holiday:** three-day weekend in Britain



“I said I wanted to see his house.”  
 “What did he do?”  
 110 “He showed it to me.”  
 “Pinch anything?”  
 “No.”  
 “What did you do it for then?”  
 The gang had gathered round: it was as though an  
 115 impromptu court were about to form and to try some case of  
 deviation. T. said, “It’s a beautiful house,” and still watching  
 the ground, meeting no one’s eyes, he licked his lips first  
 one way, then the other.  
 “What do you mean, a beautiful house?” Blackie asked  
 120 with scorn.  
 “It’s got a staircase two hundred years old like a  
 corkscrew. Nothing holds it up.”  
 “What do you mean, nothing holds it up. Does it float?”  
 “It’s to do with opposite forces, Old Misery said.”  
 125 “What else?”  
 “There’s paneling.”  
 “Like in the Blue Boar?”  
 “Two hundred years old.”  
 “Is Old Misery two hundred years old?”  
 130 Mike laughed suddenly and then was quiet again. The  
 meeting was in a serious mood. For the first time since T.  
 had strolled into the car-park on the first day of the holidays  
 his position was in danger. It only needed a single use of his  
 real name and the gang would be at his heels.  
 135 “What did you do it for?” Blackie asked. He was just, he  
 had no jealousy, he was anxious to retain T. in the gang if he  
 could. It was the word “beautiful” that worried him — that  
 belonged to a class world that you could still see parodied at  
 the Wormsley Common Empire\* by a man wearing a top hat  
 140 and a monocle, with a haw-haw accent. He was tempted to  
 say, “My dear Trevor, old chap,” and unleash his hell  
 hounds. “If you’d broken in,” he said sadly — that indeed  
 would have been an exploit worthy of the gang.  
 “This was better,” T. said. “I found out things.” He  
 145 continued to stare at his feet, not meeting anybody’s eye, as  
 though he were absorbed in some dream he was unwilling  
 — or ashamed — to share.  
 “What things?”  
 “Old Misery’s going to be away all tomorrow and Bank  
 150 Holiday.”  
 Blackie said with relief, “You mean we could break in?”  
 “And pinch things?” somebody asked.  
 Blackie said, “Nobody’s going to pinch things. Breaking  
 in — that’s good enough, isn’t it? We don’t want any court  
 155 stuff.”  
 “I don’t want to pinch anything,” T. said. “I’ve got a  
 better idea.”  
 “What is it?”  
 T. raised his eyes, as grey and disturbed as the drab  
 160 August day. “We’ll pull it down,” he said. “We’ll destroy  
 it.”

\* **Wormsley Common Empire:** music hall for popular  
 entertainment

Blackie gave a single hoot of laughter and then, like  
 Mike, fell quiet, daunted by the serious implacable gaze.  
 “What’d the police be doing all the time?” he asked.  
 “They’d never know. We’d do it from inside. I’ve found 165  
 a way in.” He said with a sort of intensity, “We’d be like  
 worms, don’t you see, in an apple. When we came out again  
 there’d be nothing there, no staircase, no panels, nothing but  
 just walls, and then we’d make the walls fall down —  
 170 somehow.”  
 “We’d go to the jug,” Blackie said.  
 “Who’s to prove? And anyway we wouldn’t have  
 pinched anything.” He added without the smallest flicker of  
 glee, “There wouldn’t be anything to pinch after we’d  
 finished.” 175  
 “I’ve never heard of going to prison for breaking  
 things,” Summers said.  
 “There wouldn’t be time,” Blackie said. “I’ve seen  
 housebreakers at work.”  
 “There are twelve of us,” T. said. “We’d organize.” 180  
 “None of us know how . . .”  
 “I know,” T. said. He looked across at Blackie. “Have  
 you got a better plan?”  
 “Today,” Mike said tactlessly, “we’re pinching free  
 185 rides . . .”  
 “Free rides,” T. said. “You can stand down, Blackie, if  
 you’d rather . . .”  
 “The gang’s got to vote.”  
 “Put it up then.”  
 Blackie said uneasily, “It’s proposed that tomorrow and 190  
 Monday we destroy Old Misery’s house.”  
 “Here, here,” said a fat boy called Joe.  
 “Who’s in favor?”  
 T. said, “It’s carried.”  
 “How do we start?” Summers asked. 195  
 “He’ll tell you,” Blackie said. It was the end of his  
 leadership. He went away to the back of the car-park and  
 began to kick a stone, dribbling it this way and that. There  
 was only one old Morris in the park, for few cars were left  
 there except lorries: without an attendant there was no  
 200 safety. He took a flying kick at the car and scraped a little  
 paint off the rear mudguard. Beyond, paying no more  
 attention to him than to a stranger, the gang had gathered  
 round T.; Blackie was dimly aware of the fickleness of  
 favor. He thought of going home, of never returning, of  
 205 letting them all discover the hollowness of T.’s leadership,  
 but suppose after all what T. proposed was possible —  
 nothing like it had ever been done before. The fame of the  
 Wormsley Common car-park gang would surely reach  
 around London. There would be headlines in the papers.  
 210 Even the grown-up gangs who ran the betting at the all-in  
 wrestling and the barrow-boys would hear with respect of  
 how Old Misery’s house had been destroyed. Driven by the  
 pure, simple and altruistic ambition of fame for the gang,  
 Blackie came back to where T. stood in the shadow of  
 215 Misery’s wall.

T. was giving his orders with decision: it was as though  
 this plan had been with him all his life, pondered through the

seasons, now in his fifteenth year crystallized with the pain of puberty. "You," he said to Mike, "bring some big nails, the biggest you can find, and a hammer. Anyone else who can bring a hammer and a screwdriver. We'll need plenty of them. Chisels too. We can't have too many chisels. Can anybody bring a saw?"

"I can," Mike said.

"Not a child's saw," T. said. "A real saw."

Blackie realized he had raised his hand like any ordinary member of the gang.

"Right, you bring one, Blackie. But now there's a difficulty. We want a hacksaw."

"What's a hacksaw?" someone asked.

"You can get 'em at Woolworth's," Summers said.

The fat boy called Joe said gloomily, "I knew it would end in a collection."

"I'll get one myself," T. said. "I don't want your money. But I can't buy a sledge-hammer."

Blackie said, "They are working on No. 15. I know where they'll leave their stuff for Bank Holiday."

"Then that's all," T. said. "We meet here at nine sharp."

"I've got to go to church," Mike said.

"Come over the wall and whistle. We'll let you in."

## 2

On Sunday morning, all were punctual except Blackie, even Mike. Mike had had a stroke of luck. His mother fell ill, his father was tired after Saturday night, and he was told to go to church alone with many warnings of what would happen if he strayed. Blackie had had difficulty in smuggling out the saw, and then in finding the sledge-hammer at the back of No. 15. He approached the house from a lane at the rear of the garden, for fear of the policeman's beat along the main road. The tired evergreens kept off a stormy sun: another wet Bank Holiday was being prepared over the Atlantic, beginning in swirls of dust under the trees. Blackie climbed the wall into Misery's garden.

There was no sign of anybody anywhere. The lav stood like a tomb in a neglected graveyard. The curtains were drawn. The house slept. Blackie lumbered nearer with the saw and the sledge-hammer. Perhaps after all nobody had turned up: the plan had been a wild invention: they had woken wiser. But when he came close to the back door he could hear a confusion of sound hardly louder than a hive in swarm: a clickety-clack, a bang bang, a scraping, a creaking, a sudden painful crack. He thought: it's true, and whistled.

They opened the back door to him and he came in. He had at once the impression of organization, very different from the old happy-go-lucky ways under his leadership. For a while he wandered up and down stairs looking for T. Nobody addressed him: he had a sense of great urgency, and already he could begin to see the plan. The interior of the house was being carefully demolished without touching the outer walls. Summers with hammer and chisel was ripping out the skirting-boards in the ground floor dining-room: he had already smashed the panels of the door. In the same

room Joe was heaving up the parquet blocks, exposing the soft wood floor-boards over the cellar. Coils of wire came out of the damaged skirting and Mike sat happily on the floor clipping the wires.

On the curved stairs two of the gang were working hard with an inadequate child's saw on the banisters — when they saw Blackie's big saw they signaled for it wordlessly. When he next saw them a quarter of the banisters had been dropped into the hall. He found T. at last in the bathroom — he sat moodily in the least cared-for room in the house, listening to the sounds coming up from below.

"You've really done it," Blackie said with awe. "What's going to happen?"

"We've only just begun," T. said. He looked at the sledge-hammer and gave his instructions. "You stay here and break the bath and the wash-basin. Don't bother about the pipes. They come later."

Mike appeared at the door. "I've finished the wires, T.," he said.

"Good. You've just got to go wandering round now. The kitchen's in the basement. Smash all the china and glass and bottles you can lay hold of. Don't turn on the taps — we don't want a flood — yet. Then go into all the rooms and turn out drawers. If they are locked get one of the others to break them open. Tear up any papers you find and smash all the ornaments. Better take a carving-knife with you from the kitchen. The bedroom's opposite here. Open the pillows and tear up the sheets. That's enough for the moment. And you, Blackie, when you've finished in here crack the plaster in the passage up with your sledge-hammer."

"What are you going to do?" Blackie asked.

"I'm looking for something special," T. said.

It was nearly lunch-time before Blackie had finished and went in search of T. Chaos had advanced. The kitchen was a shambles of broken glass and china. The dining-room was stripped of parquet, the skirting was up, the door had been taken off its hinges, and the destroyers had moved up a floor. Streaks of light came in through the closed shutters where they worked with the seriousness of creators — and destruction after all is a form of creation. A kind of imagination had seen this house as it had now become.

Mike said, "I've got to go home for dinner."

"Who else?" T. asked, but all the others on one excuse or another had brought provisions with them.

They squatted in the ruins of the room and swapped unwanted sandwiches. Half an hour for lunch and they were at work again. By the time Mike had returned, they were on the top floor, and by six the superficial damage was completed. The doors were all off, all the skirtings raised, the furniture pillaged and ripped and smashed — no one could have slept in the house except on a bed of broken plaster. T. gave his orders — eight o'clock next morning, and to escape notice they climbed singly over the garden wall, into the car-park. Only Blackie and T. were left: the light had nearly gone, and when they touched a switch, nothing worked — Mike had done his job thoroughly.

"Did you find anything special?" Blackie asked.

330 T. nodded. "Come over here," he said, "and look." Out of both pockets he drew bundles of pound notes. "Old Misery's savings," he said. "Mike ripped out the mattress, but he missed them.

"What are you going to do? Share them?"

335 "We aren't thieves," T. said. "Nobody's going to steal anything from this house. I kept these for you and me — a celebration." He knelt down on the floor and counted them out — there were seventy in all. "We'll burn them," he said, "one by one," and taking it in turns they held a note upwards

340 and lit the top corner, so that the flame burnt slowly towards their fingers. The grey ash floated above them and fell on their heads like age. "I'd like to see Old Misery's face when we are through," T. said.

"You hate him a lot?" Blackie asked.

345 "Of course I don't hate him," T. said. "There'd be no fun if I hated him." The last burning note illuminated his brooding face. "All this hate and love," he said, "it's soft, it's hooley. There's only things, Blackie," and he looked round the room crowded with the unfamiliar shadows of half

350 things, broken things, former things. "I'll race you home, Blackie," he said.

### 3

Next morning the serious destruction started. Two were missing — Mike and another boy whose parents were off to Southend and Brighton in spite of the slow warm drops that

355 had begun to fall and the rumble of thunder in the estuary like the first guns of the old blitz. "We've got to hurry," T. said.

Summers was restive. "Haven't we done enough?" he said. "I've been given a bob for slot machines. This is like

360 work."

"We've hardly started," T. said. "Why, there's all the floor left, and the stairs. We haven't taken out a single window. You voted like the others. We are going to *destroy*

365 this house. There won't be anything left when we've finished."

They began again on the first floor picking up the top floor-boards next to the outer wall, leaving the joists exposed. Then they sawed through the joists and retreated into the hall, as what was left of the floor heeled and sank.

370 They had learnt with practice, and the second floor collapsed more easily. By the evening an odd exhilaration seized them as they looked down the great hollow of the house. They ran risks and made mistakes: when they thought of the windows it was too late to reach them. "Cor," Joe said, and dropped a penny down in the dry rubble-filled well. It cracked and span among the broken glass.

375

"Why did we start this?" Summers asked with astonishment; T. was already on the ground, digging at the rubble, clearing a space along the outer wall. "Turn on the

380 taps," he said. "It's too dark for anyone to see now, and in the morning it won't matter." The water overtook them on the stairs and fell through the floorless rooms.

It was then that they heard Mike's whistle at the back. "Something's wrong," Blackie said. They could hear his

385 urgent breathing as they unlocked the door.

"The bogies?"\* Summers asked

"Old Misery," Mike said. "He's on his way." He put his head between his knees and retches. "Ran all the way," he

said with pride.

"But why?" T. said. "He told me . . ." He protested with the fury of the child he had never been, "It isn't fair."

390

"He was down at Southend," Mike said, "and he was on the train coming back. Said it was too cold and wet." He paused and gazed at the water. "My, you've had a storm

395 here. Is the roof leaking?"

"How long will he be?"

"Five minutes. I gave Ma the slip and ran."

"We better clear," Summers said. "We've done enough, anyway."

"Oh, no, we haven't. Anybody could do this—" "This" was the shattered hollowed house with nothing left but the

400 walls. Yet the walls could be preserved. Façades were valuable. They could build inside again more beautifully than before. This could again be a home. He said angrily, "We've got to finish. Don't move. Let me think."

405

"There's no time," a boy said.

"There's got to be a way," T. said. "We couldn't have got this far . . ."

"We've done a lot," Blackie said.

"No. No, we haven't. Somebody watch the front."

410

"We can't do any more."

"He may come in at the back."

"Watch the back too." T. began to plead. "Just give me a minute and I'll fix it. I swear I'll fix it." But his authority had gone with his ambiguity. He was only one of the gang.

415 "Please," he said.

"Please," Summers mimicked him, and then suddenly struck home with the fatal name. "Run along home, Trevor."

T. stood with his back to the rubble like a boxer knocked groggy against the ropes. He had no words as his

420 dreams shook and slid. Then Blackie acted before the gang had time to laugh, pushing Summers backward. "I'll watch the front, T.," he said, and cautiously he opened the shutters of the hall. The grey wet common stretched ahead, and the lamps gleamed in the puddles. "Someone's coming, T. No, it's not him. What's your plan, T.?"

425

"Tell Mike to go out to the lav and hide close beside it. When he hears me whistle he's got to count ten and start to shout."

"Shout what?"

430

"Oh, 'Help,' anything."

"You hear, Mike," Blackie said. He was the leader again. He took a quick look between the shutters. "He's coming, T."

"Quick, Mike. The lav. Stay here, Blackie, all of you till I yell."

435

\***Bogies:** police

"Where are you going, T.?"

"Don't worry. I'll see to this. I said I would, didn't I?"

440 Old Misery came limping off the common. He had mud  
on his shoes and he stopped to scrape them on the  
pavement's edge. He didn't want to soil his house, which  
stood jagged and dark between the bombsites, saved so  
narrowly, as he believed, from destruction. Even the fanlight  
445 had been left unbroken by the bomb's blast. Somewhere  
somebody whistled. Old Misery looked sharply round. He  
didn't trust whistles. A child was shouting: it seemed to  
come from his own garden. Then a boy ran into the road  
from the car-park. "Mr. Thomas," he called. "Mr. Thomas."

"What is it?"

450 "I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Thomas. One of us got taken  
short, and we thought you wouldn't mind, and now he can't  
get out."

"What do you mean, boy?"

"He's got stuck in your lav."

455 "He'd no business . . . Haven't I seen you before?"

"You showed me your house."

"So I did. So I did. That doesn't give you the right to ..."

"Do hurry, Mr. Thomas. He'll suffocate."

460 "Nonsense. He can't suffocate. Wait till I put my bag  
in."

"I'll carry your bag."

"Oh no, you don't. I carry my own."

"This way, Mr. Thomas."

465 "I can't get in the garden that way. I've got to go  
through the house."

"But you *can* get in the garden this way, Mr. Thomas.  
We often do."

"You often do?" He followed the boy with a scandalized  
fascination. "When? What right? . . ."

470 "Do you see . . . ? The wall's low."

"I'm not going to climb walls into my own garden. It's  
absurd."

475 "This is how we do it. One foot here, one foot there, and  
over." The boy's face peered down, and arm shot out, and  
Mr. Thomas found his bag taken and deposited on the other  
side of the wall.

"Give me back my bag," Mr. Thomas said. From the  
loo\* a boy yelled and yelled. "I'll call the police."

480 "Your bag's all right, Mr. Thomas. Look. One foot  
there. On your right. Now just above. To your left." Mr.  
Thomas climbed over his own garden wall. "Here's your  
bag, Mr. Thomas."

485 "I'll have the wall built up," Mr. Thomas said. "I'll not  
have you boys coming over here, using my loo." He  
stumbled on the path, but the boy caught his elbow and  
supported him. "Thank you, thank you, my boy," he  
murmured automatically. Somebody shouted again through  
the dark. "I'm coming, I'm coming," Mr. Thomas called. He  
490 said to the boy beside him, "I'm not unreasonable. Been a  
boy myself. As long as things are done regular. I don't mind  
you playing round the place Saturday mornings. Sometimes

I like company. Only it's got to be regular. One of you asks  
leave and I say Yes. Sometimes I'll say No. Won't feel like  
it. And you come in at the front door and out at the back. No  
garden walls."

"Do get him out, Mr. Thomas."

495 "He won't come to any harm in my loo," Mr. Thomas  
said, stumbling slowly down the garden. "Oh, my  
rheumatics," he said. "Always get 'em on Bank Holiday.  
I've got to go careful. There's loose stones here. Give me  
500 your hand. Do you know what my horoscope said  
yesterday? 'Abstain from any dealings in first half of week.  
Danger of serious crash.' That might be on this path," Mr.  
Thomas said. "They speak in parables and double  
meanings." He paused at the door of the loo. "What's the  
505 matter in there?" he called. There was no reply.

"Perhaps he's fainted," the boy said.

510 "Not in my loo. Here, you come out," Mr. Thomas said,  
and giving a great jerk at the door he nearly fell on his back  
when it swung easily open. A hand first supported him and  
then pushed him hard. His head hit the opposite wall and he  
sat heavily down. His bag hit his feet. A hand whipped the  
key out of the lock and the door slammed. "Let me out," he  
called, and heard the key turn in the lock. "A serious crash,"  
515 he thought, and felt dithery and confused and old.

A voice spoke to him softly through the star-shaped hole  
in the door. "Don't worry, Mr. Thomas," it said, "we won't  
hurt you, not if you stay quiet."

520 Mr. Thomas put his head between his hands and  
pondered. He had noticed that there was only one lorry in  
the car-park, and he felt certain that the driver would not  
come for it before the morning. Nobody could hear him  
from the road in front, and the lane at the back was seldom  
used. Anyone who passed there would be hurrying home  
and would not pause for what they would certainly take to  
525 be drunken cries. And if he did call "Help," who, on a lonely  
Bank Holiday evening, would have the courage to  
investigate? Mr. Thomas sat on the loo and pondered with  
the wisdom of age.

530 After a while it seemed to him that there were sounds in  
the silence — they were faint and came from the direction of  
his house. He stood up and peered through the ventilation-  
hole — between the cracks in one of the shutters he saw a  
light, not the light of a lamp, but the wavering light that a  
candle might give. Then he thought he heard the sound of  
535 hammering and scraping and chipping. He thought of  
burglars — perhaps they had employed the boy as a scout,  
but why should burglars engage in what sounded more and  
more like a stealthy form of carpentry? Mr. Thomas let out  
an experimental yell, but nobody answered. The noise could  
540 not even have reached his enemies.

Mike had gone home to bed, but the rest stayed. The  
question of leadership no longer concerned the gang. With  
nails, chisels, screwdrivers, anything that was sharp and

\* Loo: outdoor toilet

545 penetrating, they moved around the inner walls worrying at  
the mortar between the bricks. They started too high, and it  
was Blackie who hit on the damp course and realized the  
work could be halved if they weakened the joints  
immediately above. It was a long, tiring, unamusing job, but  
550 at last it was finished. The gutted house stood there balanced  
on a few inches of mortar between the damp course and the  
bricks.

There remained the most dangerous task of all, out in  
the open at the edge of the bomb-site. Summers was sent to  
555 watch the road for passers-by, and Mr. Thomas, sitting on  
the loo, heard clearly now the sound of sawing. It no longer  
came from his house, and that a little reassured him. He felt  
less concerned. Perhaps the other noises too had no  
significance.

560 A voice spoke to him through the hole. "Mr. Thomas."  
"Let me out," Mr. Thomas said sternly.

"Here's a blanket," the voice said, and a long grey  
sausage was worked through the hole and fell in swathes  
over Mr. Thomas's head.

565 "There's nothing personal," the voice said. "We want  
you to be comfortable tonight."

"Tonight," Mr. Thomas repeated incredulously.

"Catch," the voice said. "Penny buns — we've buttered  
them, and sausage-rolls. We don't want you to starve, Mr.  
570 Thomas."

Mr. Thomas pleaded desperately. "A joke's a joke, boy.  
Let me out and I won't say a thing. I've got rheumatics. I got  
to sleep comfortable."

575 "You wouldn't be comfortable, not in your house, you  
wouldn't. Not now."

"What do you mean, boy?" but the footsteps receded.  
There was only the silence of night: no sound of sawing. Mr.  
Thomas tried one more yell, but he was daunted and rebuked  
by the silence — a long way off an owl hooted and made  
580 away again on its muffled flight through the soundless  
world.

At seven next morning the driver came to fetch his  
lorry. He climbed into the seat and tried to start the engine.  
He was vaguely aware of a voice shouting, but it didn't  
585 concern him. At last the engine responded and he backed the  
lorry until it touched the great wooden shore that supported  
Mr. Thomas's house. That way he could drive right out and  
down the street without reversing. The lorry moved forward,  
was momentarily checked as though something were pulling  
590 it from behind, and then went on to the sound of a long  
rumbling crash. The driver was astonished to see bricks  
bouncing ahead of him, while stones hit the roof of his cab.  
He put on his brakes. When he climbed out the whole  
landscape had suddenly altered. There was no house beside  
595 the car-park, only a hill of rubble. He went round and  
examined the back of his car for damage and found a rope  
tied there that was still twisted at the other end round part of  
a wooden strut.

600 The driver again became aware of somebody shouting.  
It came from the wooden erection which was the nearest  
thing to a house in that desolation of broken brick. The

driver climbed the smashed wall and unlocked the door. Mr.  
Thomas came out of the loo. He was wearing a grey blanket  
to which flakes of pastry adhered. He gave a sobbing cry.

"My house," he said. "Where's my house?" 605

"Search me," the driver said. His eye lit on the remains  
of a bath and what had once been a dresser and he began to  
laugh. There wasn't anything left anywhere.

"How dare you laugh," Mr. Thomas said. "It was my  
house. My house." 610

"I'm sorry," the driver said, making heroic efforts, but  
when he remembered the sudden check to his lorry, the  
crash of bricks falling, he became convulsed again. One  
moment the house had stood there with such dignity  
between the bomb-sites like a man in a top hat, and then, 615  
bang, crash, there wasn't anything left — not anything. He  
said, "I'm sorry. I can't help it, Mr. Thomas. There's  
nothing personal, but you got to admit it's funny."

# Everyday Use

by Alice Walker

I will wait for her in the yard that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon. A yard like this is more comfortable than most people know. It is not just a yard. It is like an extended living room. When the hard clay is swept clean as a floor and the fine sand around the edges lined with tiny, irregular grooves, anyone can come and sit and look up into the elm tree and wait for the breezes that never come inside the house.

Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes: she will stand hopelessly in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs, eying her sister with a mixture of envy and awe. She thinks her sister has held life always in the palm of one hand, that "no" is a word the world never learned to say to her.

You've no doubt seen those TV shows where the child who has "made it" is confronted, as a surprise, by her own mother and father, tottering in weakly from backstage. (A pleasant surprise, of course: What would they do if parent and child came on the show only to curse out and insult each other?) On TV mother and child embrace and smile into each other's faces. Sometimes the mother and father weep, the child wraps them in her arms and leans across the table to tell how she would not have made it without their help. I have seen these programs.

Sometimes I dream a dream in which Dee and I are suddenly brought together on a TV program of this sort. Out of a dark and soft-seated limousine I am ushered into a bright room filled with many people. There I meet a smiling, gray, sporty man like Johnny Carson who shakes my hand and tells me what a fine girl I have. Then we are on the stage and Dee is embracing me with tears in her eyes. She pins on my dress a large orchid, even though she has told me once that she thinks orchids are tacky flowers.

In real life I am a large, big-boned woman with rough, man-working hands. In the winter I wear flannel nightgowns to bed and overalls during the day. I can kill and clean a hog as mercilessly as a man. My fat keeps me hot in zero weather. I can work outside all day, breaking ice to get water for washing; I can eat pork liver cooked over the open fire minutes after it comes steaming from the hog. One winter I knocked a bull calf straight in the brain between the eyes with a sledge hammer and had the meat hung up to chill before nightfall. But of course all this does not show on television. I am the way my daughter would want me to be: a hundred pounds lighter, my skin like an uncooked barley pancake. My hair glistens in the hot bright lights. Johnny Carson has much to do to keep up with my quick and witty tongue.

But that is a mistake. I know even before I wake up. Who ever knew a Johnson with a quick tongue? Who can even imagine me looking a strange white man in the eye? It seems to me I have talked to them always with one foot raised in flight, with my head turned in whichever way is farthest from them. Dee, though. She would always look anyone in the eye. Hesitation was no part of her nature.

"How do I look, Mama?" Maggie says, showing just enough of her thin body enveloped in pink skirt and red blouse for me to know she's there, almost hidden by the door.

"Come out into the yard," I say.

Have you ever seen a lame animal, perhaps a dog run over by some careless person rich enough to own a car, sidle up to someone who is ignorant enough to be kind to him? That is the way my Maggie walks. She has been like this, chin on chest, eyes on ground, feet in shuffle, ever since the fire that burned the other house to the ground.

Dee is lighter than Maggie, with nicer hair and a fuller figure. She's a woman now, though sometimes I forget. How long ago was it that the other house burned? Ten, twelve years? Sometimes I can still hear the flames and feel Maggie's arms sticking to me, her hair smoking and her dress falling off her in little black papery flakes. Her eyes seemed stretched open, blazed open by the flames reflected in them. And Dee. I see her standing off under the sweet gum tree she used to dig gum out of; a look of concentration on her face as she watched the last dingy gray board of the house fall in toward the red-hot brick chimney. Why don't you do a dance around the ashes? I'd wanted to ask her. She had hated the house that much.

I used to think she hated Maggie, too. But that was before we raised money, the church and me, to send her to Augusta to school. She used to read to us without pity; forcing words, lies, other folks' habits, whole lives upon us two, sitting trapped and ignorant underneath her voice. She washed us in a river of make-believe, burned us with a lot of knowledge we didn't necessarily need to know. Pressed us to her with the serious way she read, to shove us away at just the moment, like dimwits, we seemed about to understand.

Dee wanted nice things. A yellow organdy dress to wear to her graduation from high school; black pumps to match a green suit she'd made from an old suit somebody gave me. She was determined to stare down any disaster in her efforts. Her eyelids would not flicker for minutes at a time. Often I fought off the temptation to shake her. At sixteen she had a style of her own: and knew what style was.

I never had an education myself. After second grade the school was closed down. Don't ask me why: in 1927 colored asked fewer questions than they do now. Sometimes Maggie reads to me. She stumbles along good-naturedly but can't see well. She knows she is not bright. Like good looks and money, quickness passed her by. She will marry John Thomas (who has mossy teeth in an earnest face) and then I'll be free to sit here and I guess just sing church songs to myself. Although I never was a good singer. Never could carry a tune. I was always better at a man's job. I used to love to milk till I was hooked in the side in '49. Cows are soothing and slow and don't bother you, unless you try to milk them the wrong way.

I have deliberately turned my back on the house. It is three rooms, just like the one that burned, except the roof is tin; they don't make shingle roofs any more. There are no real windows, just some holes cut in the sides, like the portholes in a ship, but not round and not square, with rawhide holding the shutters up on the outside. This house is in a pasture, too, like the other one. No doubt when Dee sees it she will want to tear it down. She wrote me once that no matter where we "choose" to live, she will manage to come see us. But she will never bring her friends. Maggie and I thought about this and Maggie asked me, "Mama, when did Dee ever have any friends?"

She had a few. Furtive boys in pink shirts hanging about on washday after school. Nervous girls who never laughed. Impressed with her they worshiped the well-turned phrase, the cute shape, the scalding humor that erupted like bubbles in lye. She read to them.

When she was courting Jimmy T she didn't have much time to pay to us, but turned all her faultfinding power on him. He flew to marry a cheap city girl from a family of ignorant flashy people. She hardly had time to recompose herself.

When she comes I will meet—but there they are!

Maggie attempts to make a dash for the house, in her shuffling way, but I stay her with my hand. "Come back here," I say. And she stops and tries to dig a well in the sand with her toe.

It is hard to see them clearly through the strong sun. But even the first glimpse of leg out of the car tells me it is Dee. Her feet were always neat-looking, as if God himself had shaped them with a certain style. From the other side of the car comes a short, stocky man. Hair is all over his head a foot long and hanging from his chin like a kinky mule tail. I hear Maggie suck in her breath. "Uhnneh," is what it sounds like. Like when you see the wriggling end of a snake just in front of your foot on the road. "Uhnneh."

Dee next. A dress down to the ground, in this hot weather. A dress so loud it hurts my eyes. There are yellows and oranges enough to throw back the light of the sun. I feel my whole face warming from the heat waves it throws out. Earrings gold, too, and hanging down to her shoulders. Bracelets dangling and making noises when she moves her arm up to shake the folds of the dress out of her armpits. The dress is loose and flows, and as she walks closer, I like it. I hear Maggie go "Uhnneh" again. It is her sister's hair. It stands straight up like the wool on a sheep. It is black as night and around the edges are two long pigtails that rope about like small lizards disappearing behind her ears.

"Wa-su-zo-Tean-o!" she says, coming on in that gliding way the dress makes her move. The short stocky fellow with the hair to his navel is all grinning and he follows up with "Asalamalakim, my mother and sister!" He moves to hug Maggie but she falls back, right up against the back of my chair. I feel her trembling there and when I look up I see the perspiration falling off her chin.

"Don't get up," says Dee. Since I am stout it takes something of a push. You can see me trying to move a second or two before I make it. She turns, showing white heels through her sandals, and goes back to the car. Out she peeks next with a Polaroid. She stoops down quickly and lines up picture after picture of me sitting there in front of the house with Maggie cowering behind me. She never takes a shot without making sure the house is included. When a cow comes nibbling around the edge of the yard she snaps it and me and Maggie and the house. Then she puts the Polaroid in the back seat of the car, and comes up and kisses me on the forehead.

Meanwhile Asalamalakim is going through motions with Maggie's hand. Maggie's hand is as limp as a fish, and probably as cold, despite the sweat, and she keeps trying to pull it back. It looks like Asalamalakim wants to shake hands but wants to do it fancy. Or maybe he don't know how people shake hands. Anyhow, he soon gives up on Maggie.

100 "Well," I say. "Dee."  
 "No, Mama," she says. "Not 'Dee,' Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo!"  
 "What happened to 'Dee'?" I wanted to know.  
 "She's dead," Wangero said. "I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me."  
 "You know as well as me you was named after your aunt Dicie," I said. Dicie is my sister. She named Dee.  
 105 We called her "Big Dee" after Dee was born.  
 "But who was she named after?" asked Wangero.  
 "I guess after Grandma Dee," I said.  
 "And who was she named after?" asked Wangero.  
 "Her mother," I said, and saw Wangero was getting tired. "That's about as far back as I can trace it," I said.  
 110 Though, in fact, I probably could have carried it back beyond the Civil War through the branches.  
 "Well," said Asalamalakim, "there you are."  
 "Uhhnnh," I heard Maggie say.  
 "There I was not," I said, "before 'Dicie' cropped up in our family, so why should I try to trace it that far back?"  
 115 He just stood there grinning, looking down on me like somebody inspecting a Model A car. Every once in a while he and Wangero sent eye signals over my head.  
 "How do you pronounce this name?" I asked.  
 "You don't have to call me by it if you don't want to," said Wangero.  
 "Why shouldn't I?" I asked. "If that's what you want us to call you, we'll call you."  
 120 "I know it might sound awkward at first," said Wangero.  
 "I'll get used to it," I said. "Ream it out again."  
 Well, soon we got the name out of the way. Asalamalakim had a name twice as long and three times as hard. After I tripped over it two or three times he told me to just call him Hakim-a-barber. I wanted to ask him was he a barber, but I didn't really think he was, so I didn't ask.  
 125 "You must belong to those beef-cattle peoples down the road," I said. They said "Asalamalakim" when they met you, too, but they didn't shake hands. Always too busy: feeding the cattle, fixing the fences, putting up salt-lick shelters, throwing down hay. When the white folks poisoned some of the herd the men stayed up all night with rifles in their hands. I walked a mile and a half just to see the sight.  
 Hakim-a-barber said, "I accept some of their doctrines, but farming and raising cattle is not my style." (They didn't tell me, and I didn't ask, whether Wangero (Dee) had really gone and married him.)  
 130 We sat down to eat and right away he said he didn't eat collards and pork was unclean. Wangero, though, went on through the chitlins and cornbread, the greens and everything else. She talked a blue streak over the sweet potatoes. Everything delighted her. Even the fact that we still used the benches her daddy made for the table when we couldn't effort to buy chairs.  
 135 "Oh, Mama!" she cried. Then turned to Hakim-a-barber. "I never knew how lovely these benches are. You can feel the rump prints," she said, running her hands underneath her and along the bench. Then she gave a sigh and her hand closed over Grandma Dee's butter dish. "That's it!" she said. "I knew there was something I wanted to ask you if I could have." She jumped up from the table and went over in the corner where the churn stood, the milk in it crabber by now. She looked at the churn and looked at it.  
 140 "This churn top is what I need," she said. "Didn't Uncle Buddy whittle it out of a tree you all used to have?"  
 "Yes," I said.  
 "Un huh," she said happily. "And I want the dasher, too."  
 "Uncle Buddy whittle that, too?" asked the barber.  
 Dee (Wangero) looked up at me.  
 145 "Aunt Dee's first husband whittled the dash," said Maggie so low you almost couldn't hear her. "His name was Henry, but they called him Stash."  
 "Maggie's brain is like an elephant's," Wangero said, laughing. "I can use the chute top as a centerpiece for the alcove table," she said, sliding a plate over the chute, "and I'll think of something artistic to do with the dasher."  
 When she finished wrapping the dasher the handle stuck out. I took it for a moment in my hands. You didn't even have to look close to see where hands pushing the dasher up and down to make butter had left a kind of sink in the wood. In fact, there were a lot of small sinks; you could see where thumbs and fingers had sunk into the wood. It was beautiful light yellow wood, from a tree that grew in the yard where Big Dee and Stash had lived.  
 150 After dinner Dee (Wangero) went to the trunk at the foot of my bed and started rifling through it. Maggie hung back in the kitchen over the dishpan. Out came Wangero with two quilts. They had been pieced by Grandma



155 Dee and then Big Dee and me had hung them on the quilt frames on the front porch and quilted them. One was in the Lone Star pattern. The other was Walk Around the Mountain. In both of them were scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had worn fifty and more years ago. Bits and pieces of Grandpa Jarrell's Paisley shirts. And one teeny faded blue piece, about the size of a penny matchbox, that was from Great Grandpa Ezra's uniform that he wore in the Civil War.

160 "Mama," Wangero said sweet as a bird. "Can I have these old quilts?"  
I heard something fall in the kitchen, and a minute later the kitchen door slammed.  
"Why don't you take one or two of the others?" I asked. "These old things was just done by me and Big Dee from some tops your grandma pieced before she died."

165 "No," said Wangero. "I don't want those. They are stitched around the borders by machine."  
"That'll make them last better," I said.  
"That's not the point," said Wangero. "These are all pieces of dresses Grandma used to wear. She did all this stitching by hand. Imagine!" She held the quilts securely in her arms, stroking them.  
"Some of the pieces, like those lavender ones, come from old clothes her mother handed down to her," I said, moving up to touch the quilts. Dee (Wangero) moved back just enough so that I couldn't reach the quilts. They already belonged to her.

170 "Imagine!" she breathed again, clutching them closely to her bosom.  
"The truth is," I said, "I promised to give them quilts to Maggie, for when she marries John Thomas." She gasped like a bee had stung her.  
"Maggie can't appreciate these quilts!" she said. "She'd probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use."

175 "I reckon she would," I said. "God knows I been saving 'em for long enough with nobody using 'em. I hope she will!" I didn't want to bring up how I had offered Dee (Wangero) a quilt when she went away to college. Then she had told they were old-fashioned, out of style.  
"But they're priceless!" she was saying now, furiously; for she has a temper. "Maggie would put them on the bed and in five years they'd be in rags. Less than that!"  
"She can always make some more," I said. "Maggie knows how to quilt."  
Dee (Wangero) looked at me with hatred. "You just will not understand. The point is these quilts, these quilts!"  
"Well," I said, stumped. "What would you do with them?"

185 "Hang them," she said. As if that was the only thing you could do with quilts.  
Maggie by now was standing in the door. I could almost hear the sound her feet made as they scraped over each other.  
"She can have them, Mama," she said, like somebody used to never winning anything, or having anything reserved for her. "I can 'member Grandma Dee without the quilts."

190 I looked at her hard. She had filled her bottom lip with checkerberry snuff and gave her face a kind of dopey, hangdog look. It was Grandma Dee and Big Dee who taught her how to quilt herself. She stood there with her scarred hands hidden in the folds of her skirt. She looked at her sister with something like fear but she wasn't mad at her. This was Maggie's portion. This was the way she knew God to work.  
When I looked at her like that something hit me in the top of my head and ran down to the soles of my feet. Just like when I'm in church and the spirit of God touches me and I get happy and shout. I did something I never done before: hugged Maggie to me, then dragged her on into the room, snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero's hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap. Maggie just sat there on my bed with her mouth open.  
"Take one or two of the others," I said to Dee.  
But she turned without a word and went out to Hakim-a-barber.

200 "You just don't understand," she said, as Maggie and I came out to the car.  
"What don't I understand?" I wanted to know.  
"Your heritage," she said, and then she turned to Maggie, kissed her, and said, "You ought to try to make something of yourself, too, Maggie. It's really a new day for us. But from the way you and Mama still live you'd never know it."

205 She put on some sunglasses that hid everything above the tip of her nose and chin.  
Maggie smiled; maybe at the sunglasses. But a real smile, not scared. After we watched the car dust settle I asked Maggie to bring me a dip of snuff. And then the two of us sat there just enjoying, until it was time to go in the house and go to bed.

## "A Rose For Emily" ~William Faulkner

### I

When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old man-servant—a combined gardener and cook—had seen in at least ten years.

It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily's house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps—an eyesore among eyesores. And now Miss Emily had gone to join the representatives of those august names where they lay in the cedar-bemused cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson.

Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town, dating from that day in 1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor—he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron—remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity. Not that Miss Emily would have accepted charity. Colonel Sartoris invented an involved tale to the effect that Miss Emily's father had loaned money to the town, which the town, as a matter of business, preferred this way of repaying. Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it.

When the next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction. On the first of the year they mailed her a tax notice. February came, and there was no reply. They wrote her a formal letter, asking her to call at the sheriff's office at her convenience. A week later the mayor wrote her himself, offering to call or to send his car for her, and received in reply a note on paper of an archaic shape, in a thin, flowing calligraphy in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all. The tax notice was also enclosed, without comment.

They called a special meeting of the Board of Aldermen. A deputation waited upon her, knocked at the door through which no visitor had passed since she ceased giving china-painting lessons eight or ten years earlier. They were admitted by the old Negro into a dim hall from which a stairway mounted into still more shadow. It smelled of dust and disuse—a close, dank smell. The Negro led them into the parlor. It was furnished in heavy, leather-covered furniture. When the Negro opened the blinds of one window, they could see that the leather was cracked; and when they sat down, a faint dust rose sluggishly about their thighs, spinning with slow motes in the single sun-ray. On a tarnished gilt easel before the fireplace stood a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father.

They rose when she entered—a small, fat woman in black, with a thin gold chain descending to her waist and vanishing into her belt, leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head. Her skeleton was small and spare; perhaps that was why what would have been merely plumpness in another was obesity in her. She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue. Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough as they moved from one face to another while the visitors stated their errand.

She did not ask them to sit. She just stood in the door and listened quietly until the spokesman came to a stumbling halt. Then they could hear the invisible watch ticking at the end of the gold chain.

Her voice was dry and cold. "I have no taxes in Jefferson. Colonel Sartoris explained it to me. Perhaps one of you can gain access to the city records and satisfy yourselves."

"But we have. We are the city authorities, Miss Emily. Didn't you get a notice from the sheriff, signed by him?"

"I received a paper, yes," Miss Emily said. "Perhaps he considers himself the sheriff. . . . I have no taxes in Jefferson."

"But there is nothing on the books to show that, you see. We must go by the—"

"See Colonel Sartoris. I have no taxes in Jefferson."

"But, Miss Emily—"

"See Colonel Sartoris." (Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years.) "I have no taxes in Jefferson. Tobe!" The Negro appeared. "Show these gentlemen out."

### II

So she vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell. That was two years after her father's death and a short time after her sweetheart—the one we believed

## “A Rose For Emily” ~William Faulkner

would marry her—had deserted her. After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all. A few of the ladies had the temerity to call, but were not received, and the only sign of life about the place was the Negro man—a young man then—going in and out with a market basket.

"Just as if a man—any man—could keep a kitchen properly," the ladies said; so they were not surprised when the smell developed. It was another link between the gross, teeming world and the high and mighty Griersons. 55

A neighbor, a woman, complained to the mayor, Judge Stevens, eighty years old.

"But what will you have me do about it, madam?" he said.

"Why, send her word to stop it," the woman said. "Isn't there a law?"

"I'm sure that won't be necessary," Judge Stevens said. "It's probably just a snake or a rat that nigger of hers killed in the yard. I'll speak to him about it." 60

The next day he received two more complaints, one from a man who came in diffident deprecation. "We really must do something about it, Judge. I'd be the last one in the world to bother Miss Emily, but we've got to do something." That night the Board of Aldermen met—three graybeards and one younger man, a member of the rising generation. 65

"It's simple enough," he said. "Send her word to have her place cleaned up. Give her a certain time to do it in, and if she don't . . ."

"Dammit, sir," Judge Stevens said, "will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?"

So the next night, after midnight, four men crossed Miss Emily's lawn and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings while one of them performed a regular sowing motion with his hand out of a sack slung from his shoulder. They broke open the cellar door and sprinkled lime there, and in all the outbuildings. As they recrossed the lawn, a window that had been dark was lighted and Miss Emily sat in it, the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol. They crept quietly across the lawn and into the shadow of the locusts that lined the street. After a week or two the smell went away. 70 75

That was when people had begun to feel really sorry for her. People in our town, remembering how old lady Wyatt, her great-aunt, had gone completely crazy at last, believed that the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such. We had long thought of them as a tableau; Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door. So when she got to be thirty and was still single, we were not pleased exactly, but vindicated; even with insanity in the family she wouldn't have turned down all of her chances if they had really materialized. 80

When her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her; and in a way, people were glad. At last they could pity Miss Emily. Being left alone, and a pauper, she had become humanized. Now she too would know the old thrill and the old despair of a penny more or less. 85

The day after his death all the ladies prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, as is our custom. Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body. Just as they were about to resort to law and force, she broke down, and they buried her father quickly. 90

We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.

### III

She was sick for a long time. When we saw her again, her hair was cut short, making her look like a girl, with a vague resemblance to those angels in colored church windows—sort of tragic and serene. 95

The town had just let the contracts for paving the sidewalks, and in the summer after her father's death they began the work. The construction company came with niggers and mules and machinery, and a foreman named Homer Barron, a Yankee—a big, dark, ready man, with a big voice and eyes lighter than his face. The little boys would follow in groups to hear him cuss the niggers, and the niggers singing in time to the rise and fall of picks. Pretty soon he knew everybody in town. Whenever you heard a lot of laughing anywhere about the square, Homer Barron would be in the center of the group. Presently we began to see him and Miss Emily on Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow-wheeled buggy and the matched team of bays from the livery stable. 100

At first we were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest, because the ladies all said, "Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer." But there were still others, older people, who

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said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget *noblesse oblige*—without calling it *noblesse oblige*. They just said, "Poor Emily. Her kinsfolk should come to her." She had some kin in Alabama; but years ago her father had fallen out with them over the estate of old lady Wyatt, the crazy woman, and there was no communication between the two families. They had not even been represented at the funeral. 105

And as soon as the old people said, "Poor Emily," the whispering began. "Do you suppose it's really so?" they said to one another. "Of course it is. What else could . . ." This behind their hands; rustling of craned silk and satin behind jalousies closed upon the sun of Sunday afternoon as the thin, swift clop-clop-clop of the matched team passed: "Poor Emily." 110

She carried her head high enough—even when we believed that she was fallen. It was as if she demanded more than ever the recognition of her dignity as the last Grierson; as if it had wanted that touch of earthiness to reaffirm her imperviousness. Like when she bought the rat poison, the arsenic. That was over a year after they had begun to say "Poor Emily," and while the two female cousins were visiting her. 115

"I want some poison," she said to the druggist. She was over thirty then, still a slight woman, though thinner than usual, with cold, haughty black eyes in a face the flesh of which was strained across the temples and about the eyesockets as you imagine a lighthouse-keeper's face ought to look. "I want some poison," she said.

"Yes, Miss Emily. What kind? For rats and such? I'd recom—" 120

"I want the best you have. I don't care what kind."

The druggist named several. "They'll kill anything up to an elephant. But what you want is—"

"Arsenic," Miss Emily said. "Is that a good one?"

"Is . . . arsenic? Yes, ma'am. But what you want—"

"I want arsenic." 125

The druggist looked down at her. She looked back at him, erect, her face like a strained flag. "Why, of course," the druggist said. "If that's what you want. But the law requires you to tell what you are going to use it for."

Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look him eye for eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up. The Negro delivery boy brought her the package; the druggist didn't come back. When she opened the package at home there was written on the box, under the skull and bones: "For rats." 130

## IV

So the next day we all said, "She will kill herself"; and we said it would be the best thing. When she had first begun to be seen with Homer Barron, we had said, "She will marry him." Then we said, "She will persuade him yet," because Homer himself had remarked—he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks' Club—that he was not a marrying man. Later we said, "Poor Emily" behind the jalousies as they passed on Sunday afternoon in the glittering buggy, Miss Emily with her head high and Homer Barron with his hat cocked and a cigar in his teeth, reins and whip in a yellow glove. 135

Then some of the ladies began to say that it was a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people. The men did not want to interfere, but at last the ladies forced the Baptist minister—Miss Emily's people were Episcopal—to call upon her. He would never divulge what happened during that interview, but he refused to go back again. The next Sunday they again drove about the streets, and the following day the minister's wife wrote to Miss Emily's relations in Alabama. 140

So she had blood-kin under her roof again and we sat back to watch developments. At first nothing happened. Then we were sure that they were to be married. We learned that Miss Emily had been to the jeweler's and ordered a man's toilet set in silver, with the letters H. B. on each piece. Two days later we learned that she had bought a complete outfit of men's clothing, including a nightshirt, and we said, "They are married." We were really glad. We were glad because the two female cousins were even more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been. 145

So we were not surprised when Homer Barron—the streets had been finished some time since—was gone. We were a little disappointed that there was not a public blowing-off, but we believed that he had gone on to prepare for Miss Emily's coming, or to give her a chance to get rid of the cousins. (By that time it was a cabal, and we were all Miss Emily's allies to help circumvent the cousins.) Sure enough, after another week they departed. And, as we had expected all along, within three days Homer Barron was back in town. A neighbor saw the Negro man admit him at the kitchen door at dusk one evening. 150

And that was the last we saw of Homer Barron. And of Miss Emily for some time. The Negro man went in and out with the market basket, but the front door remained closed. Now and then we would see her at a window for a moment, as the men did that night when they sprinkled the lime, but for almost six months she did not 155

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appear on the streets. Then we knew that this was to be expected too; as if that quality of her father which had thwarted her woman's life so many times had been too virulent and too furious to die.

When we next saw Miss Emily, she had grown fat and her hair was turning gray. During the next few years it grew grayer and grayer until it attained an even pepper-and-salt iron-gray, when it ceased turning. Up to the day of her death at seventy-four it was still that vigorous iron-gray, like the hair of an active man. 160

From that time on her front door remained closed, save for a period of six or seven years, when she was about forty, during which she gave lessons in china-painting. She fitted up a studio in one of the downstairs rooms, where the daughters and grand-daughters of Colonel Sartoris' contemporaries were sent to her with the same regularity and in the same spirit that they were sent to church on Sundays with a twenty-five-cent piece for the collection plate. Meanwhile her taxes had been remitted. 165

Then the newer generation became the backbone and the spirit of the town, and the painting pupils grew up and fell away and did not send their children to her with boxes of color and tedious brushes and pictures cut from the ladies' magazines. The front door closed upon the last one and remained closed for good. When the town got free postal delivery Miss Emily alone refused to let them fasten the metal numbers above her door and attach a mailbox to it. She would not listen to them. 170

Daily, monthly, yearly we watched the Negro grow grayer and more stooped, going in and out with the market basket. Each December we sent her a tax notice, which would be returned by the post office a week later, unclaimed. Now and then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows—she had evidently shut up the top floor of the house—like the carved torso of an idol in a niche, looking or not looking at us, we could never tell which. Thus she passed from generation to generation—dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse. 175

And so she died. Fell ill in the house filled with dust and shadows, with only a doddering Negro man to wait on her. We did not even know she was sick; we had long since given up trying to get any information from the Negro. He talked to no one, probably not even to her, for his voice had grown harsh and rusty, as if from disuse. 180

She died in one of the downstairs rooms, in a heavy walnut bed with a curtain, her gray head propped on a pillow yellow and moldy with age and lack of sunlight.

V

The negro met the first of the ladies at the front door and let them in, with their hushed, sibilant voices and their quick, curious glances, and then he disappeared. He walked right through the house and out the back and was not seen again. 185

The two female cousins came at once. They held the funeral on the second day, with the town coming to look at Miss Emily beneath a mass of bought flowers, with the crayon face of her father musing profoundly above the bier and the ladies sibilant and macabre; and the very old men—some in their brushed Confederate uniforms—on the porch and the lawn, talking of Miss Emily as if she had been a contemporary of theirs, believing that they had danced with her and courted her perhaps, confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road, but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottleneck of the most recent decade of years. 190

Already we knew that there was one room in that region above stairs which no one had seen in forty years, and which would have to be forced. They waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground before they opened it. 195

The violence of breaking down the door seemed to fill this room with pervading dust. A thin, acrid pall as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a bridal: upon the valance curtains of faded rose color, upon the rose-shaded lights, upon the dressing table, upon the delicate array of crystal and the man's toilet things backed with tarnished silver, silver so tarnished that the monogram was obscured. Among them lay a collar and tie, as if they had just been removed, which, lifted, left upon the surface a pale crescent in the dust. Upon a chair hung the suit, carefully folded; beneath it the two mute shoes and the discarded socks. 200

The man himself lay in the bed.

For a long while we just stood there, looking down at the profound and fleshless grin. The body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him. What was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt, had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay; and upon him and upon the pillow beside him lay that even coating of the patient and biding dust. 205

Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair.