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Anthology

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Anthology for English Language (4355)

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Section A

From *Touching the Void*

Joe and Simon are mountain-climbing in the Andes, when Joe has a terrible accident. Here are two accounts by Joe and Simon of what happened.

Joe's account

'I hit the slope at the base of the cliff before I saw it coming. I was facing into the slope and both knees locked as I struck it. I felt a shattering blow in my knee, felt bones splitting, and screamed. The impact catapulted me over backwards and down the slope of the East Face. I slid, head-first, on my back. The rushing speed of it confused me. I thought of the drop below but felt nothing. Since we were roped together, Simon would be ripped off the mountain. He couldn't hold me. I screamed again as I jerked to a sudden violent stop.

10 Everything was still, silent. My thoughts raced madly. Then pain flooded down my thigh – a fierce burning fire coming down the inside of my thigh, seeming to ball in my groin, building and building until I cried out at it, and breathing came in ragged gasps. My leg! My leg!

I hung, head down, on my back, left leg tangled in the rope above me and my right leg hanging slackly to one side. I lifted my head from the snow and stared, up across my chest, at a grotesque distortion in the right knee, twisting the leg into a strange zig-zag. I didn't connect it with the pain which burnt in my groin. That had nothing to do with my knee. I kicked my left leg free of the rope and swung round until I was hanging against the snow on my chest, feet down. The pain eased. I kicked my left foot into the slope and stood up.

20 A wave of nausea surged over me. I pressed my face into the snow, and the sharp cold seemed to calm me. Something terrible, something dark with dread occurred to me, and as I thought about it, I felt the dark thought break into panic: "I've broken my leg, that's it. I'm dead. Everyone said it ... if there's just two of you a broken ankle could turn into a death sentence ... if it's broken ... if ... It doesn't hurt so much, maybe I've just ripped something."

30 I kicked my right leg against the slope, feeling sure it wasn't broken. My knee exploded. Bone grated, and the fireball rushed from groin to knee. I screamed. I looked down at the knee and could see it was broken, yet I tried not to believe what I was seeing. It wasn't just broken, it was ruptured, twisted, crushed, and I could see the kink in the joint and knew what had happened. The impact had driven my lower leg up through the knee joint.

40 I dug my axes into the snow, and pounded my good leg deeply into the soft slope until I felt sure it wouldn't slip. The effort brought back the nausea and I felt my head spin giddily to the point of fainting. I moved and a searing spasm of pain cleared away the faintness. I could see the summit of Seria Norte away to the west. I was not far below it. The sight drove home how desperately things had changed. We were above 19,000 feet, still on the ridge, and very much alone. I looked south at the small rise I had hoped to scale quickly and it seemed to grow with every second that I stared. I would never get over it. Simon would not be able to get me up it. He would leave me. He had no choice. I held my breath, thinking about it. Left here? Alone. For an age I felt overwhelmed at the notion of

being left; I felt like screaming, and I felt like swearing, but stayed silent. If I said a word, I would panic. I could feel myself teetering on the edge of it.'

Simon's account

'Joe had disappeared behind a rise in the ridge and began moving faster than I could go. I was glad we had put the steep section behind us at last. I felt tired and was grateful to be able to follow Joe's tracks instead of being in front.

I rested a while when I saw that Joe had stopped moving. Obviously he had found an obstacle and I thought I would wait until he started moving again. When the rope moved again I trudged forward after it, slowly.

50 Suddenly there was a sharp tug as the rope lashed out taut across the slope. I was pulled forward several feet as I pushed my axes into the snow and braced myself for another jerk. Nothing happened. I knew that Joe had fallen, but I couldn't see him, so I stayed put. I waited for about ten minutes until the tautened rope went slack on the snow and I felt sure that Joe had got his weight off me. I began to move along his footsteps cautiously, half expecting something else to happen. I kept tensed up and ready to dig my axe in at the first sign of trouble.

As I crested the rise, I could see down a slope to where the rope disappeared over the edge of a drop. I approached slowly, wondering what had happened. When I reached the top of the drop I saw Joe below me. He had one foot dug in
60 and was leaning against the slope with his face buried in the snow. I asked him what had happened and he looked at me in surprise. I knew he was injured, but the significance didn't hit me at first.

He told me very calmly that he had broken his leg. He looked pathetic, and my immediate thought came without any emotion. You've had it, matey. You're dead ... no two ways about it! I think he knew it too. I could see it in his face. It was all totally rational. I knew where we were, I took in everything around me instantly, and knew he was dead. It never occurred to me that I might also die. I accepted without question that I could get off the mountain alone. I had no doubt about that.

70 Below him I could see thousands of feet of open face falling into the eastern glacier bay. I watched him quite dispassionately. I couldn't help him, and it occurred to me that in all likelihood he would fall to his death. I wasn't disturbed by the thought. In a way I hoped he would fall. I had no idea how I might help him. I could get down. If I tried to get him down I might die with him. It didn't frighten me. It just seemed a waste. It would be pointless. I kept staring at him, expecting him to fall.....'

Joe Simpson

Harriet Tubman



Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in Dorchester County on the Eastern shore of Maryland. Her parents, Benjamin Ross and Harriet Green, were enslaved Ashanti Africans who had eleven children, and saw many of the older children sold into the Deep South. At five years old, Araminta was "rented" to neighbours to do housework. She was never very good at household chores, and was beaten regularly by her owners. She was, of course,

10 not educated to read or write. She eventually was assigned work as a field hand, which she preferred to household work. Although she was a small woman, she was strong, and her time working in the fields probably contributed to her strength. In 1844 or 1845, Harriet married John Tubman, a free black. She always contemplated freedom and resented her situation.

In 1849, several events came together to motivate Harriet Tubman to act. She heard that two of her brothers were about to be sold in the Deep South. Her husband threatened to sell her, too. She tried to persuade her brothers to escape with her, but ended up leaving alone, making her way to Philadelphia, and freedom. The year after Harriet Tubman's arrival in the North, she decided to return to Maryland to free her sister and her sister's family. In the next 16 years, she returned 18 or 19 more times, bringing a total of over 200 slaves out of slavery.

When Tubman first arrived in Philadelphia, she was, under the law of the time, a free woman. But the next year, with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, her status changed: she became instead, a fugitive slave, and all citizens were obligated under the law to aid in her recapture and return. So she had to operate as quietly as possible, but nevertheless she was soon known throughout abolitionist circles and the freedmen's communities.

30 As the impact of the Fugitive Slave Act became clear, Tubman began guiding her "passengers" on the "underground" railway all the way to Canada, where they would be truly free. From 1851 through 1857, she herself lived part of the year in St. Catherines, Canada, as well as spending some time in the area of Auburn, New York, where many of the citizens were anti-slavery.

Among those she brought out of slavery were members of her own family. She freed three of her brothers in 1854, bringing them to St. Catherines. In 1857, on one of her trips to Maryland, Harriet Tubman was able to bring both of her parents to freedom. She first established them in Canada, but they could not take the climate, and so she settled them on land she bought in Auburn with the aid of abolitionist supporters. Her trips were largely financed by her own funds, earned as a cook and laundress. But she did get other support from many of the leading figures of New England, and many key abolitionists.

40 After the Civil War broke out, Harriet Tubman went South to assist and work with "contrabands" - escaped slaves who were attached to the Union Army. She also briefly went to Florida on a similar mission.

In July of 1863, Tubman led troops under the command of Colonel James Montgomery in the Combahee River expedition, disrupting Southern supply lines by destroying bridges and railroads. The mission also freed more than 750 slaves. Harriet Tubman is credited not only with significant leadership

50 responsibilities for the mission itself, but with singing to calm the slaves and keep the situation in hand. Tubman came under Confederate fire on this mission. General Saxton, who reported the raid to Secretary of War Stanton, said, "This is the only military command in American history wherein a woman, black or white, led the raid and under whose inspiration it was originated and conducted." Tubman believed that she was in the employ of the U.S. Army. When she received her first pay check, she spent it to build a place where freed black women could earn a living doing laundry for the soldiers. But then she wasn't paid regularly again, and wasn't given the military rations she believed she was entitled to. She was paid only a total of \$200 in three years of service. She

60 supported herself and her work by selling baked goods and root beer which she worked on after her work duties were complete.

In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, Harriet Tubman worked to establish schools for freedmen in South Carolina. While she never learned to read and write, she appreciated the value of education for the future of freedom. In 1896, in a touching link to the next generation of African American women activists, Harriet Tubman spoke at the first meeting of the National Association of Coloured Women. Thinking of the future and continuing her support for aged and poor African Americans, Tubman established a home, incorporated in 1903 and opened in 1908, initially called the John Brown Home for Aged and Indigent

70 Coloured People, and later named after her instead. The home, to which she moved in 1911, continued for several years after her death on March 10, 1913, of pneumonia. She was buried with full military honours.

Jone Johnson Lewis

I Never Thought I could be this Lucky

Like any bride, Karen Darke was determined she'd have a wedding to remember. She spent months with her fiancé, Suresh Paul, planning their day. They decided to keep it fun – she wore trousers and a camisole top and 400 guests joined them for a barbecue on the beach of a Scottish *loch*¹. “It was the perfect day,” says Karen, a geologist. “Absolutely brilliant.”

It was especially poignant for Karen, 31, from Aberdeen, Scotland, because for 10 years she'd believed her love life was over. “When I lost the use of my legs, I couldn't imagine ever falling in love and getting married. But then I met Suresh and everything changed,” she says.

- 10 Karen was a Geology student at Aberdeen University when the accident happened. She was an experienced rock-climber and had gone climbing with three friends when she lost her footing and fell backwards, plunging 30 feet down the rock face. She lay there, barely conscious, while two of them ran to the nearest house – a mile away – to raise the alarm. Karen was then taken by helicopter to the Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, where she slipped into a coma. Karen's parents kept a vigil by her bedside and after three days she came round. “I opened my eyes and could see tears of relief on my mum's cheeks. My family gave me the will to fight,” she recalls, “But I couldn't feel my legs. It was terrifying. I knew I was paralysed, but I was sure it was temporary,” she says.
- 20 Later that day, her doctor dropped a bombshell and told her that she'd broken her neck and back so badly she'd never walk again. “It was too much to take in,” says Karen. “The idea of not being able to use my legs was horrific.” She'd also fractured her skull, broken her arms and punctured her lung. “I was ruined emotionally as well,” she admits.

After a month in intensive care, Karen underwent gruelling physiotherapy and learnt how to use a wheelchair. When she left hospital in September 1993 she went back to university, where she had to get used to looking after herself in a specially adapted flat. “Living alone was hard. I'd lost a lot of feeling, so I had to be extra careful doing things like cooking. But my friends were really supportive.”

- 30 Eighteen months later, Karen moved into an adapted flat with friends and completed her degree. “By then I was having fun again. I was used to being disabled and could cope,” she says. Slowly, Karen regained her love of sport and began taking part in adapted outdoor activities. In 1997 she became the first woman ever to hand-cycle across the Himalayas, and now competes in wheelchair marathons. “Physically, my disability became irrelevant as I pushed myself to the limit,” she says.

- In 1998, Karen started a job as a geologist for Shell and gradually began to rebuild her life. But she still found it impossible to have successful relationships. “My self-confidence had taken a battering,” she says. “I didn't want to be a
40 burden to anyone, so I put romance to the back of my mind.” But in 2000 Karen met Suresh, now 32, from London, at a conference about expeditions for the disabled. They clicked immediately. But Suresh, who designs equipment for the

disabled, had a girlfriend - so they kept in touch as friends, meeting up occasionally and chatting on the phone.

50 “Because Suresh wasn’t available I didn’t let myself think of him romantically,” says Karen. But when his relationship ended a year later, Karen was hopeful. When she went on holiday, Suresh drove her to the airport. “I just had to say something, so I mumbled that I liked him,” says Karen. “Suresh changed the subject. I was sure I had blown it and was heartbroken.” But a week later, Karen received an e-mail from Suresh saying, “I want to be with you. I love you.”

He picked Karen up from the airport and, just five weeks later, he proposed. Suresh moved from London to Aberdeen to be with Karen, and their relationship gave her a huge confidence boost. “My disability wasn’t an issue for him,” she says. Suresh agrees. “Karen’s the most beautiful woman in the world, inside and out. I couldn’t be happier.”

60 They planned their wedding and managed to incorporate Karen’s love of outdoor sports into the plans. And earlier this year they both canoed on to the beach for the ceremony. Now, having recently returned from their honeymoon, the couple are thinking about having children. “Knowing Suresh sees me as I am, not as a woman in a wheelchair, gives me enormous confidence,” says Karen. “I know we can do anything together.”

Lisa Laws

Woman magazine, 11 November 2002

¹*Loch*: lake

Impact alert – asteroids

Asteroid facts

- an asteroid is an irregularly shaped lump of rock, measuring between 10m and 10km across.
- if you collected together all known asteroids, they would weigh less than the Moon.
- being composed of minerals and metals, asteroids are potentially worth a fortune.
- it is estimated that 30,000 asteroid fragments – meteorites – fall on the Earth every year. The vast majority land in deserts or in the seas, which between them make up most of the surface area of the Earth, and so they are not recovered.

What's the probability of Earth being hit by an asteroid in the near future?

Our being hit by a large asteroid in the future is a certainty. The question is when, and that is what astronomers are trying to find out now.

How much warning time do you think we might have?

We should be able to get 80 or 100 years' notice.

What's the best way to deflect a hazardous asteroid?

There is no best way because all asteroids are different.

What to expect if one hits

Looking at the eyewitness reports from the 1908 Tunguska comet-impact, in Siberia, tells us what to expect if an asteroid hits the Earth. Amazingly, no people were killed but over a thousand reindeer were burnt to a cinder. As the shock wave smashed through the forest, it felled trees and stripped them of branches, leaving them looking like telegraph poles. Hunters, further away, were knocked unconscious and thrown to the ground by the blast. Everyone within 1,000 km of the impact saw the great flash in the sky from the explosion. The devastation covers an area approximately the size of Greater London. Should such an impact occur over any city, the human death toll would be measured in millions.

Tunguska was caused by an object no bigger than 100m in diameter, and you can expect impacts of that type every century or so. Of course, most will take place over one or other of the vast majority of unpopulated areas.

In the case of a repeat of the dinosaur-killing impact of 65 million years ago, the proposed scenario is almost unthinkable. When a 10km-sized asteroid hits the ground, it will throw so much dust into the air that the planet will be bathed in a fiery meteor storm. Bill Napier, an astronomer from Armagh Observatory, says: "Global destruction occurs largely through the ejection of hot ash, causing huge numbers of shooting stars that just incinerate everything. Then there would be a massive destruction of the atmosphere."

The chemicals released by the impact are likely to destroy the ozone layer and create enormous quantities of acid rain. The dust that does not fall back as meteorites becomes suspended in the atmosphere, blocking out the sunlight.

Seismic waves from the Tunguska impact were registered around the world. After a 'dinosaur-killer', the entire planet would be wracked with earthquakes. "I think conservatively, you are talking about Richter 9 quakes," says Napier.

Would life survive a big one?

Throughout Earth's history there have been at least five mass extinctions. The last one was of the dinosaurs. Every time, life survived and built up once again. So although life in some form would continue, predicting what would live and what might die is difficult. Without sunlight for photosynthesis, because of the
50 Earth's dusty shroud, the collapse of food chains on land and in the upper layers of the oceans seems inevitable. Perhaps seeds will survive to start again when the dust settles. Small scavengers such as rats and cockroaches might be able to adapt to the new regime. Life very deep on the ocean floor, around hot water vents, would probably be unaffected.

Worst Case Scenario

So, which should we worry about: global catastrophe dinosaur-killer size, or smaller city-smashers? Napier says: "I think the biggest danger is a Tunguska – or super-Tunguska-sized object. Especially if it lands on water, the Atlantic, say. The tsunami caused by this would be disastrous for cities around the Atlantic
60 rim."

Between the 100m class and the 10km class is a size range of objects that also causes concern. They are the asteroids measuring about 1km across. These would not cause global devastation but could have global consequences, with massive damage in every country on Earth. It is estimated that such an impact would cause the death of about a third of the world's population: billions of lives. So although the human race would survive, the biggest question is: could civilisation?

Adapted from an article by Stuart Clark in *Focus* magazine (January 2003)

Shopping for Romanian babies

There are few more depressing assignments for a journalist than the Eastern European “orphanage beat”. In Russia, you can find thousands of children who have been forcibly removed from parents deemed to be inadequate, through alcoholism, drug abuse or political inclination. The accepted belief is that the State is the best possible parent. In Romania you can find as many children who have been dumped in state institutions by parents who simply cannot afford to feed them.

10 I walked into a “Cassia dei Copii”, a “house of children”, in northern Romania. The smell of urine, the cold and dim lighting are familiar. A sea of expectant young faces looks up at me. Within seconds, two small fists are thrust into my hands. Others dig under their mattresses for childish drawings – no-one has a locker in which to keep personal belongings – which are then frantically held up to me for approval.

The children are desperate to give these offerings to someone. Anyone. They call out, “What is your name? What is your name?” I am too choked to answer. Give me a war zone any day, but spare me the emotional trauma of 100 children searching for a mother. It takes some time to locate any adult carer, hardly surprising since there are only three on duty for the 100 or so children.

20 I ask whether it is true that, in some orphanages, only 1% are what we would describe as genuine orphans; the rest have been left for economic reasons. “I don’t know,” the director says, looking around at all the children apparently without identities. “The papers have been lost. But most of them haven’t been visited for six months,” she adds helpfully, which means that under Romanian law they are now the official property of the state.

And this is not a trip down memory lane to those pictures of half-starved neglected children, the babies rocking in their cots, when journalists were first allowed access to Romania after the revolution 10 years ago. Then we found 150,000 children abandoned to the state. Since then the situation has improved slightly – there are now 140,000.

30 **‘Vested interest’**

In the thankfully clean-smelling, warm offices of the European Union in the capital Bucharest, the head of Mission holds his head in his hands.

Last year, the discovery of thousands of malnourished children, in an investigation sponsored by Brussels, prompted an emergency-feeding programme. But attempts to persuade the authorities to do something fundamental, he says, meet with a blank wall of vested interest.

“Thousands of jobs are involved in running these state institutions,” he explains. “We are dealing with an industry of children.”

40 Posing as a wealthy, would-be parent of a Romanian orphan, I discover that if you are prepared to pay, then you can shop for a baby, as I did in a town some three hours drive north of Bucharest.

Local gossip says the orphanage director is making a fortune from the trade. She has powerful friends and the police are not allowed to investigate.

She shows me 60 babies she has in her baby shop that week. They all look clean but are still prone to the rocking motion of babies suffering from neglect. She gives me three to choose from – Andrei, Nico, or Liviu. The impoverished parents of these babies will readily give their permission.

“I can forge their signatures if necessary,” she says.

50 The sum of \$20,000 is mentioned, and she says she can get the baby delivered, all papers intact (her daughter is a lawyer) to my home in north London.

Baby trade

In the surrounding villages, I find the network which feeds the trade. Wherever I stop, villagers come up to me asking, “Are you here to buy a baby?” I am told of one couple who lost two of their children to the orphanage down the road.

“We took them there for the winter,” explains the father, “because we couldn’t afford to feed them. And when we came to collect them, we were told they had gone.”

The tears roll down his cheeks. The four-year-old boy who remains at home is holding on tightly to his father as he speaks, with some anxiety.

60 I then went to meet a woman who produces for the baby shop.

“I have given six children to the orphanage and kept two,” she says. “I don’t mean to keep this latest one.”

She places a nine-month-old baby on my lap.

“You can have him if you like,” she says.

“For \$11,000,” the father adds quickly.

I hand back the seventh baby I have been offered in as many days in Romania, make my excuses and leave.

By Sue Lloyd Roberts in Romania

Explorers, or boys messing about? Either way, taxpayer gets rescue bill

Helicopter duo plucked from life-raft after Antarctic crash

Their last expedition ended in farce when the Russians threatened to send in military planes to intercept them as they tried to cross into Siberia via the icebound Bering Strait.

Yesterday a new adventure undertaken by British explorers Steve Brooks and Quentin Smith almost led to tragedy when their helicopter plunged into the sea off Antarctica.

10 The men were plucked from the icy waters by a Chilean naval ship after a nine-hour rescue which began when Mr Brooks contacted his wife, Jo Vestey, on his satellite phone asking for assistance. The rescue involved the Royal Navy, the RAF and British Coastguards.

Last night there was resentment in some quarters that the men's adventure had cost the taxpayers of Britain and Chile tens of thousands of pounds.

Experts questioned the wisdom of taking a small helicopter – the four-seater Robinson R44 has a single engine – into such a hostile environment.

There was also confusion about what exactly the men were trying to achieve. A website set up to promote the Bering Strait expedition claims the team were trying to fly from North to South Pole in their “trustworthy helicopter”.

But Ms Vestey claimed she did not know what the pair were up to, describing them as “boys messing around with a helicopter”.

20 The drama began at around 1am British time when Mr Brooks, 42, and 40-year-old Mr Smith, also known as Q, ditched into the sea 100 miles off Antarctica, about 36 miles off Smith Island, and scrambled into their life-raft.

Mr Brooks called his wife in London on his satellite phone. She said: “He said they were both in the life-raft but were okay and could I call the emergency people.”

Meanwhile, distress signals were being beamed from the ditched helicopter and from Mr Brooks' Breitling emergency watch, a wedding present.

The signals from the aircraft were deciphered by Falmouth coastguard in England and passed on to the rescue co-ordination centre at RAF Kinloss in Scotland.

30 The Royal Navy's ice patrol ship, HMS Endurance, which was 180 miles away surveying uncharted waters, began steaming towards the scene and dispatched its two Lynx helicopters.

One was driven back because of poor visibility but the second was on its way when the men were picked up by a Chilean naval vessel at about 10.20am British time.

Though the pair wore survival suits and the weather at the spot where they ditched was clear, one Antarctic explorer told Mr Brooks' wife it was “nothing short of a miracle” that they had survived.

40 Both men are experienced adventurers. Mr Brooks, a property developer from London, has taken part in expeditions to 70 countries in 15 years. He has trekked solo to Everest base camp and walked barefoot for three days in the Himalayas. He has negotiated the white water rapids of the Zambezi river by kayak and survived a

charge by a silver back gorilla in the Congo. He is also a qualified mechanical engineer and pilot.

He and his wife spent their honeymoon flying the helicopter from Alaska to Chile. The 16,000-mile trip took three months.

Mr Smith, also from London, claims to have been flying since the age of five. He has twice flown a helicopter around the globe and won the world freestyle helicopter flying championship.

Despite their experience, it is not for the first time they have hit the headlines for the wrong reasons.

50 In April, Mr Brooks and another explorer, Graham Stratford, were poised to become the first to complete a crossing of the 56-mile wide frozen Bering Strait between the US and Russia in an amphibious vehicle, Snowbird VI, which could carve its way through ice floes and float in the water in between.

But they were forced to call a halt after the Russian authorities told them they would scramble military helicopters to lift them off the ice if they crossed the border.

Ironically, one of the aims of the expedition, for which Mr Smith provided air back-up, was to demonstrate how good relations between east and west had become.

60 The wisdom of the team's latest adventure was questioned by, among others, Gunter Endres, editor of Jane's Helicopter Markets and Systems, who said: "I'm surprised they used the R44. I wouldn't use a helicopter like that to go so far over the sea. It sounds like they were pushing it to the maximum".

A spokesman for the pair said it was not known what had gone wrong. The flying conditions had been "excellent".

The Ministry of Defence said the taxpayer would pick up the bill, as was normal in rescues in the UK and abroad. The spokesperson said it was "highly unlikely" that it would recover any of the money.

70 Last night the men were on their way to the Chilean naval base where HMS Endurance was to pick them up. Ms Vestey said: "They have been checked and appear to be well. I don't know what will happen to them once they have been picked up by HMS Endurance – they'll probably have their bottoms kicked and be sent home the long way".

Steven Morris
From *The Guardian*, 28/01/2003

From *Chinese Cinderella*

Growing up in a wealthy family in 1950s Hong Kong, Adeline Yen Mah should have had an enviable childhood, but she was rejected by her dominating stepmother and despised by her brothers and sisters. She was sent to a boarding school and left there. In this extract from her autobiography she relates one of the few occasions when she went home.

Time went by relentlessly and it was Saturday again. Eight weeks more and it would be the end of term...in my case perhaps the end of school forever. Four of us were playing Monopoly. My heart was not in it and I was losing steadily. Outside it was hot and there was a warm wind blowing. The radio warned of a possible typhoon the next day. It was my turn and I threw the dice. As I played, the thought of leaving school throbbed at the back of my mind like a persistent toothache.

'Adeline!' Ma-mien Valentino was calling.

10 'You can't go now,' Mary protested. 'For once I'm winning. One, two, three, four. Good! You've landed on my property. Thirty-five dollars, please. Oh, good afternoon, Mother Valentino!'

We all stood up and greeted her.

'Adeline, didn't you hear me call you? Hurry up downstairs! Your chauffeur is waiting to take you home!'

Full of foreboding, I ran downstairs as in a nightmare, wondering who had died this time. Father's chauffeur assured me everyone was healthy.

'Then why are you taking me home?' I asked.

20 'How should I know?' he answered defensively, shrugging his shoulders. 'Your guess is as good as mine. They give me the orders and I carry them out.'

During the short drive home, my heart was full of dread and I wondered what I had done wrong. Our car stopped at an elegant villa at mid-level, halfway up the hill between the peak and the harbour.

'Where are we?' I asked foolishly.

'Don't you know anything?' the chauffeur replied rudely. 'This is your new home. Your parents moved here a few months ago.'

'I had forgotten,' I said as I got out.

Ah Gum opened the door. Inside it was quiet and cool.

'Where is everyone?'

30 'Your mother is out playing bridge. Your two brothers and Little sister are sunbathing by the swimming-pool. Your father is in his room and wants to see you as soon as you get home.'

'See me in his room?' I was overwhelmed by the thought that I had been summoned by father to enter the Holy of Holies – a place to which I had never been invited. Why?

Timidly, I knocked on the door. Father was alone, looking relaxed in his slippers and bathrobe, reading a newspaper. He smiled as I entered and I saw he was in a happy mood. I breathed a small sigh of relief at first but became uneasy when I wondered why he was being so nice, thinking, Is this a giant ruse on his part to trick me? Dare I let my guard down?

40 'Sit down! Sit down!' He pointed to a chair. 'Don't look so scared. Here, take a look at this! They're writing about someone we both know, I think.'

He handed me the day's newspaper and there, in one corner, I saw my name ADELINE YEN in capital letters prominently displayed.

50 'It was announced today that 14-year old ADELINE JUN-LING YEN of Sacred Heart Canossian School, Caine Road, Hong Kong, has won first prize in the international Play-writing Competition held in London, England, for the 1951-52 school year. It is the first time that any local Chinese student from Hong Kong has won such a prestigious event. Besides a medal, the prize comes with a cash reward of FIFTY ENGLISH POUNDS. Our sincere congratulations, ADELINE YEN, for bringing honour to Hong Kong. We are proud of you'.

Is it possible? Am I dreaming? Me, the winner?

'I was going up the lift this morning with my friend C.Y. Tung when he showed me this article and asked me, "Is the winner Adeline Jun-Ling Yen related to you? The two of you have the same uncommon last name." Now C.Y. himself has a few children about your age but so far none of them has won an international literary prize, as far as I know. So I was quite pleased to tell him that you are my daughter. Well done!'

60 He looked radiant. For once, he was proud of me. In front of his revered colleague, C.Y. Tung, a prominent fellow businessman also from Shanghai, I had given him face. I thought, Is this the big moment I have been waiting for? My whole being vibrated with all the joy in the world. I only had to stretch out my hand to reach the stars.

'Tell me, how did you do it?' he continued. 'How come *you* won?'

'Well, the rules and regulations were so very complicated. One really has to be dedicated just to understand what they really want. Perhaps I was the only one determined enough to enter and there were no other competitors!'

He laughed approvingly. 'I doubt it very much but that's a good answer.'

'Please, Father,' I asked boldly, thinking it was now or never. 'May I go to university in England too, just like my brothers?'

70 'I do believe you have potential. Tell me, what would you study?'

My heart gave a giant lurch as it dawned on me that he was agreeing to let me go. How marvellous it was simply to be alive! Study? I thought. Going to England is like entering heaven. Does it matter what you do after you go to heaven?

But Father was expecting an answer. What about creative writing? After all, I had just won first prize in an international writing competition!

'I plan to study literature. I'll be a writer.'

80 'Writer!' he scoffed. 'You are going to starve! What language are you going to write in and who is going to read your writing? Though you may think you're an expert in both Chinese and English, your Chinese is actually rather elementary. As for your English, don't you think the native English speakers can write better than you?'

I waited in silence. I did not wish to contradict him.

'You will go to England with Third Brother this summer and you will go to medical school. After you graduate, you will specialise in obstetrics. Women will always be having babies. Women patients prefer women doctors. You will learn to deliver their babies. That's a foolproof profession for you. Don't you agree?'

Agree? Of course I agreed. Apparently, he had it all planned out. As long as he let me go to university in England, I would study anything he wished. How did that line go in Wordsworth's poem? *Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive.*

90 'Father I shall go to medical school in England and become a doctor. Thank you very, very much.'

Adeline Yen Mah

From *Taking on the World*

Ellen MacArthur became famous in 2001 when she competed in the Vendée Globe solo round-the-world yacht race. She was the youngest (24 years old) and probably the shortest (just 5ft 2in!) competitor. She came second, despite appalling weather, exhaustion and, as she describes here, problems with her boat.

I climbed the mast on Christmas Eve, and though I had time to get ready, it was the hardest climb to date. I had worked through the night preparing for it, making sure I had all the tools, mouse lines and bits I might need, and had agonised for hours over how I should prepare the *halyard*¹ so that it would stream out easily below me and would not get caught as I climbed.

10 When it got light I decided that the time was right. I kitted up in my middle layer clothes as I didn't want to wear so much that I wouldn't be able to move freely up there. The most dangerous thing apart from falling off is to be thrown against the mast, and though I would be wearing a helmet it would not be difficult to break bones up there.

I laid out the new halyard on deck, flaking it neatly so there were no twists. As I took the mast in my hands and began to climb I felt almost as if I was stepping out on to the moon – a world over which I had no control. You can't ease the *sheets*² or take a *reef*³, nor can you alter the settings for the autopilot. If something goes wrong you are not there to attend to it. You are a passive observer looking down at your boat some 90 feet below you. After climbing just a couple of metres I realised how hard it was going to be, I couldn't feel my fingers – I'd need gloves, despite the loss of dexterity. I climbed down, getting soaked as we ploughed into a wave – the decks around my feet were awash. I unclipped my *jumar*⁴ from the halyard and put on a pair of sailing gloves. There would be no second climb on this one – I knew that I would not have the energy.

20

As I climbed my hands were more comfortable, and initially progress was positive. But it got harder and harder as I was not only pulling my own weight up as I climbed but also the increasingly heavy halyard – nearly 200 feet of rope by the time I made it to the top. The physical drain came far less from the climbing than from the clinging on. The hardest thing is just to hang on as the mast slices erratically through the air. There would be the odd massive wave which I could feel us surf down, knowing we would pile into the wave in front. I would wrap my arms around the mast and press my face against its cold and slippery carbon surface, waiting for the shuddering slowdown. Eyes closed and teeth gritted, I hung on tight, wrists clenched together, and hoped. Occasionally on the smaller waves I would be thrown before I could hold on tight, and my body and the tools I carried were thrown away from the mast; I'd be hanging on by just one arm, trying to stop myself from smacking back into the rig.

30

By the third *spreader*⁵ I was exhausted; the halyard was heavier and the motion more violent. I held on to her spreader base and hung there, holding tight to breathe more deeply and conjure up more energy. But I realised that the halyard was tight and that it had caught on something. I knew that if I went down to free it I would not have the energy to climb up once again. I tugged and tugged on the rope – the frustration was unreal. It had to come, quite simply the rope had to

40

come free. Luckily with all the pulling I managed to create enough slack to make it to the top, but now I was even more exhausted. I squinted at the grey sky above me and watched the mast-head whip across the clouds. The wind whistled past us, made visible by the snow that had begun to fall. Below the sea stretched out for ever, the size and length of the waves emphasised by this new aerial view. This is what it must look like to the albatross.

50 I rallied once more and left the safety of the final spreader for my last hike to the top. The motion was worse than ever, and as I climbed I thought to myself, not far now, kiddo, come on, just keep moving... As the mast-head came within reach there was a short moment of relief; at least there was no giving up now I had made it – whatever happened now I had the whole mast to climb down. I fumbled at the top of the rig, feeding in the halyard and connecting the other end to the top of *Kingfisher's* mast. The job only took half an hour – then I began my descent. This was by far the most dangerous part and I had my heart in my mouth – no time for complacency now, I thought, not till you reach the deck, kiddo, it's far from over...

60 It was almost four hours before I called Mark back and I shook with exhaustion as we spoke. We had been surfing at well over 20 knots while I was up there. My limbs were bruised and my head was spinning, but I felt like a million dollars as I spoke on the phone. Santa had called on *Kingfisher* early and we had the best present ever – a new halyard.

Ellen MacArthur

¹ *halyard*: a rope used for raising and lowering sails

² *sheet*: a line to control the sails

³ *reef*: reduces area of sails

⁴ *jumar*: a climbing device that grips the rope so that it can be climbed

⁵ *spreader*: a bar attached to a yacht's mast

From *A Foreign Field*

At the very beginning of the First World War, Robert Digby and three other young British soldiers found themselves trapped behind enemy lines. They were hidden and helped by French villagers. Robert met and fell in love with Claire Dessene, the nineteen year old daughter of Eugénie Dessene and the granddaughter of Marie Coulette. Claire gave birth to Robert's daughter. Then someone betrayed them to the occupying German army. Robert was arrested, tried as a spy and sentenced to death.

Pasteur Cheminé, ashen and distressed, reappeared at Digby's cell, prayed silently and then departed. Digby picked up the pen again. As dusk approached, he wrote three letters. The first was to his mother, the strait-laced Ellen Digby, after whom he had named his child. For nearly two years, Digby had existed entirely without military discipline: he had lived like an animal in the woods, ditched his uniform and gun, found love and fathered a child. The errant romantic in Digby had always tussled with the obedient soldier-son; had he obeyed his training and the dictates of duty he would not have fallen in love, and would perhaps not now be facing death. Digby's heart had brought him to the condemned cell, but this last letter to his mother reflected his other, conventional side: it is a stoic's statement, precisely tracing the expected cadences of patriotism, martial martyrdom, and mother-love. The English officer who would later pass the letter on to Ellen Digby found its sentiments 'brave and noble', but the suppression of emotion is agonising.

Dear Mother,

Sad news for you. I surrendered to the German authorities on the 22nd of May, 1916. I have been hiding since the 2nd September, 1914, in the village of Villeret. Lost my army on the 27th August, 1914, after having been wounded in the left forearm at Villers, not far from here. I went to the hospital to have it attended to and in the meantime my army retired. I have just received my verdict and am not disappointed, as it is what I expected from them. Condemned to death to be shot at 10.05 p.m. this evening. Be brave and do not let this trouble you too much, as I die happy for King and Country. Give a farewell kiss to my brother Thomas and my darling sister Flo. Goodbye. God bless you, and render you happy in your old days. The last dying wish of your son,

Robert Digby

Misfortunate; sad news: I have a rendezvous with Death. His words have an echo of Alan Seeger's lofty embrace of martyrdom. 'If it must be, let it come,' the American foreign legionnaire had written home just a few months earlier. 'Why flinch? It is by far the noblest form in which death can come. It is in a sense almost a privilege...'

Digby knew his audience, and Ellen Digby did not like a fuss.

The condemned man's words in his next letter were equally carefully chosen. Eugénie Desenne, Claire's mother, had disapproved of Digby from the outset. She had done her best to scupper the affair and made no secret of her view that the Englishmen had plunged her village and family into mortal danger. Digby had every reason to dislike and distrust Eugénie, but after his death Claire would need her mother's support. It was time to call a truce, and Digby addressed his
40 old adversary as the grandmother of his child.

My dear Grand-mère,

Tomorrow morning, when you wake up, think of poor Robert who is dead. I will have been shot at 10.05 (German time) against the walls of the chateau. I will die happy and contented for my country and the King, and also for France. One thing makes me happy, which is to know that you have not suffered the same fate as I. Poor Claire and my child will now be left behind without me, but never think ill of her or of my little one. Look after her well, and tell your family to do the same. I want her to have a good grandmother in her life.

50 Midway through the letter, Digby suddenly switched tone and began speaking to Claire and Marie Coulette, his most forthright defenders. Although the letter was addressed to Eugénie Desenne, it was intended to be understood by her mother and daughter. His self-control wavered.

Claire, I know you will read this letter to your grandmother. I wish I had never stayed in Villeret to bring such misery into your lives. Look after yourselves always, and reflect that your husband died bravely for a just cause. Remember me to Florency and Marie-Thérèse and tell the child not to weep for me, for I have brought her into a world of such
60 unhappiness. Remember me to all in Villeret. I have asked the pasteur of Nauroy (who has been with me for the last four hours) if he will place my body in the graveyard after the war. That is my wish.

Goodbye, and thank you.

Your friend,
Robert

The tone of this letter, written in French, was distinctly strange. Addressing Eugénie, Digby appeared contrite and remorseful, but this was also a letter of instruction, leaving its recipient in no doubt that her duty lay in protecting the daughter and granddaughter he was leaving behind.

70 It was past eight o'clock and the cell was growing murky when Robert began to write to Claire Desenne. This was the shortest of the three letters, and the saddest. He wrote quickly, again in French, for time was running short. In two years he had become what no one who knew him before 1914 could have anticipated: a Frenchman, with a French family in a tiny French village.

My darling Claire,

80 This is the last letter of my life. I am condemned to die by firing squad at five past ten tonight. Farewell, and never forget Robert, who dies happy and satisfied for France and for my own country. I kiss you. Embrace my baby girl and later, when she is grown, tell her the truth about her father, who has died contented. Send the letter I have already written for my mother. I have given another letter for my family to the pasteur, because the Germans have intercepted the letters of my comrades.

Farewell,

Your loving Robert

90 The letter ended abruptly, for the execution squad had assembled in the street outside the jail. Pasteur Cheminé, 'sick with horror', entered the cell to administer a final blessing. Whereas his comrades had been carried to their deaths on a wagon, Digby marched in his standard army-issue English boots. The villagers once more peered silently from behind shutters. 'All you could hear was the tramp of the boots on the cobbles,' remembered little Henriette Legé. Digby had no companion with whom he could sing fortifying songs, and he had much to occupy his mind. Lambert was waiting, and this time he had been unable to hide the coffin. If Digby saw it, his oddly serene expression did not change. 'He was very calm, and allowed himself to be strapped to the post without a word', wrote Ernest Lambert.

100 The old war-scarred fortress was, and remains, a serene place at twilight when, as one local writer noted in the years just before the war, 'birds from all over the countryside gather under the great trees and bushes covering the ramparts to sing a most delightful chorus: the warbler, the chaffinch, the goldcrest, the nightingale and the blackbird. If a sound breaks the solitude here, it is not the fanfare of war, the crackling of the fusillade, and the cries of the wounded, but birdsong, sweet and harmonious.'

It was late, but the chorus was still in full flow when eight German soldiers stepped forward, took aim, and killed Robert Digby.

Ben McIntyre

Section B

Dulce et Decorum Est

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
5 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

10 Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering like a man in fire or lime –
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

15 In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
20 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues –
25 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.*¹

Wilfred Owen

¹ *It is a sweet and fitting thing to die for one's country* (Latin)

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
5 To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
10 Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
15 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence;
20 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

Refugee Blues

Say this city has ten million souls,
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes:
Yet there's no place for us, my dear, yet there's no place for us.

5 Once we had a country and we thought it fair,
Look in the atlas and you'll find it there:
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.

In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,
Every spring it blossoms anew:
Old passports can't do that, my dear, old passports can't do that.

10 The consul banged the table and said,
"If you've got no passport you're officially dead":
But we are still alive, my dear, but we are still alive.

15 Went to a committee; they offered me a chair;
Asked me politely to return next year:
But where shall we go to-day, my dear, where shall we go to-day?

Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said:
"If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread":
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.

20 Thought I heard the thunder rumbling in the sky;
It was Hitler over Europe, saying, "They must die":
O we were in his mind, my dear, O we were in his mind.

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,
Saw a door opened and a cat let in:
But they weren't German Jews, my dear, but they weren't German Jews.

25 Went down the harbour and stood upon the quay,
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free:
Only ten feet away, my dear, only ten feet away.

30 Walked through a wood, saw the birds in the trees;
They had no politicians and sang at their ease:
They weren't the human race, my dear, they weren't the human race.

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,
A thousand windows and a thousand doors:
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.

35 Stood on a great plain in the falling snow;
Ten thousand soldiers marched to and fro:
Looking for you and me, my dear, looking for you and me.

W. H. Auden

The Country at my Shoulder

There's a country at my shoulder,
growing larger—soon it will burst,
rivers will spill out, run down my chest.

5 My cousin Azam wants visitors to play
ludo with him all the time.
He learns English in a class of seventy.

And I must stand to attention
with the country at my shoulder.
There's an execution in the square —

10 The women's dupattas are wet with tears.
The offices have closed
for the white-hot afternoon.

15 But the women stone-breakers chip away
at boulders, dirt on their bright hems.
They await the men and their trucks.

I try to shake the dust from the country,
smooth it with my hands.
I watch Indian films —

20 Everyone is very unhappy,
or very happy,
dancing garlanded through parks.

I hear of bribery, family quarrels,
travellers' tales — the stars
are so low you think you can touch them.

25 Uncle Aqbar drives down the mountain
to arrange his daughter's marriage.
She's studying Christina Rossetti.

30 When the country bursts, we'll meet.
Uncle Kamil shot a tiger,
it hung over the wardrobe, its jaws

Fixed in a roar — I wanted to hide
its head in a towel.
The country has become my body —

35 I can't break bits off.
The men go home in loose cotton clothes.
In the square there are those who beg —

And those who beg for mercy.
Azam passes the sweetshop,
names the sugar monuments Taj Mahal.

40 I water the country with English rain,
cover it with English words.
Soon it will burst, or fall like a meteor.

Moniza Alvi

Electricity Comes to Cocoa Bottom

Then all the children of Cocoa Bottom
went to see Mr. Samuel's electric lights.
They camped on the grass bank outside his house,
their lamps filled with oil,
5 waiting for sunset,
watching the sky turn yellow, orange.
Grannie Patterson across the road
peeped through the crack in her porch door.
The cable was drawn like a pencil line across the sun.
10 The fireflies waited in the shadows,
their lanterns off.
The kling-klings¹ swooped in from the hills,
congregating in the orange trees.
A breeze coming home from sea held its breath;
15 bamboo lining the dirt road stopped its swaying,
and evening came as soft as chiffon curtains:
Closing. Closing.

Light!
Mr. Samuel smiling on the verandah –
20 a silhouette against the yellow shimmer behind him –
and there arising such a gasp,
such a fluttering of wings,
tweet-a-whit,
such a swaying, swaying.
25 Light! Marvellous light!
And then the breeze rose up from above the trees,
swelling and swelling into a wind
such that the long grass bent forward
stretching across the bank like so many bowed heads.
30 And a voice in the wind whispered:
Is there one among us to record this moment?
But there was none –

no one (except for a few warm rocks
hidden among mongoose ferns) even heard a sound.
35 Already the children of Cocoa Bottom
had lit their lamps for the dark journey home,
and it was too late –
the moment had passed.

Marcia Douglas

¹ *Kling-klings*: birds

The Last Night (from *Charlotte Gray*)

André and his brother Jacob are two orphaned boys in France in the 1940s. They are waiting to be taken to a concentration camp.

André was lying on the floor when a Jewish orderly came with postcards on which the deportees might write a final message. He advised them to leave them at the station or throw them from the train as camp orders forbade access to the post. Two or three pencils that had survived the barracks search were passed round among the people in the room. Some wrote with sobbing passion, some with punctilious care, as though their safety, or at least the way in which they were remembered, depended upon their choice of words.

10 A woman came with a sandwich for each child to take on the journey. She also had a pail of water, round which they clustered, holding out sardine cans they passed from one to another. One of the older boys embraced her in his gratitude, but the bucket was soon empty.

When she was gone, there were only the small hours of the night to go through. André was lying on the straw, the soft bloom of his cheek laid, uncaring, in the dung. Jacob's limbs were intertwined with his for warmth.

The adults in the room sat slumped against the walls, wakeful and talking in lowered voices. Somehow, the children were spared the last hours of the wait by their ability to fall asleep where they lay, to dream of other places.

20 It was still the low part of the night when two men came into the room with coffee. Many of the adults refused to drink because they knew it meant breakfast, and therefore the departure. The children were at the deepest moments of their sleep.

30 Then there went through the room a sudden ripple, a quickening of muscle and nerve as a sound came to them from below: it was the noise of an engine – a familiar sound to many of them, the homely thudding of a Parisian bus. Five white-and-green municipal buses had come in through the main entrance, and now stood trembling in the wired-off corner of the yard. At a long table, the commandant of the camp himself sat with a list of names that another policeman was calling out in alphabetical order. In the place where its suburban destination was normally signalled, each bus carried the number of a wagon on the eastbound train.

Many of the children were too deeply asleep to be roused, and those who were awake refused to come down when the gendarmes were sent up to fetch them. In the filthy straw they dug in their heels and screamed.

André heard his name and moved with Jacob towards the bus. From the other side of the courtyard, from windows open on the dawn, a shower of food was thrown towards them by women wailing and calling out their names, though none of the scraps reached as far as the enclosure.

40 André looked up, and in a chance angle of light he saw a woman's face in which the eyes were fixed with terrible ferocity on a child beside him. Why did she stare as though she hated him? Then it came to André that she was not looking in hatred, but had kept her eyes so intensely open in order to fix the picture of her child in her mind. She was looking to remember, for ever.

He held on hard to Jacob as they mounted the platform of the bus. Some of the children were too small to manage the step up and had to be helped on by gendarmes, or pulled in by grown-ups already on board.

Andre's bus was given the signal to depart, but was delayed. A baby of a few weeks was being lifted on to the back, and the gendarme needed time to work the wooden crib over the passenger rail and into the cramped interior.

50 Eventually, the bus roared as the driver engaged the gear and bumped slowly out through the entrance, the headlights for a moment lighting up the café opposite before the driver turned the wheel and headed for the station.

Sebastian Faulks

King Schahriar and His Brother (From *The Arabian Nights*)

'The Arabian Nights' (sometimes called 'The Thousand and One Nights') is the most famous collection of stories in the world. It was originally written in Arabic over a thousand years ago. 'King Schahriar and His Brother' begins the cycle of stories and sets the scene for the rest.

In the chronicles of the ancient dynasty of the Sassanidae, who reigned for about four hundred years, from Persia to the borders of China, beyond the great river Ganges itself, we read the praises of one of the kings of this race, who was said to be the best monarch of his time. His subjects loved him, and his neighbours feared him, and when he died he left his kingdom in a more prosperous and powerful condition than any king had done before him.

10 The two sons who survived him loved each other tenderly, and it was a real grief to the elder, Schahriar, that the laws of the empire forbade him to share his dominions with his brother, Schahzeman. Indeed, after ten years, during which this state of things had not ceased to trouble him, Schahriar cut off the country of Great Tartary from the Persian Empire and made his brother king.

20 Now the Sultan Schahriar had a wife whom he loved more than all the world, and his greatest happiness was to surround her with splendour, and to give her the finest dresses and the most beautiful jewels. It was therefore with the deepest shame and sorrow that he accidentally discovered, after several years, that she had deceived him completely, and her whole conduct turned out have been so bad, that he felt himself obliged to carry out the law of the land, and order the grand-vizier to put her to death. The blow was so heavy that his mind almost gave way, and he declared that he was quite sure that at bottom all women were as wicked as the sultana, if you could only find them out, and that the fewer the world contained the better. So every evening he married a fresh wife and had her strangled the following morning before the grand-vizier, whose duty it was to provide these unhappy brides for the Sultan. The poor man fulfilled his task with reluctance, but there was no escape, and every day saw a girl married and a wife dead.

30 This behaviour caused the greatest horror in the town, where nothing was heard but cries and lamentations. In one house was a father weeping for the loss of his daughter, in another perhaps a mother trembling for the fate of her child; and instead of the blessings that had formerly been heaped on the Sultan's head, the air was now full of curses.

The grand-vizier himself was the father of two daughters, of whom the elder was called Scheherazade, and the younger Dinarzade. Dinarzade had no particular gifts to distinguish her from other girls, but her sister was clever and courageous in the highest degree. Her father had given her the best masters in philosophy, medicine, history and the fine arts, and besides all this, her beauty excelled that of any girl in the kingdom of Persia.

One day, when the grand-vizier was talking to his eldest daughter, who was his delight and pride, Scheherazade said to him, "Father, I have a favour to ask of you. Will you grant it to me?"

40 "I can refuse you nothing," replied he, "that is just and reasonable."

"Then listen," said Scheherazade. "I am determined to stop this barbarous practice of the Sultan's, and to deliver the girls and mothers from the awful fate that hangs over them."

"It would be an excellent thing to do," returned the grand-vizier, "but how do you propose to accomplish it?"

"My father," answered Scheherazade, "it is you who have to provide the Sultan daily with a fresh wife, and I implore you, by all the affection you bear me, to allow the honour to fall upon me."

50 "Have you lost your senses?" cried the grand-vizier, starting back in horror. "What has put such a thing in your head? You ought to know by this time what it means to be the sultan's bride!"

"Yes, my father, I know it well," replied she, "and I am not afraid to think of it. If I fail, my death will be a glorious one, and if I succeed I shall have done a great service to my country."

"It is of no use," said the grand-vizier, "I shall never consent. If the Sultan was to order me to plunge a dagger in your heart, I should have to obey. What a task for a father! Ah, if you do not fear death, fear at any rate the anguish you would cause me."

"Once again, my father," said Scheherazade, "will you grant me what I ask?"

60 "What, are you still so obstinate?" exclaimed the grand-vizier. "Why are you so resolved upon your own ruin?"

But the maiden absolutely refused to attend her father's words, and at length, in despair, the grand-vizier was obliged to give way, and went sadly to the palace to tell the Sultan that the following evening he would bring him Scheherazade.

The Sultan received this news with the greatest astonishment.

"How have you made up your mind," he asked, "to sacrifice your own daughter to me?"

"Sire," answered the grand-vizier, "it is her own wish. Even the sad fate that awaits her could not hold her back."

70 "Let there be no mistake, vizier," said the Sultan. "Remember you will have to take her life yourself. If you refuse, I swear that your head shall pay forfeit."

"Sire," returned the vizier. "Whatever the cost, I will obey you. Though a father, I am also your subject." So the Sultan told the grand-vizier he might bring his daughter as soon as he liked.

The vizier took back this news to Scheherazade, who received it as if it had been the most pleasant thing in the world. She thanked her father warmly for yielding to her wishes, and, seeing him still bowed down with grief, told him that she hoped he would never repent having allowed her to marry the Sultan. Then she

80 went to prepare herself for the marriage, and begged that her sister Dinarzade should be sent for to speak to her.

When they were alone, Scheherazade addressed her thus: "My dear sister; I want your help in a very important affair. My father is going to take me to the palace to celebrate my marriage with the Sultan. When his Highness receives me, I shall beg him, as a last favour, to let you sleep in our chamber, so that I may have your company during the last night I am alive. If, as I hope, he grants me my wish, be sure that you wake me an hour before the dawn, and speak to me in these words: 'My sister, if you are not asleep, I beg you, before the sun rises, to tell me one of your charming stories.' Then I shall begin, and I hope by this means to deliver the people from the terror that reigns over them." Dinarzade
90 replied that she would do with pleasure what her sister wished.

When the usual hour arrived the grand-vizier conducted Scheherazade to the palace, and left her alone with the Sultan, who bade her raise her veil and was amazed at her beauty. But seeing her eyes full of tears, he asked what was the matter. "Sire," replied Scheherazade, "I have a sister who loves me as tenderly as I love her. Grant me the favour of allowing her to sleep this night in the same room, as it is the last time we shall be together." Schahriar consented to Scheherazade's petition and Dinarzade was sent for.

100 An hour before daybreak Dinarzade awoke, and exclaimed, as she had promised, "My dear sister, if you are not asleep, tell me I pray you, before the sun rises, one of your charming stories. It is the last time that I shall have the pleasure of hearing you."

Scheherazade did not answer her sister, but turned to the Sultan. "Will your highness permit me to do as my sister asks?" said she.

"Willingly," he answered. So Scheherazade began.

The Necklace

She was one of those pretty, charming young women who have had the ill-fortune to be born into a wage-earning family. She had no dowry, no prospects, no opportunities of getting to know some rich and distinguished man who might have understood her, loved her, and made her his wife. Consequently, she let herself drift into marriage with a junior clerk in the Ministry of Public Instruction.

10 Though her tastes were simple, anything else having been out of the question, she felt as unhappy as though she had come down in the world. Among women, caste and birth are meaningless. Beauty, sweetness and charm take the place for them of blue blood and family connections. Quick wits, instinctive elegance, and adaptability are the only degrees in their hierarchy, and can make of working girls the equals of great ladies.

She was in a perpetual state of dissatisfaction, because she felt that luxuries and soft living were her natural birthright. The furnished flat in which she had to live, its squalid wallpapers, its shabby chairs, its hideous curtains and upholstery, were a constant source of torment to her. These things, which another woman with a background similar to her own might not have even noticed, she found unendurable and degrading. The sight of the girl who did the humble domestic chores filled her with hopeless longings and idle dreams. She conjured up a vision of hushed entrance halls, hung with oriental fabrics and lit by bronze
20 sconces, of tall footmen in knee-breeches dozing in deep armchairs in the drowsy warmth of a great stove. She dwelt in imagination on vast salons adorned with antique silks, on elegant tables littered with priceless knick-knacks, on perfumed boudoirs where she would sit in the late afternoons chatting with intimate friends – men well known and sought after, such as every woman wants to have dancing attendance on her.

When she sat down to dinner with her husband at the round table covered with a three-day-old cloth, and heard him say, with a delighted expression on his face, as he lifted the top from the soup tureen, 'Ah! Vegetable soup; what could be better than that!' she let her mind run on delicious dishes served in exquisite
30 porcelain, on whispered gallantries, and the sphinx-like smile with which she would listen to them while eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wing of a chicken.

She had no evening dresses, no jewels, nothing. And those were the only things she cared about. She felt made for the life they represented. She longed to be envied, popular, and courted.

She had one rich friend, a woman she had known in their convent days. But she no longer went to see her, only too well aware, from experience, that everything seemed so much worse at home when she got back from one of those expeditions. For days on end she would cry and cry, shedding tears of misery, regret, despair, and anguish.

40 One evening, her husband came home looking unusually pleased, with a large envelope in his hand.

'This is something for you,' he said.

She quickly tore open the envelope and took from it a card on which were engraved the following words:

*The Minister of Public Instruction and
Mme Georges Ramponneau
Request the pleasure
Of the company of*

M. AND MME LOISEL

*On Monday evening, the 18th of January
At the Ministry*

50

Instead of being overjoyed, as her husband had expected, she threw the card on the table in a pet, saying in a complaining voice:

‘What use is this to me?’

‘But darling, I thought you would be pleased. You never go out, and this is a chance not to be missed. I had the greatest difficulty in getting an invitation. Everyone is longing to be asked. It is a very smart occasion, and not many of the staff have been invited. You will meet all the world there!’

An angry look came into her eyes as she impatiently replied:

60 ‘And how do you expect me to dress for this smart occasion?’

This problem had not occurred to him.

‘Why’, he muttered, ‘that little frock, I suppose, which you put on when we go to the theatre; I must say, it always looks very nice to me...’

He slowly stopped speaking, for his wife was crying. Two large tears were slowly moving down her cheeks, from the corners of her eyes to the corners of her mouth. At the sight of them he felt dumbfounded and bewildered.

‘W...what’s the matter?’ he stammered.

By a violent effort she recovered her self-control and answered in a calm voice while she dabbed at her tear-stained face:

70 ‘Nothing...except that I haven’t a thing to wear. I can’t possibly go to this party. You had better give the card to one of your colleagues whose wife has a more extensive wardrobe than mine.’

He was miserable.

‘Look here, Mathilde,’ he said: ‘How much would the right kind of dress cost, something simple, I mean, which you could wear on other occasions?’

She thought for a while, totting up figures in her head, and wondering how much she could ask for without meeting with an immediate refusal and an exclamation of horror from her cheeseparing clerk of a husband.

At last, with some hesitation, she replied:

80 ‘I can’t tell to a penny, but I think I could manage with four hundred francs.’

His face went slightly pale, for he had been keeping in reserve precisely that sum with the object of buying a gun, so as to be able to treat himself to a few outings in the summer in the plain of Nanterre, with a few friends who went there for the lark-shooting.

Nevertheless, he said:

‘Right, you shall have your four hundred francs. But try to make it a really nice dress.’

90

The day of the party was approaching, but there was something depressed, uneasy, and anxious about Madame Loisel, though her dress was ready. One evening her husband said:

‘What’s wrong? You have been acting very strangely for the last few days.’

‘It vexes me’, she answered, ‘to think that I have no jewellery, not a single thing to wear with my dress. I shall look like a poor relation. I would rather stay away from the party than go like that.’

'You can wear flowers,' he said. 'It's very much the thing this season. For ten francs you can get two or three really magnificent roses.'

But she was not to be convinced. 'No ... There is nothing more humiliating than to be the one poor little guest among a lot of rich women.'

100 'Why!' he exclaimed, 'what a silly you are! How about that friend of yours, Madame Forestier? Why not ask her to lend you something? You know her quite well enough for that.'

She uttered a joyful cry.

'Of course! Why did I never think of it?'

Next day she went to see her friend and told her of her trouble. Madame Forestier went to her wardrobe with a looking-glass front, took from it a large locked box, opened it, and said:

'Take what you like, my dear.'

110 First of all she saw several bracelets, then a string of pearls, then a Venetian cross in gold and gems, of beautiful workmanship. She tried them on before the glass, unable to make up her mind, reluctant to take them off, to give them back. And all the time she kept on asking:

'Have you nothing else?'

'Why, of course. Look and see what you can find. You must know what you would like best.'

Suddenly, Mathilde came upon a black satin case with, in it, a superb diamond necklace. Her heart began to beat faster, and she was filled with a mad longing. With trembling fingers she fastened it round her throat against her neck-high dress, and looked at her reflection in a kind of ecstasy.

Then, with considerable hesitation, as though fearing a refusal, she said:

120 'Would you really lend me this? I don't want anything else.'

'Why, certainly.'

She flung her arms around her friend's neck, kissed her in a transport of affection, and fled away with her treasure.

The great day came. Madame Loisel was a tremendous success. She was the prettiest woman there, elegant, graceful, smiling, and wildly happy. The men all looked at her, asked who she was and tried hard to be introduced to her. All the Secretaries wanted to waltz with her. The Minister noticed her.

130 She danced madly. Pleasure had gone to her head like wine. She had no thought for anything but the triumph of her beauty, the splendour of her success. She moved in a happy mist made up of homage, admiration, and that sense of undisputed victory which is so dear to the female heart.

She stayed until four in the morning. Ever since midnight her husband had been fast asleep in a small, deserted salon, in the company of three other gentlemen whose wives were thoroughly enjoying themselves.

He put round her shoulders the wrap he had brought for this purpose, a shabby reminder of their day-to-day existence, the poverty of which was at odds with the beauty of her ball-dress. She was conscious of the contrast, and would have liked to slip away unnoticed by the other women wrapped in rich furs.

Loisel held her back.

140 'You'll catch cold outside. Wait here while I go and look for a cab.'

But she would not listen, and hurried down the stairs. When they got into the street, there was no cab to be found. They looked everywhere, calling to the drivers of those they saw at a distance.

In this way they walked in the direction of the River Seine, hopeless and with chattering teeth. At last, they came upon one of those ancient nocturnal cabs which are never to be seen in Paris except after dark, as though they are too much ashamed of their poverty-stricken appearance to venture out in the daylight.

150 It took them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and gloomily they climbed up to their home. It was all over now, she was thinking, and he, that he must be at the Ministry by ten.

She took off her wrap in front of the glass, that she might once more see herself in all her glory. But, suddenly, she uttered a cry. The necklace was no longer round her neck.

Her husband, half undressed, asked her what the matter was.

She turned to him in a panic: 'I've...I've... not got Madam Forestier's necklace!' Distractedly, he jumped to his feet.

'But...that's not possible!' he exclaimed.

They hunted in the folds of her dress, of her cloak, in every available pocket.

160 They could find it nowhere.

'You're sure you still had it when we started home?' he asked.

'Quite sure; I touched it in the hall at the Ministry.'

'But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall! It must be in the cab!'

'Yes, that's probably where it is. Did you take the number?'

'No. You didn't happen to notice it, I suppose?'

'No.'

They looked at one another in consternation. At last, Loisel began to put on his clothes again.

170 'I'll go over the part we came on foot, just to see...'

He went out. She remained slumped in an armchair, still in her ball-dress, without the strength to go to bed, without a fire to warm her, and without the power to think.

Her husband came back at about seven. He had found nothing. They went to the Police Station, to a number of newspaper offices with an offer of a reward, to the cab companies, to any and every place that might offer them a gleam of hope.

She spent all that day in an unrelieved state of terror at the thought of the frightful disaster which had come upon them.

180 Loisel returned that evening, pale-faced and hollow-eyed. He had failed to discover anything.

'You must write to your friend', he said, 'saying that you have broken the catch of her necklace, and that you are having it mended. That will give us time to have a further look round.'

She wrote to his dictation.

By the end of the week they had given up all hope.

Loisel, who looked five years older, said:

'We shall have to see whether we can't replace it.'

190 Next day they took the case to the jeweller whose name was inside it. He went through his books.

'It was not I, Madame, who sold this necklace; I only supplied the case.'

They went from shop to shop, trying to find a necklace like the lost one, trying to remember it in detail, both of them sick with misery and distress.

In a small shop in the Palais-Royal, they found a string of diamonds which looked like the exact double of the necklace they had lost. Its price was forty thousand francs, but they could have it for thirty-six.

They begged the jeweller not to sell it for six days. They further made it a condition of purchase that he would buy it back for thirty-four should the original be found before the end of February.

200 Loisel had inherited eighteen thousand francs from his father. The rest he would have to borrow.

And borrow he did, getting a thousand here, five hundred there, five from one man, three from another, backing bills, pledging objects at a ruinous rate of interest, dealing with professional money-lenders or with anyone who would advance him cash. He loaded himself with debts for the rest of his life, rashly affixed his signature to promissory notes without being sure he could meet them. Terrified by the prospect of his future and the black poverty which was to be his lot, he took delivery of the new necklace, and put down thirty-six thousand francs on the jeweller's counter.

210 When Madame Loisel carried the poverty to Madame Forestier, all the latter said, in a rather injured tone, was:

'You really ought to have let me have it sooner. I might have needed it.'
She did not open the case, which was what her friend had feared she might do. What would she have thought if she had noticed the substitution? Might she not have taken her for a thief?

Madame Loisel's life, from then on, was one of miserable poverty. But she played her part, from the very first, heroically. The terrible debt had to be settled, and settle it she would. The maidservant was dismissed. They moved to a cheaper flat, in the attics.

220 She undertook all the heavy work of the household, all the odious cooking. She did all the washing-up, spoiling her pretty pink finger-nails on greasy crockery and dirty saucepans. She scrubbed the dirty linen, shirts, and dish-cloths, and hung them on a line to dry. She carried the refuse down every morning to the street, and brought up the water, stopping on each landing to get her breath. Dressed like a woman of the people, she made the round of the greengrocer, the grocer, and the butcher with a basket on her arm, haggling over prices, putting up with abuse, doling out her miserable pittance penny by penny.

Each month there were bills to be paid, others to be renewed, and a constant begging for time.

230 Her husband spent his evenings auditing the accounts of various shopkeepers, and often worked far into the night, doing copying at five *sous*¹ a page.

This life lasted for ten years. At the end of that time they had paid back every penny with interest, plus accumulated compound interest.

Madame Loisel now looked like an old woman. She had the typical appearance of the working-class housewife, strong, hard, and coarse. Her hair was all anyhow, her skirt awry, her hands red. She spoke in a loud voice, and splashed water all over the place when she scrubbed the floors. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she would sit down at the window and dream of the long-distant evening when she had been the Belle of the Ball.

240 What would have happened if she had not lost the necklace? Who could say? How strange life is, how changeable! What small things make the difference between safety and disaster!

One Sunday, when she had gone to the *Champs-Élysées*² for a little relaxation from the labours of the week, she suddenly caught sight of a woman walking with a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful.

Madame Loisel felt strangely excited. Should she speak to her? Of course! And now that every debt was settled, she would tell her the whole story. Why not?

She went up to her.

'Good morning, Jeanne.'

250 The other did not recognise her and seemed surprised at being addressed so familiarly by such a low-class creature.

'I don't think I know you, Madame...I fear you must have made a mistake.'

'Oh no, I have not...I am Mathilde Loisel...'

Her friend uttered a cry:

‘But, my poor Mathilde, how you have changed!’
‘Yes, I have been through very hard times since I saw you last, and much unhappiness...all because of you!’
‘Because of me?...How do you mean?’
260 ‘Do you remember the diamond necklace which you lent me for a party at the Ministry?’
‘Certainly I do. What of it?’
‘Only that I lost it.’
‘But you gave it me back...’
‘What I gave you back was another like it. For the last ten years we have been paying for it. You must realize that it was not easy for us to do that, for we had no money of our own...But it is all over now, and I am very happy to think that it is.’
‘Do you mean that you brought a diamond necklace to replace mine?’
‘Yes. You didn’t notice any difference, did you? They were exactly alike.’
270 There was something at once simple and proud in her smile.
Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took both her friend’s hands in hers.
‘Oh you poor, poor thing! Mine was imitation and worth, at most, five hundred francs!...’

Guy de Maupassant

¹ *Sous*: coin of very small value

² *Champs Elysées*: famous street in Paris

A Hero

For Swami events took an unexpected turn. Father looked over the newspaper he was reading under the hall lamp and said, 'Swami, listen to this: "News is to hand of the bravery of a village lad who, while returning home by the jungle path, came face to face with a tiger..."' The paragraph described the fight the boy had with the tiger and his flight up a tree, where he stayed for half a day till some people came that way and killed the tiger.

After reading it through, Father looked at Swami fixedly and asked, 'What do you say to that?'

10 Swami said, 'I think he must have been a very strong and grown-up person, not at all a boy. How could a boy fight a tiger?'

'You think you are wiser than the newspaper?' Father sneered. 'A man may have the strength of an elephant and yet be a coward: whereas another may have the strength of a straw, but if he has courage he can do anything. Courage is everything, strength and age are not important.'

Swami disputed the theory. 'How can it be, Father? Suppose I have all the courage, what can I do if a tiger should attack me?'

'Leave alone strength, can you prove you have courage? Let me see if you can sleep alone tonight in my office room.'

20 A frightful proposition, Swami thought. He had always slept beside his granny in the passage, and any change in this arrangement kept him trembling and awake all night. He hoped at first that his father was only joking. He mumbled weakly, 'Yes,' and tried to change the subject; he said very loudly and with a great deal of enthusiasm, 'We are going to admit even elders in our cricket club hereafter. We are buying brand-new bats and balls. Our captain has asked me to tell you...' 'We'll see about it later,' Father cut in. 'You must sleep alone hereafter.' Swami realised that the matter had gone beyond his control: from a challenge it had become a plain command; he knew his father's tenacity at such moments.

'From the first of next month I'll sleep alone, Father.'

30 'No, you must do it now. It is disgraceful sleeping beside granny or mother like a baby. You are in the second form and I don't at all like the way you are being brought up,' he said and looked at his wife, who was rocking the cradle. 'Why do you look at me while you say it?' she asked. 'I hardly know anything about the boy.'

'No, no, I don't mean you,' Father said.

'If you mean the your mother is spoiling him, tell her so; and don't look at me,' she said, and turned away.

40 Swami's father sat gloomily gazing at his newspaper on his lap. Swami rose silently and tiptoed away to his bed in the passage. Granny was sitting up in her bed, and remarked, 'Boy, are you already feeling sleepy? Don't you want a story?' Swami made wild gesticulations to silence his granny, but that good lady saw nothing. So Swami threw himself on his bed and pulled the blanket over his face.

Granny said, 'Don't cover your face. Are you really very sleepy?' Swami leant over and whispered, 'Please, please, shut up, granny. Don't talk to me, and don't let anyone call me even if the house is on fire. If I don't sleep at once I shall perhaps die –' He turned over, curled and snored under the blanket till he found his blanket pulled away.

Presently Father came and stood over him. 'Swami, get up,' he said. He looked like an apparition in the semi-darkness of the passage, which was lit by a cone of

50 light from the wall. Swami stirred and groaned as in sleep. Father said, 'Get up, Swami.' Granny pleaded, 'Why do you disturb him?'

'Get up, Swami,' he said for the fourth time, and Swami got up. Father rolled up his bed, took it under his arm, and said, 'Come with me.' Swami looked at his granny, hesitated for a moment, and followed his father into the office room. On the way he threw a look of appeal at his mother and she said, 'Why do you take him into the office room? He can sleep in the hall, I think.'

'I don't think so,' Father said, and Swami slunk behind him with bowed head.

'Let me sleep in the hall, Father,' Swami pleaded. 'Your office room is very dusty and there may be scorpions behind your law books.'

60 'There are no scorpions, little fellow. Sleep on the bench if you like.'

'Can I have a lamp burning in the room?'

'No. You must learn not to be afraid of darkness. It is only a question of habit. You must cultivate good habits.'

'Will you at least leave the door open?'

'All right. But promise you will not roll up your bed and go to your granny's side at night. If you do it, mind you, I will make you the laughing-stock of your school.'

Swami felt cut off from humanity. He was pained and angry. He didn't like the strain of cruelty he saw in his father's nature. He hated the newspaper for printing the tiger's story. He wished that the tiger hadn't spared the boy who didn't appear

70 to be a boy after all, but a monster....

As the night advanced and the silence in the house deepened, his heart beat faster. He remembered all the stories of devils and ghosts he had heard in his life. How often had his chum Mani seen the devil in the banyan tree at his street-end. And what about poor Munisami's father, who spat out blood because the devil near the river's edge slapped his cheek when he was returning home late one night. A ray of light from the street lamp strayed in and cast shadows on the wall. Through the stillness all kinds of noises reached his ears – the ticking of the clock, rustle of trees, snoring sounds, and some vague night insects humming. He covered himself so completely that he could hardly breathe. Every moment he

80 expected the devils to come up to carry him away; there was the instance of his old friend in the fourth class who suddenly disappeared and was said to have been carried off by a ghost to Siam or Nepal...

Swami hurriedly got up and spread his bed under the bench and crouched there. It seemed to be a much safer place, more compact and reassuring. He shut his eyes tight and encased himself in his blanket once again and unknown to himself fell asleep, and in sleep was racked with nightmares. A tiger was chasing him. His feet stuck to the ground. He desperately tried to escape but his feet would not move; the tiger was at his back, and he could hear its claws scratch the ground ... scratch, scratch, and then a light thud....Swami tried to open his eyes,

90 but his eyelids would not open and the nightmare continued. It threatened to continue forever. Swami groaned in despair.

With a desperate effort he opened his eyes. He put his hand out to feel his granny's presence at his side, as was his habit, but he only touched the wooden leg of the bench. And his lonely state came back to him. He sweated with fright. And now what was this rustling? He moved to the edge of the bench and stared into the darkness. Something was moving down. He lay gazing at it in horror. His end had come. He realised that the devil would presently pull him out and tear him, and so why should he wait? As it came nearer he crawled out from under the bench, hugged it with all his might, and used his teeth on it like a mortal

100 weapon ...

'Aiyo! Something has bitten me,' went forth an agonised, thundering cry and was followed by a heavy tumbling and falling amidst furniture. In a moment Father, cook, and a servant came in, carrying light.

And all three of them fell on the burglar who lay amidst the furniture with a bleeding ankle....

Congratulations were showered on Swami next day. His classmates looked at him with respect, and his teacher patted his back. The headmaster said that he was a true scout. Swami had bitten into the flesh of one of the most notorious house-breakers of the district and the police were grateful to him for it.

110 The inspector said, 'Why don't you join the police when you are grown up?'

Swami said for the sake of politeness, 'Certainly, yes,' though he had quite made up his mind to be an engine driver, a railway guard, or a bus conductor later in life.

When he returned home from the club that night, Father asked, 'Where is the boy?'

'He is asleep.'

'Already!'

'He didn't have a wink of sleep the whole of last night,' said his mother.

'Where is he sleeping?'

120 'In his usual place,' Mother said casually. 'He went to bed at seven-thirty.'

'Sleeping beside his granny again!' Father said. 'No wonder he wanted to be asleep before I could return home – clever boy!'

Mother lost her temper. 'You let him sleep where he likes. You needn't risk his life again....' Father mumbled as he went in to change: 'All right, molly-coddle and spoil him as much as you like. Only don't blame me afterwards....'

Swami, following the whole conversation from under the blanket, felt tremendously relieved to hear that his father was giving him up.

R. K. Narayan

End of Anthology

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