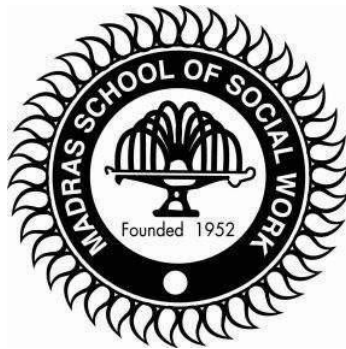


**MADRAS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK (AUTONOMOUS)**  
***32, Casa Major Road, Egmore, Chennai – 600 008***

***(Affiliated to the University of Madras)***



## **Undergraduate Program**

**Part II – English**

**Semester 1**

***(Effective from the Academic Year 2017–18 onwards)***  
***(Batch 2018-2021)***

## SEMESTER – I

### PART II – FOUNDATION

#### ENGLISH - I

**CREDITS: 4**

**TOTAL TEACHING HOURS: 60**

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Give students an exposure to the works in English Literature.
- Enable the students to study different genres in order to appreciate the depth and variety of the written word.

Unit- 1 **Poetry** (15 HOURS)

1. RICHARD CORY by EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/44982>
2. Rich and Poor by Ella Wheeler Wilcox  
<https://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/ella-wheeler-wilcox/rich-and-poor-6/>
3. Out, Out—' by Robert Frost  
<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/out-out%>
4. Peekabo, I Almost See You by Ogden Nash  
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/peekabo-i-almost-see-you/>
5. The Ballad of Rudolf Reed by Gwendolyn Brooks  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43320>

Unit -2 **Prose** (10 HOURS)

1. The Shooting of an Elephant by George Orwell  
<http://mslock.weebly.com/uploads/5/9/3/9/59397655/shootinganelephant.pdf>
2. On the Rule of the Road by A. G. Gardiner  
<http://student.allied.edu/uploadedfiles/docs/c07efed8-98b2-402b-ae75-16696790a079.pdf>
3. Teachers Should Be Role Models by APJ Abdul Kalam  
<url:https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/teachers-should-be-role-models/221300>
4. Advice To Youth by Mark Twain  
<http://people.virginia.edu/~jdk3t/TwainAY.htm>

**Unit- 3** **Short Stories** **(15 HOURS)**

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1. Lamb to the Slaughter by Roald Dahl  
<http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/lamb.html>
2. Hearts and Hands by OHenry  
[http://www.online-literature.com/o\\_henry/1019/](http://www.online-literature.com/o_henry/1019/)
3. The Sniper by Liam O’Flaherty  
<http://hennessey.lib.ok.us/sniper.htm>
4. The Case of the Lower Case Letter by Jack Delany  
<http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/CaseLowe950.shtml>

**Unit- 4** **Indian Writing in English** **(15 HOURS)**

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1. The Night of the Scorpion by Nissim Ezekiel  
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/night-of-the-scorpion/>
2. A Snake in the Grass by R. K. Narayan  
Catalyst A Multilevel English refresher
3. The Thief by Ruskin Bond  
<https://need2see.wordpress.com/wbut-hu-101english-language-technical-communication/the-thief-by-ruskin-bond/>
4. Celebrate Internet not Abuse It by Sashi Tharoor  
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2192675/SHASHI-THAROOR-Celebrate-Internet-abuse-it.html>
5. Telephonic Monsoon Magic by Revathi Seshadri  
[http://creative.sulekha.com/telephonic-monsoon-magic-short-story-for-sulekha-monsoon-magic-competition\\_618419\\_blog](http://creative.sulekha.com/telephonic-monsoon-magic-short-story-for-sulekha-monsoon-magic-competition_618419_blog)

**Unit -5** **GRAMMAR - General English Component** **(5 HOURS)**

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1. Articles, prepositions, prefix, suffix, antonyms and synonyms.

**References:**

- All the works mentioned above are available on public portals online.
- A compilation of the works will be made available to the department.

### **ESE Question Paper Pattern:**

#### **Part A:**

- Ten questions out of Twelve questions. (2 marks each).
- To include two compulsory questions on grammar from Unit V.

#### **Part B:**

- Four questions out of Six questions (10 marks each).
- To include one compulsory question on Rearranging 10 given sentences in a proper sequence to form a meaningful paragraph. The exercise will not be from the prescribed list of poems, prose, short stories and Indian writing in English.

#### **Part C:**

- Two questions out of Three questions (20 marks each).
- To include one General Comprehension question. The candidate is required to answer 5 questions of 4 marks each (no choice) based on the given passage. The passage will not be from the prescribed list of poems, prose, short stories and Indian writing in English.

## Richard Cory

By [Edwin Arlington Robinson](#)

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him:  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked;  
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
"Good-morning" and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich – yes, richer than a king –  
And admirably schooled in every grace:  
In fine, we thought that he was everything  
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,  
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

# Rich And Poor - Poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

By the castle-gate my lady stands,  
Viewing broad acres and spreading lands.

Hill and valley and mead and plain  
Are all her own, with their wealth of grain.

In the richest of rich robes she is dressed,  
A jewel blazes upon her breast;

And her brow is decked with a diadem  
That glitters with many a precious gem.

But what to the Lady Wendoline  
Rich satin garments or jewels fine?

Or ripening harvests, or spreading lands-  
See! she is wringing her milk-white hands!

And her finger is stained with crimson dew  
Where the ring with the diamond star cut through.

And a look of pain and wild despair  
Rests on the face, so young and fair.

To-morrow will be her bridal day,  
And she will barter herself away

For added wealth and a titled name;  
'Tis the curse of her station, and whose the blame!

She loathes the man who will call her wife,  
And moans o'er her hapless, loveless life.

The joys of wooing she cannot know;  
My lord, her father, has willed it so.

She's a piece of merchandise, bought and sold  
For name, position, and bags of gold.

But people must wed in their own degree,  
Though hearts may break in their agony.

Under the hill, in the castle's shade,  
At a cottage door sits an humble maid;

In her cheek the blushes come and go  
As she stitches away on a robe like snow;

And she sings aloud in her happiness-  
In a joy she cannot hide or repress.

Close at her side her lover stands,  
Watching the nimble, sun-browned hands

As they draw the needle to and fro  
Through the robe as white as drift of snow.

Both hearts are singing a wordless lay,  
For the morrow will be their bridal day.

They have only their hands, their love, their health,  
In place of title, position, and wealth.

But which is the rich, and which the poor,  
The maid at the gate, or the maid in the door?

## **'Out, Out—'**

Robert Frost

The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard  
And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,  
Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.  
And from there those that lifted eyes could count  
Five mountain ranges one behind the other  
Under the sunset far into Vermont.  
And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,  
As it ran light, or had to bear a load.  
And nothing happened: day was all but done.  
Call it a day, I wish they might have said  
To please the boy by giving him the half hour  
That a boy counts so much when saved from work.  
His sister stood beside him in her apron  
To tell them 'Supper.' At the word, the saw,  
As if to prove saws knew what supper meant,  
Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap—  
He must have given the hand. However it was,  
Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!  
The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,  
As he swung toward them holding up the hand  
Half in appeal, but half as if to keep  
The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—  
Since he was old enough to know, big boy  
Doing a man's work, though a child at heart—  
He saw all spoiled. 'Don't let him cut my hand off—  
The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!'  
So. But the hand was gone already.  
The doctor put him in the dark of ether.  
He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.  
And then—the watcher at his pulse took fright.  
No one believed. They listened at his heart.  
Little—less—nothing!—and that ended it.  
No more to build on there. And they, since they  
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.



## "Peekabo, I Almost See You"

Ogden Nash  
1902-1971

Middle-aged life is merry, and I love to  
    lead it,  
But there comes a day when your eyes  
    are all right but your arm isn't long enough  
    to hold the telephone book where you can read it,  
And your friends get jocular, so you go to the oculist,  
And of all your friends he is the jocularist,  
So over his facetiousness let us skim,  
Only noting that he has been waiting for you ever since  
    you said Good evening to his grandfather clock under  
    the impression that it was him,  
And you look at his chart and it says SHRDLU QWERTYOP,  
    and you say Well, why SHRDNTLU QWERTYOP? and he  
    says one set of glasses won't do.  
You need two.  
One for reading Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason and  
    Keats's "Endymion" with,  
And the other for walking around without saying Hello  
    to strange wymion with.  
So you spend your time taking off your seeing glasses to put  
    on your reading glasses, and then remembering that your  
    reading glasses are upstairs or in the car,  
And then you can't find your seeing glasses again because  
    without them on you can't see where they are.  
Enough of such mishaps, they would try the patience of an ox,  
I prefer to forget both pairs of glasses and pass my declining  
    years saluting strange women and grandfather clocks.

# The Ballad of Rudolph Reed

By Gwendolyn Brooks

Rudolph Reed was oaken.  
His wife was oaken too.  
And his two good girls and his good little man  
Oakened as they grew.

"I am not hungry for berries.  
I am not hungry for bread.  
But hungry hungry for a house  
Where at night a man in bed

"May never hear the plaster  
Stir as if in pain.  
May never hear the roaches  
Falling like fat rain.

"Where never wife and children need  
Go blinking through the gloom.  
Where every room of many rooms  
Will be full of room.

"Oh my home may have its east or west  
Or north or south behind it.  
All I know is I shall know it,  
And fight for it when I find it."

It was in a street of bitter white  
That he made his application.  
For Rudolph Reed was oakener  
Than others in the nation.

The agent's steep and steady stare  
Corroded to a grin.  
*Why, you black old, tough old hell of a man,  
Move your family in!*

Nary a grin grinned Rudolph Reed,  
Nary a curse cursed he,  
But moved in his House. With his dark little wife,  
And his dark little children three.

A neighbor would *look*, with a yawning eye  
That squeezed into a slit.  
But the Rudolph Reeds and the children three  
Were too joyous to notice it.

For were they not firm in a home of their own  
With windows everywhere  
And a beautiful banistered stair  
And a front yard for flowers and a back yard for grass?

The first night, a rock, big as two fists.  
The second, a rock big as three.  
But nary a curse cursed Rudolph Reed.  
(Though oaken as man could be.)

The third night, a silvery ring of glass.  
Patience ached to endure.  
But he looked, and lo! small Mabel's blood  
Was staining her gaze so pure.

Then up did rise our Rudolph Reed  
And pressed the hand of his wife,  
And went to the door with a thirty-four  
And a beastly butcher knife.

He ran like a mad thing into the night.  
And the words in his mouth were stinking.  
By the time he had hurt his first white man  
He was no longer thinking.

By the time he had hurt his fourth white man  
Rudolph Reed was dead.  
His neighbors gathered and kicked his corpse.  
"Nigger —" his neighbors said.

Small Mabel whimpered all night long,  
For calling herself the cause.  
Her oak-eyed mother did no thing  
But change the bloody gauze.

## Shooting an Elephant

By George Orwell

[http://orwell.ru/library/articles/elephant/english/e\\_eleph](http://orwell.ru/library/articles/elephant/english/e_eleph)

In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people – the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically – and secretly, of course – I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos – all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism – the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see

what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old .44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful *in terrorem*. Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone 'must'. It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of 'must' is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours' journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violences upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a labyrinth of squalid bamboo huts, thatched with palmleaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that it was a cloudy, stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not even to have heard of any elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalized cry of 'Go away, child! Go away this instant!' and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie, almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend's house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelt the elephant.

The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy

fields below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of the houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant — I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary — and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metalled road and beyond that a miry waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eight yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd's approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant — it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery — and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of 'must' was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not in the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes-faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd — seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the 'natives', and so in every crisis he has got to do what the 'natives' expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent

for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing — no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a *large* animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of 'natives'; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do.

There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim. The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole, actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick — one never does when a shot goes home — but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither

stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time – it might have been five seconds, I dare say – he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open – I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were bringing dash and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.



# On the Rule of the Road

By A.G. Gardiner

A stout old lady was walking with her basket down the middle of a street in Petrograd to the great confusion of the traffic and with no small peril to herself. It was pointed out to her that the pavement was the place for pedestrians, but she replied: 'I'm going to walk where I like. We've got liberty now.' It did not occur to the dear old lady that if liberty entitled the pedestrian to walk down the middle of the road, then the end of such liberty would be universal chaos. Everybody would be getting in everybody else's way and nobody would get anywhere. Individual liberty would have become social anarchy.

There is a danger of the world getting liberty-drunk in these days like the old lady with the basket, and it is just as well to remind ourselves of what the rule of the road means. It means that in order that the liberties of all may be preserved, the liberties of everybody must be curtailed. When the policeman, say, at Piccadilly Circus steps into the middle of the road and puts out his hand, he is the symbol not of tyranny, but of liberty. You may not think so. You may, being in a hurry, and seeing your car pulled up by this insolence of office, feel that your liberty has been outraged. How dare this fellow interfere with your free use of the public highway? Then, if you are a reasonable person, you will reflect that if he did not interfere with you, he would interfere with no one, and the result would be that Piccadilly Circus would be a maelstrom that you would never cross at all. You have submitted to a curtailment of private liberty in order that you may enjoy a social order which makes your liberty a reality.

Liberty is not a personal affair only, but a social contract. It is an accommodation of interests. In matters which do not touch anybody else's liberty, of course, I may be as free as I like. If I choose to go down the road in a dressing-gown who shall say me nay? You have liberty to laugh at me, but I have liberty to be indifferent to you. And if I have a fancy for dyeing my hair, or waxing my moustache (which heaven forbid), or wearing an overcoat and sandals, or going to bed late or getting up early, I shall follow my fancy and ask no man's permission. I shall not inquire of you whether I may eat mustard with my mutton.

And you will not ask me whether you may follow this religion or that, whether you may prefer Ella Wheeler Wilcox to Wordsworth, or champagne to shandy.

In all these and a thousand other details you and I please ourselves and ask no one's leave.

We have a whole kingdom in which we rule alone, can do what we choose, be wise or ridiculous, harsh or easy, conventional or odd. But directly we step out

of that kingdom, our personal liberty of action becomes qualified by other people's liberty. I might like to practice on the trombone from midnight till three in the morning. If I went on to the top of Everest to do it, I could please myself, but if I do it in my bedroom my family will object, and if I do it out in the streets the neighbors will remind me that my liberty to blow the trombone must not interfere with their liberty to sleep in quiet. There are a lot of people in the world, and I have to accommodate my liberty to their liberties.

We are all liable to forget this, and unfortunately we are much more conscious of the imperfections of others in this respect than of our own. A reasonable consideration for the rights or feelings of others is the foundation of social conduct.

It is in the small matters of conduct, in the observance of the rule of the road, that we pass judgment upon ourselves, and declare that we are civilized or uncivilized. The great moments of heroism and sacrifice are rare. It is the little habits of commonplace intercourse that make up the great sum of life and sweeten or make bitter the journey.

## 'Teachers Should Be Role Models'

'A student spends 25,000 hours in the campus. The school must have the best of teachers who have the ability to teach, love teaching and build moral qualities'

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

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*Following is the full text of the President's address on the eve of Teachers' Day:*

Dear listeners of All India Radio and teachers, my greetings to all of you.

I am talking to you on the special occasion of Teachers' Day. On this day, we gratefully remember the great educationist Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, whose dream was that "Teachers should be the best minds in the country". Hence, Teachers' Day is very important for all our people, for our students and even for all the parents, as the teachers lay the foundation for creating enlightened citizens for the nation. On this day, I would like to recall three teachers who helped me in shaping my life.

To begin with I am going to talk to you about my father Janab Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen, as a teacher. My father taught me a great lesson when I was a young boy. What was that lesson? It was just after India got Independence. At that time Panchayat board elections took place at Rameswaram. My father was elected Panchayat Board member and on the same day he was also elected the president of the Rameswaram Panchayat Board. Rameswaram Island was a beautiful place with 30,000 populations. At that time they elected my father as Panchayat Board president not because he belonged to a particular religion or a particular caste or spoke a particular language or for his economic status. He was elected only on the basis of his nobility of mind and for being a good human being. Dear listeners, I would like to narrate one incident that took place on the day he was elected president of the Panchayat Board.

I was at that time studying in school. Those days we did not have electricity and we used to study under ration kerosene lamps. I was reading the lessons loudly and I heard a knock at the door. We never used to lock the door in Rameswaram in those days. Somebody opened the door, came in and asked me where my father was? I told him that father had gone for the evening namaz. Then he said, I have brought something for him, can I keep it here? Since my father had gone for namaz, I shouted for my mother to get her permission to receive the item. Since she was also on the amaz there was no response. I asked the person to leave the item on the cot. After that I continued my studies.

I used to learn by reading aloud in my younger days. I was reading loud and fully concentrating on my studies. At that time my father came in and saw a tambalum kept in the cot. He asked me "What is this? Who has given that?" I told him, "Somebody

came and has kept this for you". He opened the cover of the tambalum and found there was a costly dhoti, angawastram, some fruits and some sweets and he could see the slip that the person had left behind. I was the youngest child of my father, he really loved me and I also loved him a lot. He was upset at the sight of the tambalum and gifts.

That was the first time I saw him very angry and also that was the first time I had got a thorough beating from him. I got frightened and started weeping. My mother embraced and consoled me. Then my father came and touched my shoulder lovingly with affection and advised me not to receive any gift without his permission. He quoted an Islamic Hadith, which states that, "When the Almighty appoints a person to a position, He takes care of his provision. If a person takes anything beyond that, it is an illegal gain." Then he told me that it is not a good habit. A gift is always accompanied by some purpose and a gift is a dangerous thing. It is like touching a snake and getting the poison in turn. This lesson stands out always in my mind even when I am in my seventies. This incident, taught me a very valuable lesson for my life. It is deeply embedded in my mind.

I would like also to mention the writings in Manu Smriti which states that "By accepting gifts the divine light in the person gets extinguished". Manu warns every individual against accepting gifts for the reason that it places the acceptor under an obligation in favour of the person who gave the gift and ultimately it results in making a person to do things which are not permitted according to law.

I am sharing this thought, with all of you, particularly the young ones, do not be carried away by any gift which comes with a purpose and through which one loses his personality greatly. Do you think, you can follow this in your life? I will be very happy if you can practice this sincerely.

When I think of my second teacher, I am reminded of my childhood days when I was studying in 8th class at the age of 13. I had a teacher, Shri Siva Subramania Iyer. He was one of the very good teachers in our school. All of us loved to attend his class and hear him. One day he was teaching about a bird's flight. He drew a diagram of a bird on the blackboard depicting the wings, tail and the body structure with the head. He explained how birds create the lift and fly. He also explained to us how they change direction while flying. For nearly 25 minutes he gave the lecture with various information such as lift, drag, how the birds fly in a formation of 10, 20 or 30. At the end of the class, he wanted to know whether we understood how birds fly. I said, I did not understand. When I said this, the teacher asked the other students whether they understood or not. Many students said that they also did not understand. He did not get upset by our response since he was a committed teacher.

Our teacher said that he would take all of us to the sea shore. That evening the whole class was at the sea shore of Rameswaram. We enjoyed the roaring sea waves knocking at the sandy hills in the pleasant evening. Birds were flying with sweet chirping voice. He showed the sea birds in formations of 10 to 20 numbers. We saw the marvellous formations of birds with a purpose and we were all amazed. He

showed us the birds and asked us to see that when the birds fly, what they looked like. We saw the wings flapping. He asked us to look at the tail portion with the combination of flapping wings and twisting tail. We noticed closely and found that the birds in that condition flew in the direction they desired. Then he asked us a question, "Where the engine is and how it is powered"?

The bird is powered by its own life and the motivation of what it wants. All these things were explained to us within fifteen minutes. We all understood the dynamics from this practical example. How nice it was. Our teacher was a great teacher; he could give us a theoretical lesson coupled with a live practical example available in nature. This is real teaching. I am sure many of the teachers in schools and colleges will follow this example.

For me, it was not merely an understanding of how a bird flies. The bird's flight entered into me and created a special feeling. From that evening, I thought that my future study has to be with reference to flight and flight systems. I am saying this because my teacher's teaching and the event that I witnessed decided my future career. Then one evening after the classes, I asked the teacher, "Sir, please tell me, how to progress further in learning all about flight." He patiently explained to me that I should complete 8th class, and then go to high school, and then I should go to engineering college that may lead to education on flight. If I complete all my education with excellence, I might do something connected with flight sciences. This advice and the bird flying exercise given by my teacher, really gave me a goal and a mission for my life. When I went to college, I took physics. When I went to engineering in Madras Institute of Technology, I took aeronautical engineering.

Thus my life was transformed as a rocket engineer, aerospace engineer and technologist. That one incident of my teacher teaching the lesson, showing the visual live example proved to be a turning point in my life which eventually shaped my profession.

A student during his school life upto 10+2 spends 25,000 hours in the school campus. His life is, more influenced by the teachers and the school environment. Therefore, the school must have the best of teachers with ability to, teach and love teaching and build moral qualities. Teachers should become role models. Similarly, the student must be alert to build himself with best of qualities and to get ignited with a vision for his or her future life.

I would like to share with you another experience with my teacher Prof. Satish Dhawan. First, I worked in Delhi with the Ministry of Defence. Later I joined the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in 1958 at the Aeronautical Development Establishment at Bangalore. There with the advice of the Director, I took up the development of hovercraft. Hovercraft design needed the development of a ducted contra-rotating propeller for creating a smooth flow balancing the torques. I did not know how to design a contra-rotating propeller though I knew how to design a conventional propeller. Some of my friends told me that I could approach Prof.

Satish Dhawan of the Indian Institute of Science, who was well known for his aeronautical research, for help.

I took permission from my Director Dr Mediratta and went to Prof Dhawan who was sitting in a small room in the Indian Institute of Science with a lot of books in the background and a blackboard on the wall. Prof Dhawan asked me what the problem was that I wanted to discuss. I explained the problem.. He told me that it was really a challenging task and he would teach me the design if I attended his classes in IISc between 2 pm to 3 pm on all Saturdays for the next six weeks.

He was a visionary teacher. He prepared the schedule for the entire course and wrote it on the black board. He also gave me the reference material and books I should read before I start attending the course. I considered, this as a great opportunity and I started attending the discussion and started meeting him regularly. Before commencing each meeting, he would ask critical questions and assess my understanding of the subject. That was for the first time that I realized how a good teacher prepares himself for teaching with meticulous planning and prepares the student for acquisition of knowledge. This process continued for the next six weeks. I got the capability for designing the contra-rotating propeller. Prof Dhawan told me that I was ready for developing the contra-rotating propeller for a given hovercraft configuration. That was the time I realized that Prof Dhawan was not only a teacher but also a fantastic development engineer of aeronautical systems.

Later during the critical phases of testing, Prof Dhawan was with me to witness the test and find solutions to the problems. After reaching the smooth test phase, the contra-rotating propeller went through 50 hours of continuous testing. Prof Dhawan witnessed the test himself and congratulated me. That was a great day for me when I saw the contra rotating propeller designed by my team performing to the mission requirement in the hovercraft. However, at that time, I did not realize that Prof Dhawan would become chairman, ISRO and that I would get the opportunity to work with him as a project director in the development of the satellite launch vehicle SLV-3 for injecting the Rohini satellite into the orbit. Nature has its own way to link the student's dream and real life later.

This was the first design in my career which gave me the confidence to design many complex aerospace systems in future. The hovercraft could fly just above the ground level carrying two passengers. I was the first pilot for this hovercraft and I could control and maneuver the vehicle in any direction. Through this project I learnt the techniques of designing and developing the contra-rotating propeller. Above all, I learnt that in a project, problems will always crop up; we should not allow problems to be our masters but we should defeat the problems. Then successes will sparkle.

The three teachers in my life; what did they give me? In an integrated way it can be said, that any enlightened human being can be created by three unique characteristics. One is moral value system. That I got from my father the hard way. Secondly, the teacher becoming a role model. Not only does the student learn, but the teacher shapes his life with great dreams and aims. Finally, the education and learning process has to

culminate in the creation of professional capability leading to confidence and will power to make a design, to make a product, to make a system, bravely combating many problems. What a fortune and blessing I had from my three teachers.

Among the listeners, there may be many parents, many teachers and a large number of students. Every one of us in this planet creates a page in human history irrespective of who he/she is. I realize my experience is a small dot in human life, but that dot has a life and light. This light, let it light many lamps.

My best wishes to all of you on this occasion of Teachers' Day.

Thank you.

## "Advice to Youth" (1882)

By Mark Twain

Being told I would be expected to talk here, I inquired what sort of talk I ought to make. They said it should be something suitable to youth-something didactic, instructive, or something in the nature of good advice. Very well. I have a few things in my mind which I have often longed to say for the instruction of the young; for it is in one's tender early years that such things will best take root and be most enduring and most valuable. First, then. I will say to you my young friends -- and I say it beseechingly, urgently --

Always obey your parents, when they are present. This is the best policy in the long run, because if you don't, they will make you. Most parents think they know better than you do, and you can generally make more by humoring that superstition than you can by acting on your own better judgment.

Be respectful to your superiors, if you have any, also to strangers, and sometimes to others. If a person offend you, and you are in doubt as to whether it was intentional or not, do not resort to extreme measures; simply watch your chance and hit him with a brick. That will be sufficient. If you shall find that he had not intended any offense, come out frankly and confess yourself in the wrong when you struck him; acknowledge it like a man and say you didn't mean to. Yes, always avoid violence; in this age of charity and kindness, the time has gone by for such things. Leave dynamite to the low and unrefined.

Go to bed early, get up early -- this is wise. Some authorities say get up with the sun; some say get up with one thing, others with another. But a lark is really the best thing to get up with. It gives you a splendid reputation with everybody to know that you get up with the lark; and if you get the right kind of lark, and work at him right, you can easily train him to get up at half past nine, every time -- it's no trick at all.

Now as to the matter of lying. You want to be very careful about lying; otherwise you are nearly sure to get caught. Once caught, you can never again be in the eyes to the good and the pure, what you were before. Many a young person has injured himself permanently through a single clumsy and ill finished lie, the result of carelessness born of incomplete training. Some authorities hold that the young out not to lie at all. That of course, is putting it rather stronger than



necessary; still while I cannot go quite so far as that, I do maintain, and I believe I am right, that the young ought to be temperate in the use of this great art until practice and experience shall give them that confidence, elegance, and precision which alone can make the accomplishment graceful and profitable. Patience, diligence, painstaking attention to detail -- these are requirements; these in time, will make the student perfect; upon these only, may he rely as the sure foundation for future eminence. Think what tedious years of study, thought, practice, experience, went to the equipment of that peerless old master who was able to impose upon the whole world the lofty and sounding maxim that "Truth is mighty and will prevail" -- the most majestic compound fracture of fact which any of woman born has yet achieved. For the history of our race, and each individual's experience, are sewn thick with evidences that a truth is not hard to kill, and that a lie well told is immortal. There is in Boston a monument of the man who discovered anesthesia; many people are aware, in these latter days, that that man didn't discover it at all, but stole the discovery from another man. Is this truth mighty, and will it prevail? Ah no, my hearers, the monument is made of hardy material, but the lie it tells will outlast it a million years. An awkward, feeble, leaky lie is a thing which you ought to make it your unceasing study to avoid; such a lie as that has no more real permanence than an average truth. Why, you might as well tell the truth at once and be done with it. A feeble, stupid, preposterous lie will not live two years -- except it be a slander upon somebody. It is indestructible, then of course, but that is no merit of yours. A final word: begin your practice of this gracious and beautiful art early -- begin now. If I had begun earlier, I could have learned how.

Never handle firearms carelessly. The sorrow and suffering that have been caused through the innocent but heedless handling of firearms by the young! Only four days ago, right in the next farm house to the one where I am spending the summer, a grandmother, old and gray and sweet, one of the loveliest spirits in the land, was sitting at her work, when her young grandson crept in and got down an old, battered, rusty gun which had not been touched for many years and was supposed not to be loaded, and pointed it at her, laughing and threatening to shoot. In her fright she ran screaming and pleading toward the door on the other side of the room; but as she passed him he placed the gun almost against her very breast and pulled the trigger! He had supposed it was not loaded. And he was right -- it wasn't. So there wasn't any harm done. It is the only case of that kind I ever heard of. Therefore, just the same, don't you meddle with old unloaded firearms; they are the most deadly and unerring things that have ever been created by man. You don't have to take any pains at all with them; you don't have to have a rest, you don't have to have any sights on the gun, you

don't have to take aim, even. No, you just pick out a relative and bang away, and you are sure to get him. A youth who can't hit a cathedral at thirty yards with a Gatling gun in three quarters of an hour, can take up an old empty musket and bag his grandmother every time, at a hundred. Think what Waterloo would have been if one of the armies had been boys armed with old muskets supposed not to be loaded, and the other army had been composed of their female relations. The very thought of it makes one shudder.

There are many sorts of books; but good ones are the sort for the young to read. remember that. They are a great, an inestimable, and unspeakable means of improvement. Therefore be careful in your selection, my young friends; be very careful; confine yourselves exclusively to Robertson's *Sermons*, Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, *The Innocents Abroad*, and works of that kind.

But I have said enough. I hope you will treasure up the instructions which I have given you, and make them a guide to your feet and a light to your understanding. Build your character thoughtfully and painstakingly upon these precepts, and by and by, when you have got it built, you will be surprised and gratified to see how nicely and sharply it resembles everybody else's.

## Lamb to the Slaughter

by Roald Dahl (1916-1990)

Approximate Word Count: 3899

The room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alight--hers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whiskey. Fresh ice cubes in the Thermos bucket.

Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come home from work.

Now and again she would glance up at the clock, but without anxiety, merely to please herself with the thought that each minute gone by made it nearer the time when he would come. There was a slow smiling air about her, and about everything she did. The drop of a head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil. Her skin--for this was her sixth month with child--had acquired a wonderful translucent quality, the mouth was soft, and the eyes, with their new placid look, seemed larger darker than before. When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the tires on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, the footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock. She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him as he came in.

"Hullo darling," she said.

"Hullo darling," he answered.

She took his coat and hung it in the closet. Then she walked over and made the drinks, a strongish one for him, a weak one for herself; and soon she was back again in her chair with the sewing, and he in the other, opposite, holding the tall glass with both hands, rocking it so the ice cubes tinkled against the side.

For her, this was always a blissful time of day. She knew he didn't want to speak much until the first drink was finished, and she, on her side, was content to sit quietly, enjoying his company after the long hours alone in the house. She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel--almost as a sunbather feels the sun--that warm male glow that came out of him to her when they were alone together. She loved him for the way he sat loosely in a chair, for the way he came in a door, or moved slowly across the room with long strides. She loved intent, far look in his eyes when they rested in her, the funny shape of the mouth, and especially the way he remained silent about his tiredness, sitting still with himself until the whiskey had taken some of it away.

"Tired darling?"

"Yes," he said. "I'm tired," And as he spoke, he did an unusual thing. He lifted his glass and drained it in one swallow although there was still half of it, at least half of it left.. She wasn't really watching him, but she knew what he had done because she heard the ice cubes falling back against the bottom of the empty glass when he lowered his arm. He paused a moment, leaning forward in the chair, then he got up and went slowly over to fetch himself another.

"I'll get it!" she cried, jumping up.

"Sit down," he said.

When he came back, she noticed that the new drink was dark amber with the quantity of whiskey in it.

"Darling, shall I get your slippers?"

"No."

She watched him as he began to sip the dark yellow drink, and she could see little oily swirls in the liquid because it was so strong.

"I think it's a shame," she said, "that when a policeman gets to be as senior as you, they keep him walking about on his feet all day long."

He didn't answer, so she bent her head again and went on with her sewing; but each time he lifted the drink to his lips, she heard the ice cubes clinking against the side of the glass.

"Darling," she said. "Would you like me to get you some cheese? I haven't made any supper because it's Thursday."

"No," he said.

"If you're too tired to eat out," she went on, "it's still not too late. There's plenty of meat and stuff in the freezer, and you can have it right here and not even move out of the chair."

Her eyes waited on him for an answer, a smile, a little nod, but he made no sign.

"Anyway," she went on, "I'll get you some cheese and crackers first."

"I don't want it," he said.

She moved uneasily in her chair, the large eyes still watching his face. "But you must eat! I'll fix it anyway, and then you can have it or not, as you like."

She stood up and placed her sewing on the table by the lamp.

"Sit down," he said. "Just for a minute, sit down."

It wasn't till then that she began to get frightened.

"Go on," he said. "Sit down."

She lowered herself back slowly into the chair, watching him all the time with those large, bewildered eyes. He had finished the second drink and was staring down into the glass, frowning.

"Listen," he said. "I've got something to tell you."

"What is it, darling? What's the matter?"

He had now become absolutely motionless, and he kept his head down so that the light from the lamp beside him fell across the upper part of his face, leaving the chin and mouth in shadow. She noticed there was a little muscle moving near the corner of his left eye.

"This is going to be a bit of a shock to you, I'm afraid," he said. "But I've thought about it a good deal and I've decided the only thing to do is tell you right away. I hope you won't blame me too much."

And he told her. It didn't take long, four or five minutes at most, and she sat very still through it all, watching him with a kind of dazed horror as he went further and further away from her with each word.

"So there it is," he added. "And I know it's kind of a bad time to be telling you, but there simply wasn't any other way. Of course I'll give you money and see you're looked after. But there needn't really be any fuss. I hope not anyway. It wouldn't be very good for my job."

Her first instinct was not to believe any of it, to reject it all. It occurred to her that perhaps he hadn't even spoken, that she herself had imagined the whole thing. Maybe, if she went about her business and acted as though she hadn't been listening, then later, when she sort of woke up again, she might find none of it had ever happened.

"I'll get the supper," she managed to whisper, and this time he didn't stop her.

When she walked across the room she couldn't feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn't feel anything at all- except a slight nausea and a desire to vomit. Everything was automatic now-down the steps to the cellar, the light switch, the deep freeze, the hand inside the cabinet taking hold of the first object it met. She

lifted it out, and looked at it. It was wrapped in paper, so she took off the paper and looked at it again.

A leg of lamb.

All right then, they would have lamb for supper. She carried it upstairs, holding the thin bone-end of it with both her hands, and as she went through the living-room, she saw him standing over by the window with his back to her, and she stopped.

"For God's sake," he said, hearing her, but not turning round. "Don't make supper for me. I'm going out."

At that point, Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head.

She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.

She stepped back a pace, waiting, and the funny thing was that he remained standing there for at least four or five seconds, gently swaying. Then he crashed to the carpet.

The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped bring her out of the shock. She came out slowly, feeling cold and surprised, and she stood for a while blinking at the body, still holding the ridiculous piece of meat tight with both hands.

All right, she told herself. So I've killed him.

It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden. She began thinking very fast. As the wife of a detective, she knew quite well what the penalty would be. That was fine. It made no difference to her. In fact, it would be a relief. On the other hand, what about the child? What were the laws about murderers with unborn children? Did they kill then both-mother and child? Or did they wait until the tenth month? What did they do?

Mary Maloney didn't know. And she certainly wasn't prepared to take a chance.

She carried the meat into the kitchen, placed it in a pan, turned the oven on high, and shoved it inside. Then she washed her hands and ran upstairs to the bedroom. She sat down before the mirror, tidied her hair, touched up her lips and face. She tried a smile. It came out rather peculiar. She tried again.

"Hullo Sam," she said brightly, aloud.

The voice sounded peculiar too.

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."

That was better. Both the smile and the voice were coming out better now. She rehearsed it several times more. Then she ran downstairs, took her coat, went out the back door, down the garden, into the street.

It wasn't six o'clock yet and the lights were still on in the grocery shop.

"Hullo Sam," she said brightly, smiling at the man behind the counter.

"Why, good evening, Mrs. Maloney. How're you?"

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."

The man turned and reached up behind him on the shelf for the peas.

"Patrick's decided he's tired and doesn't want to eat out tonight," she told him. "We usually go out Thursdays, you know, and now he's caught me without any vegetables in the house."

"Then how about meat, Mrs. Maloney?"

"No, I've got meat, thanks. I got a nice leg of lamb from the freezer."

"Oh."

"I don't know much like cooking it frozen, Sam, but I'm taking a chance on it this time. You think it'll be all right?"

"Personally," the grocer said, "I don't believe it makes any difference. You want these Idaho potatoes?"

"Oh yes, that'll be fine. Two of those."

"Anything else?" The grocer cocked his head on one side, looking at her pleasantly. "How about afterwards? What you going to give him for afterwards?"

"Well-what would you suggest, Sam?"

The man glanced around his shop. "How about a nice big slice of cheesecake? I know he likes that."

"Perfect," she said. "He loves it."

And when it was all wrapped and she had paid, she put on her brightest smile and said, "Thank you, Sam. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mrs. Maloney. And thank you."

And now, she told herself as she hurried back, all she was doing now, she was returning home to her husband and he was waiting for his supper; and she must cook it good, and make it as tasty as possible because the poor man was tired; and if, when she entered the house, she happened to find anything unusual, or tragic, or terrible, then naturally it would be a shock and she'd become frantic with grief and horror. Mind you, she wasn't expecting to find anything. She was just going home with the vegetables. Mrs. Patrick Maloney going home with the vegetables on Thursday evening to cook supper for her husband.

That's the way, she told herself. Do everything right and natural. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for any acting at all.

Therefore, when she entered the kitchen by the back door, she was humming a little tune to herself and smiling.

"Patrick!" she called. "How are you, darling?"

She put the parcel down on the table and went through into the living room; and when she saw him lying there on the floor with his legs doubled up and one arm twisted back underneath his body, it really was rather a shock. All the old love and longing for him welled up inside her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him, and began to cry her heart out. It was easy. No acting was necessary.

A few minutes later she got up and went to the phone. She know the number of the police station, and when the man at the other end answered, she cried to him, "Quick! Come quick! Patrick's dead!"

"Who's speaking?"

"Mrs. Maloney. Mrs. Patrick Maloney."

"You mean Patrick Maloney's dead?"

"I think so," she sobbed. "He's lying on the floor and I think he's dead."

"Be right over," the man said.

The car came very quickly, and when she opened the front door, two policeman walked in. She know them both-she know nearly all the man at that precinct-and she fell right into a chair, then went over to join the other one, who was called O'Malley, kneeling by the body.

"Is he dead?" she cried.



"I'm afraid he is. What happened?"

Briefly, she told her story about going out to the grocer and coming back to find him on the floor. While she was talking, crying and talking, Noonan discovered a small patch of congealed blood on the dead man's head. He showed it to O'Malley who got up at once and hurried to the phone.

Soon, other men began to come into the house. First a doctor, then two detectives, one of whom she know by name. Later, a police photographer arrived and took pictures, and a man who know about fingerprints. There was a great deal of whispering and muttering beside the corpse, and the detectives kept asking her a lot of questions. But they always treated her kindly. She told her story again, this time right from the beginning, when Patrick had come in, and she was sewing, and he was tired, so tired he hadn't wanted to go out for supper. She told how she'd put the meat in the oven-"it's there now, cooking"- and how she'd slopped out to the grocer for vegetables, and come back to find him lying on the floor.

Which grocer?" one of the detectives asked.

She told him, and he turned and whispered something to the other detective who immediately went outside into the street.

In fifteen minutes he was back with a page of notes, and there was more whispering, and through her sobbing she heard a few of the whispered phrases- "...acted quite normal...very cheerful...wanted to give him a good supper...peas...cheesecake...impossible that she..."

After a while, the photographer and the doctor departed and two other men came in and took the corpse away on a stretcher. Then the fingerprint man went away. The two detectives remained, and so did the two policeman. They were exceptionally nice to her, and Jack Noonan asked if she wouldn't rather go somewhere else, to her sister's house perhaps, or to his own wife who would take care of her and put her up for the night.

No, she said. She didn't feel she could move even a yard at the moment. Would they mind awfully of she stayed just where she was until she felt better. She didn't feel too good at the moment, she really didn't.

Then hadn't she better lie down on the bed? Jack Noonan asked.

No, she said. She'd like to stay right where she was, in this chair. A little later, perhaps, when she felt better, she would move.

So they left her there while they went about their business, searching the house. Occasionally one of the detectives asked her another question. Sometimes Jack Noonan spoke at her gently as he passed by. Her husband, he told her, had been killed by a blow on the back of the head administered with a heavy blunt instrument, almost certainly a large piece of metal. They were looking for the weapon. The murderer may have taken it with him, but on the other hand he may have thrown it away or hidden it somewhere on the premises.

"It's the old story," he said. "Get the weapon, and you've got the man."

Later, one of the detectives came up and sat beside her. Did she know, he asked, of anything in the house that could've been used as the weapon? Would she mind having a look around to see if anything was missing—a very big spanner, for example, or a heavy metal vase.

They didn't have any heavy metal vases, she said.

"Or a big spanner?"

She didn't think they had a big spanner. But there might be some things like that in the garage.

The search went on. She knew that there were other policemen in the garden all around the house. She could hear their footsteps on the gravel outside, and sometimes she saw a flash of a torch through a chink in the curtains. It began to get late, nearly nine she noticed by the clock on the mantle. The four men searching the rooms seemed to be growing weary, a trifle exasperated.

"Jack," she said, the next time Sergeant Noonan went by. "Would you mind giving me a drink?"

"Sure I'll give you a drink. You mean this whiskey?"

"Yes please. But just a small one. It might make me feel better."

He handed her the glass.

"Why don't you have one yourself," she said. "You must be awfully tired. Please do. You've been very good to me."

"Well," he answered. "It's not strictly allowed, but I might take just a drop to keep me going."

One by one the others came in and were persuaded to take a little nip of whiskey. They stood around rather awkwardly with the drinks in their hands, uncomfortable in her presence, trying to say consoling things to her. Sergeant

Noonan wandered into the kitchen, come out quickly and said, "Look, Mrs. Maloney. You know that oven of yours is still on, and the meat still inside."

"Oh dear me!" she cried. "So it is!"

"I better turn it off for you, hadn't I?"

"Will you do that, Jack. Thank you so much."

When the sergeant returned the second time, she looked at him with her large, dark tearful eyes. "Jack Noonan," she said.

"Yes?"

"Would you do me a small favor-you and these others?"

"We can try, Mrs. Maloney."

"Well," she said. "Here you all are, and good friends of dear Patrick's too, and helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be terrible hungry by now because it's long past your suppertime, and I know Patrick would never forgive me, God bless his soul, if I allowed you to remain in his house without offering you decent hospitality. Why don't you eat up that lamb that's in the oven. It'll be cooked just right by now."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Sergeant Noonan said.

"Please," she begged. "Please eat it. Personally I couldn't tough a thing, certainly not what's been in the house when he was here. But it's all right for you. It'd be a favor to me if you'd eat it up. Then you can go on with your work again afterwards."

There was a good deal of hesitating among the four policemen, but they were clearly hungry, and in the end they were persuaded to go into the kitchen and help themselves. The woman stayed where she was, listening to them speaking among themselves, their voices thick and sloppy because their mouths were full of meat.

"Have some more, Charlie?"

"No. Better not finish it."

"She wants us to finish it. She said so. Be doing her a favor."

"Okay then. Give me some more."

"That's the hell of a big club the gut must've used to hit poor Patrick," one of them was saying. "The doc says his skull was smashed all to pieces just like from a sledgehammer."

"That's why it ought to be easy to find."

"Exactly what I say."

"Whoever done it, they're not going to be carrying a thing like that around with them longer than they need."

One of them belched.

"Personally, I think it's right here on the premises."

"Probably right under our very noses. What you think, Jack?"

And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle.

## Hearts And Hands O”HENRY

At Denver there was an influx of passengers into the coaches on the eastbound B. & M. express. In one coach there sat a very pretty young woman dressed in elegant taste and surrounded by all the luxurious comforts of an experienced traveler. Among the newcomers were two young men, one of handsome presence with a bold, frank countenance and manner; the other a ruffled, glum-faced person, heavily built and roughly dressed. The two were handcuffed together.

As they passed down the aisle of the coach the only vacant seat offered was a reversed one facing the attractive young woman. Here the linked couple seated themselves. The young woman's glance fell upon them with a distant, swift disinterest; then with a lovely smile brightening her countenance and a tender pink tingeing her rounded cheeks, she held out a little gray-gloved hand. When she spoke her voice, full, sweet, and deliberate, proclaimed that its owner was accustomed to speak and be heard.

"Well, Mr. Easton, if you will make me speak first, I suppose I must. Don't you ever recognize old friends when you meet them in the West?"

The younger man roused himself sharply at the sound of her voice, seemed to struggle with a slight embarrassment which he threw off instantly, and then clasped her fingers with his left hand.

"It's Miss Fairchild," he said, with a smile. "I'll ask you to excuse the other hand; "it's otherwise engaged just at present."

He slightly raised his right hand, bound at the wrist by the shining "bracelet" to the left one of his companion. The glad look in the girl's eyes slowly changed to a bewildered horror. The glow faded from her cheeks. Her lips parted in a vague, relaxing distress. Easton, with a little laugh, as if amused, was about to speak again when the other forestalled him. The glum-faced man had been watching the girl's countenance with veiled glances from his keen, shrewd eyes.

"You'll excuse me for speaking, miss, but, I see you're acquainted with the marshall here. If you'll ask him to speak a word for me when we get to the pen he'll do it, and it'll make things easier for me there. He's taking me to Leavenworth prison. It's seven years for counterfeiting."

"Oh!" said the girl, with a deep breath and returning color. "So that is what you are doing out here? A marshal!"

"My dear Miss Fairchild," said Easton, calmly, "I had to do something. Money has a way of taking wings unto itself, and you know it takes money to keep step with our crowd in Washington. I saw this opening in the West, and--well, a marshalship isn't quite as high a position as that of ambassador, but--"

"The ambassador," said the girl, warmly, "doesn't call any more. He needn't ever

have done so. You ought to know that. And so now you are one of these dashing Western heroes, and you ride and shoot and go into all kinds of dangers. That's different from the Washington life. You have been missed from the old crowd."

The girl's eyes, fascinated, went back, widening a little, to rest upon the glittering handcuffs.

"Don't you worry about them, miss," said the other man. "All marshals handcuff themselves to their prisoners to keep them from getting away. Mr. Easton knows his business."

"Will we see you again soon in Washington?" asked the girl.

"Not soon, I think," said Easton. "My butterfly days are over, I fear."

"I love the West," said the girl irrelevantly. Her eyes were shining softly. She looked away out the car window. She began to speak truly and simply without the gloss of style and manner: "Mamma and I spent the summer in Denver. She went home a week ago because father was slightly ill. I could live and be happy in the West. I think the air here agrees with me. Money isn't everything. But people always misunderstand things and remain stupid--"

"Say, Mr. Marshal," growled the glum-faced man. "This isn't quite fair. I'm needing a drink, and haven't had a smoke all day. Haven't you talked long enough? Take me in the smoker now, won't you? I'm half dead for a pipe."

The bound travelers rose to their feet, Easton with the same slow smile on his face.

"I can't deny a petition for tobacco," he said, lightly. "It's the one friend of the unfortunate. Good-bye, Miss Fairchild. Duty calls, you know." He held out his hand for a farewell.

"It's too bad you are not going East," she said, reclothing herself with manner and style. "But you must go on to Leavenworth, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Easton, "I must go on to Leavenworth."

The two men sidled down the aisle into the smoker.

The two passengers in a seat near by had heard most of the conversation. Said one of them: "That marshal's a good sort of chap. Some of these Western fellows are all right."

"Pretty young to hold an office like that, isn't he?" asked the other.

"Young!" exclaimed the first speaker, "why--Oh! didn't you catch on? Say--did you ever know an officer to handcuff a prisoner to his right hand?"

# The Sniper

BY LIAM O'FLAHERTY

The long June twilight faded into night. Dublin lay enveloped in darkness but for the dim light of the moon that shone through fleecy clouds, casting a pale light as of approaching dawn over the streets and the dark waters of the Liffey. Around the beleaguered Four Courts the heavy guns roared. Here and there through the city, machine guns and rifles broke the silence of the night, spasmodically, like dogs barking on lone farms. Republicans and Free Staters were waging civil war.

On a rooftop near O'Connell Bridge, a Republican sniper lay watching. Beside him lay his rifle and over his shoulders was slung a pair of field glasses. His face was the face of a student, thin and ascetic, but his eyes had the cold gleam of the fanatic. They were deep and thoughtful, the eyes of a man who is used to looking at death.

He was eating a sandwich hungrily. He had eaten nothing since morning. He had been too excited to eat. He finished the sandwich, and, taking a flask of whisky from his pocket, he took a short drought. Then he returned the flask to his pocket. He paused for a moment, considering whether he should risk a smoke. It was dangerous. The flash might be seen in the darkness, and there were enemies watching. He decided to take the risk.

Placing a cigarette between his lips, he struck a match, inhaled the smoke hurriedly and put out the light. Almost immediately, a bullet flattened itself against the parapet of the roof. The sniper took another whiff and put out the cigarette. Then he swore softly and crawled away to the left.

Cautiously he raised himself and peered over the parapet. There was a flash and a bullet whizzed over his head. He dropped immediately. He had seen the flash. It came from the opposite side of the street.

He rolled over the roof to a chimney stack in the rear, and slowly drew himself up behind it, until his eyes were level with the top of the parapet. There was nothing to be seen--just the dim outline of the opposite housetop against the blue sky. His enemy was under cover.

Just then an armored car came across the bridge and advanced slowly up the street. It stopped on the opposite side of the street, fifty yards ahead. The sniper

could hear the dull panting of the motor. His heart beat faster. It was an enemy car. He wanted to fire, but he knew it was useless. His bullets would never pierce the steel that covered the gray monster.

Then round the corner of a side street came an old woman, her head covered by a tattered shawl. She began to talk to the man in the turret of the car. She was pointing to the roof where the sniper lay. An informer.

The turret opened. A man's head and shoulders appeared, looking toward the sniper. The sniper raised his rifle and fired. The head fell heavily on the turret wall. The woman darted toward the side street. The sniper fired again. The woman whirled round and fell with a shriek into the gutter.

Suddenly from the opposite roof a shot rang out and the sniper dropped his rifle with a curse. The rifle clattered to the roof. The sniper thought the noise would wake the dead. He stooped to pick the rifle up. He couldn't lift it. His forearm was dead. "I'm hit," he muttered.

Dropping flat onto the roof, he crawled back to the parapet. With his left hand he felt the injured right forearm. The blood was oozing through the sleeve of his coat. There was no pain--just a deadened sensation, as if the arm had been cut off.

Quickly he drew his knife from his pocket, opened it on the breastwork of the parapet, and ripped open the sleeve. There was a small hole where the bullet had entered. On the other side there was not hole. The bullet had lodged in the bone. It must have fractured it. He bent the arm below the wound. the arm bent back easily. He ground his teeth overcome the pain.

Then taking out his field dressing, he ripped open the packet with his knife. He broke the neck of the iodine bottle and let the bitter fluid drip into the wound. A paroxysm of pain swept through him. He placed the cotton wadding over the wound and wrapped the dressing over it. He tied the ends with his teeth.

Then he lay still against the parapet, and, closing his eyes, he made an effort of will to overcome the pain.

In the street beneath all was still. The armored car had retired speedily over the bridge, with the machine gunner's head hanging lifeless over the turret. The woman's corpse lay still in the gutter.



The sniper lay still for a long time nursing his wounded arm and planning escape. Morning must not find him wounded on the roof. The enemy on the opposite roof covered his escape. He must kill that enemy and he could not use his rifle. He had only a revolver to do it. Then he thought of a plan.

Taking off his cap, he placed it over the muzzle of his rifle. Then he pushed the rifle slowly upward over the parapet, until the cap was visible from the opposite side of the street. Almost immediately there was a report, and a bullet pierced the center of the cap. The sniper slanted the rifle forward. The cap clipped down into the street. Then catching the rifle in the middle, the sniper dropped his left hand over the roof and let it hang, lifelessly. After a few moments he let the rifle drop to the street. Then he sank to the roof, dragging his hand with him.

Crawling quickly to his feet, he peered up at the corner of the roof. His ruse had succeeded. The other sniper, seeing the cap and rifle fall, thought that he had killed his man. He was now standing before a row of chimney pots, looking across, with his head clearly silhouetted against the western sky.

The Republican sniper smiled and lifted his revolver above the edge of the parapet. The distance was about fifty yards--a hard shot in the dim light, and his right arm was paining him like a thousand devils. He took a steady aim. His hand trembled with eagerness. Pressing his lips together, he took a deep breath through his nostrils and fired. He was almost deafened with the report and his arm shook with the recoil.

Then when the smoke cleared, he peered across and uttered a cry of joy. His enemy had been hit. He was reeling over the parapet in his death agony. He struggled to keep his feet, but he was slowly falling forward as if in a dream. The rifle fell from his grasp, hit the parapet, fell over, bounded off the pole of a barber's shop beneath and then clattered on the pavement.

Then the dying man on the roof crumpled up and fell forward. The body turned over and over in space and hit the ground with a dull thud. Then it lay still.

The sniper looked at his enemy falling and he shuddered. The lust of battle died in him. He became bitten by remorse. The sweat stood out in beads on his forehead. Weakened by his wound and the long summer day of fasting and watching on the roof, he revolted from the sight of the shattered mass of his

dead enemy. His teeth chattered, he began to gibber to himself, cursing the war, cursing himself, cursing everybody.

He looked at the smoking revolver in his hand, and with an oath he hurled it to the roof at his feet. The revolver went off with a concussion and the bullet whizzed past the sniper's head. He was frightened back to his senses by the shock. His nerves steadied. The cloud of fear scattered from his mind and he laughed.

Taking the whiskey flask from his pocket, he emptied it a drought. He felt reckless under the influence of the spirit. He decided to leave the roof now and look for his company commander, to report. Everywhere around was quiet. There was not much danger in going through the streets. He picked up his revolver and put it in his pocket. Then he crawled down through the skylight to the house underneath.

When the sniper reached the laneway on the street level, he felt a sudden curiosity as to the identity of the enemy sniper whom he had killed. He decided that he was a good shot, whoever he was. He wondered did he know him. Perhaps he had been in his own company before the split in the army. He decided to risk going over to have a look at him. He peered around the corner into O'Connell Street. In the upper part of the street there was heavy firing, but around here all was quiet.

The sniper darted across the street. A machine gun tore up the ground around him with a hail of bullets, but he escaped. He threw himself face downward beside the corpse. The machine gun stopped.

Then the sniper turned over the dead body and looked into his brother's face.

# The Case of The Lower Case Letter

By Jack Delany

She breezed into my office one cold September morning. I'd been enjoying a hot cup of Starbuck's finest and surfing the web for local news. The famous lexical semanticist Professor Edgar Nettleston had been found dead, a gunshot wound to the head. The police verdict was suicide.

She held out an elegant hand as she floated towards me and I glimpsed a wedding band with a stone the size of a peanut M&M.

"I'm Edith Nettleston."

"Sorry about the old man."

"I'm not. He loved me, but he loved words more. I'll be brief. My husband was working on a paper that will rock the very foundation of lexical semantics. It's worth a fortune in lecture tours, but nobody can find it. I believe his suicide note is a clue to its whereabouts."

She removed a scrap of paper from her blouse.

*"edith. i'm not going to whine, i've had a good life. i've found wealth and happiness as a teacher, a seller of knowledge. but i find myself depressed beyond hope ... and so i'm choosing the hour and manner of my own demise. i have treated you badly. i demanded you dyed your brown curls blonde. i thought i could buy you when i should have won your love. i called you a witch. i'd complain: where's the woman i married? i said you ate too much. if i wanted change, i could have used a carrot rather than a stick. you probably wanted to wring my neck. forgive me. farewell."*

"It's all written in lower case. My husband was a stickler for correct grammar. I refuse to believe it doesn't mean something."

"Mrs. Nettleston, I think I can help you. There's a couple of odd things about this letter. Firstly, as you say, it's written entirely in lower case. Mr. Nettleston was a world-renowned lexical semanticist, not a teenager texting his BFFs."

"Secondly, it has a more than usual number of homophones, words where there is another word with the same sound but different spelling and meaning. When dealing with a lexical semanticist, that's surely no accident."

"If we read those homophones in order, we have: whine, seller, hour, manner. And translating to their homophones: Wine cellar our manor."

Several hours later, we arrived at the Nettlestons' country house and immediately headed for the basement. A flip of a light switch revealed tunnels filled with rows of dark bottles.

"Where is it? It would take years to search this place."

"Not so fast, Mrs. Nettleston. First I have to ask you something: your wedding ring diamond, how large is it?"

"It's eight carats. Edgar wouldn't stop talking about it."

"That's what I feared." I pulled out my trusty revolver. "How you must have hated him and his lexical semantics! You figured you'd kill him and keep the money from the paper yourself. You forced him to write that suicide note, thinking you knew where it was. But he was suspicious and he'd already hidden it. And he had another surprise for you: the rest of the note, it doesn't reveal where the paper is, it reveals his killer. The final homophones: dyed buy won witch where's ate carrot wring. That is: died by one which wears eight carat ring."

As the cops left with Mrs. Nettleston I took a quick trip round the maze of tunnels. It didn't take me long to find it. Most of the wine lay unpacked on racks but in one corner two cases sat stacked, one on top of each other. Carefully, I opened the lower one.

## Night of the Scorpion

By Nissim Ezekiel

I remember the night my mother  
was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours  
of steady rain had driven him  
to crawl beneath a sack of rice.

Parting with his poison - flash  
of diabolic tail in the dark room -  
he risked the rain again.

The peasants came like swarms of flies  
and buzzed the name of God a hundred times  
to paralyse the Evil One.

With candles and with lanterns  
throwing giant scorpion shadows  
on the mud-baked walls  
they searched for him: he was not found.  
They clicked their tongues.  
With every movement that the scorpion made his poison moved in Mother's blood,  
they said.

May he sit still, they said  
May the sins of your previous birth  
be burned away tonight, they said.  
May your suffering decrease  
the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.  
May the sum of all evil  
balanced in this unreal world

against the sum of good  
become diminished by your pain.  
May the poison purify your flesh

of desire, and your spirit of ambition,  
they said, and they sat around  
on the floor with my mother in the centre,  
the peace of understanding on each face.  
More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours,  
more insects, and the endless rain.  
My mother twisted through and through,

groaning on a mat.  
My father, sceptic, rationalist,  
trying every curse and blessing,  
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.  
He even poured a little paraffin  
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.  
I watched the flame feeding on my mother.  
I watched the holy man perform his rites to tame the poison with an incantation.  
After twenty hours  
it lost its sting.

My mother only said  
Thank God the scorpion picked on me  
And spared my children.

## A SNAKE IN THE GRASS

R. K. Narayan

ON a sunny afternoon, when the inmates of the bungalow were at their siesta a cyclist rang his bell at the gate frantically and announced: "A big cobra has got into your compound. It crossed my wheel." He pointed to its track under the gate, and resumed his journey.

The family consisting of the mother and her four sons assembled at the gate in great agitation. The old servant Dasa was sleeping in the shed. They shook him out of his sleep and announced to him the arrival of the cobra.

"There is no cobra," he replied and tried to dismiss the matter. They swore at him and forced him to take an interest in the cobra.

"The thing is somewhere here. If it is not found before the evening, we will dismiss you. Your neglect of the garden and the lawns is responsible for all these dreadful things coming in." Some neighbours dropped in. They looked accusingly at Dasa :

"You have the laziest servant on earth," they said.

"He ought to keep the surroundings tidy."

"I have been asking for a grass-cutter for months," Dasa said. In one voice they ordered him to manage with the available things and learn not to make demands. He persisted.

They began to speculate how much it would cost to buy a grass-cutter. A neighbour declared that you could not think of buying any article made of iron till after the war. He chanted banalities of wartime prices. The second son of the house asserted that he could get anything he wanted at controlled prices.

The neighbour became eloquent on black-market. A heated debate followed. The rest watched in apathy.

At this point the college-boy of the house butted in with:

"I read in an American paper that 30,000 people die of snake-bite every year." Mother threw up her arms in horror and arraigned Dasa. The boy elaborated the statistics.

"I have worked it out, 83 a day. That means every twenty minutes someone is dying of cobra-bite. As we have been talking here, one person has lost his life

somewhere." Mother nearly screamed on hearing it. The compound looked sinister. The boys brought in bamboo-sticks and pressed one into the hands of the servant also. He kept desultorily poking it into the foliage with a cynical air.

"The fellow is beating about the bush," someone cried aptly. They tucked up their dhoties, seized every available knife and crow-bar and began to hack the garden. Creepers, bushes, and lawns, were laid low.

What could not be trimmed was cut to the root. The inner walls of the house brightened with the unobstructed glare streaming in. When there was nothing more to be done Dasa asked triumphantly,

"Where is the snake?

"An old beggar cried for alms at the gate. They told her not to pester when they were engaged in a snake-hunt. On hearing it the old woman became happy.

"You are fortunate. It is God Subramanya who has come to visit you. Don't kill the snake/'

Mother was in hearty agreement:

"You are right.

I forgot all about the promised Abhishckam. This is a reminder." She gave a coin to the beggar, who promised to send down a snake-charmer as she went.

Presently an old man appeared at the gate and announced himself as a snake-charmer. They gathered around him. He spoke to them of his life and activities and his power over snakes. They asked admiringly:

"How do you catch them?" "Thus," he said, pouncing upon a hypothetical snake on the ground. They pointed the direction in which the cobra had gone and asked him to go ahead. He looked helplessly about and said:

"If you show me the snake, I'll at once catch it. Otherwise what can I do? The moment you see it again, send for me. I live nearby." He gave his name and address and departed.

At five in the evening, they threw away their sticks and implements and repaired to the veranda to rest.

They had turned up every stone in the garden and cut down every grass-blade and shrub, so that the tiniest insect coming into the garden should have no cover.



They were loudly discussing the various measures they would take to protect themselves against reptiles in the future, when Dasa appeared before them carrying a water-pot whose mouth was sealed with a slab of stone. He put the pot down and said:

"I have caught him in this. I saw him peeping out of it. . . .

I saw him before he could see me." He explained at length the strategy he had employed to catch and seal up the snake in the pot. They stood at a safe distance and gazed on the pot. Dasa had the glow of a champion on his face.

"Don't call me an idler hereafter," he said. Mother complimented him on his sharpness and wished she had placed some milk in the pot as a sort of religious duty. Dasa picked up the pot cautiously and walked off saying that he would leave the pot with its contents with the snake-charmer living nearby. He became the hero of the day. They watched him in great admiration and decided to reward him adequately.

It was five minutes since Dasa was gone when the youngest son cried:

"See there!" Out of a hole in the compound wall a cobra emerged. It glided along towards the gate, paused for a moment to look at the gathering in the veranda with its hood halfopen.

It crawled under the gate and disappeared along a drain. When they recovered from the shock they asked, "Does it mean that there are two snakes here?"

"The college-boy murmured: "I wish I had taken the risk and knocked the water-pot from Dasa's hand; we might have known what it contained."

# The Thief

by Ruskin Bond

I WAS STILL A thief when I met Arun and though I was only fifteen I was an experienced and fairly successful hand.

Arun was watching the wrestlers when I approached him. He was about twenty, a tall, lean fellow, and he looked kind and simple enough for my purpose. I hadn't had much luck of late and thought I might be able to get into this young person's confidence. He seemed quite fascinated by the wrestling. Two well-oiled men slid about in the soft mud, grunting and slapping their thighs. When I drew Arun into conversation he didn't seem to realize I was a stranger.

'You look like a wrestler yourself I said.

'So do you,' he replied, which put me out of my stride for a moment because at the time I was rather thin and bony and not very impressive physically.

'Yes,' I said. 'I wrestle sometimes.'

'What's your name?'

'Deepak,' I lied.

Deepak was about my fifth name. I had earlier called myself Ranbir, Sudhir, Trilok and Surinder. After this preliminary exchange Arun confined himself to comments on the match, and I didn't have much to say. After a while he walked away from the crowd of spectators. I followed him.

'Hallo' he said. 'Enjoying yourself?'

I gave him my most appealing smile. 'I want to work for you' I said.

He didn't stop walking. 'And what makes you think I want someone to work for me?'

'Well' I said, 'I've been wandering about all day looking for the best person to work for. When I saw you I knew that no one else had a chance.'

'You flatter me' he said.

'That's all right.'

'But you can't work for me.'

'Why not?'

'Because I can't pay you.'

I thought that over for a minute. Perhaps I had misjudged my man.

'Can you feed me?' I asked.

'Can you cook?' he countered.

"I can cook" I lied.

'If you can cook" he said, Til feed you.'

He took me to his room and told me I could sleep in the verandah. But I was nearly back on the street that night. The meal I cooked must have been pretty awful because Arun gave it to the neighbour's cat and told me to be off. But I just hung around smiling in my most appealing way and then he couldn't help laughing. He sat down on the bed and laughed for a full five minutes and later patted me on the head and said, never mind, he'd teach me to cook in the morning. Not only did he teach me to cook but he taught me to write my name and his and said he would soon teach me to write whole sentences and add money on paper when you didn't have any in your pocket!

It was quite pleasant working for Arun. I made the tea in the morning and later went out shopping. I would take my time buying the day's supplies and make a profit of about twenty-five paise a day. I would tell Arun that rice was fifty-six paise a pound (it generally was), but I would get it at fifty paise a pound. I think he knew I made a little this way but he didn't mind. He wasn't giving me a regular wage.

I was really grateful to Arun for teaching me to write. I knew that once I could write like an educated man there would be no limit to what I could achieve. It might even be an incentive to be honest.

Arun made money by fits and starts. He would be borrowing one week, lending the next. He would keep worrying about his next cheque but as soon as it arrived he would go out and celebrate lavishly.

One evening he came home with a wad of notes and at night I saw him tuck the bundles under his mattress at the head of the bed. I had been working for

Arun for nearly a fortnight and, apart from the shopping hadn't done much to exploit him. I had every opportunity for doing so. I had a key to the front door which meant I had access to the room whenever Arun was out. He was the most trusting person I had ever met. And that was why I couldn't make up my mind to rob him. It's easy to rob a greedy man because he deserves to be robbed. It's easy to rob a rich man because he can afford to be robbed. But it's difficult to rob a poor man, even one who really doesn't care if he's robbed. A rich man or a greedy man or a careful man wouldn't keep his money under a pillow or mattress. He'd lock it up in a safe place. Arun had put his money where it would be child's play for me to remove it without his knowledge. It's time I did some real work, I told myself. I'm getting out of practice .... If I don't take the money, he'll only waste it on his friends .... He doesn't even pay me ....

Arun was asleep. Moonlight came in from the veranda and fell across the bed. I sat up on the floor, my blanket wrapped round me, considering the situation. There was quite a lot of money in that wad and if I took it I would have to leave town—I might make the 10.30 express to Amritsar ....

Slipping out of the blanket, I crept on all four through the door and up to the bed and peeped at Arun. He was sleeping peacefully with a soft and easy breathing. His face was clear and unlined. Even I had more markings on my face, though mine were mostly scars.

My hand took on an identity of its own as it slid around under the mattress, the fingers searching for the notes. They found them and I drew them out without a crackle.

Arun sighed in his sleep and turned on his side, towards me. My free hand was resting on the bed and his hair touched my fingers. I was frightened when his hair touched my fingers, and crawled quickly and quietly out of the room. When I was in the street I began to run. I ran down the bazaar road to the station. The shops were all closed but a few lights were on in the upper windows. I had the notes at my waist, held there by the string of my pyjamas. I felt I had to stop and count the notes though I knew it might make me late for the train. It was already 10.20 by the clock tower. I slowed down to a walk and my fingers flicked through the notes. There were about a hundred rupees in fives. A good haul. I could live like a prince for a month or two.

When I reached the station I did not stop at the ticket office (I had never bought a ticket in my life) but dashed straight onto the platform.

The Amritsar Express was just moving out. It was moving slowly enough for me to be able to jump on the footboard of one of the carriages but I hesitated for some urgent, unexplainable reason. I hesitated long enough for the train to leave without me.

When it had gone and the noise and busy confusion of the platform had subsided, I found myself standing alone on the deserted platform. The knowledge that I had a hundred stolen rupees in my pyjamas only increased my feeling of isolation and loneliness. I had no idea where to spend the night. I had never kept any friends because sometimes friends can be one's undoing. I didn't want to make myself conspicuous by staying at a hotel. And the only person I knew really well in town was the person I had robbed!

Leaving the station, I walked slowly through the bazaar keeping to dark, deserted alleys. I kept thinking of Arun. He would still be asleep, blissfully unaware of his loss.

I have made a study of men's faces when they have lost something of material value. The greedy man shows panic, the rich man shows anger, the poor man shows fear. But I knew that neither panic nor anger nor fear would show on Arun's face when he discovered the theft; only a terrible sadness not for the loss of the money but for my having betrayed his trust. I found myself on the maidan and sat down on a bench with my feet tucked up under my haunches. The night was a little cold and I regretted not having brought Arun's blanket along. A light drizzle added to my discomfort. Soon it was raining heavily. My shirt and pyjamas stuck to my skin and a cold wind brought the rain whipping across my face. I told myself that sleeping on a bench was something I should have been used to by now but the veranda had softened me.

I walked back to the bazaar and sat down on the steps of a closed shop. A few vagrants lay beside me, rolled up tight in thin blankets. The clock showed midnight. I felt for the notes. They were still with me but had lost their crispness and were damp with rainwater. Arun's money. In the morning he would probably have given me a rupee to go to the pictures but now I had it all. No more cooking his meals, running to the bazaar, or learning to write whole sentences. Whole sentences ....

They were something I had forgotten in the excitement of a hundred rupees. Whole sentences, I knew, could one day bring me more than a hundred rupees. It was a simple matter to steal (and sometimes just as simple to be caught)

but to be a really big man, a wise and successful man, that was something. I should go back to Arun, I told myself, if only to learn how to write.

Perhaps it was also concern for Arun that drew me back. A sense of sympathy is one of my weaknesses, and through hesitation over a theft I had often been caught. A successful thief must be pitiless. I was fond of Arun. My affection for him, my sense of sympathy, but most of all my desire to write whole sentences, drew me back to the room.

I hurried back to the room extremely nervous, for it is easier to steal something than to return it undetected. If I was caught beside the bed now, with the money in my hand, or with my hand under the mattress, there could be only one explanation: that I was actually stealing. If Arun woke up I would be lost.

I opened the door clumsily and stood in the doorway in clouded moonlight. Gradually my eyes became accustomed to the darkness of the room. Arun was still asleep. I went on all fours again and crept noiselessly to the head of the bed. My hand came up with the notes. I felt his breath on my fingers. I was fascinated by his tranquil features and easy breathing and remained motionless for a minute. Then my hand explored the mattress, found the edge, slipped under it with the notes.

I awoke late next morning to find that Arun had already made the tea. I found it difficult to face him in the harsh light of day. His hand was stretched out towards me. There was a five-rupee note between his fingers. My heart sank. "I made some money yesterday" he said. "Now you'll get paid regularly." My spirit rose as rapidly as it had fallen. I congratulated myself on having returned the money. But when I took the note, I realized that he knew everything. The note was still wet from last night's rain.

"Today I'll teach you to write a little more than your name" he said.

He knew but neither his lips nor his eyes said anything about their knowing.

I smiled at Arun in my most appealing way. And the smile came by itself, without my knowing it.

# **Celebrate Internet not abuse it**

By SHASHI THAROOR

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As a writer and a politician I am conscious how fortunate we are to live in a country that guarantees us the right of freedom of expression.

I think of freedom of expression as a fundamental human right - one that helps to guarantee all my other rights. Indeed Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that people have the right to 'seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.'

Writers in some developing countries have to contend with the argument that development and freedom of expression are incompatible - that the media, for instance, must serve the ends of development as defined by the government, or operate only within the boundaries of what the social and religious authorities define as permissible.

## **Free speech**

The developing world is full of writers, artists and journalists who have to function in societies which do not grant them this freedom. For them freedom of expression is the oxygen of their own survival, and that of their society, but they are stifled.

In countries where truth is what the government or the religious establishment says is true, freedom of expression is essential to depict alternative truths which the society needs to accommodate in order to survive.

And yet it is all too often absent, because in many countries, there are those who question the value of freedom of speech in their societies; those who argue that it threatens stability and endangers progress; those who still consider freedom of speech a Western import, an imposition from abroad and not the indigenous expression of every people's demand for freedom.

What has always struck me about this argument is that it is never made by the people, but by governments; never by the powerless but by the powerful; never by the voiceless, but by those whose voices are all that can be heard. Let us put this argument once and for all to the only test that matters: the choice of every people, to know more or know less, to be heard or be silenced, to stand up or kneel down.

Only freedom of expression will allow the world's oppressed and underprivileged a way out of the darkness that shrouds their voices, and their hopes.

Media freedom is a vital aspect of the freedom of expression. A free press often marks the difference between a society that is able to protect itself from abuses of human

rights and one that falls victim to oppression and injustice. The media must always use its freedom to raise the awkward question, to probe beyond the evident reality, to awaken the dormant consciousness, and therefore, yes, sometimes to subvert the established order.

Freedom of the press is ultimately the best guarantee of liberty, of change and of progress. It is the mortar that binds together the bricks of freedom – and it is also the open window embedded in those bricks, which would, in Mahatma Gandhi's famous metaphor, allow the winds of the world to blow freely through the house. As Indians we know that there is no development without democracy, and no democracy without freedom of speech. There is widespread recognition today that restraints on the flow of information directly undermine development and progress in the 21st century. In this era of globalisation, global interdependence means that those who receive and disseminate information have an edge over those who curtail it.

The Internet has been giving people more opportunities to exercise freedom of expression than ever before. In the age of the Internet, there can be little argument that information and freedom go together. The information revolution is inconceivable without political democracy -and vice versa. Already, the spread of information has had a direct impact on the degree of accountability and transparency of governments around the world.

The Internet has been made possible by advances in technology that have also transformed the traditional media.

## **Technology**

Technology that is lighter to carry, simpler to use, and comes at a fraction of the cost, has already changed television reporting.

Not so long ago, a ton of equipment was flown into a trouble-spot; a satellite dish the size of a house was set up; a story was born.

And where that satellite dish was, the journalists stayed. So that's where the story stayed, until the dish moved on.

But now, digital technology is producing cameras a tenth the cost of yesterday's, simple enough to be operated by a non-technician, the reporter himself, with pictures that can be sent down the telephone line.

The simpler to use, more affordable technology has truly democratised television news. Smaller, less well-financed newsgathering organisations and independent operations in developing countries, have all benefited from this revolution.



## **Possibilities**

But so has the story in itself; because no story will be too remote to reach, too hard to get to, too expensive to cover, or too difficult to transmit. One reporter and a telephone line will often be enough.

This kind of technological innovation that has transformed TV has also made the Internet a vital source of news and analysis without any of the limitations of reach that television has.

The new hallmarks of freedom of expression today are the ability to receive, download and send information through electronic networks, and the capacity to share information - whether in a newspaper, on a TV screen, or an on-line web site - without censorship or restrictions.

The information society of the 21st century can thrive only if citizens are provided with full information to allow democratic participation at all levels in determining their destiny.

New digital technology offers great possibilities for enhancing traditional media and combining them with new media.

Technology has become the biggest asset for those who seek to promote and protect freedom of expression around the world.

That is why we must support and celebrate the Internet and strive to ensure that the freedoms it offers are neither abused nor eroded.

There is a thin line between the risk of abuse and the threat of censorship, but in a democracy, there is only one side of that line we can stand on.

## Telephonic Monsoon Magic.

By Revathi Seshadri

Swati woke up with a start. Cursed the telephone. Again, the recurring dream ended before she heard what Sumeet was trying to say.

It was Nina, inviting her to a get-together in the evening so that Swati could be introduced to her friends.

The incessant rains appeared to have affected the telephone lines. She could barely hear Nina.

Nina mentioned the venue and was about to give directions.

“I have seen the name plate. I would reach there”, Said Swati cutting her short.

When her entire family perished in the earth -quake, Swati could not bear to live in that city anymore. She took a transfer to this small coastal town and arrived here ten days ago. But the black mood, depression and desire to end her misery once for all, persisted. The suicide attempts she tried failed both the times.

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‘Lily’s place’ – Really a romantic name thought Swati as she pressed the bell

She introduced herself to the pleasant middle-aged plump woman who opened the door.

“Welcome, I am Lily Stokes. You are the first one to arrive. “

People trickled in and at seven O’ clock, Lily said “Meditation time.”

Swati was confused and looked around for the absent Nina.

Ten minutes passed in absolute silence and the séance began. Suddenly Lily called out. “Swati, a spirit person named Sumeet wants to speak to you.”

Her husband Sumeet’s booming voice came from Lilly’s throat.

“Swati, we are fine. People who commit suicide go to a different plane than ours and we never get to meet them. I have been trying to get the message on to you through dreams which invariably got abruptly terminated for some reason or the other. May be that is not the route I was expected to take. Live your life full and join us only at the right time. Do not try to cut short life”.

Swati left the place after thanking Lily. She had at last found her peace.

Next morning, Nina called up to ask why she was not at 'Willy's place. She sounded quite annoyed.

Swati explained that she heard it as 'Lily's place', thanks to the faulty telephone line brought about by the monsoon rains.

'That mumbo jumbo place? It is a closed circuit. They never admit strangers. How did you get in?'

"My husband saw to it that they did", Swati said softly as she hung up on the thoroughly confused Nina.

After a long time, Swati felt light hearted enough to hum a tune that incidentally glorified the onset of monsoon!