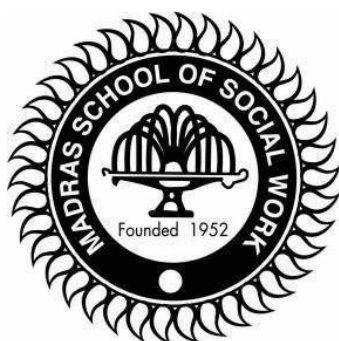


**MADRAS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK (AUTONOMOUS)**  
***32, Casa Major Road, Egmore, Chennai – 600 008***

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



## **Undergraduate Program**

**Part II – English**

**Semester III**

***(Effective from the Academic Year 2017 –18 onwards)***  
**(Batch 2017-2020)**

## SEMESTER – III

### 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. THE Journey of the MAGI BY T. S. Eliot

<https://allpoetry.com/The-Journey-Of-The-Magi>

2. Home Burial By Robert Frost

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/53086>

3. Neighbours by Rudyard Kipling

<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/k/kipling/rudyard/limits/chapter23.html>

4. Telephone Conversation by [Wole Soyinka](#)

<https://allpoetry.com/poem/10379451-Telephone-Conversation-by-Wole-Soyinka>

Unit -2 Prose (15 HOURS)

1. The Two Brothers By Leo Tolstoy

<https://education.ucf.edu/litsymposium/Resources2012/Smith%20&%20Lee/THE%20TWO%20BROTHERS%20text%20by%20Leo%20Tolstoy.pdf>

2. Letter to my Daughter By Maya Angelou

[https://www.goddessshift.com/Maya\\_Angelou.pdf](https://www.goddessshift.com/Maya_Angelou.pdf)

3. George Saunders's Advice to Graduates

[https://6thfloor.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/31/george-saunderss-advice-to-graduates/?\\_r=0](https://6thfloor.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/31/george-saunderss-advice-to-graduates/?_r=0)

4. The Circus by Dan Clark

<http://www.janice142.com/JoyPage/Circus.htm>

5. Arthur Miller's Writ Against the Death Penalty

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/28/books/review/luck-and-the-death-penalty.htm>

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Unit- 3 Works of Nobel Laureates (10 HOURS)

1. "The Pomegranate," by Kawabata Yasunari

[http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan\\_1950\\_kawabata.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1950_kawabata.htm)

2. HIS CHOSEN CALLING by V.S. NAIPAUL

[http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/j\\_patterson/Documents/English%2012/46629700-Miguel-Street-V-S-Naipaul.pdf](http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/j_patterson/Documents/English%2012/46629700-Miguel-Street-V-S-Naipaul.pdf)

3. Abortion By Eugene O' Neill

<http://www.eoneill.com/texts/abortion/contents.htm>

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Unit- 4 Short Stories (10 HOURS)

1. Marriage is a Private Affair By Chinua Achebe

<http://www.worthschools.net/userfiles/542/Classes/16165/Marriage%20is%20a%20Private%20Affair%20PDF.pdf>

2. The Medicine Bag By Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

<http://topherdavis.com/eng2d-short-stories.pdf>

3. Thank You Ma'am By Langston Hughes

[http://photos.state.gov/libraries/hochiminh/646441/vantt/Thank%20You\\_%20Ma\\_am.pdf](http://photos.state.gov/libraries/hochiminh/646441/vantt/Thank%20You_%20Ma_am.pdf)

4. Paper By Catherin Lim

<https://d2ct263enury6r.cloudfront.net/ddUHYn9gC3vrnymABX5sWLywuVcAcbeEdspp>

1. While the Auto Waits By O. Henry

[http://www.10-minute-plays.com/comedies/while\\_the\\_auto\\_waits.html](http://www.10-minute-plays.com/comedies/while_the_auto_waits.html)

2. The Boor by Anton Chekhov

<http://www.theatrehistory.com/plays/boor.html>

3. Grey Matter By Jeanette D. Farr

[http://www.10-minute-plays.com/dramas/gray\\_matter.html](http://www.10-minute-plays.com/dramas/gray_matter.html)

### GRAMMAR - General English Component

1. Correct the error and rewrite the correct sentences.
2. Form sentences of your own from the given words/phrases.

### **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 .

Part B:

- Four questions out of Six questions (10 marks each).
- To include one compulsory General Comprehension question. The candidate is required to answer 5 questions of 2 marks each (no choice) based on the given passage. The passage will not be from the prescribed list of poems, prose, short stories, drama and writings of Nobel Laureates.

Part C:

- Two questions out of Three questions (20 marks each).
- To include one compulsory General Essay question on any common/ Current affairs topic.

**The Journey Of The Magi** By T. S. Eliot

A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter.'  
And the camels galled, sorefooted, refractory,  
Lying down in the melting snow.  
There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
and running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
And three trees on the low sky,  
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.

### **T S Eliot**

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on September 26, 1888, in St. Louis, Missouri, the seventh and last child of Henry Ware Eliot, a brick manufacturer, and Charlotte (Stearns) Eliot, who was active in social reform and was herself a not-untalented poet. Both parents were descended from families that had emigrated from England to Massachusetts in the seventeenth century. William Greenleaf Eliot, the poet's paternal grandfather, had, after his graduation from Harvard in the 1830s, moved to St. Louis, where he became a Unitarian minister, but the New England connection was closely maintained--especially, during Eliot's youth, through the family's summer home on the Atlantic coast

<https://allpoetry.com/The-Journey-Of-The-Magi>

### **Home Burial By Robert Frost**

He saw her from the bottom of the stairs  
Before she saw him. She was starting down,  
Looking back over her shoulder at some fear.  
She took a doubtful step and then undid it  
To raise herself and look again. He spoke  
Advancing toward her: 'What is it you see  
From up there always -- for I want to know.'

She turned and sank upon her skirts at that,  
And her face changed from terrified to dull.  
He said to gain time: 'What is it you see,'  
Mounting until she cowered under him.  
'I will find out now – you must tell me, dear.'  
She, in her place, refused him any help  
With the least stiffening of her neck and silence.  
She let him look, sure that he wouldn't see,  
Blind creature; and awhile he didn't see.  
But at last he murmured, 'Oh,' and again, 'Oh.'  
'What is it – what?' she said.

'Just that I see.'

'You don't,' she challenged. 'Tell me what it is.'  
'The wonder is I didn't see at once.  
I never noticed it from here before.  
I must be wonted to it – that's the reason.  
The little graveyard where my people are!  
So small the window frames the whole of it.  
Not so much larger than a bedroom, is it?  
There are three stones of slate and one of marble,  
Broad-shouldered little slabs there in the sunlight  
On the sidehill. We haven't to mind *those*.  
But I understand: it is not the stones,  
But the child's mound –'

'Don't, don't, don't, don't,' she cried.

She withdrew shrinking from beneath his arm

That rested on the banister, and slid downstairs;

And turned on him with such a daunting look,

He said twice over before he knew himself:

'Can't a man speak of his own child he's lost?'

'Not you! Oh, where's my hat? Oh, I don't need it!

I must get out of here. I must get air.

I don't know rightly whether any man can.'

'Amy! Don't go to someone else this time.

Listen to me. I won't come down the stairs.'

He sat and fixed his chin between his fists.

'There's something I should like to ask you, dear.'

'You don't know how to ask it.'

'Help me, then.'

Her fingers moved the latch for all reply.

'My words are nearly always an offense.

I don't know how to speak of anything

So as to please you. But I might be taught

I should suppose. I can't say I see how.

A man must partly give up being a man

With women-folk. We could have some arrangement

By which I'd bind myself to keep hands off

Anything special you're a-mind to name.





Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly  
And roll back down the mound beside the hole.  
I thought, Who is that man? I didn't know you.  
And I crept down the stairs and up the stairs  
To look again, and still your spade kept lifting.  
Then you came in. I heard your rumbling voice  
Out in the kitchen, and I don't know why,  
But I went near to see with my own eyes.  
You could sit there with the stains on your shoes  
Of the fresh earth from your own baby's grave  
And talk about your everyday concerns.  
You had stood the spade up against the wall  
Outside there in the entry, for I saw it.'  
'I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed.  
I'm cursed. God, if I don't believe I'm cursed.'

'I can repeat the very words you were saying:  
"Three foggy mornings and one rainy day  
Will rot the best birch fence a man can build."  
Think of it, talk like that at such a time!  
What had how long it takes a birch to rot  
To do with what was in the darkened parlor?  
You *couldn't* care! The nearest friends can go  
With anyone to death, comes so far short

They might as well not try to go at all.  
No, from the time when one is sick to death,  
One is alone, and he dies more alone.  
Friends make pretense of following to the grave,  
But before one is in it, their minds are turned  
And making the best of their way back to life  
And living people, and things they understand.  
But the world's evil. I won't have grief so  
If I can change it. Oh, I won't, I won't!  
'There, you have said it all and you feel better.  
You won't go now. You're crying. Close the door.  
The heart's gone out of it: why keep it up.  
Amy! There's someone coming down the road!  
'You – oh, you think the talk is all. I must go –  
Somewhere out of this house. How can I make you –'  
  
'If – you – do!' She was opening the door wider.  
'Where do you mean to go? First tell me that.  
I'll follow and bring you back by force. I *will!* –'

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/53086>

## **Neighbours** by Rudyard Kipling

THE MAN that is open of heart to his neighbour.  
And stops to consider his likes and dislikes.  
His blood shall be wholesome whatever his labour.  
His luck shall be with him whatever he strikes.  
The Splendour of Morning shall duly possess him.  
That he may not be sad at the falling of eve.  
And, when he has done with mere living – God bless him!  
A many shall sigh, and one Woman shall grieve! –

But he that is costive of soul toward his fellow.  
Through the ways, and the works, and the woes of this life.  
Him food shall not fatten, him drink shall not mellow;  
And his innards shall brew him perpetual strife.  
His eye shall be blind to God's Glory above him;  
His ear shall be deaf to Earth's Laughter around;  
His Friends and his Club and his Dog shall not love him;  
And his Widow shall skip when he goes under ground!

<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/k/kipling/rudyard/limits/chapter23.html>

## **Telephone Conversation** By Wole Soyinka

The price seemed reasonable, location  
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived  
Off premises. Nothing remained  
But self-confession. "Madam", I warned,  
"I hate a wasted journey - I am African."  
Silence. Silenced transmission of pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,  
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled  
Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was, foully.  
"HOW DARK?"...I had not misheard...."ARE YOU LIGHT OR VERY DARK?" Button B.  
Button A. Stench  
Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.  
Red booth. Red pillar-box. Red double-tiered  
Omnibus squelching tar.  
It was real! Shamed

By ill-mannered silence, surrender  
Pushed dumbfoundment to beg simplification.  
Considerate she was, varying the emphasis-  
"ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT" Revelation came  
"You mean- like plain or milk chocolate?"  
Her accent was clinical, crushing in its light  
Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted  
I chose. "West African sepia" \_ and as afterthought.  
"Down in my passport." Silence for spectroscopic  
Flight of fancy, till truthfulness chaged her accent  
Hard on the mouthpiece "WHAT'S THAT?" conceding "DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT  
IS." "Like brunette."  
"THAT'S DARK, ISN'T IT?"  
"Not altogether.  
Facially, I am brunette, but madam you should see the rest of me. Palm of my hand,  
soles of my feet.  
Are a peroxide blonde. Friction, caused-  
Foolishly madam- by sitting down, has turned  
My bottom raven black- One moment madam! - sensing  
Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap  
About my ears- "Madam," I pleaded, "wouldn't you rather  
See for yourself?"

Wole Soyinka is a black Africa's foremost dramatist and one of the controversial writers of this generation. As playwright, actor, producer, poet, novelist and author of scathing satirical revues, Soyinka has been a champion of the responsibility of art and the artist to society. This has made him a bitter critic of society and the establishment and has involved him in some activist episodes which cost him his freedom. He took degrees in English, at the Universities of Ibadan and Leeds and early in his life he became interested in poetry and and the theatre. His plays owe some of their theatricality to the experience he gained while working in some English theat

<https://allpoetry.com/poem/10379451-Telephone-Conversation-by-Wole-Soyinka>

## THE TWO BROTHERS

By Leo Tolstoy

Two brothers set out on a journey together. At noon they lay down in a forest to rest. When they woke up they saw a stone lying next to them. There was something written on the stone, and they tried to make out what it was.

"Whoever finds this stone," they read, "let him go straight into the forest at sunrise. In the forest a river will appear; let him swim across the river to the other side. There he will find a she - bear and her cubs. Let him take the cubs from her and run up the mountain with them, without once looking back. On the top of the mountain he will see a house, and in that house he will find happiness."

When they had read what was written on the stone, the younger brother said:

"Let us go together. We can swim across the river, carry off the bear cubs, take them to the house on the mountain, and together find happiness.

"I am not going into the forest after bear cubs," said the elder brother, "and I advise you not to go. In the first place, no one can know whether what is written on this stone is the truth -- perhaps it was written in jest. It is even possible that we have not read it correctly. In the second place, even if what is written here is the truth -- suppose we go into the forest and night comes, and we cannot find the river. We shall be lost. And if we do find the river, how are we going to swim across it? It may be broad and swift. In the third place, even if we swim across the river, do you think it is an easy thing to take her cubs away from the she - bear? She will seize us, and, instead of finding happiness, we shall perish, and all for nothing. In the fourth place, even if we succeeded in carrying off the bear cubs, we could not run up a mountain without stopping to rest.

And, most important of all, the stone does not tell us what kind of happiness we should find in that house. it may be that the happiness awaiting us there is not at all the sort of happiness we would want."

"In my opinion," said the younger brother, "you are wrong. What is written on the stone could not have been put there without reason. And it is all perfectly clear. In the first place, no harm will come to us if we try. In the second place, if we do not go, someone else will read the inscription on the stone and find happiness, and we shall have lost it all. In the third place, if you do not make an effort and try hard, nothing in the world

will succeed. In the fourth place, I should not want it thought that I was afraid of anything."

The elder brother answered him by saying, "The proverb says: 'In seeking great happiness small pleasures may be lost.' And also: 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'"

The younger brother replied, "I have heard: 'He who is afraid of the leaves must not go into the forest.' And also: 'Beneath a stone no water flows.'

The younger brother set off, and the elder remained behind.

No sooner had the younger brother gone into the forest, than he found the river, swam across it, and there on the other side was the she - bear, fast asleep. He took her cubs, and ran up the mountain without looking back. When he reached the top of the mountain the people came out to meet him with a carriage to take him into the city, where they made him their king.

He ruled for five years. In the sixth year, another king, who was stronger than he, waged war against him. The city was conquered, and he was driven out.

Again the younger brother became a wanderer, and he arrived one day at the house of the elder brother. The elder brother was living in a village and had grown neither rich nor poor. The two brothers rejoiced at seeing each other, and at once began telling of all that had happened to them.

"You see, said the elder brother, "I was right. Here I have lived quietly and well, while you, though you may have been a king, have seen a great deal of trouble,"

"I do not regret having gone into the forest and up the mountain,' replied the younger brother. "I may have nothing now, but I shall always have something to remember, while you have no memories at all."

## Letter to My Daughter

By Maya Angelou

Dear Daughter,

This letter has taken an extraordinary time getting itself together.

I have all along known that I wanted to tell you directly of some lessons I have learned and under what conditions I have learned them.

My life has been long, and believing that life loves the liver of it, I have dared to try many things, sometimes trembling, but daring, still.

There have been people in my life who meant me well, taught me valuable lessons, and others who have meant me ill, and have given me ample notification that my world is not meant to be all peaches and cream.

I have made many mistakes and no doubt will make more before I die. When I have seen pain, when I have found that my ineptness has caused displeasure, I have learned to accept my responsibility and to forgive myself first, then to apologize to anyone injured by my misreckoning. Since I cannot un-live history, and repentance is all I can offer God, I have hopes that my sincere apologies were accepted.

You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them. Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud. Do not complain. Make every effort to change things you do not like. If you cannot make a change, change the way you have been thinking. You might find a new solution.

Never whine. Whining lets a brute know that a victim is in the neighborhood.

Be certain that you do not die without having done something wonderful for humanity.

I gave birth to one child, a son, but I have thousands of daughters.

You are Black and White, Jewish and Muslim, Asian, Spanish-speaking, Native American and Aleut. You are fat and thin and pretty and plain, gay and straight, educated and unlettered, and I am speaking to you all. Here is my offering to you.

\* \* \* \* \*



## **Keep the Faith**

Many things continue to amaze me, even well into my seventh decade. I'm startled or at least taken aback when people walk up to me and without being questioned inform me that they are

Christians. My first response is the question "Already?"

It seems to me that becoming a Christian is a lifelong endeavor.

I believe that is also true for one wanting to become a Buddhist, or a Muslim, a Jew, Jainist, or a Taoist. The persons striving to live their religious beliefs know that the idyllic condition cannot be arrived at and held on to eternally. It is in the search itself that one finds the ecstasy.

The Depression, which was so difficult for everyone to survive, was especially so for a single black woman in the Southern states tending her crippled adult son and raising two small grandchildren.

One of my earliest memories of my grandmother, who was called "Mamma," is a glimpse of that tall, cinnamon-colored woman with a deep, soft voice, standing thousands of feet up in the air with nothing visible beneath her.

Whenever she confronted a challenge, Mamma would clasp her hands behind her back, look up as if she could will herself into the heavens, and draw herself up to her full six-foot height.

She would tell her family in particular, and the world in general,

"I don't know how to find the things we need, but I will step out on the word of God. I am trying to be a Christian and I will just step out on the word of God." Immediately I could see her flung into space, moons at her feet and stars at her head, comets swirling around her shoulders. Naturally, since she was over six feet tall, and stood out on the word of God, she was a giant in heaven. It wasn't difficult for me to see Mamma as powerful, because she had the word of God beneath her feet. Thinking of my grandmother years later, I wrote a gospel song that has been sung rousinglly by the Mississippi Mass choir.

*"You said to lean on your arm*

*And I am leaning*

*You said to trust in your love*

*And I am trusting*

*You said to call on your name*

*And I am calling*

*I'm stepping out on your word."*

Whenever I began to question whether God exists, I looked up to the sky and surely there, right there, between the sun and moon, stands my grandmother, singing a long meter hymn, a song somewhere between a moan and a lullaby and I know faith is the evidence of things unseen.

And all I have to do is continue trying to be a Christian.

*Maya Angelou is a poet, writer, performer, teacher, director, and lifetime African American activist. Among her many published works are a five-volume autobiography, which began in 1970 with *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and the collections of verse *And Still I Rise* and *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Die*. In 1993, she wrote and read the poem *On the Pulse of Morning* at Bill Clinton's presidential inauguration, at his request. It was only the second time a poet had been asked to read at an inauguration, the first being Robert Frost at the inauguration of John F. Kennedy.*

[https://www.goddessshift.com/Maya\\_Angelou.pdf](https://www.goddessshift.com/Maya_Angelou.pdf)

## George Saunders's Advice to Graduates

**George Saunders delivered the convocation speech at Syracuse University for the class of 2013**

[https://6thfloor.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/31/george-saunderss-advice-to-graduates/?\\_r=0](https://6thfloor.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/31/george-saunderss-advice-to-graduates/?_r=0)

Down through the ages, a traditional form has evolved for this type of speech, which is: Some old fart, his best years behind him, who, over the course of his life, has made a series of dreadful mistakes (*that would be me*), gives heartfelt advice to a group of shining, energetic young people, with all of their best years ahead of them (*that would be you*).

And I intend to respect that tradition.

Now, one useful thing you can do with an old person, in addition to borrowing money from them, or asking them to do one of their old-time "dances," so you can watch, while laughing, is ask: "Looking back, what do you regret?" And they'll tell you. Sometimes, as you know, they'll tell you even if you haven't asked. Sometimes, even when you've specifically requested they *not* tell you, they'll tell you.

So: What do I regret? Being poor from time to time? Not really. Working terrible jobs, like "knuckle-puller in a slaughterhouse?" (And don't even ASK what that entails.) No. I don't regret that. Skinny-dipping in a river in Sumatra, a little buzzed, and looking up and seeing like 300 monkeys sitting on a pipeline, pooping down into the river, the river in which I was swimming, with my mouth open, naked? And getting deathly ill afterwards, and staying sick for the next seven months? Not so much. Do I regret the occasional humiliation? Like once, playing hockey in front of a big crowd, including this girl I really liked, I somehow managed, while falling and emitting this weird whooping noise, to score on my own goalie, while also sending my stick flying into the crowd, nearly hitting that girl? No. I don't even regret that.

But here's something I do regret:

In seventh grade, this new kid joined our class. In the interest of confidentiality, her Convocation Speech name will be "ELLEN." ELLEN was small, shy. She wore these blue cat's-eye glasses that, at the time, only old ladies wore. When nervous, which was pretty much always, she had a habit of taking a strand of hair into her mouth and chewing on it.

So she came to our school and our neighborhood, and was mostly ignored, occasionally teased (“Your hair taste good?” — that sort of thing). I could see this hurt her. I still remember the way she’d look after such an insult: eyes cast down, a little gut-kicked, as if, having just been reminded of her place in things, she was trying, as much as possible, to disappear. After awhile she’d drift away, hair-strand still in her mouth. At home, I imagined, after school, her mother would say, you know: “How was your day, sweetie?” and she’d say, “Oh, fine.” And her mother would say, “Making any friends?” and she’d go, “Sure, lots.”

Sometimes I’d see her hanging around alone in her front yard, as if afraid to leave it.

And then — they moved. That was it. No tragedy, no big final hazing.

One day she was there, next day she wasn’t.

End of story.

Now, why do I regret *that*? Why, forty-two years later, am I still thinking about it? Relative to most of the other kids, I was actually pretty *nice* to her. I never said an unkind word to her. In fact, I sometimes even (mildly) defended her.

But still. It bothers me.

So here’s something I know to be true, although it’s a little corny, and I don’t quite know what to do with it:

What I regret most in my life are *failures of kindness*.

Those moments when another human being was there, in front of me, suffering, and I responded . . . sensibly. Reservedly. Mildly.

Or, to look at it from the other end of the telescope: Who, in *your* life, do you remember most fondly, with the most undeniable feelings of warmth?

Those who were kindest to you, I bet.

It’s a little facile, maybe, and certainly hard to implement, but I’d say, as a goal in life, you could do worse than: *Try to be kinder*.

Now, the million-dollar question: What’s our problem? Why aren’t we kinder?

Here's what I think:

Each of us is born with a series of built-in confusions that are probably somehow Darwinian. These are: (1) we're central to the universe (that is, our personal story is the main and most interesting story, the *only* story, really); (2) we're separate from the universe (there's US and then, out there, all that other junk – dogs and swing-sets, and the State of Nebraska and low-hanging clouds and, you know, other people), and (3) we're permanent (death is real, o.k., sure – for you, but not for me).

Now, we don't *really* believe these things – intellectually we know better – but we believe them viscerally, and live by them, and they cause us to prioritize our own needs over the needs of others, even though what we really want, in our hearts, is to be less selfish, more aware of what's actually happening in the present moment, more open, and more loving.

So, the second million-dollar question: How might we DO this? How might we become more loving, more open, less selfish, more present, less delusional, etc., etc?

Well, yes, good question.

Unfortunately, I only have three minutes left.

So let me just say this. There *are* ways. You already know that because, in your life, there have been High Kindness periods and Low Kindness periods, and you know what inclined you toward the former and away from the latter. Education is good; immersing ourselves in a work of art: good; prayer is good; meditation's good; a frank talk with a dear friend; establishing ourselves in some kind of spiritual tradition – recognizing that there have been countless really smart people before us who have asked these same questions and left behind answers for us.

Because kindness, it turns out, is *hard* – it starts out all rainbows and puppy dogs, and expands to include . . . well, *everything*.

One thing in our favor: some of this “becoming kinder” happens naturally, with age. It might be a simple matter of attrition: as we get older, we come to see how useless it is to be selfish – how illogical, really. We come to love other people and are thereby counter-instructed in our own centrality. We get our butts kicked by real life, and people come to our defense, and help us, and we learn that we're not separate, and don't want to be. We see people near and dear to us dropping away, and are gradually

convinced that maybe we too will drop away (someday, a long time from now). Most people, as they age, become less selfish and more loving. I think this is true. The great Syracuse poet, Hayden Carruth, said, in a poem written near the end of his life, that he was “mostly Love, now.”

And so, a prediction, and my heartfelt wish for you: as you get older, your self will diminish and you will grow in love. YOU will gradually be replaced by LOVE. If you have kids, that will be a huge moment in your process of self-diminishment. You really won't care what happens to YOU, as long as they benefit. That's one reason your parents are so proud and happy today. One of their fondest dreams has come true: you have accomplished something difficult and tangible that has enlarged you as a person and will make your life better, from here on in, forever.

Congratulations, by the way.

When young, we're anxious — understandably — to find out if we've got what it takes. Can we succeed? Can we build a viable life for ourselves? But you — in particular you, of this generation — may have noticed a certain cyclical quality to ambition. You do well in high-school, in hopes of getting into a good college, so you can do well in the good college, in the hopes of getting a good job, so you can do well in the good job so you can . . .

And this is actually O.K. If we're going to become kinder, that process has to include taking ourselves seriously — as doers, as accomplisners, as dreamers. We *have* to do that, to be our best selves.

Still, accomplishment is unreliable. “Succeeding,” whatever that might mean to you, is hard, and the need to do so constantly renews itself (success is like a mountain that keeps growing ahead of you as you hike it), and there's the very real danger that “succeeding” will take up your whole life, while the big questions go untended.

So, quick, end-of-speech advice: Since, according to me, your life is going to be a gradual process of becoming kinder and more loving: Hurry up. Speed it along. Start right now. There's a confusion in each of us, a sickness, really: *selfishness*. But there's also a cure. So be a good and proactive and even somewhat desperate patient on your own behalf — seek out the most efficacious anti-selfishness medicines, energetically, for the rest of your life.

Do all the other things, the ambitious things – travel, get rich, get famous, innovate, lead, fall in love, make and lose fortunes, swim naked in wild jungle rivers (after first having it tested for monkey poop) – but as you do, to the extent that you can, *err in the direction of kindness*. Do those things that incline you toward the big questions, and avoid the things that would reduce you and make you trivial. That luminous part of you that exists beyond personality – your soul, if you will – is as bright and shining as any that has ever been. Bright as Shakespeare’s, bright as Gandhi’s, bright as Mother Teresa’s. Clear away everything that keeps you separate from this secret luminous place. Believe it exists, come to know it better, nurture it, share its fruits tirelessly.

And someday, in 80 years, when you’re 100, and I’m 134, and we’re both so kind and loving we’re nearly unbearable, drop me a line, let me know how your life has been. I hope you will say: It has been *so* wonderful.

Congratulations, Class of 2013.

I wish you great happiness, all the luck in the world, and a beautiful summer.

**Correction: August 9, 2013**

An earlier version of this post misspelled Mother Teresa's name as Theresa.

## **The Circus**

by Dan Clark

Once when I was a teenager, my father and I were standing in line to buy tickets for the circus. Finally, there was only one family between us and the ticket counter. This family made a big impression on me. There were eight children, all probably under the age of 12. You could tell they didn't have a lot of money. Their clothes were not expensive, but they were clean. The children were well-behaved, all of them standing in line, two-by-two behind their parents, holding hands. They were excitedly jabbering about the clowns, elephants and other acts they would see that night. One could sense they had never been to the circus before. It promised to be a highlight of their young lives.

The father and mother were at the head of the pack standing proud as could be. The mother was holding her husband's hand, looking up at him as if to say, "You're my knight in shining armor." He was smiling and basking in pride, looking at her as if to reply, "You got that right." The ticket lady asked the father how many tickets he wanted. He proudly responded, "Please let me buy eight children's tickets and two adult tickets so I can take my family to the circus."

The ticket lady quoted the price.

The man's wife let go of his hand, her head dropped, the man's lip began to quiver. The father leaned a little closer and asked, "How much did you say?"

The ticket lady again quoted the price.

The man didn't have enough money.

How was he supposed to turn and tell his eight kids that he didn't have enough money to take them to the circus?

Seeing what was going on, my dad put his hand into his pocket, pulled out a \$20 bill and dropped it on the ground. (We were not wealthy in any sense of the word!) My father reached down, picked up the bill, tapped the man on the shoulder and said, "Excuse me, sir, this fell out of your pocket."

The man knew what was going on. He wasn't begging for a handout but certainly appreciated the help in a desperate, heartbreaking, embarrassing situation. He looked straight into my dad's eyes, took my dad's hand in both of his, squeezed tightly onto the



\$20 bill, and with his lip quivering and a tear streaming down his cheek, he replied, "Thank you, thank you, sir. This really means a lot to me and my family."

My father and I went back to our car and drove home. We didn't go to the circus that night, but we didn't go without.

<http://www.janice142.com/JoyPage/Circus.htm>

## **Arthur Miller's Writ Against the Death Penalty**

*In 2002, the playwright Arthur Miller wrote the brief essay below to help the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern's law school in its campaign to abolish the death penalty in Illinois. In it, Miller, a longtime opponent of the death penalty, described the case of Peter Reilly, a teenager who was convicted in 1974 of brutally killing his mother.*

*Miller's essay advances a clear argument – but it is also memorable for its simple storytelling and the playwright's sensitivity to the strange sequence of events that helped Peter Reilly go free.*

It is a small town so everybody knew the boy. He was approaching 18 but he was slight, blond and soft-spoken so he was referred to as a boy. His mildness made it hard for many to believe that he had butchered his mother even after the State Police announced that he had made a confession. In fact, the longer his trial went on, the fewer the folks who felt convinced of his guilt.

Still, strange things do happen and he was convicted and was actually in a car on his way to the State Penitentiary when a group of residents raised enough money – some even mortgaging their homes – to lodge an appeal, and he was returned to the local jail. Basically a conservative community, many people there had rather unwillingly come to believe that the confession had somehow been forced out of him by the police.

At the hearing to decide whether to give him a new trial, things did not look good; the second judge seemed a fair and sympathetic listener but the defense, now under a new lawyer, was required to produce new evidence, not easy to get hold of. But several days into the hearing the state's attorney who had gotten the boy convicted dropped dead on a golf course and a substitute prosecutor immediately took his place and began studying his papers on the case.

In the files the substitute discovered an affidavit from a witness who swore that he and his wife had seen the boy in another part of town at the very moment his mother was being attacked and killed. This affidavit had been withheld from evidence, never introduced into the original trial despite the witness being a policeman who had known the boy and had not the slightest doubt that he had recognized him. Introduced into the hearing the very next morning, the affidavit blew the state's case out of the water and the boy was freed.

If the state of Connecticut had had a death penalty, the boy may well have been executed. The boy's mother had been nearly eviscerated, savagely mauled, and feelings of disgust and anger were aroused. Indeed, it was only the adventitious death of the prosecutor that saved the boy from a long sentence in a penitentiary that would probably have destroyed him, gentle and mild as he was. Connecticut is not normally considered a benighted state but one with a very high income level, and a large proportion of educated people. Yet this travesty happened there.

Any honest supporter of the death penalty simply cannot avoid facing the high probability of mistaken verdicts, of which there are indeed many in this country. The nation's conscience forbids the state to kill innocent people. The death penalty makes the presumption that there are never going to be corrupt, ambitious, cowardly prosecutors and police who, afraid to admit they were wrong in arresting a suspect, go down to the end insisting on his guilt; that there are never honest mistakes in judgment, never any visual misidentifications, but that in each and every prosecution the guilty verdict is invariably deserved.

The boy, Peter Reilly, regained his freedom in Litchfield County because a prosecutor died at the propitious time and because his neighbors believed in him, and outsiders were moved to come to his aid. The life of the innocent cannot be allowed to depend on that much luck nor the states dishonored by pretensions of infallibility in absolutely every capital case that comes before its all but overwhelmed courts.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/28/books/review/luck-and-the-death-penalty.html>

## The Pomegranate

by Kawabata Yasunari

*Kawabata Yasunari (1889-1972) was the first Japanese writer to win the Nobel Prize in literature. It was awarded in 1968, and coincided with the centennial celebration of the Meiji Restoration.*

*Japanese authors of the modern period have been well aware of both their own long, rich literary tradition and new ideas about content, form, and style available from the West. Kawabata was no exception; his work has been influenced by both traditions, and is widely read in the West as well as in Japan.*

*Kawabata is best known in the United States for novels such as *Snow Country*, *A Thousand Cranes*, and *The Sound of the Mountain*, but he also wrote many very short stories – a form he called *tanagokoro no shôsetsu* ("palm-of-the-hand stories"). These short narratives are less concerned with plot, or story line, than with depicting momentary experiences and feelings that have wider meanings.*

*As you read the following story, written in 1945 just at the end of World War II, try to think about what each little incident means to the main character, Kimiko.*

### "The Pomegranate"

In the high wind that night the pomegranate tree was stripped of its leaves.

The leaves lay in a circle around the base.

Kimiko was startled to see it naked in the morning, and wondered at the flawlesseness of the circle. She would have expected the wind to disturb it.

There was a pomegranate, a very fine one, left behind in the tree.

"Just come and look at it," she called to her mother.

"I had forgotten." Her mother glanced up at the tree and went back to the kitchen.

It made Kimiko think of their loneliness. The pomegranate over the veranda too seemed lonely and forgotten.

Two weeks or so before, her seven-year-old nephew had come visiting, and had noticed the pomegranates immediately. He had scrambled up into the tree. Kimiko had felt that she was in the presence of life.

"There is a big one up above," she called from the veranda.

"But if I pick it I can't get back down."

It was true. To climb down with pomegranates in both hands would not be easy. Kimiko smiled. He was a dear.

Until he had come the house had forgotten the pomegranate. And until now they had forgotten it again.

Then the fruit had been hidden in the leaves. Now it stood clear against the sky.

There was strength in the fruit and in the circle of leaves at the base. Kimiko went and knocked it down with a bamboo pole.

It was so ripe that the seeds seemed to force it open. They glistened in the sunlight when she laid it on the veranda, and the sun seemed to go on through them.

She felt somehow apologetic.

Upstairs with her sewing at about ten, she heard Keikichi's voice. Though the door was unlocked, he seemed to have come around to the garden. There was urgency in his voice.

"Kimiko, Kimiko!" her mother called. "Keikichi is here."

Kimiko had let her needle come unthreaded. She pushed it back into the pincushion.

"Kimiko had been saying how she wanted to see you again before you leave." Keikichi was going to war. "But we could hardly go and see you without an invitation, and you didn't come. It was good of you to come today."

She asked him to stay for lunch, but he was in a hurry.

"Well, do at least have a pomegranate. We grew it ourselves." She called up to Kimiko again.

He greeted her with his eyes, as if it were more than he could do to wait for her to come down. She stopped on the stairs.

Something warm seemed to come into his eyes, and the pomegranate fell from his hand.

They looked at each other and smiled.

When she realized that she was smiling, she flushed. Keikichi got up from the veranda.

"Take care of yourself, Kimiko."

"And you."

He had already turned away and was saying goodbye to her.

Kimiko looked on at the garden gate after he had left.

"He was in such a hurry," said her mother. "And it's such a fine pomegranate."

He had left it on the veranda.

Apparently he had dropped it as that warm something came into his eyes and he was beginning to open it. He had not broken it completely in two. It lay with the seeds up.

Her mother took it to the kitchen and washed it, and handed it to Kimiko.

Kimiko frowned and pulled back, and then, flushing once more, took it in with some confusion.

Keikichi would seem to have taken a few seeds from the edge.

With her mother watching her, it would have been strange for Kimiko to refuse to eat. She bit nonchalantly into it. The sourness filled her mouth. She felt a kind of sad happiness, as if it were penetrating far down inside her.

Uninterested, her mother had stood up.

She went to a mirror and sat down. "Just look at my hair, will you. I said goodbye to Keikichi with this wild mop of hair."

Kimiko could hear the comb.

"When your father died," her mother said softly, "I was afraid to comb my hair. When I combed my hair I would forget what I was doing. When I came to myself it would be as if your father were waiting for me to finish."

Kimiko remembered her mother's habit of eating what her father had left on his plate.

She felt something pull at her, a happiness that made her want to weep.

Her mother had probably given her the pomegranate because of a reluctance to throw it away. Only because of that. It had become a habit not to throw things away.

Alone with her private happiness, Kimiko felt shy before her mother.

She thought that it had been a better farewell than Keikichi could have been aware of, and that she could wait any length of time for him to come back.

She looked toward her mother. The sun was falling on the paper doors beyond which she sat at her mirror.

She was somehow afraid to bite into the pomegranate on her knee.

Translated by Edward G. Seidensticker, in *Contemporary Japanese Literature*, edited by Howard Hibbett (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1977), 293-295. Reprinted by permission of the translator.

### Discussion Questions & Writing Exercise

1. Early in the story the solitary pomegranate in the tree "made Kimiko think of their loneliness." Why? Is there anything later in the story that tells why they — Kimiko and her mother — feel lonely?
2. What does the pomegranate symbolize in the story? Why do you think Kimiko "was somehow afraid to bite into" it? Is there any connection between that and her mother's recollection about combing her hair?
3. Remember that Keikichi was "going to war"; does anything else in the story indicate that it takes place during wartime?

Try to think of some small incident in your own life that was unimportant in itself, but made you think about more significant things. See if you can write a short "palm-of-the-hand" story about it.

## HIS CHOSEN CALLING

By V.S. NAIPAUL

After midnight there were two regular noises in the street. At about two o'clock you heard the sweepers; and then, just before dawn, the scavenging-carts came and you heard the men scraping off the rubbish the sweepers had gathered into heaps.

No boy in the street particularly wished to be a sweeper. But if you asked any boy what he would like to be, he would say, 'I going be a cart-driver.'

There was certainly a glamour to driving the blue carts. The men were aristocrats. They worked early in the morning and had the rest of the day free. And then they were always going on strike. They didn't strike for much. They struck for things like a cent more a day; they struck if someone was laid off. They struck when the war began; they struck when the war ended. They struck when India got independence. They struck when Gandhi died.

Eddoes, who was a driver, was admired by most of the boys. He said his father was the best cart-driver of his day, and he told us great stories of the old man's skill. Eddoes came from a low Hindu caste, and there was a lot of truth in what he said. His skill was a sort of family skill, passing from father to son.

One day I was sweeping the pavement in front of the house where I lived, and Eddoes came and wanted to take away the broom from me. I liked sweeping and I didn't want to give him the broom.

'Boy, what you know about sweeping?' Eddoes asked, laughing.

I said, 'What, it have so much to know?'

Eddoes said, 'This is my job, boy. I have experience. Wait until you big like me.'

I gave him the broom.

I was sad for a long time afterwards. It seemed that I would never never grow as big as Eddoes, never have that thing he called experience. I began to admire Eddoes more than ever; and more than ever I wanted to be a cart-driver.

But Elias was not that sort of boy.

When we who formed the Junior Miguel Street Club squatted on the pavement, talking, like Hat and

Bogart and the others, about things like life and cricket and football, I said to Elias, 'So you don't want to be a cart-driver? What you want to be then? A sweeper?'

Elias spat neatly into the gutter and looked down. He said very earnestly, 'I think I going be a doctor, you hear.'

If Boyee or Errol had said something like that, we would all have laughed. But we recognised that Elias was different, that Elias had brains.

We all felt sorry for Elias. His father George brutalised the boy with blows, but Elias never cried, never spoke a word against his father.

One day I was going to Chin's shop to buy three cents' worth of butter, and I asked Elias to come with me. I didn't see George about, and I thought it was safe.

We were just about two houses away when we saw George. Elias grew scared. George came up and said sharply, 'Where you going?' And at the same time he landed a powerful cuff on Elias's jaw.

George liked beating Elias. He used to tie him with rope, and then beat him with rope he had soaked in the gutters of his cow-pen. Elias didn't cry even then. And shortly after, I would see George laughing with Elias, and George used to say to me, 'I know what you thinking. You wondering how me and he get so friendly so quick.'

The more I disliked George, the more I liked Elias.

I was prepared to believe that he would become a doctor someday.

Errol said, 'I bet you when he come doctor and thing he go forget the rest of we. Eh, Elias?'

A small smile appeared on Elias's lips.

'Nah,' he said. 'I wouldn't be like that. I go give a lot of money and thing to you and Boyee and the rest of you fellows.' And Elias waved his small hands, and we thought we could see the Cadillac and the black bag and the tube-thing that Elias was going to have when he became a doctor.

Elias began going to the school at the other end of Miguel Street. It didn't really look like a school at all.



It looked just like any house to me, but there was a sign outside that said:

T

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H

OYT, I.A

. (London, External)

Passes in the Cambridge

School Certificate Guaranteed

The odd thing was that although George beat Elias at the slightest opportunity, he was very proud that his son was getting an education. 'The boy learning a hell of a lot, you know. He reading Spanish, French and Latin, and he writing Spanish, French and Latin.'

The year before his mother died, Elias sat for the Cambridge Senior School Certificate.

Titus Hoyt came down to our end of the street.

'That boy going pass with honours,' Titus Hoyt said. 'With honours.'

We saw Elias dressed in neat khaki trousers and white shirt, going to the examination room, and we looked at him with awe.

Errol said, 'Everything Elias write not remaining here, you know. Every word that boy write going to

England.'

It didn't sound true.

'What you think it is at all?' Errol said. 'Elias have brains, you know.'

Elias's mother died in January, and the results came out in March.

Elias hadn't passed.

Hat looked through the list in the

Guardian over and over again, looking for Elias's name, saying, 'You never know. People always making mistake, especially when it have so much names.'

Elias's name wasn't in the paper.

Boyee said, 'What else you expect? Who correct the papers? Englishman, not so? You expect them to give Elias a pass?'

Elias was with us, looking sad and not saying a word.

Hat said, 'Is a damn shame. If they know what hell the boy have to put up with, they woulda pass him quick quick.'

Titus Hoyt said, 'Don't worry. Rome wasn't built in a day. This year! This year, things going be much much better. We go show those Englishmen and them.'

Elias left us and he began living with Titus Hoyt. We saw next to nothing of him. He was working night and day.

One day in the following March, Titus Hoyt rode up to us and said, 'You hear what happen?'

'What happen?' Hat asked.

'The boy is a genius,' Titus Hoyt said.

'Which boy?' Errol asked.

'Elias.'

'What Elias do?'

'The boy gone and pass the Cambridge Senior School Certificate.'

Hat whistled. 'The Cambridge Senior School Certificate?'

Titus Hoyt smiled. 'That self. He get a third grade. His name going to be in the papers tomorrow. I always say it, and I saying it again now, this boy Elias have too much brains.'

Hat said later, 'Is too bad that Elias father dead. He was a good-for-nothing, but he wanted to see his son a educated man.'

Elias came that evening, and everybody, boys and men, gathered around him. They talked about everything but books, and Elias, too, was talking about things like pictures and girls and cricket. He was looking very solemn, too.

There was a pause once, and Hat said, 'What you going to do now, Elias? Look for work?'

Elias spat. 'Nah, I think I will write the exam again.'

I said, 'But why?'

'I want a second grade.'

We understood. He wanted to be a doctor.

Elias sat down on the pavement and said, 'Yes, boy. I think I going to take that exam again, and this

year I going to be so good that this Mr Cambridge go bawl when he read what I write for him.'

We were silent, in wonder.

'Is the English and litritcher that does beat me.'

In Elias's mouth litritcher was the most beautiful word I heard. It sounded like something to eat, something rich like chocolate.

Hat said, 'You mean you have to read a lot of poultry and thing?'

Elias nodded. We felt it wasn't fair, making a boy like Elias do litritcher and poultry.

Elias moved back into the pink house which had been empty since his father died. He was studying and working. He went back to Titus Hoyt's school, not as pupil, but as a teacher, and Titus Hoyt said he was giving him forty dollars a month.

Titus Hoyt added, 'He worth it, too. He is one of the brightest boys in Port of Spain.'

Now that Elias was back with us, we noticed him better. He was the cleanest boy in the street. He bathed twice a day and scrubbed his teeth twice a day. He did all this standing up at the tap in front of the house. He swept the house every morning before going to school. He was the opposite of his father. His father was short and fat and dirty. He was tall and thin and clean. His father drank and swore. He never drank and no one ever heard him use a bad word.

My mother used to say to me, 'Why you don't take after Elias? I really don't know what sort of son God give me, you hear.'

And whenever Hat or Edward beat Boyee and Errol, they always said, 'Why you beating we for? Not

everybody could be like Elias, you know.'

Hat used to say, 'And it ain't only that he got brains. The boy Elias have nice waystoo.' So I think I was a little glad when Elias sat the examination for the third time, and failed.

Hat said, 'You see how we catch these Englishmen and them. Nobody here can tell me that the boy didn't pass the exam, but you think they go want to give him a better grade? Ha!'

And everybody said, 'Is a real shame.'

And when Hat asked Elias, 'What you going to do now, boy?' Elias said, 'You know, I think I go take up a job. I think I go be a sanitary inspector.'

We saw him in khaki uniform and khaki topee, going from house to house with a little notebook.

'Yes,' Elias said. 'Sanitary inspector, that's what I going to be.'

Hat said, 'It have a lot of money in that, I think. I hear your father George uses to pay the sanitary inspector five dollars a month to keep his mouth shut. Let we say you get about ten or even eight people like that. That's – let me see ... ten fives is fifty, eight fives is forty. There, fifty, forty dollars straight. And mark you, that ain't counting your salary.'

Elias said, 'Is not the money I thinking about. I really like the work.'

It was easy to understand that.

Elias said, 'But it have a exam, you know.'

Hat said, 'But they don't send the papers to England for that?'

Elias said, 'Nah, but still, I fraid exams and things, you know. I ain't have any luck with them.'

Boyee said, 'But I thought you was thinking of taking up doctoring.'

Hat said, 'Boyee, I going to cut your little tail if you don't shut up.'

But Boyee didn't mean anything bad.

Elias said, 'I change my mind. I think I want to be a sanitary inspector. I really like the work.'

\* \* \*

For three years Elias sat the sanitary inspectors' examination, and he failed every time.

Elias began saying, 'But what the hell you expect in Trinidad? You got to bribe everybody if you want to get your toenail cut.'

Hat said, 'I meet a man from a boat the other day, and he tell me that the sanitary inspector exams in British Guiana much easier. You could go to

B.G. and take the exams there and come back and work here.'

Elias flew to B.G., wrote the exam, failed it, and flew back.

Hat said, 'I meet a man from Barbados. He tell me that the exams easier in Barbados. It easy, easy, he say.'

Elias flew to Barbados, wrote the exam, failed it, and flew back.

Hat said, 'I meet a man from Grenada the other day'

Elias said, 'Shut your arse up, before it have trouble between we in this street.'

A few years later I sat the Cambridge Senior School Certificate Examination myself, and Mr. Cambridge gave me a second grade. I applied for a job in the Customs, and it didn't cost me much to get it.

I got a khaki uniform with brass buttons, and a cap. Very much like the sanitary inspector's uniform.

Elias wanted to beat me up the first day I wore the uniform.

'What your mother do to get you that?' he shouted, and I was going for him when Eddoes put a stop to it.

Eddoes said, 'He just sad and jealous. He don't mean anything.'

For Elias had become one of the street aristocrats. He was driving the scavenging carts.

'No theory here,' Elias used to say. 'This is the practical. I really like the work.'

### Miguel Street

V. S. Naipaul was born in Trinidad in 1932. He went to England on a scholarship in 1950. After four years at Oxford he began to write, and since then he has followed no other profession. He is the author of more than twenty books of fiction and nonfiction and the recipient of numerous honors, including the Nobel

Prize in 2001, the Booker Prize in 1971, and a knighthood for services to literature in 1990. He lives in

Wiltshire, England.

[http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/j\\_patterson/Documents/English%2012/46629700-Miguel-Street-V-S-Naipaul.pdf](http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/j_patterson/Documents/English%2012/46629700-Miguel-Street-V-S-Naipaul.pdf)

# ABORTION

By Eugene O' Neill

## CHARACTERS—JACK TOWNSEND

JOHN TOWNSEND, *his father*

MRS. TOWNSEND, *his mother*

LUCY TOWNSEND, *his sister*

EVELYN SANDS, *his fiancée*

DONALD (BULL) HERRON, *his room-mate*

JOE MURRAY, *a machinist*

STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY

*The action takes place in the study of the suite of rooms occupied by Townsend and Herron on the ground floor of a dormitory in a large eastern university in the United States.*

Time – The Present.

SCENE – *The study of the suite of rooms occupied by Jack Townsend and Donald Herron on the ground floor of a dormitory in a large eastern university of the United States. The left wall is composed almost entirely of a large bow-window looking out on the campus, and forming a window seat which is piled high with bright colored cushions. In the middle of the far side, a door opening into a hallway of the dormitory. On either side of the door, leather covered divans with leather cushions. In the right corner to the rear, a writing desk with an electric drop-light hanging over it. In the middle of the right wall, a fireplace. In the extreme right foreground, a door opening into a bedroom. In the center of the room, a table with an electric reading-lamp wired from the chandelier above. Books, periodicals, pipes, cigarette boxes, ash-trays, etc., are also on the table. The walls of the room are hung with flags, class banners, framed photographs of baseball and football teams, college posters, etc. Two Morris chairs and several rockers are grouped about the table.*

*It is about eight o'clock in the evening of a warm day in June. At first the windows on the left are gray with the dim glow of the dying twilight but as the action progresses this slowly disappears.*

*A sound of voices comes from the hall. The door in the rear is opened and Mrs. Townsend and Lucy enter, escorted by Herron. Their figures can be vaguely made out in the dusk of the room.*

LUCY – *(feeling her way toward the table)* Do put on the lights, Bull! I know I'm going to break my neck in a minute. *(Mrs. Townsend remains standing by the doorway.)*

HERRON – *(cheerfully)* One minute, one minute! *(strikes his shin against the corner of the divan – wrathfully)* Oh – *(bites his tongue just in time)*

LUCY – *(with a gurgling laugh)* Say it! Say it!

HERRON – *(leaning over the divan and feeling on the wall for the electric switch – softly)* Oh darn!

LUCY – Hypocrite! That isn't what you were going to say.

HERRON – Oh gosh, then. *(finds the switch)* There! *(turns on all the lights except the drop-light)* Let there be light!

LUCY – *(She is a small, vivacious blond nineteen years old, gushing with enthusiasm over everything and everybody. She wears an immense bouquet of flowers at the waist of her dark blue dress and carries a flag.)* Don't stand there posing, Bull. *(flings herself into one of the Morris chairs)* You look much more like a God of darkness than one of light.

MRS. TOWNSEND – *(a sweet-faced, soft-spoken, gray-haired lady in her early fifties. She is dressed in dark gray. She turns to Lucy with smiling remonstrance.)* Lucy! *(to Herron who clumsily arranges a cushion at the back of a rocking chair for her)* Thank you, Donald. *(Herron winces at the "Donald.")*

LUCY – *(contemptuously)* Donald!

HERRON – *(chuckling – He is a huge, swarthy six-footer with a bull neck and an omnipresent grin, slow to anger and to understanding but – an All-American tackle. His immense frame is decked out in white flannels which make him look gigantic.)* I don't care much for the "Donald" myself.

LUCY – And I still claim, Mother, that Donald, alias Bull, resembles Pluto more than any other divinity. It is true, judging from the pictures I have seen, that Pluto was not as fat – *(as Herron slouches into a sitting position on the divan)* nor as clumsy, but –



HERRON – (*grinning*) What have I done today? What have I done? Didn't I purchase candy and beautiful flowers? And now I reap nothing but abuse. I appeal to you, Mrs. Townsend. She is breaking me on the wheel.

LUCY – Poor butterfly! (*convulsed with laughter*) Ha ha ha! Poor, delicate fragile butterfly!

HERRON – There you go again! (*appealingly*) You see, Mrs. Townsend? Every word of mine is turned to mockery. (*He sighs explosively.*)

MRS. TOWNSEND – (*smiling*) Never mind, Donald; you ought to hear the nice things she says behind your back. Lucy – (*indignantly*) Mother!

HERRON – I find it hard to believe.

LUCY – Mother is fibbing so as not to hurt your feelings. (*with a roguish smile*) I never, never in all my life said a good word about you. You don't deserve it.

MRS. TOWNSEND – Why, Lucy, what a thing to say! (*While she is speaking Joe Murray appears in the doorway to the rear. He is a slight, stoop-shouldered, narrow-chested young fellow of eighteen, with large, feverish, black eyes, thin lips, pasty complexion, and the sunken cheeks of a tuberculosis victim. He wears a shabby dark suit. He peers blinkingly around the room and knocks but they do not hear him.*)

LUCY – (*glancing toward the door and seeing him*) Someone to see you, Bull.

HERRON – (*turning to Murray*) Anything you want?

MURRAY – (*aggressively*) I wanta see Townsend, Jack Townsend.

HERRON – He's not here.

MURRAY – D'yuh know when he'll be in?

HERRON – Any minute; but I advise you not to wait. He won't have any time for you tonight. If you want to leave a message I'll give it to him.

MURRAY – (*truculently*) He'll find time for me all right.

HERRON – *(staring at him)* You think so? Suit yourself. *(pointedly)* You can wait for him outside. *(Murray's face pales with rage. He starts to say something then turns abruptly and disappears into the hallway.)*

HERRON – Pleasant little man!

LUCY – Don't you know who it was?

HERRON – Never saw him before; probably some fresh "townie" who thinks Jack's indebted to him because he recovered a stolen baseball bat or something, and wants to put the acid on him for a dollar or two. Jack's such a good-natured slob –

LUCY – *(with agile)* Listen to who is talking.

MRS. TOWNSEND – *(proudly)* Jack always has been so good-hearted.

HERRON – *(with a smile)* He's only stingy with base-hits. Great game he pitched today. Star players usually fall down when they're captains of teams and it's their last year in college; but not old Jack – only three hits off him.

MRS. TOWNSEND – This game we saw today decides the championship, doesn't it?

LUCY – Certainly, Mother. You don't suppose I'd have yelled my whole voice away if it wasn't, do you? I can hardly speak.

MRS. TOWNSEND – *(with a sly wink at Herron)* I hadn't noticed that, Lucy. *(Herron shakes with suppressed mirth.)*

LUCY – *(pouting)* Oh, Mother, how unkind!

MRS. TOWNSEND – I must confess I'm not much of a fan – Is that What you call it? – I do not understand the game and if it wasn't for Jack playing I'm afraid I Would find it rather wearisome.

HERRON – Jack is the big man of the college tonight, all right. The President is a mere nonentity beside him. Add to our list of athletic heroes one Jack Townsend, captain and pitcher.

MRS. TOWNSEND – How they carried him around the field after the game!

LUCY – And cheered him!

HERRON – You bet We did. I had a hold of one leg. But I agree With you Mrs. Townsend. If Jack didn't play I Wouldn't take much interest in baseball myself. *(enthusiastically)* Football is the real game.

LUCY – Of course you'd say that.

MRS. TOWNSEND – That's beyond me, too. I've heard it's so rough, that so many players are injured. When John first entered college his father and I made him promise not to go in for it on any account.

HERRON – *(regretfully)* You spoiled a fine player. *(noise of voices from the hall)* Speaking of the – hm – angel. *(Evelyn Sands enters followed by Jack Townsend. Evelyn is a tall, dark-haired, beautiful girl about twenty years old. Her eyes are large and brown, her mouth full-lipped, resolute; her figure lithe and graceful. She is dressed simply but stylishly in white. Jack is a wellbuilt handsome young fellow about twenty-two years old, with blond hair brushed straight back from his forehead, intelligent blue eyes, a good-natured, self-indulgent mouth, and ruddy, tanned complexion. He has the easy confident air of one who has, through his prowess in athletics, become a figure of note in college circles and is accustomed to the deference of those around him. He wears a dark coat, white soft shirt with a bright colored tie, flannel trousers, and white tennis shoes.)*

LUCY – Hail to the hero! *(Evelyn comes over and sits on the arm of Lucy's chair. Jack stands beside his mother.)*

MRS. TOWNSEND – *(smiling fondly up at him)* Where is your father?

JACK – Right outside, talking to Professor Simmons. After dinner as we were following you out of the Inn we ran into the Prof and he walked down with us. Did you think we were lost?

LUCY – *(with a mischievous glance at Evelyn)* We thought you might have forestalled the forthcoming happy event by eloping. *(Evelyn blushes.)*

JACK – *(laughing)* With father for chaperon?

LUCY – Well, don't you dare do it! I'd never forgive you spoiling my chance to wear my gown. I'm going to be just the most stunning bridesmaid. Am I not, Mother?

MRS. TOWNSEND – Of course, dear. *(to Jack)* Why didn't you ask the professor to come in?

JACK – I did, Mother, but he's on his way somewhere or other.

HERRON – By the way, Jack, there was a "townie" in here asking to see you a few minutes ago.

JACK – *(starting nervously)* A "townie"? Did he give any name?

HERRON – No. A fresh little shrimp; said he'd wait. Wasn't he outside?

JACK – *(visibly uneasy)* I didn't see anyone.

HERRON – He'll be back probably; and look out for a touch. *(The singing of a distant quartet sounds faintly from the campus.)*

LUCY – *(springing up)* I hear them singing on the campus. I'm going out. Bull, when does the big P'rade start?

HERRON – Pretty soon; you can hear the clans gathering now.

LUCY – I'm going to march beside them all the way to the lake.

MRS. TOWNSEND – The lake?

LUCY – There's going to be a canoe carnival, and bonfires, and dancing, and everything, Mother. You've simply got to come, all of you, in honor of hero Jack.

JACK – *(embarrassed)* Come, come, Sis, praise from you is rare indeed.

HERRON – *(emphatically)* Indeed!

LUCY – *(archly to Herron)* Indeed?

MRS. TOWNSEND – *(getting quickly from her chair – with a girlish laugh)* I'm going with you. I'll show you young people I can celebrate with the best of you.

JACK – Are you sure it isn't too much for you, Mother?

MRS. TOWNSEND – *(her face flushed with excitement)* Nonsense, Jack!

JACK – *(putting his arm around her affectionately)* Dear old mother – young mother, I should say.

LUCY – Come on everybody!

JACK – You people go on ahead and I'll catch up with you. *(Mrs. Townsend goes out.)*

LUCY – *(to Herron)* Come on, jumbo.

HERRON – *(groaning)* Jumbo! And Bull! Lucy thinks I'm a menagerie. *(He and Lucy go out. Evelyn starts to follow them but Jack stops her and takes her in his arms.)*

JACK – We won't be alone again for ages. *(kisses her)*

EVELYN – *(smiling up into his face)* I'm so proud of you, Jack, dear.

JACK – *(laughingly puts his fingers across her lips)* Ssshhh! You'll give me an awful attack of exaggerated ego if you go on talking like that.

EVELYN – But it's true, dear.

JACK – Then for the good of my soul don't tell me. Praise from Sis is wonder enough for one day.

EVELYN – *(moving a few steps away from him)* I wish I could tell you how proud I felt when I sat in the grandstand and watched you. *(with a laugh)* It was a horrid sort of selfish pride, too, for I couldn't help saying to myself from time to time: He loves me, me! He belongs to me; and I thought of how jealous all the girls around me who were singing his praises would be if they knew.

JACK – *(his face suddenly grown serious, as if at some painful memory)* Please Evelyn! You make me feel so mean – and contemptible when you talk like that.

EVELYN – *(astonished)* Mean? Contemptible? How foolish you are, Jack. *(excitedly)* I felt like standing on my seat and shouting to all of them: "What right have you to think of him? He is mine, mine!" *(laughing at her own enthusiasm, adds in a matter-of-fact tone)* Or will be in three months.

JACK – *(his voice thrilling with emotion)* In three months! *(jokingly)* Do you know those three months are going to seem like three years?

EVELYN – (*gaily*) Three centuries; but I was telling you how splendid you were this afternoon.

JACK – (*protestingly*) Sssshh, Evelyn! (*tries to put his arms around her*)

EVELYN – (*backing away and avoiding him*) You were so cool, so brave. It struck me as symbolical of the way you would always play, in the game of life – fairly, squarely, strengthening those around you, refusing to weaken at critical moments, advancing others by sacrifices, fighting the good fight for the cause, the team, and always, always, whether vanquished or victor, reserving a hearty, honest cheer for the other side. (*breaking off breathlessly*) Oh, Jack dear, I loved you so!

JACK – (*a strong note of pain in his voice, puts his hands over his ears, and forces a laugh*) I won't listen any longer. I positively refuse.

EVELYN – (*smiling*) It's all over. I'm through. I simply had to tell you. (*She holds out both hands to him. He draws her into his arms and kisses her.*)

JACK – (*with deep feeling*) I shall try – with all my strength – in the future, Evelyn, – to live as you have said and become worthy of you. Today was nothing. One does one's best for the sake of the game, for the love of the struggle. Our best happened to be luckier, more skillful, perhaps, than the other fellow's – that's all.

EVELYN – It's so like you to say that. You're a dear. (*She kisses him. Jack's father, John Townsend, appears in the doorway. He is a tall, kindly old man of sixty or so with a quantity of white hair. He is erect,, well preserved, energetic, dressed immaculately but soberly. He laughs and shakes a finger at Evelyn.*)

TOWNSEND – Caught in the act. (*Evelyn smiles and blushes.*) Evelyn, they're waiting for you outside and Lucy threatens to come in and drag you out if my persuasive powers have no effect. They want to make a start for the Steps and see the P'rade form. It's due to start shortly. (*While he is speaking he comes forward, puts his straw hat on the table, and sits down in one of the Morris chairs.*)

EVELYN – (*eagerly*) I wouldn't miss it for worlds. (*She goes to the door; then turns and looks at Jack irresolutely.*) Aren't you coming with us, both of you? (*Jack looks at his father uncertainly.*)

TOWNSEND – We'll join you there; or, better still, – *(to Jack)* The P'rade passes right by here, doesn't it? They always used to in the old days.

JACK – Yes, Dad.

TOWNSEND – Then you go ahead with the others, Evelyn, and since Lucy tells me you're going to follow the P'rade, we'll be able to join you when you pass by. *(explanatively)* I've seen and taken part in so many of these affairs that their novelty has sort of worn off for me; and Jack, – if they were to discover the hero of the day at this stage of the game he wouldn't have a rag to his back, eh, Jack?

JACK – *(smiling)* I'm black and blue all over from their fond caresses this afternoon.

EVELYN – *(gaily)* I'm off, then. *(looking at Jack)* You'll surely join us when we pass?

JACK – Sure thing.

EVELYN – *(waving her hand)* Bye-bye. *(She goes out. Jack sits down near his father.)*

TOWNSEND – *(takes out a cigar and lights it. Jack watches him uneasily as if he foresees what his father is going to say and dreads it. Townsend avoids his eyes. There is an uncomfortable silence. Then Townsend begins vaguely)* It certainly removes the burden of the years from my shoulders to come out to the old college in the Spring and live the old days over in memory and hobnob with some of the old-timers who were young-timers with me. It becomes more difficult every year I find. All the old landmarks are disappearing one by one.

JACK – *(perfunctorily)* Yes, even in my time there have been great changes.

TOWNSEND – *(very palpably talking to gain time)* It gives me a painful heart-throb every time I come back and look for some old place and find it renovated or torn down.

JACK – *(shortly)* I can well understand that.

TOWNSEND – You don't realize what this college comes to mean to you in after years; how it becomes inseparably woven into the memories of one's lost youth until the two become identical.

JACK – *(impatiently)* Yes, I suppose so.

TOWNSEND – (*more and more vaguely*) Happiest days of my life, of anyone's life –

JACK – (*abruptly*) Come to the point, Dad.

TOWNSEND – (*confused*) What? Eh?

JACK – (*firmly*) You didn't send Evelyn away in order that you might wax reminiscent; you know that, Dad.

TOWNSEND – (*heaving a sigh of relief*) You are quite right, I did not; but what I ought to speak about is such a deuced painful subject for both of us that I hardly dare speak of it – especially on your day of triumph when I should be the last one to bring up any unpleasantness.

JACK – (*kindly*) Never mind that, Dad.

TOWNSEND – You see I didn't know when I'd have another opportunity of seeing you alone without arousing your mother's suspicions.

JACK – I understand.

TOWNSEND – And the thing has caused me so much worry. I simply had to hear from your own lips that everything was all right.

JACK – Then I will set your mind at rest immediately. Everything is all right.

TOWNSEND – (*fervently*) Thank God for that! Why haven't you written to me?

JACK – Until a few days ago I had nothing new to tell you.

TOWNSEND – When was the operation performed?

JACK – Last Monday.

TOWNSEND – And you've heard from her since?

JACK – I received a short note from her that night. It was all over and everything was all right, she said. She told me I needn't worry any longer.

TOWNSEND – That was five days ago. You haven't had any word since then?



JACK – No.

TOWNSEND – That's a favorable sign. If any further complications had cropped up she would surely have let you know, wouldn't she?

JACK – Yes, I think she would. I imagine she's frightened to death and doesn't want any more to do with me. I'm sure I hope so. And then, you see I never answered her letter or telephoned.

TOWNSEND – (*gravely*) You were wrong there, my boy.

JACK – (*excitedly*) I know it, I know it, Dad; but I had just received a letter from Evelyn telling me she was coming out for Commencement Week and the game, and – Oh, when I thought of her the other affair seemed so horrible and loathsome, I swore I'd never speak or write again. When I was certain she was in no danger I judged it best for both of us to break off once and for all.

TOWNSEND – Listen, my boy; Are you sure – you know one's vanity blinds one in such cases – are you sure, absolutely sure, you were the father of this child which would have been born to her?

JACK – (*emphatically*) Yes, I am certain of it, as certain as one can possibly be. (*wildly*) Oh I wish to God I had grounds for some suspicion of the sort. What a salve it would be for my conscience! But no, no! To even think such is an insult to a sweet girl. (*defiantly*) For she is a sweet, lovely girl in spite of everything, and if I had loved her the least particle, if I had not been in love with Evelyn, I should certainly have married her.

TOWNSEND – Hm, – if you did not love this girl, why did you, – why, in the first place, – ?

JACK – (*leaning toward his father and fixing his eyes upon him searchingly*) Why? Why? Who knows why or who, that does know, has the courage to confess it, even to himself. Be frank, Dad! Judging from several anecdotes which your friend Professor Simmons has let slip about your four years here, you were no St. Anthony. Turn your mind back to those days and then answer your own question: "Why, in the first place?"

TOWNSEND – (*staves at the floor in moody retrospection – a pause*) We've retained a large portion of the original mud in our make-up. That's the only answer I can think of.

JACK – (*ironically*) That's it! Do you suppose it was the same man who loves Evelyn who did this other thing? No, a thousand times no, such an idea is abhorrent. It was the male beast who ran gibbering through the forest after its female thousands of years ago.

TOWNSEND – Come, Jack, that is pure evasion. You are responsible for the Mr. Hyde in you as well as for the Dr. Jekyll. Restraint –

JACK – (*scornfully*) Restraint? Ah, yes, everybody preaches but who practices it? And could they if they wanted to? Some impulses are stronger than we are, have proved themselves so throughout the world's history. Is it not rather our ideals of conduct, of Right and Wrong, our ethics, which are unnatural and monstrously distorted? Is society not suffering from a case of the evil eye which sees evil where there is none? Isn't it our moral laws which force me into evasions like the one which you have just found fault with?

TOWNSEND – You're delving too deep, for me, my boy. Save your radical arguments for the younger generation. I cannot see them in the same light you do (*grumblingly*) and if I could, I wouldn't. What I cannot understand is how you happened to get in with this young woman in the first place. You'll pardon me, Jack, but it seems to me to show a lack of judgment on your part, and – er – good taste.

JACK – (*shrugging his shoulders*) Such things usually are errors in taste.

TOWNSEND – This young woman was hardly of the class you have been accustomed to associate with, I presume.

JACK – She is a working girl, a stenographer.

TOWNSEND – Has she any immediate relations who would be liable to discover the unfortunate termination of your (*sarcastically*) love affair?

JACK – Her father is dead. Her mother is a silly woman who would be the last to suspect anything. She has two sisters, both youngsters under ten, and one brother about eighteen, a machinist or something of the sort who is only home for week-ends.

TOWNSEND – And she and her brother support the others?

JACK – (*avoiding his father's eyes*) So I believe.

TOWNSEND – *(his expression stern and accusing, starts to say something but restrains himself)* Ah.

JACK – *(glancing at his father)* Yes, yes I know it, Dad. I have played the scoundrel all the way through. I realize that now. Why couldn't I have felt this way before, at the start? Then this would never have happened. But at that time the whole thing seemed just a pleasant game we were playing; its serious aspects appeared remote, unreal. I never gave them a thought. I have paid for it since then, I want you to believe that. I have had my glance into the abyss. In loss of confidence and self-respect, in bitter self-abasement I have paid, and I am sure the result of it all will be to make me a better man, a man more worthy to be Evelyn's husband.

TOWNSEND – *(huskily)* God grant it, my boy. *(gets to his feet)* I want to thank you for the confidence you placed in your father by making a frank appeal to me when you got in this trouble. It shows you regard me not only as a father but as a friend; and that is the way I would have it.

JACK – You have always urged me to come to you and be frank about everything; and I always have and always will. I had to have the money and I thought I owed it to you to be open and aboveboard and not start in deceiving you at this late day. I couldn't get it in any other way very well. Two hundred dollars is quite a sum for a college student to raise at a moment's notice.

TOWNSEND – *(restored to good humor)* The wages of sin are rather exorbitant.

JACK – He was the only doctor I could find who would do that sort of thing. He knew I was a college student and probably made inquiries about your financial rating, – and there you are. There was nothing for me to do but grin and pay. But as I said in my letter this money is a loan. It would be unfair for me to make you shoulder my – mistakes.

TOWNSEND – *(cheerfully)* Let's forget all about it. *(He holds out his hand to Jack who clasps it heartily.)* All's well that ends well. You've learned your lesson. *(The sound of a college cheer comes faintly through the open window.)* And now shall we join the others? That cheer wakens the old fever in me. I want to follow the band and get singed by the Roman candles. *(He picks his straw hat from the table.)*

JACK – *(eagerly)* Yes, let's do that. *(They are going toward the door in the rear when Joe Murray appears in the doorway. Jack cannot repress an exclamation of alarm and his face grows pale.)*

MURRAY – *(fixing his eyes on Jack with an expression of furious hatred)* Look here, Townsend, I gotta see yuh for a minute.

JACK – *(unwillingly)* All right, Murray. You join the others, Dad, and I'll catch you in a few minutes. *(Townsend, struck by the change in his son's voice looks questioningly at him, asking an explanation. Jack turns away from him.)*

JACK – Come in, Murray, and have a seat. *(Townsend goes out. Murray slouches to the middle of the room but does not sit down. His fingers fumble nervously at the buttons of his coat. He notices this and plunges his hands into his coat pockets. He seems endeavoring to restrain the hatred and rage which the spasmodic working of his features show to be boiling within him.)*

JACK – *(appears occupied in arranging the things on the table)* Well?

MURRAY – *(chokingly)* Well! *(He can go no further.)*

JACK – *(coldly, without looking at him)* Anything I can do for you?

MURRAY – *(in strangled tones)* Anything you can do for me!

JACK – *(hurriedly)* Yes; I'm in rather a hurry and if it's nothing very important I'd be just as well pleased if you'd come some other time.

MURRAY – Important? You mayn't think so. It's not important to you, yuh – *(He is stopped by a fit of violent coughing which racks his thin body.)*

JACK – *(irritably)* You've come here looking for trouble, Murray. You better wait until you've cooled off. *(then more kindly)* What is it you want to say to me? Out with it!

MURRAY – *(wiping his mouth on his coat sleeve – angrily)* I'll out with it, damn yuh! – standing there so cool – dressed in swell clothes – and all these other gods – *(choking)* and Nellie – and Nellie –

JACK – *(leaning toward him)* Yes, Nellie?

MURRAY – (*sobbing*) She's dead. (*in a transport of rage*) You killed her, yuh dirty murderer!

JACK – (*dully, as if he did not understand*) Dead? No, no, you don't mean that. She wrote to me everything was all right. Dead? (*As he speaks he backs away from Murray in horror and stumbles against one of the Morris chairs. He sits down in it mechanically.*)

MURRAY – (*shrilly*) She's dead – Nellie, my sister – she's dead.

JACK – (*half to himself*) No, it's impossible. (*fiercely*) It's a lie! What scheme is this of yours? You're trying to frighten me.

MURRAY – (*raging*) She's dead, I tell yuh, dead! She died this morning.

JACK – (*forced to believe*) She died this morning? (*in a dazed voice*) But why didn't she – I didn't know – (*stares straight before him*) God!

MURRAY – Why didn't she let yuh know, yuh mean? She wrote to yuh, she told me she did; and yuh knew she was sick and never answered it. She might'a lived if she thought yuh cared, if she heard from yuh; but she knew yuh were tryin' to git rid of her.

JACK – (*in agony*) Stop, for God's sake! I know I should have written. I meant to write but –

MURRAY – She kept sayin': "I wanta die. I don't wanta live!" (*furiously*) But I'll fix yuh! I'll make yuh pay.

JACK – (*startled, turns to him quickly*) What do you mean?

MURRAY – Don't give me any of that. Yuh know what I mean. Yuh know how she died. (*fiercely*) Yuh know who killed her.

JACK – (*his voice trembling – not looking at Murray*) How she died? Killed her? I don't understand –

MURRAY – Yuh lic! She was murdered and yuh know it.

JACK – (*horror-struck*) Murdered?

MURRAY – Yes, and you murdered her.

JACK – (*shuddering*) I? What? I murdered? – Are you crazy?

MURRAY – You and your dirty skunk of a doctor.

JACK – (*sinks back in his chair with a groan*) Ooh!

MURRAY – (*with fierce scorn*) Yuh thought yuh was safe, didn't yuh, with me away from home? Yuh c'd go out and pitch the champeenship game – and she lyin' dead! Yuh c'd ruin her and throw her down and no one say a word because yuh're a swell college guy and captain of the team, and she ain't good enough for yuh to marry. She's goin' to have a kid, your kid, and because yuh're too rotten to act like a man, yuh send her to a faker of a doctor to be killed; and she does what yuh say because she loves yuh; and yuh don't even think enough of her to answer her letter (*sobbing*) when she's dyin' on account of you!

JACK – (*speaking with difficulty*) She – told you – all this?

MURRAY – Not a word! (*proudly*) She died game; she wasn't no coward. I tried every way I knew how to git her to tell me but she wouldn't. Not a word outa her against you. (*choking with angry sobs*) And you – and you – yuh dirty coward! – playin' ball!

JACK – (*dully*) I did what I thought was best for her.

MURRAY – Yuh sneaked out like a coward because yuh thought she wasn't good enough. (*with a sneer*) Yuh think yuh c'n get away with that stuff and then marry some goil of your own kind, I s'pose, – some goil like I seen yuh come in with tonight. (*vindictively*) But yuh won't; not if I have to go to hell for it! (*A pause. Jack is silent, breathing hard. His eyes are haunted, full of despair, as he vainly seeks to escape from the remorse which is torturing him. The faint sound of the college cheer, then of the band, comes from the open window. From this point to the end these sounds are continuous, the band only being silenced to permit the giving of the cheer, and as the action progresses they become more and more distinct.*)

MURRAY – (*continues in the same vindictive tones*) I've always hated yuh since yuh first come to the house. I've always hated all your kind. Yuh come here to school and yuh think yuh c'n do as yuh please with us town people. Yuh treat us like servants, an' what are you, I'd like to know? – a lot of lazy no-good dudes spongin' on your old men; and the goils, our goils, think yuh're grand! (*Jack is staring at the floor, his head bowed, and does not seem to hear him.*)

MURRAY – I knew somethin' would happen. I told Nellie to look out, and she laughed. When the old lady sent for me and I come home and saw Nellie and she wouldn't leave me go for a doctor, I had a hunch what was wrong. She wouldn't say nothin' but I got our doc, not the one you sent her to, and he told me just what I thought and said she was goin' to die. (*raging*) If I'd seen yuh that minute I'd killed yuh. I knew it was you but I couldn't prove it. Then one of the kids got scared and told me Nellie'd sent her to your doc for medicine when she first took sick. I bought a gun and the kid showed me where he was. I shoved the gun in his face and he owned up and told me about you. He offered me money, lots of it, to keep my mouth shut, and I took it – the money he'd got from you – blood money! (*with a savage grin*) An' I'll keep my mouth shut – maybe!

JACK – (*his eyes lighting up with a gleam of hope, turns eagerly to Murray*) Listen, Murray! This affair is unspeakably horrible, and I am – everything you say; but I want you – you must believe I honestly thought I was acting for the best in having the operation performed. That it has turned out so tragically is terrible. You cannot realize how I am suffering. I feel as if I were what you called me – a murderer. (*brokenly*) It is horrible, horrible! The thought of it will torture me all my life.

MURRAY – That don't bring her back to life. Yuh're too late!

JACK – (*frenziedly*) Too late! What do you mean? You haven't told anyone? You haven't –

MURRAY – When I left his office I went home and – she was dead. Then I come up here lookin' for you. I wanted to kill yuh, but – I been thinkin' – yuh're not worth gittin' hung for. (*with a cruel grin*) I c'n see a better way of fixin' yuh, – one that'll get yuh right.

JACK – (*half to himself*) You haven't told anyone?

MURRAY – What's the difference? There's plenty of time. I know.

JACK – (*trying to steady his voice which is trembling with apprehension*) Murray, for your own sake, for your dead sister's good name, for your family's sake you must keep this thing quiet. I do not plead for myself. I am willing to have you punish me individually in any way you see fit; but there are others, innocent ones, who will suffer.

MURRAY – She was innocent, too, before you –

JACK – *(interrupting him)* My mother and father, my sister, Ev – *(bites back the name)* This would kill my mother if she knew. They are innocent. Do not revenge yourself on them.

MURRAY – *(inflexibly)* You killed my sister.

JACK – Why will you keep saying that? You know it was an accident; that I would gladly have given my own life rather than have it happen. And you must keep silent. I will do anything you want, I tell you! *(He goes close to Murray.)* You say the doctor gave you money? I'll give you ten times as much as he did. *(Murray's face grows livid.)* I'll see that you get so much a year for the rest of your life. My father is rich. We'll get you a good position, do everything you wish, *(breaking down)* only do not punish the innocent.

MURRAY – *(slowly)* You want – to pay me – for Nellie! *(With a terrible cry of rage he pulls a revolver from the pocket of his coat. Before he can pull the trigger Jack seizes his wrist. There is a short struggle. Jack takes the revolver away from him and lays it on the table. Murray has a violent attack of coughing. He recovers and is slinking toward the door when Jack suddenly picks up the revolver from the table and holds it out to him.)*

JACK – *(steadily)* Here, take it! I was a fool to stop you. Let the thing end with me and leave the innocent alone.

MURRAY – *(malevolently)* It's too good for yuh. *(He has edged stealthily nearer and nearer the door and with a final spring gains the safety of the dark hallway. He shouts back)* I'm goin' to the p'lice station. D'yuh hear, yuh dirty ba – rd! To the p'lice station! *(His quick footsteps can be heard as he runs out. Jack makes a movement as if to follow him but stops and sits down heavily by the table, laying the revolver on it. He hears the band and the cheers of the paraders who have evidently just invaded that section of the campus. He hurries to the windows, closes them, and pulls down the shades. The band is playing a march song and the students are singing. Jack groans and hides his face in his hands. The parade is about to pass by his windows. The glare of the red fire glows dully on the window shades. Jack springs up and rushes into his bedroom on the right. Several students crowd in the doorway from the ball.)*

ONE STUDENT – He's not here.

ANOTHER STUDENT – He ran away. *(All go out laughing and shouting. The band stops playing. Jack comes out from the bedroom, his face drawn with agony. The cheerleader's voice can be heard shouting "He ran away but if we give him a cheer, he'll hear us. A long cheer for Townsend, fellows! Hip! Hip!")*



JACK – *(staggering toward the window crying brokenly)* No! No! For God's sake! *(The first part of the cheer booms out. He reels to the table and sees the revolver lying there. He snatches it up and presses it to his temple. The report is drowned by the cheering. He falls forward on his face, twitches, is still.)*

THE STUDENTS – *(winding up the nine long rahs)* Rah! Rah! Rah! Townsend! Townsend! Townsend! *(The band strikes up: "For He's A Jolly Good Fellow." The students commence to sing. The parade moves off again. Evelyn appears in the doorway to the rear.)*

EVELYN – Jack! It's all right now, dear. You can come out of hiding. *(She blinks for a moment blinded by the light; then comes into the room and sees the body – in terror)* Jack! What's the matter? *(She rushes over and kneels beside him; then faints as she sees the blood on his temples, the revolver still clutched in his right hand. She falls on the floor beside him.)*

THE STUDENTS – *(their voices growing gradually fainter)* For he's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny.

*(The Curtain Falls)*

## Marriage is a Private Affair

by Chinua Achebe

'Have you written to your dad yet?' asked Nene one afternoon as she sat with Nnaemeka in her room at 16

Kasanga Street, Lagos.

'No. I've been thinking about it. I think it's better to tell him when I get home on leave!'

'But why? Your leave is such a long way off yet—six whole weeks. He should be let into our happiness now.'

Nnaemeka was silent for a while, and then began very slowly as if he groped for his words: 'I wish I were sure it would be happiness to him.'

'Of course it must,' replied Nene, a little surprised. 'Why shouldn't it?'

'You have lived in Lagos all your life, and you know very little about people in remote parts of the country.'

'That's what you always say. But I don't believe anybody will be so unlike other people that they will be unhappy when their sons are engaged to marry.'

'Yes. They are most unhappy if the engagement is not arranged by them. In our case it's worse—you are not even an Ibo.'

This was said so seriously and so bluntly that Nene could not find speech immediately. In the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the city it had always seemed to her something of a joke that a person's tribe could determine whom he married.

At last she said, 'You don't really mean that he will object to your marrying me simply on that account? I had always thought you Ibos were kindly-disposed to other people.'

'So we are. But when it comes to marriage, well, it's not quite so simple. And this,' he added, 'is not peculiar to the Ibos. If your father were alive and lived in the heart of Ibibio-land he would be exactly like my father.'

'I don't know. But anyway, as your father is so fond of you, I'm sure he will forgive you soon enough. Come on then, be a good boy and send him a nice lovely letter...'

'It would not be wise to break the news to him by writing. A letter will bring it upon him with a shock. I'm quite sure about that.'

'All right, honey, suit yourself. You know your father.'

As Nnaemeka walked home that evening he turned over in his mind different ways of overcoming his father's opposition, especially now that he had gone and found a girl for him. He had thought of showing his letter to Nene but decided on second thoughts not to, at least for the moment. He read it again when he got home and couldn't help smiling to himself. He remembered Ugoye quite well, an Amazon of a girl who used to beat up all the boys, himself included, on the way to the stream, a complete dunce at school.

'I have found a girl who will suit you admirably—Ugoye Nweke, the eldest daughter of our neighbour, Jacob Nweke. She has a proper Christian upbringing. When she stopped schooling some years ago her father (a man of sound judgement) sent her to live in the house of a pastor where she has received all the training a wife could need. Her Sunday School teacher has told me that she reads her Bible very fluently. I hope we shall begin negotiations when you come home in December.'

On the second evening of his return from Lagos Nnaemeka sat with his father under a cassia tree. This was the old man's retreat where he went to read his Bible when the parching December sun had set and a fresh, reviving wind blew on the leaves.

'Father,' began Nnaemeka suddenly, 'I have come to ask for forgiveness.'

'Forgiveness? For what, my son?' he asked in amazement.

'It's about this marriage question.'

'Which marriage question?'

'I can't—we must—I mean it is impossible for me to marry Nweke's daughter.'

'Impossible? Why?' asked his father.

'I don't love her.'

'Nobody said you did. Why should you?' he asked.

'Marriage today is different...'

'Look here, my son,' interrupted his father, 'nothing is different. What one looks for in a wife are a good character and a Christian background.'

Nnaemeka saw there was no hope along the present line of argument.

'Moreover,' he said, 'I am engaged to marry another girl who has all of Ugoye's good qualities, and who...'

His father did not believe his ears. 'What did you say?' he asked slowly and disconcertingly.

'She is a good Christian,' his son went on, 'and a teacher in a Girls' School in Lagos.'

'Teacher, did you say? If you consider that a qualification for a good wife I should like to point out to you, Emeka, that no Christian woman should teach. St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says that women should keep silence.' He rose slowly from his seat and paced forwards and backwards. This was his pet subject, and he condemned vehemently those church leaders who encouraged women to teach in their schools. After he had spent his emotion on a long homily he at last came back to his son's engagement, in a seemingly milder tone.

'Whose daughter is she, anyway?'

'She is Nene Atang.'

'What!' All the mildness was gone again. 'Did you say Neneataga, what does that mean?'

'Nene Atang from Calabar. She is the only girl I can marry.' This was a very rash reply and Nnaemeka expected the storm to burst. But it did not. His father merely walked away into his room. This was most unexpected and perplexed Nnaemeka. His father's silence was infinitely more menacing than a flood of threatening speech. That night the old man did not eat.

When he sent for Nnaemeka a day later he applied all possible ways of dissuasion. But the young man's heart was hardened, and his father eventually gave him up as lost.

'I owe it to you, my son, as a duty to show you what is right and what is wrong. Whoever put this idea into your head might as well have cut your throat. It is

Satan's work.' He waved his son away.

'You will change your mind, Father, when you know Nene.'

'I shall never see her,' was the reply. From that night the father scarcely spoke to his son. He did not, however, cease hoping that he would realize how serious was the danger he was heading for. Day and night he put him in his prayers.

Nnaemeka, for his own part, was very deeply affected by his father's grief. But he kept hoping that it would pass away. If it had occurred to him that never in the history of his people had a man married a woman who spoke a different tongue, he might have been less optimistic. 'It has never been heard,' was the verdict of an old man speaking a few weeks later. In that short sentence he spoke for all of his people. This man had come with others to commiserate with Okeke when news went round about his son's behaviour. By that time the son had gone back to Lagos.

'It has never been heard,' said the old man again with a sad shake of his head.

'What did Our Lord say?' asked another gentleman. 'Sons shall rise against their Fathers; it is there in the Holy

Book.'

'It is the beginning of the end,' said another.

The discussion thus tending to become theological, Madubogwu, a highly practical man, brought it down once more to the ordinary level.

'Have you thought of consulting a native doctor about your son?' he asked Nnaemeka's father.

'He isn't sick,' was the reply.

'What is he then? The boy's mind is diseased and only a good herbalist can bring him back to his right senses.

The medicine he requires is Amalile, the same that women apply with success to recapture their husbands' straying affection.'

'Madubogwu is right,' said another gentleman. 'This thing calls for medicine.'

'I shall not call in a native doctor.' Nnaemeka's father was known to be obstinately ahead of his more superstitious neighbours in these matters. 'I will not be another Mrs Ochuba. If my son wants to kill himself let him do it with his own hands. It is not for me to help him.'

'But it was her fault,' said Madubogwu. 'She ought to have gone to an honest herbalist. She was a clever woman, nevertheless.'

'She was a wicked murderess,' said Jonathan who rarely argued with his neighbours because, he often said, they were incapable of reasoning. 'The medicine was prepared for her husband, it was his name they called in its preparation and I am sure it would have been perfectly beneficial to him. It was wicked to put it into the herbalist's food, and say you were only trying it out.'

Six months later, Nnaemeka was showing his young wife a short letter from his father:

\_'It amazes me that you could be so unfeeling as to send me your wedding picture. I would have sent it back. But on further thought I decided just to cut off your wife and send it back to you because I have nothing to do with her. How I wish that I had nothing to do with you either.' \_

When Nene read through this letter and looked at the mutilated picture her eyes filled with tears, and she began to sob.

'Don't cry, my darling,' said her husband. 'He is essentially good-natured and will one day look more kindly on our marriage.' But years passed and that one day did not come.

For eight years, Okeke would have nothing to do with his son, Nnaemeka. Only three times (when Nnaemeka asked to come home and spend his leave) did he write to him.

'I can't have you in my house,' he replied on one occasion. 'It can be of no interest to me where or how you spend your leave—or your life, for that matter.'

The prejudice against Nnaemeka's marriage was not confined to his little village. In Lagos, especially among his people who worked there, it showed itself in a different way. Their women, when they met at their village meeting, were not hostile to Nene. Rather, they paid her such excessive deference as to make her feel she was not one of them. But as time went on, Nene gradually broke through some of this prejudice and even began to make friends among them. Slowly and grudgingly they began to admit that she kept her home much better than most of them.

The story eventually got to the little village in the heart of the Ibo country that Nnaemeka and his young wife were a most happy couple. But his father was one of the few people in the village who knew nothing about this. He always displayed so much temper whenever his son's name was mentioned that everyone avoided it in his

presence. By a tremendous effort of will he had succeeded in pushing his son to the back of his mind. The strain had nearly killed him but he had persevered, and won.

Then one day he received a letter from Nene, and in spite of himself he began to glance through it perfunctorily until all of a sudden the expression on his face changed and he began to read more carefully.

‘... Our two sons, from the day they learnt that they have a grandfather, have insisted on being taken to him. I find it impossible to tell them that you will not see them. I implore you to allow Nnaemeka to bring them home for a short time during his leave next month. I shall remain here in Lagos...’

The old man at once felt the resolution he had built up over so many years falling in. He was telling himself that he must not give in. He tried to steel his heart against all emotional appeals. It was a re-enactment of that other struggle. He leaned against a window and looked out. The sky was overcast with heavy black clouds and a high wind began to blow filling the air with dust and dry leaves. It was one of those rare occasions when even Nature takes a hand in a human fight. Very soon it began to rain, the first rain in the year. It came down in large sharp drops and was accompanied by the lightning and thunder which mark a change of season. Okeke was trying hard not to think of his two grandsons. But he knew he was now fighting a losing battle. He tried to hum a favourite hymn but the pattering of large rain drops on the roof broke up the tune. His mind immediately returned to the children. How could he shut his door against them? By a curious mental process he imagined them standing, sad and forsaken, under the harsh angry weather—shut out from his house.

That night he hardly slept, from remorse—and a vague fear that he might die without making it up to them.

## **“The Medicine Bag”**

by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

Published: Grandpa Was a Cowboy & an Indian and Other Stories

My kid sister Cheryl and I always bragged about our Sioux grandpa, Joe Iron Shell. Our friends, who had always lived in the city and only knew about Indians from movies and TV, were impressed by our stories. Maybe we exaggerated and made Grandpa and the reservation sound glamorous, but when we'd return home to Iowa after our yearly summer visit to Grandpa, we always had some exciting tale to tell.

We always had some authentic Sioux article to show our listeners. One year Cheryl had new moccasins that Grandpa had made. On another visit he gave me a small, round, flat rawhide drum which was decorated with a painting of a warrior riding a horse. He taught me a real Sioux chant to sing while I beat the drum with a leather-covered stick that had a feather on the end. Man, that really made an impression.

We never showed our friends Grandpa's picture. Not that we were ashamed of him, but because we knew that the glamorous tales we told didn't go with the real thing. Our friends would have laughed at the picture, because

Grandpa wasn't tall and stately like TV Indians. His hair wasn't in braids but hung in stringy gray strands on his neck, and he was old. He was our great-grandfather, and he didn't live in a tepee, but all by himself in a part log, part tar-paper shack on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. So when Grandpa came to visit us, I was so ashamed and embarrassed I could've died.

There are a lot of yippy poodles and other fancy little dogs in our neighborhood, but they usually barked singly at the mailman from the safety of their own yards. Now it sounded as if a whole pack of mutts were barking together in one place.

I got up and walked to the curb to see what the commotion was. About a block away I saw a crowd of little kids yelling, with the dogs yipping and growling around someone who was walking down the middle of the street.

I watched the group as it slowly came closer and saw that in the center of the strange procession was a man wearing a tall black hat. He'd pause now and then to peer at something in his hand and then at the houses on either side of the street. I felt cold and hot at the same time as I recognized the man. "Oh, no!" I whispered. "It's Grandpa!"



I stood on the curb, unable to move even though I wanted to run and hide. Then I got mad when I saw how the yippy dogs were growling and nipping at the old man's baggy pant legs and how wearily he poked them away with his cane. "Stupid mutts," I said as I ran to rescue Grandpa.

When I kicked and hollered at the dogs to get away, they put their tails between their legs and scattered. The kids ran to the curb, where they watched me and the old man.

"Grandpa," I said, and felt pretty dumb when my voice cracked. I reached for his beat-up old tin suitcase, which was tied shut with a rope. But he set it down right in the street and shook my hand.

"Hau, Takoza, Grandchild," he greeted me formally in Sioux.

All I could do was stand there with the whole neighborhood watching and shake the hand of the leather-brown old man. I saw how his gray hair straggled from under his big black hat, which had a drooping feather in its crown. His rumpled black suit hung like a sack over his stooped frame. As he shook my hand, his coat fell open to expose a bright-red satin shirt with a beaded bolo tie under the collar. His get-up wasn't out of place on the reservation, but it sure was here, and I wanted to sink right through the pavement.

"Hi," I muttered with my head down. I tried to pull my hand away when I felt his bony hand trembling, and looked up to see fatigue in his face. I felt like crying. I couldn't think of anything to say, so I picked up Grandpa's suitcase, took his arm, and guided him up the driveway to our house.

Mom was standing on the steps. I don't know how long she'd been watching, but her hand was over her mouth and she looked as if she couldn't believe what she saw. Then she ran to us.

"Grandpa," she gasped. "How in the world did you get here?"

She checked her move to embrace Grandpa, and I remembered that such a display of affection is unseemly to the Sioux and would embarrass him.

"Hau, Marie," he said as he shook Mom's hand. She smiled and took his other arm.

As we supported him up the steps, the door banged open and Cheryl came bursting out of the house. She was all smiles and was so obviously glad to see Grandpa that I was ashamed of how I felt.

“Grandpa!” she yelled happily. “You came to see us!”

Grandpa smiled and Mom and I let go of him as he stretched out his arms to my ten-year-old sister, who was still young enough to be hugged.

“Wicinca, little girl,” he greeted her, and then collapsed.

He had fainted. Mom and I carried him into her sewing room, where we had a spare bed. After we had Grandpa on the bed, Mom stood there helplessly patting his shoulder. “Shouldn’t we call the doctor, Mom?” I suggested, since she didn’t seem to know what to do. “Yes,” she agreed, with a sigh. “You make Grandpa comfortable, Martin.”

I reluctantly moved to the bed. I knew Grandpa wouldn’t want to have Mom undress him, but I didn’t want to, either. He was so skinny and frail that his coat slipped off easily. When I loosened his tie and opened his shirt collar, I felt a small leather pouch that hung from a thong around his neck. I left it alone and moved to remove his boots. The scuffed old cowboy boots were tight and he moaned as I put pressure on his legs to jerk them off. I put the boots on the floor and saw why they fit so tight. Each one was stuffed with money. I looked at the bills that lined the boots and started to ask about them, but Grandpa’s eyes were closed again.

Mom came back with a basin of water. “The doctor thinks Grandpa is suffering from heat exhaustion,” she explained as she bathed Grandpa’s face. Mom gave a big sigh, “Oh hinh, Martin. How do you suppose he got here?”

We found out after the doctor’s visit. Grandpa was angrily sitting up in bed while Mom tried to feed him some soup.

“Tonight you let Marie feed you, Grandpa,” spoke my dad, who had gotten home from work just as the doctor was leaving.

“You’re not really sick,” he said as he gently pushed Grandpa back against the pillows. “The doctor said you just got too tired and hot after your long trip.”

Grandpa relaxed, and between sips of soup he told us of his journey. Soon after our visit to him Grandpa decided that he would like to see where his only living descendants lived and what our home was like. Besides, he admitted sheepishly, he was lonesome after we left.

I knew everybody felt as guilty as I did – especially Mom. Mom was all Grandpa had left. So even after she married my dad, who’s a white man and teaches in the college in

our city, and after Cheryl and I were born, Mom made sure that every summer we spent a week with Grandpa.

I never thought that Grandpa would be lonely after our visits, and none of us noticed how old and weak he had become. But Grandpa knew and so he came to us. He had ridden on buses for two and a half days. When he arrived in the city, tired and stiff from sitting for so long, he set out, walking, to find us.

He had stopped to rest on the steps of some building downtown and a policeman found him. The cop, according to Grandpa, was a good man who took him to the bus stop and waited until the bus came and told the driver to let Grandpa out at Bell View Drive. After Grandpa got off the bus, he started walking again. But he couldn't see the house numbers on the other side when he walked on the sidewalk, so he walked in the middle of the street.

That's when all the little kids and dogs followed him.

I knew everybody felt as bad as I did. Yet I was proud of this eighty-six-year-old man, who had never been away from the reservation, having the courage to travel so far alone.

"You found the money in my boots?" he asked Mom.

"Martin did," she answered, and roused herself to scold. "Grandpa, you shouldn't have carried so much money.

What if someone had stolen it from you?"

Grandpa laughed. "I would've known if anyone tried to take the boots off my feet. The money is what I've saved for a long time—a hundred dollars—for my funeral. But you take it now to buy groceries so that I won't be a burden to you while I am here."

"That won't be necessary, Grandpa," Dad said. "We are honored to have you with us and you will never be a burden. I am only sorry that we never thought to bring you home with us this summer and spare you the discomfort of a long trip."

Grandpa was pleased. "Thank you," he answered. "But do not feel bad that you didn't bring me with you, for I would not have come then. It was not time." He said this in such a way that no one could argue with him. To Grandpa and the Sioux, he once told me, a thing would be done when it was the right time to do it and that's the way it was.

“Also,” Grandpa went on, looking at me, “I have come because it is soon time for Martin to have the medicine bag.”

We all knew what that meant. Grandpa thought he was going to die and he had to follow the tradition of his family to pass the medicine bag, along with its history, to the oldest male child.

“Even though the boy,” he said, still looking at me, “bears a white man’s name, the medicine bag will be his.”

I didn’t know what to say. I had the same hot and cold feeling that I had when I first saw Grandpa in the street.

The medicine bag was the dirty leather pouch I had found around his neck. “I could never wear such a thing,” I almost said aloud. I thought of having my friends see it in gym class, at the swimming pool, and could imagine the smart things they would say. But I just swallowed hard and took a step toward the bed. I knew I would have to take it.

But Grandpa was tired. “Not now, Martin,” he said, waving his hand in dismissal, “it is not time. Now I will sleep.”

So that’s how Grandpa came to be with us for two months. My friends kept asking to come see the old man, but I put them off. I told myself that I didn’t want them laughing at Grandpa. But even as I made excuses, I knew it wasn’t Grandpa that I was afraid they’d laugh at.

Nothing bothered Cheryl about bringing her friends to see Grandpa. Every day after school started, there’d be a crew of giggling little girls or round-eyed little boys crowded around the old man on the patio, where he’d gotten in the habit of sitting every afternoon.

Grandpa would smile in his gentle way and patiently answer their questions, or he’d tell them stories of brave warriors, ghosts, animals, and the kids listened in awed silence. Those little guys thought Grandpa was great.

Finally, one day after school, my friends came home with me because nothing I said stopped them. “We’re going to see the great Indian of Bell View Drive,” said Hank, who was supposed to be my best friend. “My brother has seen him three times, so he oughta be well enough to see us.”

When we got to my house, Grandpa was sitting on the patio. He had on his red shirt, but today he also wore a fringed leather vest that was decorated with beads. Instead of his usual cowboy boots he had solidly beaded moccasins on his feet that stuck out of his black trousers. Of course, he had his old black hat on—he was seldom without it. But it had been brushed and the feather in the beaded headband was proudly erect, its tip a brighter white. His hair lay in silver strands over the red shirt collar.

I stared just as my friends did and I heard one of them murmur, “Wow!”

Grandpa looked up and when his eyes met mine, they twinkled as if he were laughing inside. He nodded to me and my face got all hot. I could tell that he had known all along I was afraid he’d embarrass me in front of my friends.

“Hau, hoksilas, boys,” he greeted, and held out his hand.

My buddies passed in a single file and shook his hand as I introduced them. They were so polite I almost laughed.

“How, there, Grandpa,” and even a “How do you do, sir.”

“You look fine, Grandpa,” I said as the guys sat on the lawn chairs or on the patio floor.

“Hanh, yes,” he agreed. “When I woke up this morning, it seemed the right time to dress in the good clothes. I knew that my grandson would be bringing his friends.”

“You guys want some lemonade or something?” I offered. No one answered. They were listening to Grandpa as he started telling how he’d killed the deer from which his vest was made.

Grandpa did most of the talking while my friends were there. I was so proud of him and amazed at how respectfully quiet my buddies were. Mom had to chase them home at suppertime. As they left, they shook

Grandpa’s hand again and said to me:

“Martin, he’s really great!”

“Yeah, man! Don’t blame you for keeping him to yourself.”

“Can we come back?”

But after they left, Mom said, “No more visitors for a while, Martin. Grandpa won’t admit it, but his strength hasn’t returned. He likes having company, but it tires him.”

That evening Grandpa called me to his room before he went to sleep. "Tomorrow," he said, "when you come home, it will be time to give you the medicine bag."

I felt a hard squeeze from where my heart is supposed to be and was scared, but I answered, "OK, Grandpa."

All night I had weird dreams about thunder and lightning on a high hill. From a distance I heard the slow beat of a drum. When I woke up in the morning, I felt as if I hadn't slept at all. At school it seemed as if the day would never end and when it finally did, I ran home.

Grandpa was in his room, sitting on the bed. The shades were down and the place was dim and cool. I sat on the floor in front of Grandpa, but he didn't even look at me. After what seemed a long time, he spoke.

"I sent your mother and sister away. What you will hear today is only for a man's ears. What you will receive is only for a man's hands." He fell silent and I felt shivers down my back.

"My father in his early manhood," Grandpa began, "made a vision quest to find a spirit guide for his life. You cannot understand how it was in that time, when the great Teton Sioux were first made to stay on the reservation.

There was a strong need for guidance from Wakantanka, the Great Spirit. But too many of the young men were filled with despair and hatred. They thought it was hopeless to search for a vision when the glorious life was gone and only the hated confines of a reservation lay ahead. But my father held to the old ways.

"He carefully prepared for his quest with a purifying sweat bath and then he went alone to a high butte top to fast and pray. After three days he received his sacred dream—in which he found, after long searching, the white man's iron. He did not understand his vision of find-ing something belonging to the white people, for in that time they were the enemy. When he came down from the butte to cleanse himself at the stream below, he found the remains of a campfire and the broken shell of an iron kettle. This was a sign which reinforced his dream. He took

a piece of the iron for his medicine bag, which he had made of elk skin years before, to prepare for his quest.

"He returned to his village, where he told his dream to the wise old men of the tribe. They gave him the name Iron

Shell, but neither did they understand the meaning of the dream. This first Iron Shell kept the piece of iron with him at all times and believed it gave him protection from the evils of those unhappy days.

“Then a terrible thing happened to Iron Shell. He and several other young men were taken from their homes by the soldiers and sent far away to a white man’s boarding school. He was angry and lonesome for his parents and the young girl he had wed before he was taken away. At first Iron Shell resisted the teachers’ attempts to change him and he did not try to learn. One day it was his turn to work in the school’s blacksmith shop. As he walked into the place, he knew that his medicine had brought him there to learn and work with the white man’s iron.

“Iron Shell became a blacksmith and worked at the trade when he returned to the reservation. All of his life he treasured the medicine bag. When he was old and I was a man, he gave it to me, for no one made the vision quest anymore.”

Grandpa quit talking and I stared in disbelief as he covered his face with his hands. His shoulders were shaking with quiet sobs and I looked away until he began to speak again.

“I kept the bag until my son, your mother’s father, was a man and had to leave us to fight in the war across the ocean. I gave him the bag, for I believed it would protect him in battle, but he did not take it with him. He was afraid that he would lose it. He died in a faraway place.”

Again Grandpa was still and I felt his grief around me.

“My son,” he went on after clearing his throat, “had only a daughter and it is not proper for her to know of these things.”

He unbuttoned his shirt, pulled out the leather pouch, and lifted it over his head. He held it in his hand, turning it over and over as if memorizing how it looked.

“In the bag,” he said as he opened it and removed two objects, “is the broken shell of the iron kettle, a pebble from the butte, and a piece of the sacred sage.” He held the pouch upside down and dust drifted down.

“After the bag is yours, you must put a piece of prairie sage within and never open it again until you pass it on to your son.” He replaced the pebble and the piece of iron and tied the bag.

I stood up, somehow knowing I should. Grandpa slowly rose from the bed and stood upright in front of me, holding the bag before my face. I closed my eyes and waited for him to slip it over my head. But he spoke.

“No, you need not wear it.” He placed the soft leather bag in my right hand and closed my other hand over it. “It would not be right to wear it in this time and place, where no one will understand. Put it safely away until you are again on the reservation.

Wear it then, when you replace the sacred sage.”

Grandpa turned and sat again on the bed. Wearily he leaned his head against the pillow. “Go,” he said, “I will sleep now.”

“Thank you, Grandpa,” I said softly, and left with the bag in my hands.

That night Mom and Dad took Grandpa to the hospital. Two weeks later I stood alone on the lonely prairie of the reservation and put the sacred sage in my medicine bag

<http://topherdavis.com/eng2d-short-stories.pdf>



## Thank You, Ma'am

by Langston Hughes

She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it slung across her shoulder. It was about eleven o'clock at night, and she was walking alone, when a boy ran up behind her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with the single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy's weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance so, instead of taking off full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back on the sidewalk, and his legs flew up. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue-jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

After that the woman said, "Pick up my pocketbook, boy, and give it here." She still held him. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse. Then she said, "Now ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

Firmly gripped by his shirt front, the boy said, "Yes'm."

The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?"

The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

She said, "You a lie!"

By that time two or three people passed, stopped, turned to look, and some stood watching.

"If I turn you loose, will you run?" asked the woman.

"Yes'm," said the boy.

"Then I won't turn you loose," said the woman. She did not release him.

"I'm very sorry, lady, I'm sorry," whispered the boy.

"Um-hum! And your face is dirty. I got a great mind to wash your face for you. Ain't you got nobody home to tell you to wash your face?"

"No'm," said the boy.

"Then it will get washed this evening," said the large woman starting up the street, dragging the frightened boy behind her.

He looked as if he were fourteen or fifteen, frail and willow-wild, in tennis shoes and blue jeans.

The woman said, "You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right now is to wash your face. Are you hungry?"

"No'm," said the being dragged boy. "I just want you to turn me loose."

"Was I bothering you when I turned that corner?" asked the woman.

"No'm."

"But you put yourself in contact with me," said the woman. "If you think that that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I get through with you, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones."

Sweat popped out on the boy's face and he began to struggle. Mrs. Jones stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half-nelson about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street.

When she got to her door, she dragged the boy inside, down a hall, and into a large kitchenette-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still had him by the neck in the middle of her room.

She said, "What is your name?"

"Roger," answered the boy.

"Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face," said the woman, whereupon she turned him loose—at last. Roger looked at the door—looked at the woman—looked at the door—and went to the sink.

Let the water run until it gets warm," she said. "Here's a clean towel."

"You gonna take me to jail?" asked the boy, bending over the sink.

“Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere,” said the woman. “Here I am trying to get home to cook me a bite to eat and you snatch my pocketbook! Maybe, you ain’t been to your supper either, late as it be. Have you?”

“There’s nobody home at my house,” said the boy.

“Then we’ll eat,” said the woman, “I believe you’re hungry – or been hungry – to try to snatch my pocketbook.”

“I wanted a pair of blue suede shoes,” said the boy.

“Well, you didn’t have to snatch my pocketbook to get some suede shoes,” said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. “You could of asked me.”

“M’am?”

The water dripping from his face, the boy looked at her. There was a long pause. A very long pause. After he had dried his face and not knowing what else to do dried it again, the boy turned around, wondering what next. The door was open. He could make a dash for it down the hall. He could run, run, run, run, run!

The woman was sitting on the day-bed. After a while she said, “I were young once and I wanted things I could not get.”

There was another long pause. The boy’s mouth opened. Then he frowned, but not knowing he frowned.

The woman said, “Um-hum! You thought I was going to say but, didn’t you? You thought I was going to say, but I didn’t snatch people’s pocketbooks

. Well, I wasn’t going to say that.” Pause.

Silence. “I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son – neither tell God, if he didn’t already know. So you set down while I fix us something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable.”

In another corner of the room behind a screen was a gas plate and an icebox. Mrs. Jones got up and went behind the screen. The woman did not watch the boy to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse which she left behind her on the day-bed. But the boy took care to sit on the far side of the room where he thought she could easily see him out of the corner of her eye, if she wanted to. He did not trust the woman not to trust him. And he did not want to be mistrusted now.

“Do you need somebody to go to the store,” asked the boy, “maybe to get some milk or something?”

“Don’t believe I do,” said the woman, “unless you just want sweet milk yourself. I was going to make cocoa out of this canned milk I got here.”

“That will be fine,” said the boy.

She heated some lima beans and ham she had in the icebox, made the cocoa, and set the table.

The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him. Instead, as they ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty-shop that stayed open late, what the work was like, and how all kinds of women came in and out, blondes, red-heads, and Spanish. Then she cut him a half of her ten-cent cake.

“Eat some more, son,” she said.

When they were finished eating she got up and said, “Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook nor nobody else’s

— because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But I wish you would behave yourself, son, from here on in.”

She led him down the hall to the front door and opened it. “Good-night! Behave yourself, boy!” she said, looking out into the street.

The boy wanted to say something else other than “Thank you, m’am” to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but he couldn’t do so as he turned at the barren stoop and looked back at the large woman in the door. He barely managed to say “Thank you” before she shut the door. And he never saw her again.

[http://photos.state.gov/libraries/hochiminh/646441/vant/Thank%20You\\_%20Ma\\_a\\_m.pdf](http://photos.state.gov/libraries/hochiminh/646441/vant/Thank%20You_%20Ma_a_m.pdf)

## “Paper”

by Catherine Lim

*Malaysian author Catherine Lim set this short story in Singapore, an island nation that became known as one of the Four Tigers of Asia – the name given to Asian countries that experienced dramatic economic growth beginning in the 1970s. What price does Tay Soon, the story’s main character, pay for his dreams of success?*

**H**e wanted it, he dreamed of it, he hankered after it, as an addict after his opiate.

Once the notion of a big beautiful house had lodged itself in his imagination, Tay Soon nurtured it until it became the consuming passion of his life. A house.

A dream house such as he had seen on his drives with his wife and children along the roads bordering the prestigious housing estates on the island, and in the glossy pages of *Homes and Modern Living*. Or rather, it was a house which was an amalgam of the best, the most beautiful aspects of the houses he had seen. He knew every detail of his dream house already, from the aluminum sliding doors to the actual shade of the dining room carpet to the shape of the swimming pool. Kidney. He rather liked the shape. He was not ashamed of the enthusiasm with which he spoke of the dream house, an enthusiasm that belonged to women only, he was told. Indeed, his enthusiasm was so great that it had infected his wife and even his children, small though they were. Soon his wife Yee Lian was describing to her sister Yee Yeng, the dream house in all its perfection of shape and decor, and the children were telling their cousins and friends. “My daddy says that when our house is ready . . .”

They talked of the dream house endlessly. It had become a reality stronger than the reality of the small terrace house which they were sharing with Tay Soon’s mother, to whom it belonged. Tay Soon’s mother, whose little business of selling bottled curries and vegetable preserves which she made herself, left her little time for dreams, clucked her tongue and shook her head and made sarcastic remarks about the ambitiousness of young people nowadays.

“What’s wrong with this house we’re staying in?” she asked petulantly. “Aren’t we all comfortable in it?”

Not as long as you have your horrid ancestral altars all over the place, and your grotesque sense of colour – imagine painting the kitchen wall bright pink. But Yee Lian was tactful enough to keep the remarks to herself, or to make them only to her sister

Yee Yeng, otherwise they were sure to reach the old lady, and there would be no end to her sharp tongue.

The house – the dream house – it would be a far cry from the little terrace house in which they were all staying now, and Tay Soon and Yee Lian talked endlessly about it, and it grew magnificently in their imaginations, this dream house of theirs with its timbered ceiling and paneled walls and sunken circular sitting room which was to be carpeted in rich amber. It was no empty dream, for there was much money in the bank already. Forty thousand dollars had been saved. The house would cost many times that, but Tay Soon and Yee Lian with their good salaries would be able to manage very well. Once they took care of the down payment, they would be able to pay back monthly over a period of ten years – fifteen, twenty – what did it matter how long it took as long as the dream house was theirs? It had become the symbol of the peak of earthly achievement, and all of Tay Soon’s energies and devotion were directed towards its realization.

His mother said, “You’re a show-off, what’s so grand about marble flooring and a swimming pool?

Why don’t you put your money to better use?” But the forty thousand grew steadily, and after Tay Soon and Yee Lian had put in every cent of their annual bonuses, it grew to forty-eight thousand, and husband and wife smiled at the smooth way their plans were going.

### *What’s so grand about marble flooring and a swimming pool?*

It was a time of growing interest in the stock market. The quotations for stocks and shares were climbing the charts, and the crowds in the rooms of the broking houses were growing perceptibly.

Might we not do something about this, Yee Lian said to her husband. Do you know that Dr. Soo bought Rustan Banking for four dollars and today the shares are worth seven dollars each? The temptation was great. The rewards were almost immediate.

Thirty thousand dollars’ worth of NBE became fifty-five thousand almost overnight. Tay Soon and

Yee Lian whooped. They put their remaining eighteen thousand in Far East Mart. Three days later the shares were worth twice that much. It was not to be imagined that things could stop here. Tay Soon secured a loan from his bank and put twenty thousand in

OHTE. This was a particularly lucky share; it shot up to four times its value in three days.

“Oh, this is too much, too much,” cried Yee Lian in her ecstasy, and she sat down with pencil and paper, and found after a few minutes’ calculation that they had made a cool one hundred thousand in a matter of days.

And now there was to be no stopping. The newspapers were full of it, everybody was talking about it, it was in the very air. There was plenty of money to be made in the stock exchange by those who had guts – money to be made by the hour, by the minute, for the prices of stocks and shares were rising faster than anyone could keep track of them! Dr. Soo was said – he laughingly dismissed it as a silly rumour – Dr. Soo was said to have made two million dollars already. If he sold all his shares now, he would be a millionaire twice over. And Yee Yeng,

Yee Lian’s sister, who had been urged with sisterly goodwill to come join the others make money, laughed happily to find that the shares she had bought for four twenty on Tuesday had risen to seven ninety-five on Friday – she laughed and thanked Yee Lian who advised he not to sell yet, it was going further, it would hit the ten dollar mark by next week. And Tay Soon both laughed and cursed – cursed that he had failed to buy a share at nine dollars which a few days later had hit seventeen dollars! Yee Lian said reproachfully, “I thought I told you to buy it, darling,” and Tay Soon had beaten his forehead in despair and said, “I know, I know, why didn’t I! Big fool that I am!” And he had another reason to curse himself – he sold five thousand West Parkes at sixteen twenty-three per share, and saw, to his horror, West Parkes climb to eighteen ninety the very next day!

“I’ll never sell now,” he vowed. “I’ll hold on. I won’t be so foolish.” And the frenzy continued.

Husband and wife couldn’t talk or think of anything else. They thought fondly of their shares – going to be worth a million altogether soon. A million! In the peak of good humour, Yee Lian went to her mother-in-law, forgetting the past insults, and advised her to join the others by buying some shares, she would get her broker to buy them immediately for her, there was sure money in it.

The old lady refused curtly, and to her son later, she showed great annoyance, scolding him for being so foolish as to put all his money in those worthless shares. “Worthless!” exploded Tay Soon.

"Do you know, Mother, if I sold all my shares today,

I would have the money to buy fifty terrace houses like the one you have?"

His wife said, "Oh, we'll just leave her alone. I was kind enough to offer to help her make money, but since she's so nasty and ungrateful, we'll leave her alone."

The comforting, triumphant thought was that soon, very soon, they would be able to purchase their dream house; it would be even more magnificent than the one they had dreamt of, since they had made almost a – Yee Lian preferred not to say the sum.

There was the old superstitious fear of losing something when it is too often or too directly referred to, and Yee Lian had cautioned her husband not to make mention of their gains.

"Not to worry, not to worry," he said jovially, not superstitious like his wife, "After all, it's just paper gains so far."

The downward slide, or the bursting of the bubble as the newspapers dramatically called it, did not initially cause much alarm, for the speculators all expected the shares to bounce back to their original strength and thence continue the phenomenal growth. But that did not happen. The slide continued.

Tay Soon said nervously, "Shall we sell? Do you

***"Do you know, Mother, if I sold all my shares today, I would have the money to buy fifty terrace houses like the one you have?"***

think we should sell?" but Yee Lian said stoutly, "There is talk that this decline is a technical thing only – it will be over soon, and then the rise will continue. After all, see what is happening in Hong

Kong and London and New York. Things are as good as ever."

"We're still making, so not to worry," said Yee Lian after a few days. Their gains were pared by half. A few days later, their gains were pared to marginal.

There is talk of a recovery, insisted Yee Lian.

Do you know, Tay Soon, Dr. Soo's wife is buying up some OHTE and West Parkes now? She says these two are sure to rise. She has some inside information that these two are going to climb past the forty dollar mark –



Tay Soon sold all his shares and put the money in OHTE and West Parkes. OHTE and West

Parkes crashed shortly afterwards. Some began to say the shares were not worth the paper of the certificates.

“Oh, I can’t believe, I can’t believe it,” gasped

Yee Lian, pale and sick. Tay Soon looked in mute horror at her.

“All our money was in OHTE and West Parkes,” he said, his lips dry.

“That stupid Soo woman!” shrieked Yee Lian. “I think she deliberately led me astray with her advice! She’s always been jealous of me – ever since she knew we were going to build a house grander than hers!”

“How are we going to get our house now?” asked Tay Soon in deep distress, and for the first time he wept. He wept like a child, for the loss of all his money, for the loss of the dream house that he had never stopped loving and worshipping.

The pain bit into his very mind and soul, so that he was like a madman, unable to go to his office to work, unable to do anything but haunt the broking houses, watching with frenzied anxiety for OHTE and West Parkes to show him hope. But there was no hope. The decline continued with gleeful rapidity. His broker advised him to sell, before it was too late, but he shrieked angrily,

“What! Sell at a fraction at which I bought them!

How can this be tolerated?”

And he went on hoping against hope.

He began to have wild dreams in which he sometimes laughed and sometimes screamed. His wife Yee Lian was afraid and she ran sobbing to her sister who never failed to remind her curtly that all her savings were gone, simply because when she had wanted to sell, Yee Lian had advised her not to.

“But what is your sorrow compared to mine,” wept Yee Lian, “see what’s happening to my husband.

He’s cracking up! He talks to himself, he doesn’t eat, he has nightmares, he beats the children.

Oh, he's finished!"

Her mother-in-law took charge of the situation, while Yee Lian, wide-eyed in mute horror at the terrible change that had come over her husband, shrank away and looked to her two small children for comfort. Tight-lipped and grim, the elderly woman made herbal medicines for Tay Soon, brewing and straining for hours, and got a Chinese medicine man to come to have a look at him.

"There is a devil in him," said the medicine man, and he proceeded to make him a drink which he mixed with the ashes of a piece of prayer paper.

But Tay Soon grew worse. He lay in bed, white, haggard and delirious, seeming to be beyond the touch of healing. In the end, Yee Lian, on the advice of her sister and friends, put him in hospital.

"I have money left for the funeral," whimpered the frightened

Yee Lian only a week later, but her mother-in-law sharply retorted, "You leave everything to me! I have the money for his funeral, and I shall give him the best! He wanted a beautiful house all his life; I shall give him a beautiful house now!"

She went to the man who was well-known on the island for his beautiful houses and she ordered the best. It would come to nearly a thousand dollars, said the man, a thin, wizened fellow whose funereal gauntness and pallor seemed to be a concession to his calling.

That doesn't matter, she said, I want the best.

The house is to be made of superior paper, she instructed, and he was to make it to her specifications.

She recollected that he, Tay Soon, had often spoken of marble flooring, a timbered ceiling and a kidney-shaped swimming pool. Could he simulate all these in paper?

The thin, wizened man said, "I've never done

***I have the money for his funeral, and I shall give him the best! He wanted a beautiful house all his life; I shall give him a beautiful house now!***

anything like that before. All my paper houses for the dead have been the usual kind—I can put in paper furniture and paper cars, paper utensils for the kitchen and paper

servants, all that the dead will need in the other world. But I shall try to put in what you've asked for. Only it will cost more."

The house, when it was ready, was most beautiful to see. It stood seven feet tall, a delicate framework of wire and thin bamboo strips covered with finely worked paper of a myriad colours. Little silver flowers scattered liberally throughout the entire structure, gave a carnival atmosphere. There was a paper swimming pool (round, as the man had not understood "kidney") which had to be fitted inside the house itself, as there was no provision for a garden or surrounding grounds. Inside the house were paper figures; there were at least four servants to attend to the needs of the master who was posed beside two cars, one distinctly a Chevrolet and the other a Mercedes.

At the appointed time, the paper house was brought to Tay Soon's grave and set on fire there. It burned brilliantly, and in three minutes was a heap of ashes on the grave.

### **Activity Options**

1. *Writing Narrative Paragraphs* Write a different conclusion to this story. For example, you might write an ending in which Tay Soon reaps a profit from his investments and attains his dream house. Read your ending aloud to classmates.
2. *Summarizing* Draw a sketch of Tay Soon's dream house based on your reading of this story.

Then post your sketch in the classroom.

3. *Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects*

Make a chart to illustrate the positive and negative effects of Tay Soon's quest for his dream house. Then discuss with classmates what lesson you think this story teaches about the pursuit of wealth.

**WHILE THE AUTO WAITS**

by O. Henry adapted for the stage by Walter Wykes

**CHARACTERS****GIRL****YOUNG MAN****WAITRESS****CHAUFFEUR**

TIME - 1920s

*[Twilight. The quiet corner of a city park. A GIRL in gray sits alone on a bench, reading her book. A large-meshed veil hangs over her face, which nevertheless shines through with a calm and unconscious beauty. When she turns a page, the book slips from her hand, and a YOUNG MAN, who has been hovering nearby, pounces upon it. He returns it to her with a gallant and hopeful air.]*

GIRL: Oh, thank you.

YOUNG MAN: Nice weather we're having.

GIRL: Yes.

*[Pause.]*

YOUNG MAN: Well ...

GIRL: You may sit down, if you like.

YOUNG MAN: *[Eagerly.]* Are you sure? I don't want to interrupt your reading.

GIRL: Really, sit. I would like very much to have you do so. The light is too bad for reading. I would prefer to talk.

YOUNG MAN: Well, if you insist. *[He slides hopefully onto the seat next to her.]* You know, you've got to be the stunningest girl I've ever seen. Honest. I had my eye on you since yesterday.

GIRL: Yesterday?

YOUNG MAN: Didn't know somebody was bowled over by those pretty lamps of yours, did you, honeysuckle?

GIRL: Whoever you are, you must remember that I am a lady. I will excuse the remark you have just made because the mistake was, doubtless, not an unnatural one – in your circle. I asked you to sit down; if the invitation must constitute me your honeysuckle, consider it withdrawn.

YOUNG MAN: Sorry. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you. I just thought ... well, I mean, there are girls in parks, you know – that is, of course, you don't know, but –

GIRL: Abandon the subject, if you please. Of course I know.

YOUNG MAN: Right.

GIRL: Now, tell me about these people passing and crowding, each way, along these paths. Where are they going? Why do they hurry so? Are they happy?

YOUNG MAN: It is interesting to watch them – isn't it? The wonderful drama of life. Some are going to supper and some to – er – other places. One can't help but wonder what their histories are.

GIRL: Yes! How fascinating they seem to me – rushing about with their petty little dreams and their common worries! I come here to sit because here, only, can I be near the great, common, throbbing heart of humanity. My part in life is cast where its beating is never felt. Can you surmise why I spoke to you, Mr. – ?

YOUNG MAN: Parkenstacker. And your name...?

*[He waits, eager and hopeful, but she only holds up a slender finger and smiles slightly.]*

GIRL: No, you would recognize it immediately. It is simply impossible to keep one's name out of the papers. Or even one's portrait. This veil and this hat – my maid's, of course – are my only protection. They furnish me with an incog. You should have seen the chauffeur staring when he thought I did not see. Candidly, there are five or six names that belong in the holy of holies, and mine, by the accident of birth, is one of them. I spoke to you, Mr. Stackenpot –

YOUNG MAN: Parkenstacker.

GIRL: – Mr. Parkenstacker, because I wanted to talk, for once, with a natural man – a real man – one unspoiled by the despicable gloss of wealth and supposed social

superiority. Oh! You have no idea how weary I am of it—money, money, money! And of the men who surround me, dancing like little marionettes all cut from the same pattern. I am sick of pleasure, of jewels, of travel, of society, of luxuries of all kinds!

YOUNG MAN: I always had the idea that money must be a pretty good thing.

GIRL: A competence is to be desired, certainly. But when you have so many millions that—! [*She concludes the sentence with a gesture of despair.*] It is the monotony of it that palls. Drives, dinners, theatres, balls, suppers, balls, dinners, more balls, followed of course by dinners and suppers, with the gilding of superfluous wealth over it all. Sometimes the very tinkle of the ice in my champagne glass nearly drives me mad.

YOUNG MAN: You know ... I've always liked to read up on the habits and customs of the wealthy class. I consider myself a bit of a connoisseur on the subject. But I like to have my information accurate. Now, I had formed the opinion that champagne is cooled in the bottle and not by placing ice in the glass.

*[The GIRL gives a musical laugh of genuine amusement.]*

GIRL: You must understand that we of the non-useful class depend for our amusement upon departure from precedent. Just now it is a fad to put ice in champagne. The idea was originated by a visiting Prince of Tartary while dining at the Waldorf. It will soon give way to some other whim. Just as, at a dinner party this week on Madison Avenue, a green kid glove was laid by the plate of each guest to be put on and used while eating olives.

YOUNG MAN: [*Humbly.*] I see.

GIRL: These special diversions of the inner circle do not become familiar to the common public, of course.

YOUNG MAN: Of course. It's all quite fascinating. I've always wanted to participate in, or at least witness first hand, the rituals of the elite.

GIRL: We are drawn to that which we do not understand.

YOUNG MAN: I guess that's true.

GIRL: For my part, I have always thought that if I should ever love a man it would be one of lowly station. One who is a worker and not a drone. But, doubtless, the claims of caste and wealth will prove stronger than my inclination. Just now I am besieged by two suitors. One is Grand Duke of a German principality. I think he has, or has had, a wife, somewhere, driven mad by his intemperance and cruelty. The other is an English

Marquis, so cold and mercenary that I prefer even the diabolical nature of the Duke. What is it that impels me to tell you these things, Mr. Pakenwacker?

YOUNG MAN: Parkenstacker.

GIRL: Of course.

YOUNG MAN: I don't know why you should bare your soul to a common man like me, but you can't know how much I appreciate your confidences.

*[The girl contemplates him with the calm, impersonal regard that befits the difference in their stations.]*

GIRL: What is your line of business, if you don't mind my asking?

YOUNG MAN: A very humble one. But I hope to rise in the world someday.

GIRL: You have aspirations?

YOUNG MAN: Oh, yes. There's so much I want to do.

GIRL: I admire your enthusiasm. I, myself, can find very little to be enthused about, burdened, as I am, by the constant pleasures and diversions of my class.

YOUNG MAN: Did you really mean it, before, when you said you could love a man of lowly station?

GIRL: Indeed I did. But I said "might."

YOUNG MAN: Why only "might?"

GIRL: Well, there is the Grand Duke and the Marquis to think of, you know.

YOUNG MAN: But you've said yourself – they're so cold.

GIRL: I am sure you understand when I say there are certain expectations of a young lady in my position. It would be such a disappointment to certain members of my family if I were to marry a commoner as we like to call them. You simply cannot imagine the scandal it would cause. All the magazines would remark upon it. I might even be cut off from the family fortune. And yet ... no calling could be too humble were the man I loved all that I wish him to be.

YOUNG MAN: I work in a restaurant.

*[The girl shrinks slightly.]*

GIRL: Not as a *waiter*? Labor is noble, but personal attendance, you know – valets and –

YOUNG MAN: Not a waiter. I'm a cashier in ... in that restaurant over there.

GIRL: *[With a strange, suspicious look.]* That ... that one there? *[He nods.]* That one?

YOUNG MAN: Yes.

GIRL: *[Confused.]* Are you sure?

YOUNG MAN: Quite sure.

GIRL: But –

*[Suddenly the GIRL consults a tiny watch set in a bracelet of rich design upon her wrist. She rises with a start.]*

GIRL: Oh!

YOUNG MAN: What is it? What's wrong?

GIRL: I ... I am late for an important engagement.

YOUNG MAN: An engagement?

GIRL: Yes!

YOUNG MAN: Some sort of ball or –

GIRL: Yes, yes!

YOUNG MAN: Will I see you again?

GIRL: I do not know. Perhaps – but the whim may not seize me again. I must go quickly now. There is a dinner, and a box at the play – and, oh! The same old round! Perhaps you noticed an automobile at the upper corner of the park as you came. One with a white body.

YOUNG MAN: *[Knitting his brow strangely.]* And red running gear?



GIRL: Yes. I always come in that. Pierre waits for me there. He supposes me to be shopping in the department store across the square. Conceive of the bondage of the life wherein we must deceive even our chauffeurs. Good-night.

YOUNG MAN: Wait! It's getting dark, and the park is full of questionable characters. Can't I walk you to your –

GIRL: *[Quickly.]* No! I mean ... no. If you have the slightest regard for my wishes, you will remain on this bench for ten minutes after I have left. I do not mean to question your intentions, but you are probably aware that autos generally bear the monogram of their owner. Again, good-night.

*[Suddenly a WAITRESS approaches, wearing a soiled, dirty uniform – evidently just coming off her shift.]*

WAITRESS: Mary-Jane! Mary-Jane Parker! What on earth are you doing out here?! Don't you know what time it is?!

GIRL: *[A little flustered.]* To whom are you speaking, Madame?

WAITRESS: To whom am I ... to you! Who do you think, you ninny?!

GIRL: Then I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about.

WAITRESS: You're shift started fifteen minutes ago! Mr. Witherspoon's in a rage! This is the third time this month you've been late! You'd better get yourself over there and into uniform before he cuts you loose for good!

GIRL: I –

WAITRESS: Go on, now! I know you can't afford to miss a paycheck!

GIRL: *[Attempting to maintain her dignity.]* You must have me confused with – with someone else.

WAITRESS: Confused with – why, Mary-Jane Parker, we've known each other for three years! We swap shifts! Have you been drinking?! Why are you wearing that ridiculous hat?!

GIRL: *[To the YOUNG MAN.]* I ... I'm sorry, Mr. Porkenblogger –

YOUNG MAN: Parkenstacker.

GIRL: Parkenstacker.

WAITRESS: *Parkenstacker?*

YOUNG MAN: Yes, Parkenstacker.

WAITRESS: As in THE Parkenstackers?! From the society pages?!

GIRL: *The society pages?*

YOUNG MAN: If only I were so fortunate.

GIRL: You ... you must excuse me. My chauffeur is waiting.

WAITRESS: *Chauffeur?!* What kind of crazy airs are you putting on?! You've never had a chauffeur in your life! You don't even own an automobile!

GIRL: I do so!

WAITRESS: Since when?!

GIRL: Since ... Oh, get away from me! I don't know you!

WAITRESS: Don't know me?! You *have* been drinking! I'm going to tell your mother!

*[The GIRL rushes off, followed closely by the WAITRESS. The YOUNG MAN picks up her book where she has dropped it.]*

YOUNG MAN: Wait! You forgot your —

*[But they are gone. After a few moments, a CHAUFFEUR approaches cautiously.]*

CHAUFFEUR: Begging your pardon, sir.

YOUNG MAN: Yes, Henri?

CHAUFFEUR: I don't mean to intrude, but your dinner reservation — shall I cancel or —

YOUNG MAN: No ... I'm coming.

CHAUFFEUR: Very good, sir. The auto is waiting.

*[The CHAUFFEUR exits and leaves the YOUNG MAN standing alone for a moment as the lights fade.]*

[http://www.10-minute-plays.com/comedies/while\\_the\\_auto\\_waits.html](http://www.10-minute-plays.com/comedies/while_the_auto_waits.html)

## THE BOOR

by: Anton Chekhov

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### PERSONS IN THE PLAY

HELENA IVANOVNA POPOV, a young widow, mistress of a country estate

GRIGORI STEPANOVITCH SMIRNOV, proprietor of a country estate

LUKA, servant of MRS. POPOV

A gardener. A Coachman. Several workmen.

TIME: *The present.*

SCENE: *A well-furnished reception-room in MRS. POPOV'S home. MRS. POPOV is discovered in deep mourning, sitting upon a sofa, gazing steadfastly at a photograph. LUKA is also present.*

LUKA: It isn't right, ma'am. You're wearing yourself out! The maid and the cook have gone looking for berries; everything that breathes is enjoying life; even the cat knows how to be happy--slips about the courtyard and catches birds--but you hide yourself here in the house as though you were in a cloister. Yes, truly, by actual reckoning you haven't left this house for a whole year.

MRS. POPOV: And I shall never leave it--why should I? My life is over. He lies in his grave, and I have buried myself within these four walls. We are both dead.

LUKA: There you are again! It's too awful to listen to, so it is! Nikolai Michailovitch is dead; it was the will of the Lord, and the Lord has given him eternal peace. You have grieved over it and that ought to be enough. Now it's time to stop. One can't weep and wear mourning forever! My wife died a few years ago. I grieved for her. I wept a whole month--and then it was over. Must one be forever singing lamentations? That would be more than your husband was worth! *[He sighs.]* You have forgotten all your neighbors. You don't go out and you receive no one. We live--you'll pardon me--like the spiders, and the good light of day we never see. All the livery is eaten by mice--as though there weren't any more nice people in the world! But the whole neighborhood is full of gentlefolk. The regiment is stationed in Riblov--officers--simply beautiful! One can't see enough of them! Every Friday a ball, and military music every day. Oh, my dear, dear ma'am, young and pretty as you are, if you'd only let your spirits live--! Beauty can't last forever. When ten short years are over, you'll be glad enough to go out a bit and meet the officers--and then it'll be too late.

MRS. POPOV: [*Resolutely.*] Please don't speak of these things again. You know very well that since the death of Nikolai Michailovitch my life is absolutely nothing to me. You think I live, but it only seems so. Do you understand? Oh, that his departed soul may see how I love him! I know, it's no secret to you; he was often unjust to me, cruel, and--he wasn't faithful, but I shall be faithful to the grave and prove to him how *I* can love. There, in the Beyond, he'll find me the same as I was until his death.

LUKA: What is the use of all these words, when you'd so much rather go walking in the garden or order Toby or Welikan harnessed to the trap, and visit the neighbors?

MRS. POPOV: [*Weeping.*] Oh!

LUKA: Madam, dear madam, what is it? In Heaven's name!

MRS. POPOV: He loved Toby so! He always drove him to the Kortschagins or the Vlassovs. What a wonderful horseman he was! How fine he looked when he pulled at the reins with all his might! Toby, Toby--give him an extra measure of oats to-day!

LUKA: Yes, ma'am.

[*A bell rings loudly.*]

MRS. POPOV: [*Shudders.*] What's that? I am at home to no one.

LUKA: Yes, ma'am.

[*He goes out, centre.*]

MRS. POPOV: [*Gazing at the photograph.*] You shall see, Nikolai, how I can love and forgive! My love will die only with me--when my poor heart stops beating. [*She smiles through her tears.*] And aren't you ashamed? I have been a good, true wife; I have imprisoned myself and I shall remain true until death, and you--you--you're not ashamed of yourself, my dear monster! You quarrelled with me, left me alone for weeks--

[*LUKA enters in great excitement.*]

LUKA: Oh, ma'am, someone is asking for you, insists on seeing you--

MRS. POPOV: You told him that since my husband's death I receive no one?

LUKA: I said so, but he won't listen; he says it is a pressing matter.

MRS. POPOV: I receive no one!

LUKA: I told him that, but he's a wild man; he swore and pushed himself into the room; he's in the dining-room now.

MRS. POPOV: *[Excitedly.]* Good. Show him in. The impudent--!

*[LUKA goes out, centre.]*

MRS. POPOV: What a bore people are! What can they want with me? Why do they disturb my peace? *[She sighs.]* Yes, it is clear I must enter a convent. *[Meditatively.]* Yes, a convent.

*[SMIRNOV enters, followed by LUKA.]*

SMIRNOV: *[To LUKA.]* Fool, you make too much noise! You're an ass! *[Discovering MRS. POPOV--politely.]* Madam, I have the honor to introduce myself: Lieutenant in the Artillery, retired, country gentleman, Grigori Stapanovitch Smirnov! I'm compelled to bother you about an exceedingly important matter.

MRS. POPOV: *[Without offering her hand.]* What is it you wish?

SMIRNOV: Your deceased husband, with whom I had the honor to be acquainted, left me two notes amounting to about twelve hundred roubles. Inasmuch as I have to pay the interest to-morrow on a loan from the Agrarian Bank, I should like to request, madam, that you pay me the money to-day.

MRS. POPOV: Twelve-hundred--and for what was my husband indebted to you?

SMIRNOV: He bought oats from me.

MRS. POPOV: *[With a sigh, to LUKA.]* Don't forget to give Toby an extra measure of oats.

*[LUKA goes out.]*

MRS. POPOV: *[To SMIRNOV.]* If Nikolai Michailovitch is indebted to you, I shall, of course, pay you, but I am sorry, I haven't the money to-day. To-morrow my manager will return from the city and I shall notify him to pay you what is due you, but until then I cannot satisfy your request. Furthermore, today is just seven months since the death of my husband, and I am not in the mood to discuss money matters.

SMIRNOV: And I am in the mood to fly up the chimney with my feet in the air if I can't lay hands on that interest to-morrow. They'll seize my estate!

MRS. POPOV: Day after to-morrow you will receive the money.

SMIRNOV: I don't need the money day after to-morrow; I need it to-day.

MRS. POPOV: I'm sorry I can't pay you today.

SMIRNOV: And I can't wait until day after to-morrow.

MRS. POPOV: But what can I do if I haven't it?

SMIRNOV: So you can't pay?

MRS. POPOV: I cannot.

SMIRNOV: Hm! Is that your last word?

MRS. POPOV: My last.

SMIRNOV: Absolutely?

MRS. POPOV: Absolutely.

SMIRNOV: Thank you. [*He shrugs his shoulders.*] And they expect me to stand for all that. The toll-gatherer just now met me in the road and asked why I was always worrying. Why, in Heaven's name, shouldn't I worry? I need money, I feel the knife at my throat. Yesterday morning I left my house in the early dawn and called on all my debtors. If even one of them had paid his debt! I worked the skin off my fingers! The devil knows in what sort of Jew-inn I slept; in a room with a barrel of brandy! And now at last I come here, seventy versts from home, hope for a little money, and all you give me is moods! Why shouldn't I worry?

MRS. POPOV: I thought I made it plain to you that my manager will return from town, and then you will get your money.

SMIRNOV: I did not come to see the manager; I came to see you. What the devil--pardon the language--do I care for your manager?

MRS. POPOV: Really, sir, I am not used to such language or such manners. I shan't listen to you any further.

*[She goes out, left.]*

SMIRNOV: What can one say to that? Moods! Seven months since her husband died! Do I have to pay the interest or not? I repeat the question, have I to pay the interest or not? The husband is dead and all that; the manager is--the devil with him!--travelling somewhere. Now, tell me, what am I to do? Shall I run away from my creditors in a

balloon? Or knock my head against a stone wall? If I call on Grusdev he chooses to be "not at home," Iroschevitch has simply hidden himself, I have quarrelled with Kurzin and came near throwing him out of the window, Masutov is ill and this woman has--moods! Not one of them will pay up! And all because I've spoiled them, because I'm an old whiner, dish-rag! I'm too tender-hearted with them. But wait! I allow nobody to play tricks with me, the devil with 'em all! I'll stay here and not budge until she pays! Brr! How angry I am, how terribly angry I am! Every tendon is trembling with anger, and I can hardly breathe! I'm even growing ill! [*He calls out.*] Servant!

[*LUKA enters.*]

LUKA: What is it you wish?

SMIRNOV: Bring me Kvas or water! [*LUKA goes out.*] Well, what can we do? She hasn't it on hand? What sort of logic is that? A fellow stands with the knife at his throat, he needs money, he is on the point of hanging himself, and she won't pay because she isn't in the mood to discuss money matters. Women's logic! That's why I never liked to talk to women, and why I dislike doing it now. I would rather sit on a powder barrel than talk with a woman. Brr!--I'm getting cold as ice; this affair has made me so angry. I need only to see such a romantic creature from a distance to get so angry that I have cramps in my calves! It's enough to make one yell for help!

[*Enter LUKA.*]

LUKA: [*Hands him water.*] Madam is ill and is not receiving.

SMIRNOV: March! [*LUKA goes out.*] Ill and isn't receiving! All right, it isn't necessary. I won't receive, either! I'll sit here and stay until you bring that money. If you're ill a week, I'll sit here a week. If you're ill a year, I'll sit here a year. As Heaven is my witness, I'll get the money. You don't disturb me with your mourning--or with your dimples. We know these dimples! [*He calls out the window.*] Simon, unharness! We aren't going to leave right away. I am going to stay here. Tell them in the stable to give the horses some oats. The left horse has twisted the bridle again. [*Imitating him.*] Stop! I'll show you how. Stop! [*Leaves window.*] It's awful. Unbearable heat, no money, didn't sleep last night and now--mourning--dresses with moods. My head aches; perhaps I ought to have a drink. Ye-s, I must have a drink. [*Calling.*] Servant!

LUKA: What do you wish?

SMIRNOV: Something to drink! [*LUKA goes out. SMIRNOV sits down and looks at his clothes.*] Ugh, a fine figure! No use denying that. Dust, dirty boots, unwashed, uncombed, straw on my vest--the lady probably took me for a highwayman. [*He yawns.*] It was a little impolite to come into a reception-room with such clothes. Oh, well, no

harm done. I'm not here as a guest. I'm a creditor. And there is no special costume for creditors.

LUKA: *[Entering with glass.]* You take great liberty, sir.

SMIRNOV: *[Angrily.]* What?

LUKA: I--I--I just----

SMIRNOV: Whom are you talking to? Keep quiet.

LUKA: *[Angrily.]* Nice mess! This fellow won't leave!

*[He goes out.]*

SMIRNOV: Lord, how angry I am! Angry enough to throw mud at the whole world! I even feel ill! Servant!

*[MRS. POPOV comes in with downcast eyes.]*

MRS. POPOV: Sir, in my solitude I have become unaccustomed to the human voice and I cannot stand the sound of loud talking. I beg you, please to cease disturbing my rest.

SMIRNOV: Pay me my money and I'll leave.

MRS. POPOV: I told you once, plainly, in your native tongue, that I haven't the money at hand; wait until day after to-morrow.

SMIRNOV: And I also had the honor of informing you in your native tongue that I need the money, not day after to-morrow, but to-day. If you don't pay me to-day I shall have to hang myself to-morrow.

MRS. POPOV: But what can I do if I haven't the money?

SMIRNOV: So you are not going to pay immediately? You're not?

MRS. POPOV: I cannot.

SMIRNOV: Then I'll sit here until I get the money. *[He sits down.]* You will pay day after to-morrow? Excellent! Here I stay until day after to-morrow. *[Jumps up.]* I ask you, do I have to pay that interest to-morrow or not? Or do you think I'm joking?

MRS. POPOV: Sir, I beg of you, don't scream! This is not a stable.



SMIRNOV: I'm not talking about stables, I'm asking you whether I have to pay that interest to-morrow or not?

MRS. POPOV: You have no idea how to treat a lady.

SMIRNOV: Oh, yes, I have.

MRS. POPOV: No, you have not. You are an ill-bred, vulgar person! Respectable people don't speak so to ladies.

SMIRNOV: How remarkable! How do you want one to speak to you? In French, perhaps! Madame, je vous prie! Pardon me for having disturbed you. What beautiful weather we are having to-day! And how this mourning becomes you!

*[He makes a low bow with mock ceremony.]*

MRS. POPOV: Not at all funny! I think it vulgar!

SMIRNOV: *[Imitating her.]* Not at all funny--vulgar! I don't understand how to behave in the company of ladies. Madam, in the course of my life I have seen more women than you have sparrows. Three times have I fought duels for women, twelve I jilted and nine jilted me. There was a time when I played the fool, used honeyed language, bowed and scraped. I loved, suffered, sighed to the moon, melted in love's torments. I loved passionately, I loved to madness, loved in every key, chattered like a magpie on emancipation, sacrificed half my fortune in the tender passion, until now the devil knows I've had enough of it. Your obedient servant will let you lead him around by the nose no more. Enough! Black eyes, passionate eyes, coral lips, dimples in cheeks, moonlight whispers, soft, modest sights--for all that, madam, I wouldn't pay a kopeck! I am not speaking of present company, but of women in general; from the tiniest to the greatest, they are conceited, hypocritical, chattering, odious, deceitful from top to toe; vain, petty, cruel with a maddening logic and *[he strikes his forehead]* in this respect, please excuse my frankness, but one sparrow is worth ten of the aforementioned petticoat-philosophers. When one sees one of the romantic creatures before him he imagines he is looking at some holy being, so wonderful that its one breath could dissolve him in a sea of a thousand charms and delights; but if one looks into the soul--it's nothing but a common crocodile. *[He seizes the arm-chair and breaks it in two.]* But the worst of all is that this crocodile imagines it is a masterpiece of creation, and that it has a monopoly on all the tender passions. May the devil hang me upside down if there is anything to love about a woman! When she is in love, all she knows is how to complain and shed tears. If the man suffers and makes sacrifices she swings her train about and tries to lead him by the nose. You have the misfortune to be a woman, and naturally you know woman's nature; tell me on your honor, have you ever in your life seen a woman who was really true and faithful? Never! Only the old and the deformed are

true and faithful. It's easier to find a cat with horns or a white woodcock, than a faithful woman.

MRS. POPOV: But allow me to ask, who is true and faithful in love? The man, perhaps?

SMIRNOV: Yes, indeed! The man!

MRS. POPOV: The man! [*She laughs sarcastically.*] The man true and faithful in love! Well, that is something *new!* [*Bitterly.*] How can you make such a statement? Men true and faithful! So long as we have gone thus far, I may as well say that of all the men I have known, my husband was the best; I loved him passionately with all my soul, as only a young, sensible woman may love; I gave him my youth, my happiness, my fortune, my life. I worshipped him like a heathen. And what happened? This best of men betrayed me in every possible way. After his death I found his desk filled with love-letters. While he was alive he left me alone for months--it is horrible even to think about it--he made love to other women in my very presence, he wasted my money and made fun of my feelings--and in spite of everything I trusted him and was true to him. And more than that: he is dead and I am still true to him. I have buried myself within these four walls and I shall wear this mourning to my grave.

SMIRNOV: [*Laughing disrespectfully.*] Mourning! What on earth do you take me for? As if I didn't know why you wore this black domino and why you buried yourself within these four walls. Such a secret! So romantic! Some knight will pass the castle, gaze up at the windows, and think to himself: "Here dwells the mysterious Tamara who, for love of her husband, has buried herself within four walls." Oh, I understand the art!

MRS. POPOV: [*Springing up.*] What? What do you mean by saying such things to me?

SMIRNOV: You have buried yourself alive, but meanwhile you have not forgotten to powder your nose!

MRS. POPOV: How dare you speak so?

SMIRNOV: Don't scream at me, please; I'm not the manager. Allow me to call things by their right names. I am not a woman, and I am accustomed to speak out what I think. So please don't scream.

MRS. POPOV: I'm not screaming. It is you who are screaming. Please leave me, I beg you.

SMIRNOV: Pay me my money, and I'll leave.

MRS. POPOV: I won't give you the money.

SMIRNOV: You won't? You won't give me my money?

MRS. POPOV: I don't care what you do. You won't get a kopeck! Leave me!

SMIRNOV: As I haven't had the pleasure of being either your husband or your fiancé, please don't make a scene. *[He sits down.]* I can't stand it.

MRS. POPOV: *[Breathing hard.]* You are going to sit down?

SMIRNOV: I already have.

MRS. POPOV: Kindly leave the house!

SMIRNOV: Give me the money.

MRS. POPOV: I don't care to speak with impudent men. Leave! *[Pause.]* You aren't going?

SMIRNOV: No.

MRS. POPOV: No?

SMIRNOV: No.

MRS. POPOV: Very well.

*[She rings the bell. Enter LUKA.]*

MRS. POPOV: Luka, show the gentleman out.

LUKA: *[Going to SMIRNOV.]* Sir, why don't you leave when you are ordered? What do you want?

SMIRNOV: *[Jumping up.]* Whom do you think you are talking to? I'll grind you to powder.

LUKA: *[Puts his hand to his heart.]* Good Lord! *[He drops into a chair.]* Oh, I'm ill; I can't breathe!

MRS. POPOV: Where is Dascha? *[Calling.]* Dascha! Pelageja! Dascha!

*[She rings.]*

LUKA: They're all gone! I'm ill! Water!

MRS. POPOV: [*To SMIRNOV.*] Leave! Get out!

SMIRNOV: Kindly be a little more polite!

MRS. POPOV: [*Striking her fists and stamping her feet.*] You are vulgar! You're a boor! A monster!

SMIRNOV: What did you say?

MRS. POPOV: I said you were a boor, a monster!

SMIRNOV: [*Steps toward her quickly.*] Permit me to ask what right you have to insult me?

MRS. POPOV: What of it? Do you think I am afraid of you?

SMIRNOV: And you think that because you are a romantic creature you can insult me without being punished? I challenge you!

LUKA: Merciful Heaven! Water!

SMIRNOV: We'll have a duel!

MRS. POPOV: Do you think because you have big fists and a steer's neck I am afraid of you?

SMIRNOV: I allow no one to insult me, and I make no exception because you are a woman, one of the "weaker sex!"

MRS. POPOV: [*Trying to cry him down.*] Boor, boor, boor!

SMIRNOV: It is high time to do away with the old superstition that it is only the man who is forced to give satisfaction. If there is equity at all let their be equity in all things. There's a limit!

MRS. POPOV: You wish to fight a duel? Very well.

SMIRNOV: Immediately.

MRS. POPOV: Immediately. My husband had pistols. I'll bring them. [*She hurries away, then turns.*] Oh, what a pleasure it will be to put a bullet in your impudent head. The devil take you!

[*She goes out.*]

SMIRNOV: I'll shoot her down! I'm no fledgling, no sentimental young puppy. For me there is no weaker sex!

LUKA: Oh, sir. *[Falls to his knees.]* Have mercy on me, an old man, and go away. You have frightened me to death already, and now you want to fight a duel.

SMIRNOV: *[Paying no attention.]* A duel. That's equity, emancipation. That way the sexes are made equal. I'll shoot her down as a matter of principle. What can a person say to such a woman? *[Imitating her.]* "The devil take you. I'll put a bullet in your impudent head." What can one say to that? She was angry, her eyes blazed, she accepted the challenge. On my honor, it's the first time in my life that I ever saw such a woman.

LUKA: Oh, sir. Go away. Go away!

SMIRNOV: That *is* a woman. I can understand her. A real woman. No shilly-shallying, but fire, powder, and noise! It would be a pity to shoot a woman like that.

LUKA: *[Weeping.]* Oh, sir, go away.

*[Enter MRS. POPOV.]*

MRS. POPOV: Here are the pistols. But before we have our duel, please show me how to shoot. I have never had a pistol in my hand before!

LUKA: God be merciful and have pity upon us! I'll go and get the gardener and the coachman. Why has this horror come to us?

*[He goes out.]*

SMIRNOV: *[Looking at the pistols.]* You see, there are different kinds. There are special duelling pistols, with cap and ball. But these are revolvers, Smith & Wesson, with ejectors; fine pistols! A pair like that cost at least ninety roubles. This is the way to hold a revolver. *[Aside.]* Those eyes, those eyes! A real woman!

MRS. POPOV: Like this?

SMIRNOV: Yes, that way. Then you pull the hammer back--so--then you aim--put your head back a little. Just stretch your arm out, please. So--then press your finger on the thing like that, and that is all. The chief thing is this: don't get excited, don't hurry your aim, and take care that your hand doesn't tremble.

MRS. POPOV: It isn't well to shoot inside; let's go into the garden.

SMIRNOV: Yes. I'll tell you now, I am going to shoot into the air.

MRS. POPOV: That is too much! Why?

SMIRNOV: Because---because. That's my business.

MRS. POPOV: You are afraid. Yes. A-h-h-h. No, no, my dear sir, no flinching! Please follow me. I won't rest until I've made a hole in that head I hate so much. Are you afraid?

SMIRNOV: Yes, I'm afraid.

MRS. POPOV: You are lying. Why won't you fight?

SMIRNOV: Because--because--I--like you.

MRS. POPOV: *[With an angry laugh.]* You like me! He dares to say he likes me! *[She points to the door.]* Go.

SMIRNOV: *[Laying the revolver silently on the table, takes his hat and starts. At the door he stops a moment, gazing at her silently, then he approaches her, hesitating.]* Listen! Are you still angry? I was mad as the devil, but please understand me--how can I express myself? The thing is like this--such things are-- *[He raises his voice.]* Now, is it my fault that you owe me money? *[Grasps the back of the chair, which breaks.]* The devil know what breakable furniture you have! I like you! Do you understand? I--I'm almost in love!

MRS. POPOV: Leave! I hate you.

SMIRNOV: Lord! What a woman! I never in my life met one like her. I'm lost, ruined! I've been caught like a mouse in a trap.

MRS. POPOV: Go, or I'll shoot.

SMIRNOV: Shoot! You have no idea what happiness it would be to die in sight of those beautiful eyes, to die from the revolver in this little velvet hand! I'm mad! Consider it and decide immediately, for if I go now, we shall never see each other again. Decide--speak--I am a noble, a respectable man, have an income of ten thousand, can shoot a coin thrown into the air. I own some fine horses. Will you be my wife?

MRS. POPOV: *[Swings the revolver angrily.]* I'll shoot!

SMIRNOV: My mind is not clear--I can't understand. Servant--water! I have fallen in love like any young man. *[He takes her hand and she cries with pain.]* I love you! *[He kneels.]* I love you as I have never loved before. Twelve women I jilted, nine jilted me,

but not one of them all have I loved as I love you. I am conquered, lost; I lie at your feet like a fool and beg for your hand. Shame and disgrace! For five years I haven't been in love; I thanked the Lord for it, and now I am caught, like a carriage tongue in another carriage. I beg for your hand! Yes or no? Will you?--Good!

*[He gets up and goes quickly to the door.]*

MRS. POPOV: Wait a minute!

SMIRNOV: *[Stopping.]* Well?

MRS. POPOV: Nothing. You may go. But--wait a moment. No, go on, go on. I hate you. Or--no; don't go. Oh, if you knew how angry I was, how angry! *[She throws the revolver on to the chair.]* My finger is swollen from this thing. *[She angrily tears her handkerchief.]* What are you standing there for? Get out!

SMIRNOV: Farewell!

MRS. POPOV: Yes, go. *[Cries out.]* Why are you going? Wait--no, go!! Oh, how angry I am! Don't come too near, don't come too near--er--come--no nearer.

SMIRNOV: *[Approaching her.]* How angry I am with myself! Fall in love like a schoolboy, throw myself on my knees. I've got a chill! *[Strongly.]* I love you. This is fine--all I needed was to fall in love. To-morrow I have to pay my interest, the hay harvest has begun, and then you appear! *[He takes her in his arms.]* I can never forgive myself.

MRS. POPOV: Go away! Take your hands off me! I hate you--you--this is--

*[A long kiss. Enter LUKA with an axe, the gardener with a rake, the coachman with a pitchfork, and workmen with poles.]*

LUKA: *[Staring at the pair.]* Merciful heavens!

*[A long pause.]*

MRS. POPOV: *[Dropping her eyes.]* Tell them in the stable that Toby isn't to have any oats.

<http://www.theatrehistory.com/plays/boor.html>

## GRAY MATTER

by Jeanette D. Farr

### CHARACTERS

**MARGE: 66 years old. Well-dressed, middle-class, white woman.**

**RUSSELL: 21 years old. African-American male. Wears baggy clothes and a baseball cap.**

### SETTING

Small room in a police station. It somewhat resembles a doctor's waiting room, but not as comfortable. There is a row of 6 chairs and a counter. On the counter is a clipboard with a pencil attached with string and a "front desk" bell. Behind the counter is a computer generated sign that reads: "PLEASE SIGN IN".

*[MARGE is sitting in a middle seat in the row of chairs. She is reading, doing a crossword puzzle, knitting - something to occupy her time. SHE has her purse on the seat next to her. RUSSELL enters, looks around notices sign, signs in, then moves to find a seat. MARGE, not looking up, moves her purse to the other side of her and tucks it close.]*

RUSSELL: I saw that.

MARGE: Excuse me?

RUSSELL: I caught you.

MARGE: I don't know you.

RUSSELL: When I walked in, you moved your bag.

MARGE: Please. I don't want any trouble.

RUSSELL: I'm not-

MARGE: Because if you're causing trouble, I can notify someone.

RUSSELL: I wasn't-



MARGE: OK then.

*[PAUSE.]*

RUSSELL: Do I make you nervous?

MARGE: I don't even know you.

RUSSELL: Doesn't matter. I can still make you nervous.

MARGE: Look, I was in the middle of something, if you don't mind.

RUSSELL: Why did you move your bag?

MARGE: I was getting some gum.

*[SHE searches for a piece of gum.]*

RUSSELL: Can I have a piece?

MARGE: It's Juicy Fruit.

RUSSELL: My favorite.

MARGE: I only have a stick.

RUSSELL: Can I have half?

MARGE: You're bothering me.

RUSSELL: Ok. So I don't make you nervous, but I bother you?

MARGE: I'm just not in the mood for... conversation.

RUSSELL: I think it's something else.

MARGE: If you say so.

*[MARGE goes back to her "project"]*

RUSSELL: When I walked through that door you *thought*: Rapist, murderer, purse-stealer.

MARGE: I thought no such thing.

RUSSELL: But you moved your purse.

MARGE: I was just being polite by making more room. I would do that for anyone.

RUSSELL: I don't buy it.

MARGE: It doesn't really concern me if you buy it or not. That's the reason.

RUSSELL: There are five empty chairs I could sit in.

MARGE: All right. *[As if to satisfy him]* You caught me.

RUSSELL: Unless you wanted me to come sit next to you.

MARGE: You sit where you'd like.

*[RUSSELL sits in the chair farthest away from her.]*

RUSSELL: This one's too hard.

*[HE moves to the third chair closest to her.]*

RUSSELL: Nope. Not right either.

*[HE gets two chairs away.]*

RUSSELL: Damn uncomfortable!

*[HE sits next to her.]*

RUSSELL: Do you mind if I try yours? This one isn't right either. How 'bout you let me sit on your lap.

*[MARGE goes to counter and rings the bell.]*

RUSSELL: Wait, wait, lady! I was only joking. Sit back down!

MARGE: Will you leave me alone?

RUSSELL: I'll be nice. I'll even sit over here if it'll make you happy.

*[MARGE sits far away from RUSSELL.]*

RUSSELL: Why are you here?

MARGE: Why are YOU here?

RUSSELL: I came to see my parole officer.

MARGE: Nice.

RUSSELL: Does that bother you?

MARGE: And you wondered why I moved my purse.

RUSSELL: But when I walked in you didn't know I was coming to see my parole officer. You just saw me and assumed I was a criminal.

MARGE: I followed my instincts. When the fight or flight kicks in you should listen to that. What you just said about you being a criminal was exactly what my gut was telling me.

RUSSELL: So you moved your purse.

MARGE: Right.

RUSSELL: Wow. You knew. I guess I can't go anywhere anymore. That must be why people cross the street when they see me comin'. It's just like B.O. Nobody ever tells you that you have B.O. until it's too late. Then you come home after realizing you forgot to put on deodorant and wonder why in the hell nobody has been talking to you. Thank you. Thank you for letting me know you can actually see or FEEL through your instinctual animal feelings that there is criminal written all over my face.

MARGE: I'm sure if you dressed a little better, that might help too.

RUSSELL: Maybe kick down a few bucks, get a nice suit or something....

MARGE: Clean yourself up a little.

RUSSELL: Sure. Thanks. You've really helped me uh... What's your name?

MARGE: Why do you want to know my name?

RUSSELL: Well, I can't tell all my "convict" friends that some nice lady helped me. I'd like to tie a name to a face.

MARGE: I don't think you need to know my name.

RUSSELL: Come on.

MARGE: If I tell you, you'll.... leave me alone?

RUSSELL: Cross my heart!

MARGE: Sheila.

RUSSELL: What?

MARGE: That's my name. Sheila.

RUSSELL: Ok. *[PAUSE]* It's a sin to lie.

MARGE: I know that.

RUSSELL: You feel ok being a liar.

MARGE: Who said I was lying?

RUSSELL: You don't look like a Sheila. Sheila is a young beautiful lady's name.

MARGE: Thank you.

RUSSELL: No, no, no - don't take this wrong. But you ain't a Sheila.

MARGE: You get a name at birth and you keep a name for life. Even beautiful young women named Sheila eventually grow older.

RUSSELL: Yeah, but they don't grow up to look like you.

MARGE: How can you tell what a person should be called or not.

RUSSELL: You said I looked like a criminal.

MARGE: I did not.

RUSSELL: Did you or did you not just admit to me that I looked like a criminal. That you had a gut instinct - and you were right, weren't you?

MARGE: Let's just let it go, ok?

RUSSELL: Sheila?

*[SHE doesn't respond.]*

RUSSELL: Hey, Sheila. That is your name isn't it?

MARGE: Yes.

RUSSELL: For a minute there, I thought you didn't know.

MARGE: What is it.

RUSSELL: I wasn't exactly truthful with you a minute ago.

MARGE: Really.

RUSSELL: I'm not here to see my parole officer.

MARGE: That's nice.

RUSSELL: I don't even have a police record.

MARGE: Fine.

RUSSELL: Yet I look like a criminal.

MARGE: Well, what else was I supposed to think-

RUSSELL: Why?

MARGE: Why what?

RUSSELL: Why did you assume that I was a criminal? Was it because of this?

*[HE points to the palm of his hand.]*

MARGE: Your hand?

RUSSELL: No. Closer. Look. Right here. See it?

*[MARGE moves closer to his hand, she is curious. Just as she gets close enough he forms his hand into a fist.]*

MARGE: I don't see anything.

RUSSELL: Simple as that. *[HE points to his fist.]* Black. *[HE points to her face.]* and white.

*[There is a long pause. Just as MARGE is about to speak, RUSSELL goes over to the counter, leans over, and looks around.]*

MARGE: I haven't seen anyone at that counter in a while. They told me to wait.

RUSSELL: Man. This is messed up. Always like the government. Keep you waiting as long as they want to. Unless of course you've done something wrong, then they're up your ass with a microscope. I can't be waiting all day. *[Ringing the bell]* Hey! Anyone there?

MARGE: The best thing is probably to just sit quietly and wait.

RUSSELL: I'm here on my lunch hour, man! *[To himself]* I can't come back to work late, they'll have my ass.

MARGE: Where do you work?

RUSSELL: Excuse me?

MARGE: Your job. Where do you have to go?

RUSSELL: I get it. *[Pause]* I have a job, so it's ok to talk to me, now.

MARGE: I just wondered how far you had to walk.

RUSSELL: I drove myself down here. Jesus, lady! We LIBERALS have cars too, you know. Maybe not nice ones like you folks but at least it gets me from point A to point B, and I bought it with hard earned workin' man's money.

MARGE: I didn't mean-

RUSSELL: You didn't mean. Don't tell me you didn't mean. I may be what at least 45 years younger than you but I'm not stupid! I know what you meant.

MARGE: Please. Don't be so sensitive, I-

RUSSELL: What. Am I wrong? Did I jump to conclusions about what you just said? Am I misunderstanding you?

MARGE: Yes!

RUSSELL: *[Calm, direct, and to the point]* Now you know how it feels.

MARGE: I don't know what you are trying to prove here.

RUSSELL: I assumed things about you just like you assumed things about me when I walked through that door. I'm not trying to change the way you think, I'm just telling you how it goes. You can't tell me that if an elderly white woman was sitting next to you instead of me that you wouldn't be exchanging recipes and complaining about your arthritis or whatever the hell you all do. You certainly wouldn't have jumped out of your skin like you did when I walked in here.

MARGE: Would it make you happy if I gave you my recipe for pot roast?

RUSSELL: Aw, man!

MARGE: I won't give anyone that recipe you know. Not even my sister. The key is the marinade.

RUSSELL: Forget it.

MARGE: You say "that's what we do" so I'm following through with it.

RUSSELL: I'm just saying you wouldn't be so uptight if I was someone different.

MARGE: Uptight! The reason I'm uptight has nothing to do with who you are.

RUSSELL: Don't bother apologizing for who YOU are. You don't have to talk to me or trust that I'm not going to take something of yours. If that's what you believe - then - way it goes.

MARGE: I don't trust anyone at the moment! *[Pause, having trouble getting this out]* Somewhere between here and thirteenth street I've misplaced my wallet. The sad thing about it is it had a lot of money in it not to mention my driver's license and pictures of my grandchildren. I don't even care about the money, but the fact that someone out there knows my identity isn't too comforting to me. I came down here to file a report in hopes that someone would be honest enough to... What was I thinking? I've wasted half my day in here just for one chance that there is one honest person left in this world.

RUSSELL: I'm sorry. I'm sure someone will find it.

MARGE: Oh, I'm sure someone has found it by now and had a fine time maxing my gold card. I don't know why I'm wasting my time.

*[MARGE gets up to leave.]*

RUSSELL: Hey, Sheila. Why don't you wait a few more minutes. I'm sure if we make enough noise, someone will come out to help us.

*[MARGE stops.]*

MARGE: May I tell you something?

RUSSELL: Sure. *[Pause]* What is it?



MARGE: You did catch me.

RUSSELL: No sweat... I mean, I didn't know.

MARGE: My name... it isn't Sheila.

RUSSELL: Well whadaya know? Really? 'Cause I was convinced that...

MARGE: Don't be funny. Actually it's...

RUSSELL: Marge.

MARGE: What - How?

RUSSELL: You just LOOK like a Marge to me.

MARGE: *[Amazed]* You're good at that.

RUSSELL: And...It says it on your license.

*[HE reaches into his pocket and pulls out a ladies' wallet.]*

RUSSELL: Here.

MARGE: You - Where?

RUSSELL: I tried phoning, but there was no answer.

*[MARGE opens up her wallet.]*

RUSSELL: You can count it if you want. I didn't take nothin'.

MARGE: Come here.

RUSSELL: Aw, lady. I didn't take any of it! I just found it like that-

*[MARGE takes out a photo and shows it to RUSSELL.]*

MARGE: This is my granddaughter. THIS is Sheila.

RUSSELL: *[Smiling.]* She's pretty. I can see the resemblance.

MARGE: *[A beat - SHE stands]* Well, no use staying around here if I don't have to and YOU need to get yourself back to work. You'd better cross your name off that list. Don't want some government employee working too hard calling your name.

RUSSELL: They have to do something.

*[MARGE exits without her purse which she left on the chair. RUSSELL goes over to clipboard and crosses out his name. HE turns around, runs over to the purse and picks it up.]*

RUSSELL: Hey, Marge, you forgot your-

MARGE: I forgot my-

RUSSELL & MARGE: *[Simultaneously]* Purse.

MARGE: *[Taking her bag.]* Thank you.

*(LIGHTS FADE)*

[http://www.10-minute-plays.com/dramas/gray\\_matter.html](http://www.10-minute-plays.com/dramas/gray_matter.html)

### **GRAMMAR - General English Component**

1. Correct the error and rewrite the correct sentences.
2. Form sentences of your own from the given words/phrases.