

Introduction to
LITERATURE

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Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm

[1785–1859]

Wilhelm Carl Grimm

[1786–1863]

The GRIMM BROTHERS were born a year apart in Hanau, Germany. Their parents, Philipp Wilhelm Grimm and Dorothea Zimmer Grimm, were noted citizens of the city. Philipp was a lawyer and an officer of the court. The brothers were the second and third sons of a large family. In 1791, the family moved to Steinau, where their father died in 1796. The family then moved to Kassel, where the boys lived with an aunt and attended school. Both boys then studied law but also became deeply interested in folk poetry, so the two began to collect folk tales. When their mother died in 1808, both boys became librarians in order to support their younger siblings.

*In 1812 the two brothers published their first book of tales, volume one of *Kinderund Hausmärchen* (Childrens' and Household Tales); volume two followed in 1815. This work eventually would see seven editions and would contain two hundred tales. In 1816 and 1818, the brothers followed with *Deutsche Sagen*, a collection of German legends. While working on the folk tales, the brothers were also becoming two of the most important linguists of their time, discovering that languages connect through both their form and meaning. Both eventually received honorary doctorates from Marburg University for their distinguished work.*

In 1825 Wilhelm Grimm and Henriette Dorothea (Dortchen) Wild married. She had been the source of many of the folktales and had worked with the brothers before the marriage. In 1830 the brothers received posts of both professors and librarians at the University of Göttingen. In 1841 they moved to the University of Berlin, but gave up this appointment to devote themselves to research into language and literature.

*The list of publications and honors for the Grimm brothers is vast. They virtually invented the fields of folklore and linguistics. They began the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (German Dictionary) in 1852, a thirty-two volume set that was still being edited well into the twentieth century. The Grimms themselves wrote only entries A through F; the rest was published over the next hundred years.*

For many years the tales of Grimm brothers were lost to the popular reading public until the debate over whether fairy tales should be presented to children in their harsh original forms led to renewed interest in the old tales that the Grimms had collected. The tales clearly evoke debate when compared to more gentle movie versions of the stories often shown to children.



Cinderella

BROTHERS GRIMM

THE WIFE OF A RICH MAN fell sick, and as she felt that her end was drawing near, she called her only daughter to her bedside and said: "Dear child, be good and pious, and then the good God will always protect you, and I will look down on you from heaven and be near you." Thereupon she closed her eyes and departed. Every day the maiden went out to her mother's grave and wept, and she remained pious and good. When winter came the snow spread a white sheet over the grave, and by the time the spring sun had drawn it off again, the man had taken another wife.

The woman had brought with her into the house two daughters, who were beautiful and fair of face, but vile and black of heart. Now began a bad time for the poor step-child. "Is the stupid goose to sit in the parlor with us?" they said. "He who wants to eat bread must earn it; out with the kitchen-wench." They took her pretty clothes away from her, put an old grey bedgown on her, and gave her wooden shoes. "Just look at the proud princess, how decked out she is!" they cried, and laughed, and led her into the kitchen. There she had to do hard work from morning till night, get up before daybreak, carry water, light fires, cook and wash. Besides this, the sisters did her every imaginable injury—they mocked her and emptied her peas and lentils into the ashes, so that she was forced to sit and pick them out again. In the evening when she had worked till she was weary she had no bed to go to, but had to sleep by the hearth in the cinders. And as on that account she always looked dusty and dirty, they called her Cinderella.

It happened that the father was once going to the fair, and he asked his two step-daughters what he should bring back for them. "Beautiful dresses," said one, "pearls and jewels," said the second. "And you, Cinderella," said he, "what will you have?" "Father, break off for me the first branch which knocks against your hat on your way home." So he bought beautiful dresses, pearls and jewels for his two step-daughters, and on his way home, as he was riding through a green thicket, a hazel twig brushed against him and knocked off his hat. Then he broke off the branch and took it with him. When he reached home he gave his step-daughters the things which they had wished for, and to Cinderella he

gave the branch from the hazel-bush. Cinderella thanked him, went to her mother's grave and planted the branch on it, and wept so much that the tears fell down on it and watered it. And it grew and became a handsome tree. Thrice a day Cinderella went and sat beneath it, and wept and prayed, and a little white bird always came on the tree, and if Cinderella expressed a wish, the bird threw down to her what she had wished for.

It happened, however, that the King gave orders for a festival which was to last three days, and to which all the beautiful young girls in the country were invited, in order that his son might choose himself a bride. When the two step-sisters heard that they too were to appear among the number, they were delighted, called Cinderella and said: "Comb our hair for us, brush our shoes and fasten our buckles, for we are going to the wedding at the King's palace." Cinderella obeyed, but wept, because she too would have liked to go with them to the dance, and begged her step-mother to allow her to do so. "You go, Cinderella!" said she; "covered in dust and dirt as you are, and would go to the festival? You have no clothes and shoes, and yet would dance!" As, however, Cinderella went on asking, the step-mother said at last: "I have emptied a dish of lentils into the ashes for you, if you have picked them out again in two hours, you shall go with us." The maiden went through the back-door into the garden, and called: "You tame pigeons, you turtledoves, and all you birds beneath the sky, come and help me to pick

The good into the pot,
The bad into the crop."

Then two white pigeons came in by the kitchen-window, and afterwards the turtle-doves, and at last all the birds beneath the sky, came whirring and crowding in, and alighted amongst the ashes. And the pigeons nodded with their heads and began pick, pick, pick, pick, and the rest began also pick, pick, pick, pick, and gathered all the good grains into the dish. Hardly had one hour passed before they had finished, and all flew out again. Then the girl took the dish to her step-mother, and was glad, and believed that now she would be allowed to go with them to the festival. But the step-mother said: "No, Cinderella, you have no clothes and you can not dance; you would only be laughed at." And as Cinderella wept at this, the step-mother said: "If you can pick two dishes of lentils out of the ashes for me in one hour, you shall go with us." And she thought to herself: "That she most certainly cannot do again." When the step-mother had emptied the two dishes of lentils amongst the ashes, the maiden went through the back-door into the garden and cried: "You tame pigeons, you turtle-doves, and all you birds beneath the sky, come and help me to pick.

The good into the pot,
The bad into the crop.”

Then two white pigeons came in by the kitchen-window, and afterwards the turtle-doves, and at length all the birds beneath the sky, came whirring and crowding in, and alighted amongst the ashes. And the doves nodded with their heads and began pick, pick, pick, pick, and the others began also pick, pick, pick, pick, and gathered all the good seeds into the dishes, and before half an hour was over they had already finished, and all flew out again. Then the maiden carried the dishes to the step-mother and was delighted, and believed that she might now go with them to the wedding. But the step-mother said: “All this will not help; you cannot go with us, for you have no clothes and can not dance; we should be ashamed of you!” On this she turned her back on Cinderella, and hurried away with her two proud daughters.

As no one was now at home, Cinderella went to her mother’s grave beneath the hazel-tree, and cried:

“Shiver and quiver, little tree,
Silver and gold throw down over me.”

Then the bird threw a gold and silver dress down to her, and slippers embroidered with silk and silver. She put on the dress with all speed, and went to the wedding. Her step-sisters and the step-mother however did not know her, and thought she must be a foreign princess, for she looked so beautiful in the golden dress. They never once thought of Cinderella, and believed that she was sitting at home in the dirt, picking lentils out of the ashes. The prince approached her, took her by the hand and danced with her. He would dance with no other maiden, and never let loose of her hand, and if any one else came to invite her, he said: “This is my partner.”

She danced till it was evening, and then she wanted to go home. But the King’s son said: “I will go with you and bear you company,” for he wished to see to whom the beautiful maiden belonged. She escaped from him, however, and sprang into the pigeon-house. The King’s son waited until her father came, and then he told him that the unknown maiden had leapt into the pigeon-house. The old man thought: “Can it be Cinderella?” and they had to bring him an axe and a pickaxe that he might hew the pigeon-house to pieces, but no one was inside it. And when they got home Cinderella lay in her dirty clothes among the ashes, and a dim little oil-lamp was burning on the mantle-piece, for Cinderella had jumped quickly down from the back of the pigeon-house and had run to the little hazel-tree, and there she had taken off her beautiful clothes and laid them on the grave, and the bird had taken them away again,

and then she had seated herself in the kitchen amongst the ashes in her grey gown.

Next day when the festival began afresh, and her parents and the step-sisters had gone once more, Cinderella went to the hazel-tree and said:

“Shiver and quiver, my little tree,
Silver and gold throw down over me.”

Then the bird threw down a much more beautiful dress than on the preceding day. And when Cinderella appeared at the wedding in this dress, every one was astonished at her beauty. The King’s son had waited until she came, and instantly took her by the hand and danced with no one but her. When others came and invited her, he said: “This is my partner.” When evening came she wished to leave, and the King’s son followed her and wanted to see into which house she went. But she sprang away from him, and into the garden behind the house. Therein stood a beautiful tall tree on which hung the most magnificent pears. She clambered so nimbly between the branches like a squirrel that the King’s son did not know where she was gone. He waited until her father came, and said to him: “The unknown maiden has escaped from me, and I believe she has climbed up the pear-tree.” The father thought: “Can it be Cinderella?” and had an axe brought and cut the tree down, but no one was on it. And when they got into the kitchen, Cinderella lay there among the ashes, as usual, for she had jumped down on the other side of the tree, had taken the beautiful dress to the bird on the little hazel-tree, and put on her grey gown.

On the third day, when the parents and sisters had gone away, Cinderella went once more to her mother’s grave and said to the little tree:

“Shiver and quiver, my little tree,
Silver and gold throw down over me.”

And now the bird threw down to her a dress which was more splendid and magnificent than any she had yet had, and the slippers were golden. And when she went to the festival in the dress, no one knew how to speak for astonishment. The King’s son danced with her only, and if any one invited her to dance, he said: “This is my partner.”

When evening came, Cinderella wished to leave, and the King’s son was anxious to go with her, but she escaped from him so quickly that he could not follow her. The King’s son, however, had employed a ruse, and had caused the whole staircase to be smeared with pitch, and there, when she ran down, had the maiden’s left slipper remained stuck. The King’s son picked it up, and it was small and dainty, and all golden. Next morning, he went with it to the father,

and said to him: "No one shall be my wife but she whose foot this golden slipper fits." Then were the two sisters glad, for they had pretty feet. The eldest went with the shoe into her room and wanted to try it on, and her mother stood by. But she could not get her big toe into it, and the shoe was too small for her. Then her mother gave her a knife and said: "Cut the toe off; when you are Queen you will have no more need to go on foot." The maiden cut the toe off, forced the foot into the shoe, swallowed the pain, and went out to the King's son. Then he took her on his horse as his bride and rode away with her. They were obliged, however, to pass the grave, and there, on the hazel-tree, sat the two pigeons and cried:

"Turn and peep, turn and peep,
There's blood within the shoe,
The shoe it is too small for her,
The true bride waits for you."

Then he looked at her foot and saw how the blood was trickling from it. He turned his horse round and took the false bride home again, and said she was not the true one, and that the other sister was to put the shoe on. Then this one went into her chamber and got her toes safely into the shoe, but her heel was too large. So her mother gave her a knife and said: "Cut a bit off your heel; when you are Queen you will have no more need to go on foot." The maiden cut a bit off her heel, forced her foot into the shoe, swallowed the pain, and went out to the King's son. He took her on his horse as his bride, and rode away with her, but when they passed by the hazel-tree, the two little pigeons sat on it and cried:

"Turn and peep, turn and peep,
There's blood within the shoe,
The shoe it is too small for her,
The true bride waits for you."

He looked down at her foot and saw how the blood was running out of her shoe, and how it had stained her white stocking quite red. Then he turned his horse and took the false bride home again. "This also is not the right one," said he, "have you no other daughter?" "No," said the man, "there is still a little stunted kitchen-wench which my late wife left behind her, but she cannot possibly be the bride." The King's son said he was to send her up to him; but the mother answered: "Oh no, she is much too dirty, she cannot show herself!" But he absolutely insisted on it, and Cinderella had to be called. She first washed her hands and face clean, and then went and bowed down before the

King's son, who gave her the golden shoe. Then she seated herself on a stool, drew her foot out of the heavy wooden shoe, and put it into the slipper, which fitted like a glove. And when she rose up and the King's son looked at her face he recognized the beautiful maiden who had danced with him and cried: "That is the true bride!" The step-mother and the two sisters were horrified and became pale with rage; he, however, took Cinderella on his horse and rode away with her. As they passed by the hazel-tree, the two white doves cried:

"Turn and peep, turn and peep,
No blood is in the shoe,
The shoe is not too small for her,
The true bride rides with you,"

and when they had cried that, the two came flying down and placed themselves on Cinderella's shoulders, one on the right, the other on the left, and remained sitting there.

When the wedding with the King's son was to be celebrated, the two false sisters came and wanted to get into favor with Cinderella and share her good fortune. When the betrothed couple went to church, the elder was at the right side and the younger at the left, and the pigeons pecked out one eye from each of them. Afterwards as they came back, the elder was at the left, and the younger at the right, and then the pigeons pecked out the other eye from each. And thus, for their wickedness and falsehood, they were punished with blindness all their days.

QUESTIONS

THE BROTHERS GRIMM, *Cinderella*

1. What happens to Cinderella's mother? Where is she buried? How is the girl treated by the stepfamily?
2. What does Cinderella ask her father for when he goes to town? How does the branch become the solution to all her problems? What magic does the tree seem to have?
3. What tasks does Cinderella have to accomplish to please the step-mother? What ruses does she use to keep the prince from seeing where she lives?
4. What happens to the stepsisters when they try on the slipper and when they go to the wedding?
5. Stepparents can be very loving, but often family conflicts develop over preferences for one's own children over one's stepchildren. How does the story drive home the tragedy of these conflicts?
6. Cinderella is a folk representation of the Cupid and Psyche legend in which Psyche must undergo tasks in the underworld to become worthy of her god lover. In what ways do these tasks represent the trials of adolescence for a girl?
7. Why are the punishments of the stepsisters so severe? What happens to those who try to hurt the innocent? How does society judge such people?
8. The birds are the friends of Cinderella and help her each time that she calls on them. What does it mean that each time the dress becomes more fine as she continues visits to the palace progress? What changes in Cinderella are represented by the more and more beautiful clothing?
9. Ritual lines are repeated over and over in fairy tales to explain the significant points in the story. Why are the birds' lines repeated, and why does the prince say over and over that the beautiful mysterious girl is his partner?
10. Everything in the story happens in threes: three tasks, three dresses, three tries at the slipper. How is the number three used for completeness in this tale?
11. Cinderella is a kind of nature figure who lives in the ashes and finds support under a huge tree. She also hides in a bird's house and in a pear

tree. What does nature represent for humans? How has the human race treated nature? How have some humans been like the stepmother and stepsisters? Write about the effects of rejecting nature.

12. Discuss experiences you have had with blended families, either in your own life or in the lives of friends or family. Why are there so many more challenges in these families? What solutions might be proposed to the conflicts that arise?
13. What does it mean that Cinderella is rescued by a prince? Why does she need someone else to rescue her? What would modern women think of her solutions (sitting and crying, asking nature for help)? How are some problems still solved in these old ways?



Little Snow White

BROTHERS GRIMM

ONCE UPON A TIME in the middle of winter, when the flakes of snow were falling like feathers from the sky, a queen sat at a window sewing, and the frame of the window was made of black ebony. And whilst she was sewing and looking out of the window at the snow, she pricked her finger with the needle, and three drops of blood fell upon the snow. And the red looked pretty upon the white snow, and she thought to herself, would that I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window-frame.

Soon after that she had a little daughter, who was as white as snow, and as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony, and she was therefore called little Snow White. And when the child was born, the queen died.

After a year had passed the king took to himself another wife. She was a beautiful woman, but proud and haughty, and she could not bear that anyone else should surpass her in beauty. She had a wonderful looking-glass, and when she stood in front of it and looked at herself in it, and said,

looking-glass, looking-glass, on the wall,
who in this land is the fairest of all.

The looking-glass answered,

thou, oh queen, art the fairest of all.

Then she was satisfied, for she knew that the looking-glass spoke the truth. But Snow White was growing up, and grew more and more beautiful, and when she was seven years old she was as beautiful as the day, and more beautiful than the queen herself. And once when the queen asked her looking-glass,

looking-glass, looking-glass, on the wall,
who in this land is the fairest of all.

It answered,

thou art fairer than all who are here, lady queen.
But more beautiful still is Snow White, as I ween.

Then the queen was shocked, and turned yellow and green with envy. From that hour, whenever she looked at Snow White, her heart heaved in her breast, she hated the girl so much. And envy and pride grew higher and higher in her heart like a weed, so that she had no peace day or night. She called a huntsman, and said, take the child away into the forest. I will no longer have her in my sight. Kill her, and bring me back her lung and liver as a token. The huntsman obeyed, and took her away but when he had drawn his knife, and was about to pierce Snow White's innocent heart, she began to weep, and said, ah dear huntsman, leave me my life. I will run away into the wild forest, and never come home again.

And as she was so beautiful the huntsman had pity on her and said, run away, then, you poor child. The wild beasts will soon have devoured you, thought he, and yet it seemed as if a stone had been rolled from his heart since it was no longer needful for him to kill her. And as a young bear just then came running by he stabbed it, and cut out its lung and liver and took them to the queen as proof that the child was dead. The cook had to salt them, and the wicked queen ate them, and thought she had eaten the lung and liver of Snow White.

But now the poor child was all alone in the great forest, and so terrified that she looked at all the leaves on the trees, and did not know what to do. Then she began to run, and ran over sharp stones and through thorns, and the wild beasts ran past her, but did her no harm.

She ran as long as her feet would go until it was almost evening, then she saw a little cottage and went into it to rest herself. Everything in the cottage was small, but neater and cleaner than can be told. There was a table on which was a white cover, and seven little plates, and on each plate a little spoon, moreover, there were seven little knives and forks, and seven little mugs. Against the wall stood seven little beds side by side, and covered with snow-white counterpanes.

Little Snow White was so hungry and thirsty that she ate some vegetables and bread from each plate and drank a drop of wine out of each mug, for she did not wish to take all from one only. Then, as she was so tired, she laid herself down on one of the little beds, but none of them suited her, one was too long, another too short, but at last she found that the seventh one was right, and so she remained in it, said a prayer and went to sleep.

When it was quite dark the owners of the cottage came back. They were seven dwarfs who dug and delved in the mountains for ore. They lit their seven candles, and as it was now light within the cottage they saw that someone had been there, for everything was not in the same order in which they had left it.

The first said, who has been sitting on my chair.

The second, who has been eating off my plate.

The third, who has been taking some of my bread.

The fourth, who has been eating my vegetables.

The fifth, who has been using my fork.

The sixth, who has been cutting with my knife.

The seventh, who has been drinking out of my mug.

Then the first looked round and saw that there was a little hollow on his bed, and he said, who has been getting into my bed. The others came up and each called out, somebody has been lying in my bed too. But the seventh when he looked at his bed saw little Snow White, who was lying asleep therein. And he called the others, who came running up, and they cried out with astonishment, and brought their seven little candles and let the light fall on little Snow White. Oh, heavens, oh, heavens, cried they, what a lovely child. And they were so glad that they did not wake her up, but let her sleep on in the bed. And the seventh dwarf slept with his companions, one hour with each, and so passed the night.

When it was morning little Snow White awoke, and was frightened when she saw the seven dwarfs. But they were friendly and asked her what her name was. My name is Snow White, she answered. How have you come to our house, said the dwarfs. Then she told them that her step-mother had wished to have her killed, but that the huntsman had spared her life, and that she had run for the whole day, until at last she had found their dwelling.

The dwarfs said, if you will take care of our house, cook, make the beds, wash, sew and knit, and if you will keep everything neat and clean you can stay with us and you shall want for nothing.

Yes, said Snow White, with all my heart. And she stayed with them. She kept the house in order for them. In the mornings they went to the mountains and looked for copper and gold, in the evenings they came back, and then their supper had to be ready. The girl was alone the whole day, so the good dwarfs warned her and said, beware of your step-mother, she will soon know that you are here, be sure to let no one come in.

But the queen, believing that she had eaten Snow White's lung and liver, could not but think that she was again the first and most beautiful of all, and she went to her looking-glass and said,

looking-glass, looking-glass, on the wall,
who in this land is the fairest of all.

And the glass answered,

oh, queen, thou art fairest of all I see,
but over the hills, where the seven dwarfs dwell,

Snow White is still alive and well,
and none is so fair as she.

Then she was astounded, for she knew that the looking-glass never spoke falsely, and she knew that the huntsman had betrayed her, and that little Snow White was still alive.

And so she thought and thought again how she might kill her, for so long as she was not the fairest in the whole land, envy let her have no rest. And when she had at last thought of something to do, she painted her face, and dressed herself like an old pedlar-woman, and no one could have known her. In this disguise she went over the seven mountains to the seven dwarfs, and knocked at the door and cried, pretty things to sell, very cheap, very cheap. Little Snow White looked out of the window and called out, good-day my good woman, what have you to sell. Good things, pretty things, she answered, stay-laces of all colors, and she pulled out one which was woven of bright-colored silk. I may let the worthy old woman in, thought Snow White, and she unbolted the door and bought the pretty laces. Child, said the old woman, what a fright you look, come, I will lace you properly for once. Snow-white had no suspicion, but stood before her, and let herself be laced with the new laces. But the old woman laced so quickly and so tightly that Snow White lost her breath and fell down as if dead. Now I am the most beautiful, said the queen to herself, and ran away.

Not long afterwards, in the evening, the seven dwarfs came home, but how shocked they were when they saw their dear little Snow White lying on the ground, and that she neither stirred nor moved, and seemed to be dead. They lifted her up, and, as they saw that she was laced too tightly, they cut the laces, then she began to breathe a little, and after a while came to life again. When the dwarfs heard what had happened they said, the old pedlar-woman was no one else than the wicked queen, take care and let no one come in when we are not with you.

But the wicked woman when she had reached home went in front of the glass and asked,

looking-glass, looking-glass, on the wall,
who in this land is the fairest of all.

And it answered as before,

oh, queen, thou art fairest of all I see,
but over the hills, where the seven dwarfs dwell,
Snow White is still alive and well,
and none is so fair as she.

When she heard that, all her blood rushed to her heart with fear, for she saw plainly that little Snow White was again alive. But now, she said, I will think of something that shall really put an end to you. And by the help of witchcraft, which she understood, she made a poisonous comb. Then she disguised herself and took the shape of another old woman. So she went over the seven mountains to the seven dwarfs, knocked at the door, and cried, good things to sell, cheap, cheap. Little Snow White looked out and said, go away, I cannot let anyone come in. I suppose you can look, said the old woman, and pulled the poisonous comb out and held it up. It pleased the girl so well that she let herself be beguiled, and opened the door. When they had made a bargain the old woman said, now I will comb you properly for once. Poor little Snow White had no suspicion, and let the old woman do as she pleased, but hardly had she put the comb in her hair than the poison in it took effect, and the girl fell down senseless. You paragon of beauty, said the wicked woman, you are done for now, and she went away.

But fortunately it was almost evening, when the seven dwarfs came home. When they saw Snow White lying as if dead upon the ground they at once suspected the step-mother, and they looked and found the poisoned comb. Scarcely had they taken it out when Snow White came to herself, and told them what had happened. Then they warned her once more to be upon her guard and to open the door to no one.

The queen, at home, went in front of the glass and said,

looking-glass, looking-glass, on the wall,
who in this land is the fairest of all.

Then it answered as before,

oh, queen, thou art fairest of all I see,
but over the hills, where the seven dwarfs dwell,
Snow White is still alive and well,
and none is so fair as she.

When she heard the glass speak thus she trembled and shook with rage. Snow White shall die, she cried, even if it costs me my life.

There upon she went into a quite secret, lonely room, where no one ever came, and there she made a very poisonous apple. Outside it looked pretty, white with a red cheek, so that everyone who saw it longed for it, but whoever ate a piece of it must surely die.

When the apple was ready she painted her face, and dressed herself up as a farmer's wife, and so she went over the seven mountains to the seven dwarfs.

She knocked at the door. Snow White put her head out of the window and said, I cannot let anyone in, the seven dwarfs have forbidden me. It is all the same to me, answered the woman, I shall soon get rid of my apples. There, I will give you one.

No, said Snow White, I dare not take anything. Are you afraid of poison, said the old woman, look, I will cut the apple in two pieces, you eat the red cheek, and I will eat the white. The apple was so cunningly made that only the red cheek was poisoned. Snow White longed for the fine apple, and when she saw that the woman ate part of it she could resist no longer, and stretched out her hand and took the poisonous half. But hardly had she a bit of it in her mouth than she fell down dead. Then the queen looked at her with a dreadful look, and laughed aloud and said, white as snow, red as blood, black as ebony-wood, this time the dwarfs cannot wake you up again.

And when she asked of the looking-glass at home,

looking-glass, looking-glass, on the wall,
who in this land is the fairest of all.

And it answered at last,

oh, queen, in this land thou art fairest of all.

Then her envious heart had rest, so far as an envious heart can have rest.

The dwarfs, when they came home in the evening, found Snow White lying upon the ground, she breathed no longer and was dead. They lifted her up, looked to see whether they could find anything poisonous, unlaced her, combed her hair, washed her with water and wine, but it was all of no use, the poor child was dead, and remained dead. They laid her upon a bier, and all seven of them sat around it and wept for her, and wept three days long.

Then they were going to bury her, but she still looked as if she were living, and still had her pretty red cheeks. They said, we could not bury her in the dark ground, and they had a transparent coffin of glass made, so that she could be seen from all sides, and they laid her in it, and wrote her name upon it in golden letters, and that she was a king's daughter. Then they put the coffin out upon the mountain, and one of them always stayed by it and watched it. And birds came too, and wept for Snow White, first an owl, then a raven, and last a dove.

And now Snow White lay a long, long time in the coffin, and she did not change, but looked as if she were asleep, for she was as white as snow, as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony.

It happened, however, that a king's son came into the forest, and went to the dwarfs house to spend the night. He saw the coffin on the mountain, and the beautiful Snow White within it, and read what was written upon it in golden

letters. Then he said to the dwarfs, let me have the coffin, I will give you whatever you want for it. But the dwarfs answered, we will not part with it for all the gold in the world. Then he said, let me have it as a gift, for I cannot live without seeing Snow White. I will honor and prize her as my dearest possession. As he spoke in this way the good dwarfs took pity upon him, and gave him the coffin.

And now the king's son had it carried away by his servants on their shoulders. And it happened that they stumbled over a tree-stump, and with the shock the poisonous piece of apple which Snow White had bitten off came out of her throat. And before long she opened her eyes, lifted up the lid of the coffin, sat up, and was once more alive. Oh, heavens, where am I, she cried. The king's son, full of joy, said, you are with me. And told her what had happened, and said, I love you more than everything in the world, come with me to my father's palace, you shall be my wife.

And Snow White was willing, and went with him, and their wedding was held with great show and splendor. But Snow White's wicked step-mother was also bidden to the feast. When she had arrayed herself in beautiful clothes she went before the looking-glass, and said,

looking-glass, looking-glass, on the wall,
who in this land is the fairest of all.

The glass answered,

oh, queen, of all here the fairest art thou,
but the young queen is fairer by far as I trow.

Then the wicked woman uttered a curse, and was so wretched, so utterly wretched that she knew not what to do. At first she would not go to the wedding at all, but she had no peace, and had to go to see the young queen. And when she went in she recognized Snow White, and she stood still with rage and fear, and could not stir. But iron slippers had already been put upon the fire, and they were brought in with tongs, and set before her. Then she was forced to put on the red-hot shoes, and dance until she dropped down dead.

QUESTIONS

LITTLE SNOW WHITE, *Brothers Grimm*

1. What kind of child does the first queen hope for, and what kind of child does she have? Describe the coloring of the child. Why is it essential that the mother die so that the rest of the story can unfold?
2. How does the second queen's jealousy manifest itself? What does she say to the mirror, and what does the mirror reply? How does this reply set up the rest of the plot?
3. Why do the dwarves agree to keep Snow White, and how do they try to warn her about the threat that might come to her? What three threats follow, and what is the importance of the apple as the final threat?
4. What happens to the queen at the end of the tale? Did this end surprise you? How does it differ from more sanitized versions of this story?
5. The conflicts between mothers and daughters are legendary, though in real life they are usually resolved by the time the girl grows to adulthood. How do these conflicts display themselves in this fairy tale? What does happen to the mother of the girl in the end of every life? What might the red-hot shoes mean?
6. The dwarves provide a safe haven for Snow White as the huntsman provides a safe escape. What kinds of natural phenomena might be represented by these characters? How does nature protect young girls from their own innocent impulses and choices?
7. What does the prince represent in the story? Does the fairy tale prince represent anything in the ordinary world? Who might actually wake a girl from her slumber into reality?
8. Fairy tales often have repeated lines and reused sets of numbers. How do the questions to the mirror work as ritualistic repetitions? What does the reader feel each time that the questions are asked? How do numbers work in the tale? How many attempts on Snow White's life are there? How many queens are there? How many dwarves? Note the use of three, four, and seven.
9. This fairy tale has ritualistic elements that recall other fairy tales. For example, the testing of the beds and the eating of the meal recall elements in Goldilocks and the Three Bears. How is this tale a much harsher version of that simpler tale?

10. The ending of this tale comes swiftly and brutally. What is the effect of this quick and fatal ending? How does it leave the reader feeling? Uneasy? Perplexed? Shocked?
11. Write about your own “growing pains.” What conflicts did you have with authority? What did you learn from the conflicts? What do you know now that you wish you had known when you were a youngster or teenager?
12. Watch the Disney version of Snow White, or read a children’s book that tells the tale. Then write about the differences in the way that the tale is presented in each source. Why has the story been changed? What is lost, and what is gained? Who is the audience for each version?
13. Write about the ways that women work to stay young and beautiful. What ways do they use to “keep their looks”? Who forces them into surgery, starvation, and other kinds of discomfort to stay young and beautiful? Is it worth it? Why or why not?



Edgar Allan Poe

[1809–1849]

*The son of traveling actors, EDGAR ALLAN POE was probably abandoned by his father shortly after his birth. In any case, his father died in 1810, and his mother continued to act, moving frequently with her children until 1811, when she too died, leaving Poe and his siblings destitute. Poe was adopted by the family of John and Frances Allan, and at his baptism assumed his benefactor's name. Despite this early gesture of connectedness, Poe's relationship with the Allans was fractious, especially after Poe began attending the University of Virginia in 1836. Here Poe was known both for his writing and also for his gambling and drinking. His repeated, abusive pleas for money caused John Allan to cut him off periodically. After one such incident Poe left the university and joined the army. During his service he published his first book of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (1827). His second, *Al Aaraaf*, was published in 1829. In 1830, through Allan's influence, Poe was awarded an appointment to West Point, but he was soon expelled. Among cadets the legend still circulates that he forced this himself by showing up naked for morning formation, but it is more likely that drinking and gambling lay at the heart of the matter. In any event, this disgrace seems to have been fortuitous, because at this time Poe began to devote himself to writing, publishing several stories and winning a fiction contest in 1832.*

*In 1833 he became editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, one of several important literary posts he would fill in his life. In 1839 he became editor of *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*; in 1840 editor of *Graham's*; and in 1845 editor of the *Broadway Journal*. He published a great deal of his own poetry and fiction in these journals, as well as numerous reviews (many of them quite strident), and in this way had a significant impact on literary trends and tastes. However, despite the fact that he continued to be awarded editorial positions, the same kind of behavior that resulted in his dismissal from West Point—drinking, gambling, and a disinclination to bow to authority—led him regularly into conflict with his employers. And although he published his work regularly, he was never far from poverty. He also had a tendency to pick literary fights, and was most famously dismissive of the New England transcendentalists. Some speculate that this kind of controversy may have been a ploy to sell magazines.*

*Although his writing career was relatively brief and his habits were self-destructive, Poe managed to amass an impressive canon before his death in 1849. In addition to such works as "Ligeia" (1838); "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839); *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840); and the popular "The Raven" (1844); Poe is credited with the invention of the detective story. His character C. Auguste Dupin from "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"; "The Mystery*

of Marie Roget”; and “The Purloined Letter” served as type for Sherlock Holmes and countless other detectives. In these and other stories Poe demonstrates an obsession with the dark side of human psychology. Many of his tales explore a concept he labeled “the spirit of perverseness . . . the unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself.” This phenomenon can be seen in stories such as “The Black Cat” and “The Tell-Tale Heart,” in which seemingly rational characters are drawn to commit ghastly crimes for reasons they cannot explain. While his last years were clouded by the death of his wife from tuberculosis in 1846, he seemed on the road to recovery when, in 1849, he stopped in Baltimore on his way to Philadelphia and was found on the street four days later, unconscious and near death. The exact cause of his death on October 7 remains a mystery.

—David L. G. Arnold, *University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point*



The Black Cat

EDGAR ALLAN POE

FOR THE MOST WILD, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not—and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburthen my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified—have tortured—have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To me, they have presented little but Horror—to many they will seem less terrible than *baroques*.¹ Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the common-place—some intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.

From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions. I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiarity of character grew with my growth, and, in my manhood, I derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure. To those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and sagacious dog, I need hardly be at the trouble of explaining the nature or the intensity of the gratification thus derivable. There is something in the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere *Man*.

I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own. Observing my partiality for domestic pets, she lost

¹Grotesque, bizarre

First published in the *United States Saturday Post* on August 19, 1843. Collected in *Tales of Edgar A. Poe* in 1845.

no opportunity of procuring those of the most agreeable kind. We had birds, gold fish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and *a cat*.

This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise. Not that she was ever *serious* upon this point—and I mention the matter at all for no better reason than that it happens, just now, to be remembered.

Pluto²—this was the cat's name—was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets.

Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which my general temperament and character—through the instrumentality of the Fiend Intemperance³—had (I blush to confess it) experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected, but ill-used them. For Pluto, however, I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him, as I made no scruple of maltreating the rabbits, the monkey, or even the dog, when by accident, or through affection, they came in my way. But my disease grew upon me—for what disease is like Alcohol!—and at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish—even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.

One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from my waistcoat-pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

When reason returned with the morning—when I had slept off the fumes of the night's debauch—I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty, but it was, at best, a feeble

²Roman god of the dead.

³Alcoholism

and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched. I again plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.

In the meantime the cat slowly recovered. The socket of the lost eye presented, it is true, a frightful appearance, but he no longer appeared to suffer any pain. He went about the house as usual, but, as might be expected, fled in extreme terror at my approach. I had so much of my old heart left, as to be at first grieved by this evident dislike on the part of a creature which had once so loved me. But this feeling soon gave place to irritation. And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart—one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should *not*? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is *Law*, merely because we understand it to be such? This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to *vex itself*—to offer violence to its own nature—to do wrong for the wrong's sake only—that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree;—hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart;—hung it *because* I knew that it had loved me, and *because* I felt it had given me no reason of offence;—hung it *because* I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin—a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it—if such a thing were possible—even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God.

On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of fire. The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and myself, made our escape from the conflagration. The destruction was complete. My entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to despair.

I am above the weakness of seeking to establish a sequence of cause and effect, between the disaster and the atrocity. But I am detailing a chain of facts—and wish not to leave even a possible link imperfect. On the day succeeding the fire, I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. The plastering had here, in great measure, resisted the action of the

fire—a fact which I attributed to its having been recently spread. About this wall a dense crowd were collected, and many persons seemed to be examining a particular portion of it with very minute and eager attention. The words “strange!” “singular!” and other similar expressions, excited my curiosity. I approached and saw, as if graven in *bas relief* upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic *cat*. The impression was given with an accuracy truly marvellous. There was a rope about the animal’s neck.

When I first beheld this apparition—for I could scarcely regard it as less—my wonder and my terror were extreme. But at length reflection came to my aid. The cat, I remembered, had been hung in a garden adjacent to the house. Upon the alarm of fire, this garden had been immediately filled by the crowd—by some one of whom the animal must have been cut from the tree and thrown, through an open window, into my chamber. This had probably been done with the view of arousing me from sleep. The falling of other walls had compressed the victim of my cruelty into the substance of the freshly-spread plaster; the lime of which, with the flames, and the *ammonia* from the carcass, had then accomplished the portraiture as I saw it.

Although I thus readily accounted to my reason, if not altogether to my conscience, for the startling fact just detailed, it did not the less fail to make a deep impression upon my fancy. For months I could not rid myself of the phantasm⁴ of the cat; and, during this period, there came back into my spirit a half-sentiment that seemed, but was not, remorse. I went so far as to regret the loss of the animal, and to look about me, among the vile haunts which I now habitually frequented, for another pet of the same species, and of somewhat similar appearance, with which to supply its place.

One night as I sat, half stupefied, in a den of more than infamy, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object, reposing upon the head of one of the immense hogsheads⁵ of Gin, or of Rum, which constituted the chief furniture of the apartment. I had been looking steadily at the top of this hogshead for some minutes, and what now caused me surprise was the fact that I had not sooner perceived the object thereupon. I approached it, and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat—a very large one—fully as large as Pluto, and closely resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white hair upon any portion of his body; but this cat had a large, although indefinite splotch of white, covering nearly the whole region of the breast.

Upon my touching him, he immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared delighted with my notice. This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search. I at once offered to purchase it of the

⁴Terrifying vision

⁵Large barrel or cask.

landlord; but this person made no claim to it—knew nothing of it—had never seen it before.

I continued my caresses, and, when I prepared to go home, the animal evinced a disposition to accompany me. I permitted it to do so; occasionally stooping and patting it as I proceeded. When it reached the house it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favorite with my wife.

For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated; but I know not how or why it was—its evident fondness for myself rather disgusted and annoyed. By slow degrees, these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, preventing me from physically abusing it. I did not, for some weeks, strike, or otherwise violently ill use it; but gradually—very gradually—I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently from its odious presence, as from the breath of a pestilence.

What added, no doubt, to my hatred of the beast, was the discovery, on the morning after I brought it home, that, like Pluto, it also had been deprived of one of its eyes. This circumstance, however, only endeared it to my wife, who, as I have already said, possessed, in a high degree, that humanity of feeling which had once been my distinguishing trait, and the source of many of my simplest and purest pleasures.

With my aversion to this cat, however, its partiality for myself seemed to increase. It followed my footsteps with a pertinacity which it would be difficult to make the reader comprehend. Whenever I sat, it would crouch beneath my chair, or spring upon my knees, covering me with its loathsome caresses. If I arose to walk it would get between my feet and thus nearly throw me down, or, fastening its long and sharp claws in my dress, clamber, in this manner, to my breast. At such times, although I longed to destroy it with a blow, I was yet withheld from so doing, partly by a memory of my former crime, but chiefly—let me confess it at once—by absolute *dread* of the beast.

This dread was not exactly a dread of physical evil—and yet I should be at a loss how otherwise to define it. I am almost ashamed to own—yes, even in this felon's cell, I am almost ashamed to own—that the terror and horror with which the animal inspired me, had been heightened by one of the merest chimæras⁶ it would be possible to conceive. My wife had called my attention, more than once, to the character of the mark of white hair, of which I have spoken, and which constituted the sole visible difference between the strange beast and the one I had destroyed. The reader will remember that this

⁶In Greek mythology, this fire-breathing monster has a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail. The word has come to signify any horrible vision or phantasm.

mark, although large, had been originally very indefinite; but, by slow degrees—degrees nearly imperceptible, and which for a long time my Reason struggled to reject as fanciful—it had, at length, assumed a rigorous distinctness of outline. It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name—and for this, above all, I loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster *had I dared*—it was now, I say, the image of a hideous—of a ghastly thing—of the GALLOWES!—oh, mournful and terrible engine of Horror and of Crime—of Agony and of Death!

And now was I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere Humanity. And *a brute beast*—whose fellow I had contemptuously destroyed—*a brute beast* to work out for *me*—for me a man, fashioned in the image of the High God—so much of insufferable wo! Alas! neither by day nor by night knew I the blessing of Rest any more! During the former the creature left me no moment alone; and, in the latter, I started, hourly, from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of *the thing* upon my face, and its vast weight—an incarnate Night-Mare that I had no power to shake off—incumbent eternally upon my *heart!*

Beneath the pressure of torments such as these, the feeble remnant of the good within me succumbed. Evil thoughts became my sole intimates—the darkest and most evil of thoughts. The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of all things and of all mankind; while, from the sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers.

One day she accompanied me, upon some household errand, into the cellar of the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan.

This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire deliberation, to the task of concealing the body. I knew that I could not remove it from the house, either by day or by night, without the risk of being observed by the neighbors. Many projects entered my mind. At one period I thought of cutting the corpse into minute fragments, and destroying them by fire. At another, I resolved to dig a grave for it in the floor of the cellar. Again, I deliberated about casting it in the well in the yard—about packing it in a

box, as if merchandize, with the usual arrangements, and so getting a porter to take it from the house. Finally I hit upon what I considered a far better expedient than either of these. I determined to wall it up in the cellar—as the monks of the middle ages are recorded to have walled up their victims.

For a purpose such as this the cellar was well adapted. Its walls were loosely constructed, and had lately been plastered throughout with a rough plaster, which the dampness of the atmosphere had prevented from hardening. Moreover, in one of the walls was a projection, caused by a false chimney, or fireplace, that had been filled up, and made to resemble the rest of the cellar. I made no doubt that I could readily displace the bricks at this point, insert the corpse, and wall the whole up as before, so that no eye could detect anything suspicious.

And in this calculation I was not deceived. By means of a crow-bar I easily dislodged the bricks, and, having carefully deposited the body against the inner wall, I propped it in that position, while, with little trouble, I re-laid the whole structure as it originally stood. Having procured mortar, sand, and hair, with every possible precaution, I prepared a plaster which could not be distinguished from the old, and with this I very carefully went over the new brick-work. When I had finished, I felt satisfied that all was right. The wall did not present the slightest appearance of having been disturbed. The rubbish on the floor was picked up with the minutest care. I looked around triumphantly, and said to myself—“Here at least, then, my labor has not been in vain.”

My next step was to look for the beast which had been the cause of so much wretchedness; for I had, at length, firmly resolved to put it to death. Had I been able to meet with it, at the moment, there could have been no doubt of its fate; but it appeared that the crafty animal had been alarmed at the violence of my previous anger, and forebore to present itself in my present mood. It is impossible to describe, or to imagine, the deep, the blissful sense of relief which the absence of the detested creature occasioned in my bosom. It did not make its appearance during the night—and thus for one night at least, since its introduction into the house, I soundly and tranquilly slept; aye, *slept* even with the burden of murder upon my soul!

The second and the third day passed, and still my tormentor came not. Once again I breathed as a freeman. The monster, in terror, had fled the premises forever! I should behold it no more! My happiness was supreme! The guilt of my dark deed disturbed me but little. Some few inquiries had been made, but these had been readily answered. Even a search had been instituted—but of course nothing was to be discovered. I looked upon my future felicity as secured.

Upon the fourth day of the assassination, a party of police came, very unexpectedly, into the house, and proceeded again to make rigorous investigation of

the premises. Secure, however, in the inscrutability of my place of concealment, I felt no embarrassment whatever. The officers bade me accompany them in their search. They left no nook or corner unexplored. At length, for the third or fourth time, they descended into the cellar. I quivered not in a muscle. My heart beat calmly as that of one who slumbers in innocence. I walked the cellar from end to end. I folded my arms upon my bosom, and roamed easily to and fro. The police were thoroughly satisfied and prepared to depart. The glee at my heart was too strong to be restrained. I burned to say if but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly sure their assurance of my guiltlessness.

“Gentlemen,” I said at last, as the party ascended the steps, “I delight to have allayed your suspicions. I wish you all health, and a little more courtesy. By the bye, gentlemen, this—this is a very well constructed house.” [In the rabid desire to say something easily, I scarcely knew what I uttered at all.]—“I may say an *excellently* well constructed house. These walls—are you going, gentlemen?—these walls are solidly put together;” and here, through the mere phrenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily, with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brick-work behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.

But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs of the Arch-Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb!—by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman—a howl!—a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation.

Of my own thoughts it is folly to speak. Swooning, I staggered to the opposite wall. For one instant the party upon the stairs remained motionless, through extremity of terror and of awe. In the next, a dozen stout arms were toiling at the wall. It fell bodily. The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb!

[1843]

QUESTIONS

EDGAR ALLAN POE, *The Black Cat*

1. Describe your experience of reading this story. What do you find interesting, surprising, or even shocking about the tale?
2. Why does the narrator maim his cat? With what weapon does he perpetrate this crime? Discuss the ways in which this instrument symbolizes the broader themes and character transformations of the story.
3. How does the narrator come to murder his wife? In what way does he attempt to hide her body? How does this central movement of the story reflect Poe's vision of domestic life?
4. What imagination of human identity emerges from "The Black Cat"? Is the narrator a powerful figure? Is he capable of self-knowledge and control?
5. Compare the narrator's tone with his actions. What emerges from the clash between these two aspects of his character?
6. Discuss the narrative frame of "The Black Cat." What is the immediate setting of the story? What is the context of the narrator's confession?
7. In "The Tell-Tale Heart," Poe confronts us with a narrator murderously obsessed by his one-eyed neighbor; the same may be said of "The Black Cat." Write an essay about "ocular" imagery in these two stories. What is significant about eyes—blind or seeing—in these two fictions?
8. With his short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), Poe invented the modern detective story; he elaborated the form with tales such as "The Purloined Letter" and "The Gold Bug." Is "The Black Cat" yet another example of the mystery genre? Review one of Poe's detective stories and write an essay about the ways in which "The Black Cat" complements and/or revises Poe's detective fiction.



The Cask of Amontillado

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE THOUSAND INJURIES OF Fortunato I had borne as I best could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood, that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good-will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso¹ spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity—to practice imposture upon the British and Austrian *millionaires*. In painting and gemmary, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was quack²—but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley³. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him, that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

¹A learned devotee

²An imposter, poseur

³A multi-colored costume, particularly that worn by a jester.

I said to him: “My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day! But I have received a pipe⁴ of what passes for Amontillado⁵, and I have my doubts.”

“How?” said he. “Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!”

“I have my doubts,” I replied; “and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain.”

“Amontillado!”

“I have my doubts.”

“Amontillado!”

“And I must satisfy them.”

“Amontillado!”

“As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn it is he: He will tell me—”

“Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry.”

“And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own.”

“Come, let us go.”

“Whither?”

“To your vaults.”

“My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi—”

“I have no engagement;—come.”

“My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre.”⁶

“Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado.”

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a *roquelaire*⁷ closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honor of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders

⁴A wine cask.

⁵A light sherry produced in the Spanish town of Montilla.

⁶Salt peter (potassium nitrate).

⁷A knee-length cloak.

were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux⁸, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together upon the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

“The pipe?” said he.

“It is farther on,” said I; “but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls.”

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

“Nitre?” he asked, at length.

“Nitre,” I replied. “How long have you had that cough?”

“Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!”

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

“It is nothing,” he said, at last.

“Come,” I said, with decision, “we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides there is Luchesi—”

“Enough,” he said; “the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough.”

“True—true,” I replied; “and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily; but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc⁹ will defend us from the damps.”

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

“Drink,” I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

“I drink,” he said, “to the buried that repose around us.”

“And I to your long life.”

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

⁸Torches

⁹A red wine named for the French region of its origin.

“These vaults,” he said, “are extensive.”

“The Montresors,” I replied, “were a great and numerous family.”

“I forget your arms.”

“A huge human foot d’or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel.”

“And the motto?”

“*Nemo me impune lacessit.*”¹⁰

“Good!” he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through long walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

“The nitre!” I said; “see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river’s bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough—”

“It is nothing,” he said; “let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc.”

I broke and reached him a flagon¹¹ of De Grâve¹². He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upward with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

“You do not comprehend?” he said.

“Not I,” I replied.

“Then you are not of the brotherhood.”

“How?”

“You are not of the masons.”

“Yes, yes,” I said; “yes, yes.”

“You? Impossible! A mason?”

“A mason,” I replied.

“A sign,” he said.

“It is this,” I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my *roquelaire*.

“You jest,” he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. “But let us proceed to the Amontillado.”

¹⁰Latin: “No one insults me with impunity.” Such mottos are often inscribed in the coat of arms (symbol originally borne on a shield or clothing) of European aristocratic families.

¹¹A large wine bottle.

¹²A white wine from Bordeaux.

“Be it so,” I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavored to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

“Proceed,” I said; “herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi—”

“He is an ignoramus,” interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

“Pass your hand,” I said, “over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power.”

“The Amontillado!” ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

“True,” I replied; “the Amontillado.”

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depths of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated—I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

“Ha! ha! ha!—he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!”

“The Amontillado!” I said.

“He! ha! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone.”

“Yes,” I said, “let us be gone.”

“*For the love of God, Montresor!*”

“Yes,” I said, “for the love of God.”

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud:

“Fortunato!”

No answer. I called again:

“Fortunato!”

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a tingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I reerected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*¹³

[1850]

¹³Latin: “Rest in peace.”

QUESTIONS

EDGAR ALLAN POE, *The Cask of Amontillado*

1. Why does the Montresor dislike Fortunato? What drives him to commit murder?
2. What is the frame of this story? That is, how much time has elapsed since the events described in the tale? To whom might Montresor be speaking?
3. Montresor means “my treasure” in French. The name Fortunato obviously suggests someone who enjoys good fortune. To what extent do these names illuminate larger themes and motifs in “The Cask of Amontillado”?
4. What celebration takes place during the course of the story? How does this event reflect, enable, or somehow authorize Montresor’s plot against Fortunato?
5. Why does Montresor use a story about fine wine as a means of luring Fortunato? Discuss the ways in which the ruse illuminates Fortunato’s personality and social position.
6. Consider the physical settings of “The Cask of Amontillado.” What is the significance of the transition from street to catacombs?
7. As the Montresor and Fortunato descend into the catacombs, they at one point discuss the latter’s membership in the secret society of the Freemasons. Describe this phase of the story and comment on its significance to the story as a whole. Who are the Masons? What social or political tensions surround this exchange between Montresor and Fortunato?
8. Montresor refers to his family and to his own happiness in the past tense. What does this tendency say about his personal situation and about his motives for committing the murder?
9. Review “The Cask of Amontillado” along with Poe’s “The Gold Bug”; “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”; and/or “The Purloined Letter.” Consider the ways in which Poe represents aristocratic characters. Why does Poe, living in the democratic society of early nineteenth century America, devote so much attention to European noblemen? Argue for your findings in an essay.



The Tell-Tale Heart

EDGAR ALLAN POE

TRUE!—NERVOUS—VERY, VERY dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen *me*. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation¹ I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern,² all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him he lay upon his bed. Ha!—would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at

¹Deception

²A lantern with a sliding or perforated cover that limits the beam of light.

midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never, before that night, had I *felt* the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back—but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,) and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out—“Who's there?”

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches³ in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it had welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—“It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor,” or “it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp.” Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. *All in vain*; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the perceived

³Small wood-beetles whose ticking noises were thought to predict a death.

shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to *feel* the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length, a simple dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man’s face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over acuteness of the senses?—now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew *that* sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man’s heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo⁴ of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man’s terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the he heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbour! The old man’s hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed⁵ over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned,

⁴In this sense, a “tattoo” is a rhythmic beat.

⁵Down comforter sometimes used as a mattress.

and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings.⁶ I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all—ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart,—for what had I *now* to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbour during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled,—for *what* had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search—search *well*. I led them, at length, to *his* chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room and desired them *here* to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My *manner* had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct:—it continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness—until, at length, I found that the noise was *not* within my ears.

No doubt I now grew *very* pale;—but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was *a low, dull, quick sound—much such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*. I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why *would* they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men—but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what *could* I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I

⁶Beams

swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—*louder!* And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they *knew!*—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! and now—again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder!*

“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks! here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!”

[1843]

QUESTIONS

EDGAR ALLAN POE, *The Tell-Tale Heart*

1. Describe the “dramatic situation” of this story. Who tells the story? What are the circumstances of his narration?
2. Speculate about the narrator’s motives for killing his neighbor. Why does the old man’s eye bother the narrator? What does the eye suggest or symbolize?
3. How does the narrator murder and dispose of his neighbor? What is the effect of this revelation on the reader?
4. What is symbolized by the act of dismemberment? How does the image of the dismembered human body speak to questions of identity and selfhood?
5. Consider the role of the police in “The Tell Tale-Heart.” To what extent do they participate in the solution of the crime?
6. Why does the narrator confess to the murder? How does this confession direct our attention to inner, subjective life as opposed to an objective, social reality?
7. Research and write an essay about “The Tell-Tale Heart” as Poe’s commentary on urban experience in America. What peculiar dangers does the city present in this story? How does the failure of the police detectives reflect Poe’s opinion of contemporary social institutions?
8. With his short story, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841), Poe invented the modern detective story. Is “The Tell-Tale Heart” another example of the mystery genre? Review one of Poe’s detective stories and write an essay about the ways in which “The Tell-Tale Heart” complements and/or revises the literary form to which Poe so heavily contributed.



The Raven

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and
weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, tapping at my chamber door.
“’Tis some visiter,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door— 5
Only this and nothing more.”

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost
Lenore— 10
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name
Lenore—
Nameless *here* for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating 15
“’Tis some visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
This it is and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore; 20
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you”—here I opened wide the
door;—
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering,
fearing, 25
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream
before;

But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word,
“Lenore?”

This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word,
“Lenore!”

Merely this and nothing more. 30

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
“Surely,” said I, “surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;— 35
’Tis the wind and nothing more!”

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and
flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or
stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber
door— 40

Perched upon a bust of Pallas¹ just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
“Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no
craven, 45
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly
shore—

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore!”²
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

¹ Pallas: Pallas Athene, Greek goddess of wisdom, arts, and war.

² Poe’s speaker here associates the raven with Pluto, Roman god of death and the underworld.

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore; 50
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as “Nevermore.”

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only 55
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he
fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered “Other friends have flown
before—
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my Hopes have flown
before.”
Then the bird said “Nevermore.” 60

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden
bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore 65
Of ‘Never—nevermore.’”

But the Raven still beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust
and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore— 70
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of
yore
Meant in croaking “Nevermore.”

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom’s core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining 75
On the cushion’s velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o’er,
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o’er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen
censer
Swung by seraphim³ whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted
floor. 80
“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he
hath sent thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe⁴ from thy memories of Lenore;
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or
devil!— 85
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here
ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—
Is there—*is there* balm in Gilead?⁵—tell me—tell me, I implore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.” 90

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both
adore—
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,⁶
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name
Lenore.” 95
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I shrieked,
upstarting—
“Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door! 100
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my
door!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

³ Seraphim: in Judeo-Christian tradition, seraphim are the highest order of angels; these beings are known to inspire prophecy.

⁴ Nepenthe: an ancient potion reputed to cure grief and sorrow.

⁵ In the Hebrew Bible, the “balm of Gilead” is a healing ointment suggestive of God’s power to restore the soul.

⁶ Aidenn: this is an alternate spelling for the biblical Garden of Eden.

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming, 105
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the
floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

QUESTIONS

EDGAR ALLAN POE, *The Raven*

1. Describe the basic dramatic situation of “The Raven.” Who is the speaker? Who is Lenore? What is his dilemma? What is the nature of the dialogue described in the text?
2. Discuss “The Raven” in terms of its setting. Where and when does the poem take place? To what extent do the colors, textures, and odors of the poem’s setting contribute to its overall effects and meanings?
3. “The Raven” has been lauded as a masterpiece of poetic technique or “prosody.” Consider the ways in which prosodic tactics such as rhyme, rhythm, assonance, and repetition are important to the work’s overall effect.
4. What is the poetic genre of “The Raven”? Feel free to explore diverse possibilities.
5. Poe is often associated with the literary Gothic. Research this ethos and describe the ways in which Poe participates in or even invents Gothic conventions in “The Raven.”
6. Compose an argument about the speaker’s psychological condition. To what extent is this narrator reliable? What evidence— explicit and implicit—does he offer about his state of mind?
7. Various species of birds hold different meanings within different cultures. Research the significance of ravens within western culture and discuss the extent to which this context illuminates “The Raven.”



Dorothy Parker

[1893–1967]

DOROTHY PARKER, born Dorothy Rothschild, is best remembered for her sharp-tongued satiric wit, conveyed through her poems, short stories, and acerbic theater and book reviews. Parker was the youngest of four children in a comfortable Jewish family living in New York; after her mother's death, when Dorothy was five, she was sent first to a convent school run by Catholic nuns, and then later to a private school in New Jersey. Parker first became a staff writer for *Vogue* magazine, and in 1915 moved to *Vanity Fair*, where she worked with fellow writers Robert E. Sherwood and Robert Benchley, and later succeeded P. G. Wodehouse as *Vanity Fair*'s chief drama critic. In 1917, Parker married a Wall Street broker, who soon left for Europe to serve as a volunteer ambulance driver in World War I. During this period, Parker had regular lunches at the Algonquin Hotel with Sherwood and Benchley and other literary figures, including New York Times drama critic Alexander Woollcott and the founder of *The New Yorker* magazine, Harold Ross. This cluster of luminaries came to be known as the Algonquin Round Table, known for their sharp, often vicious wit. Parker's wit, however, resulted in her termination by *Vanity Fair* in 1920, after her criticisms of theatrical productions by several of the magazine's major advertisers became too caustic for the publishers' taste. Parker went on to write for several other publications, continuing her review and essay writing, but also producing extremely popular, often viciously humorous poetry. Parker also experimented during this period with the monologue as the basis for a style of short fiction.

Parker's marriage did not long survive after her husband returned from the war, and as her depression over the failure of that relationship and other aspects of her personal life grew, she increasingly turned to alcohol for comfort. This addiction was a contributing factor in her first suicide attempt, in 1923, and Parker's writing around this time often displayed a somewhat wistful consideration of suicide's appeal. This was, however, the most productive period of her life; between 1926 and 1939, Parker published seven volumes of poetry and fiction, including *Enough Rope* (1926), *Sunset Gun* (1927), *Death and Taxes* (1931), *After Such Pleasures* (1933), and *Here Lies* (1939). During the 1930s and 1940s, Parker turned her attention toward Hollywood, working on the screenplays for numerous films, including *A Star Is Born* (1937), which was nominated for an Academy Award for best screenplay. She also became increasingly involved in political causes, helping to found the Anti-Nazi League in 1936 and later declaring herself a Communist. This affiliation, however, resulted in her blacklisting by the California State Senate Committee on Un-American Activities in 1949.

Parker died of a heart attack in 1967. Her continued alcoholism profoundly affected the last years of her career, which never regained the luster of her Round Table and Hollywood years. Her literary reputation has also suffered somewhat due to the apparent simplicity of her caustic one-liners, but her sharp wit made her one of the foremost observers, and critics, of the sentimental ideals of early twentieth-century culture.



Résumé

DOROTHY PARKER

Razors pain you;
Rivers are damp;
Acids stain you;
And drugs cause cramp.
Guns aren't lawful;
Nooses give;
Gas smells awful;
You might as well live.

5

[1925]

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QUESTIONS

DOROTHY PARKER, *Résumé*

1. How is the poem's combination of light-hearted humor and submerged sadness created? Which particular images, word choices, or sound patterns contribute to that ambivalent tone?
2. What attitudes toward suicide does "Résumé" convey? How convincingly does it convey them?
3. What do you make of the poem's title? What does "résumé" seem to mean in the context of this poem?
4. "Résumé" was written two years after Parker's first unsuccessful suicide attempt. How does that biographical detail affect your understanding of the poem?



Hansel and Gretel

JACOB AND WILHELM GRIMM

NEXT TO A GREAT FOREST there lived a poor woodcutter with his wife and his two children. The boy's name was Hansel and the girl's name was Gretel. He had but little to eat, and once, when a great famine came to the land, he could no longer provide even their daily bread.

One evening as he was lying in bed worrying about his problems, he sighed and said to his wife, "What is to become of us? How can we feed our children when we have nothing for ourselves?"

"Man, do you know what?" answered the woman. "Early tomorrow morning we will take the two children out into the thickest part of the woods, make a fire for them, and give each of them a little piece of bread, then leave them by themselves and go off to our work. They will not find their way back home, and we will be rid of them."

"No, woman," said the man. "I will not do that. How could I bring myself to abandon my own children alone in the woods? Wild animals would soon come and tear them to pieces."

"Oh, you fool," she said, "then all four of us will starve. All you can do is to plane the boards for our coffins." And she gave him no peace until he agreed.

"But I do feel sorry for the poor children," said the man.

The two children had not been able to fall asleep because of their hunger, and they heard what the stepmother had said to the father.

Gretel cried bitter tears and said to Hansel, "It is over with us!"

"Be quiet, Gretel," said Hansel, "and don't worry. I know what to do."

And as soon as the adults had fallen asleep, he got up, pulled on his jacket, opened the lower door, and crept outside. The moon was shining brightly, and the white pebbles in front of the house were glistening like silver coins. Hansel bent over and filled his jacket pockets with them, as many as would fit.

Then he went back into the house and said, "Don't worry, Gretel. Sleep well. God will not forsake us." Then he went back to bed.

At daybreak, even before sunrise, the woman came and woke the two children. "Get up, you lazybones. We are going into the woods to fetch wood." Then she gave each one a little piece of bread, saying, "Here is something for midday. Don't eat it any sooner, for you'll not get any more."

Gretel put the bread under her apron, because Hansel's pockets were full of stones. Then all together they set forth into the woods. After they had walked a little way, Hansel began stopping again and again and looking back toward the house.

The father said, "Hansel, why are you stopping and looking back? Pay attention now, and don't forget your legs."

"Oh, father," said Hansel, "I am looking at my white cat that is sitting on the roof and wants to say good-bye to me."

The woman said, "You fool, that isn't your cat. That's the morning sun shining on the chimney."

However, Hansel had not been looking at his cat but instead had been dropping the shiny pebbles from his pocket onto the path.

When they arrived in the middle of the woods, the father said, "You children gather some wood, and I will make a fire so you won't freeze."

Hansel and Gretel gathered together some twigs, a pile as high as a small mountain

The twigs were set afire, and when the flames were burning well, the woman said, "Lie down by the fire and rest. We will go into the woods to cut wood. When we are finished, we will come back and get you."

Hansel and Gretel sat by the fire. When midday came each one ate his little piece of bread. Because they could hear the blows of an ax, they thought that the father was nearby. However, it was not an ax. It was a branch that he had tied to a dead tree and that the wind was beating back and forth. After they had sat there a long time, their eyes grew weary and closed, and they fell sound sleep.

When they finally awoke, it was dark at night. Gretel began to cry and said, "How will we get out of woods?"

Hansel comforted her, "Wait a little until the moon comes up, and then we'll find the way."

After the full moon had come up, Hansel took his little sister by the hand. They followed the pebbles that glistened there like newly minted coins, showing them the way. They walked throughout the entire night, and as morning was breaking, they arrived at the father's house.

They knocked on the door, and when the woman opened it and saw that it was Hansel and Gretel, she said, "You wicked children, why did you sleep so long in the woods? We thought that you did not want to come back."

But the father was overjoyed when he saw his children once more, for he had not wanted to leave them alone.

Not long afterward there was once again great need everywhere, and one evening the children heard the mother say to the father, "We have again eaten up everything. We have only a half loaf of bread, and then the song will be over. We must get rid of the children. We will take them deeper into the woods, so they will not find their way out. Otherwise there will be no help for us."

The man was very disheartened, and he thought, "It would be better to share the last bit with the children."

But the woman would not listen to him, scolded him, and criticized him. He who says A must also say B, and because he had given in the first time, he had to do so the second time as well.

The children were still awake and had overheard the conversation. When the adults were asleep, Hansel got up again and wanted to gather pebbles as he had done before, but the woman had locked the door, and Hansel could not get out. But he comforted his little sister and said, "Don't cry, Gretel. Sleep well. God will help us."

Early the next morning the woman came and got the children from their beds. They received their little pieces of bread, even less than the last time. On the way to the woods, Hansel crumbled his piece in his pocket, then often stood still, and threw crumbs onto the ground.

"Hansel, why are you always stopping and looking around?" said his father. "Keep walking straight ahead."

"I can see my pigeon sitting on the roof. It wants to say good-bye to me."

"Fool," said the woman, "that isn't your pigeon. That's the morning sun shining on the chimney."

But little by little Hansel dropped all the crumbs onto the path. The woman took them deeper into the woods than they had ever been in their whole lifetime.

Once again a large fire was made, and the mother said, "Sit here, children. If you get tired you can sleep a little. We are going into the woods to cut wood. We will come and get you in the evening when we are finished."

When it was midday Gretel shared her bread with Hansel, who had scattered his piece along the path. Then they fell asleep, and evening passed, but no one came to get the poor children.

It was dark at night when they awoke, and Hansel comforted Gretel and said, "Wait, when the moon comes up I will be able to see the crumbs of bread that I scattered, and they will show us the way back home."

When the moon appeared they got up, but they could not find any crumbs, for the many thousands of birds that fly about in the woods and in the fields had pecked them up.

Hansel said to Gretel, "We will find our way," but they did not find it.

They walked through the entire night and the next day from morning until evening, but they did not find their way out of the woods. They were terribly hungry, for they had eaten only a few small berries that were growing on the ground. And because they were so tired that their legs would no longer carry them, they lay down under a tree and fell asleep. It was already the third morning since they had left the father's house. They started walking again, but managed only to go deeper and deeper into the woods. If help did not come soon, they would perish. At midday they saw a little snow-white bird sitting on a branch. It sang so beautifully that they stopped to listen. When it was finished it stretched its wings and flew in front of them. They followed it until they came to a little house. The bird sat on the roof, and when they came closer, they saw that the little house was built entirely from bread with a roof made of cake, and the windows were made of clear sugar.

"Let's help ourselves to a good meal," said Hansel. "I'll eat a piece of the roof, and Gretel, you eat from the window. That will be sweet."

Hansel reached up and broke off a little of the roof to see how it tasted, while Gretel stood next to the windowpanes and was nibbling at them. Then a gentle voice called out from inside:

Nibble, nibble, little mouse,
Who is nibbling at my house?

The children answered:

The wind, the wind,
The heavenly child.

They continued to eat, without being distracted. Hansel, who very much liked the taste of the roof, tore down another large piece, and Gretel poked out an entire round windowpane. Suddenly the door opened, and a woman, as old as the hills and leaning on a crutch, came creeping out. Hansel and Gretel were so frightened that they dropped what they were holding in their hands.

But the old woman shook her head and said, "Oh, you dear children, who brought you here? Just come in and stay with me. No harm will come to you."

She took them by the hand and led them into her house. Then she served them a good meal: milk and pancakes with sugar, apples, and nuts. Afterward she made two nice beds for them, decked in white. Hansel and Gretel went to bed, thinking they were in heaven. But the old woman had only pretended to be friendly. She was a wicked witch who was lying in wait there for children. She had built her house of bread only in order to lure them to her, and if she captured one, she would kill him, cook him, and eat him; and for her that was a day to celebrate.

Witches have red eyes and cannot see very far, but they have a sense of smell like animals, and know when humans are approaching.

When Hansel and Gretel came near to her, she laughed wickedly and spoke scornfully, "Now I have them. They will not get away from me again."

Early the next morning, before they awoke, she got up, went to their beds, and looked at the two of them lying there so peacefully, with their full red cheeks. "They will be a good mouthful," she mumbled to herself. Then she grabbed Hansel with her withered hand and carried him to a little stall, where she locked him behind a cage door. Cry as he might, there was no help for him.

Then she shook Gretel and cried, "Get up, lazybones! Fetch water and cook something good for your brother. He is locked outside in the stall and is to be fattened up. When he is fat I am going to eat him."

Gretel began to cry, but it was all for nothing. She had to do what the witch demanded. Now Hansel was given the best things to eat every day, but Gretel received nothing but crayfish shells.

Every morning the old woman crept out to the stall and shouted, "Hansel, stick out your finger, so I can feel if you are fat yet."

But Hansel stuck out a little bone, and the old woman, who had bad eyes and could not see the bone, thought it was Hansel's finger, and she wondered why he didn't get fat.

When four weeks had passed and Hansel was still thin, impatience overcame her, and she would wait no longer. "Hey, Gretel!" she shouted to the girl, "Hurry up and fetch some water. Whether Hansel is fat or thin, tomorrow I am going to slaughter him and boil him."

Oh, how the poor little sister sobbed as she was forced to carry the water, and how the tears streamed down her cheeks! "Dear God, please help us," she cried. "If only the wild animals had devoured us in the woods, then we would have died together."

"Save your slobbering," said the old woman. "It doesn't help you at all."

The next morning Gretel had to get up early, hang up the kettle with water, and make a fire.

"First we are going to bake," said the old woman. "I have already made a fire in the oven and kneaded the dough."

She pushed poor Gretel outside to the oven, from which fiery flames were leaping. "Climb in," said the witch, "and see if it is hot enough to put the bread in yet." And when Gretel was inside, she intended to close the oven, and bake her, and eat her as well.

But Gretel saw what she had in mind, so she said, "I don't know how to do that. How can I get inside?"

“Stupid goose,” said the old woman. “The opening is big enough. See, I myself could get in.” And she crawled up stuck her head into the oven.

Then Gretel gave her a shove, causing her to fall in. Then she closed the iron door and secured it with a bar. The old woman began to howl frightfully. But Gretel ran away, and the godless witch burned up miserably. Gretel ran straight to Hansel, unlocked his stall, and cried, “Hansel, we are saved. The old witch is dead.”

Then Hansel jumped out, like a bird from its cage when someone opens its door. How happy they were! They threw their arms around each other’s necks, jumped with joy, and kissed one another. Because they now had nothing to fear, they went into the witch’s house. In every corner were chests of pearls and precious stones.

“These are better than pebbles,” said Hansel, filling his pockets.

Gretel said, “I will take some home with me as well,” and she filled her apron full.

“But now we must leave,” said Hansel, “and get out of these witch-woods.”

After walking a few hours they arrived at a large body of water. “We cannot get across,” said Hansel. “I cannot see a walkway or a bridge.”

“There are no boats here,” answered Gretel, but there is a white duck swimming. If I ask it, it will help us across.”

Then she called out:

Duckling, duckling,
Here stand Gretel and Hansel.
Neither a walkway nor a bridge,
Take us onto your white back.

The duckling came up to them, and Hansel climbed onto it, then asked his little sister to sit down next to him.

“No,” answered Gretel. “That would be too heavy for the duckling. It should take us across one at a time.”

That is what the good animal did, and when they were safely on the other side, and had walked on a little while, the woods grew more and more familiar to them, and finally they saw the father’s house in the distance. They began to run, rushed inside, and threw their arms around the father’s neck.

The man had not had even one happy hour since he had left the children in the woods. However, the woman had died. Gretel shook out her apron, scattering pearls and precious stones around the room, and Hansel added to them by throwing one handful after the other from his pockets.

Now all their cares were at an end, and they lived happily together.

My tale is done,
A mouse has run.

And whoever catches it can make for himself from it a large, large fur cap.

The Rose Tree (1890)

Joseph Jacobs

THERE was once upon a time a good man who had two children: a girl by a first wife, and a boy by the second. The girl was as white as milk, and her lips were like cherries. Her hair was like golden silk, and it hung to the ground. Her brother loved her dearly, but her wicked stepmother hated her. 'Child,' said the stepmother one day, 'go to the grocer's shop and buy me a pound of candles.' She gave her the money; and the little girl went, bought the candles, and started on her return. There was a stile to cross. She put down the candles whilst she got over the stile. Up came a dog and ran off with the candles.

She went back to the grocer's, and she got a second bunch. She came to the stile, set down the candles, and proceeded to climb over. Up came the dog and ran off with the candles.

She went again to the grocer's, and she got a third bunch; and just the same happened. Then she came to her stepmother crying, for she had spent all the money and had lost three bunches of candles.

The stepmother was angry, but she pretended not to mind the loss. She said to the child: 'Come, lay your head on my lap that I may comb your hair.' So the little one laid her head in the woman's lap, who proceeded to comb the yellow silken hair. And when she combed the hair fell over her knees, and rolled right down to the ground.

Then the stepmother hated her more for the beauty of her hair; so she said to her, 'I cannot part your hair on my knee, fetch a billet of wood.' So she fetched it. Then said the stepmother, 'I cannot part your hair with a comb, fetch me an axe.' So she fetched it.

‘Now,’ said the wicked woman, ‘lay your head down on the billet whilst I part your hair.’

Well! she laid down her little golden head without fear; and whist! down came the axe, and it was off. So the mother wiped the axe and laughed.

Then she took the heart and liver of the little girl, and she stewed them and brought into the house for supper. The husband tasted them and shook his head. He said they tasted very strangely. She gave some to the little boy, but he would not eat. She tried to force him, but he refused, and ran out into the garden, and took up his little sister, and put her in a box, and buried the box under a rose-tree; and every day he went to the tree and wept, till his tears ran down on the box.

One day the rose-tree flowered. It was spring and there among the flowers was a white bird; and it sang, and sang, and sang like an angel out of heaven. Away it flew, and it went to a cobbler’s shop, and perched itself on a tree hard by; and thus it sang:

‘My wicked mother slew me,
My dear father ate me,
My little brother whom I love
Sits below, and I sing above
Stick, stock, stone dead.’

‘Sing again that beautiful song,’ said the shoemaker. ‘If you will first give me those little red shoes you are making.’ The cobbler gave the shoes, and the bird sang the song; then flew to a tree in front of the watchmaker’s, and sang:

‘My wicked mother slew me
My dear father ate me,
My little brother whom I love
Sits below, and I sing above
Stick, stock, stone dead.’

‘Oh, the beautiful song! sing it again, sweet bird,’ said the watchmaker. ‘If you will give me first that gold watch and chain in your hand.’ The jeweller gave the watch and chain. The bird took it in one foot, the shoes in the other, and, after having repeated the song, flew away to where three millers were picking a millstone. The bird perched on a tree and sang:

‘My wicked mother slew me,
My dear father ate me,
My little brother whom I love
Sits below, and I sing above
Stick!’

Then one of the men put down his tool and looked up from his work,
‘Stock!’

Then the second miller’s man laid aside his tool and looked up,
‘Stone!’

Then the third miller’s man laid down his tool and looked up,
‘Dead!’

Then all three cried out with one voice: ‘Oh, what a beautiful song! Sing it, sweet bird, again.’ ‘If you will put the millstone round my neck,’ said the bird. The men did what the bird wanted and away to the tree it flew with the millstone round its neck, the red shoes in one foot, and the gold watch and chain in the other. It sang the song and then flew home. It rattled the millstone against the eaves of the house, and the stepmother said: ‘It thunders.’ Then the little boy ran out to see the thunder, and down dropped the red shoes at his feet. It rattled the millstone against the eaves of the house once more, and the stepmother said again: ‘It thunders.’ Then the father ran out and down fell the chain about his neck.

In ran father and son, laughing and saying, ‘See, what fine things the thunder has brought us!’ Then the bird rattled the millstone against the eaves of the house a third time; and the stepmother said: ‘It thunders again; perhaps the thunder has brought something for me’, and she ran out; but the moment she stepped outside the door, down fell the millstone on her head; and so she died.

Gold-Tree And Silver-Tree (1890)

Joseph Jacobs

ONCE upon a time there was a king who had a wife, whose name was Silver-tree, and a daughter, whose name was Gold-tree. On a certain day of the days, Gold-tree and Silver-tree went to a glen, where there was a well, and in it there was a trout.

Said Silver-tree, "Troutie, bonny little fellow, am not I the most beautiful queen in the world?"

"Oh! indeed you are not."

"Who then?"

"Why, Gold-tree, your daughter."

Silver-tree went home, blind with rage. She lay down on the bed, and vowed she would never be well until she could get the heart and the liver of Gold-tree, her daughter, to eat.

At nightfall the king came home, and it was told him that Silver-tree, his wife, was very ill. He went where she was, and asked her what was wrong with her.

"Oh! only a thing which you may heal if you like."

"Oh! indeed there is nothing at all which I could do for you that I would not do."

"If I get the heart and the liver of Gold-tree, my daughter, to eat, I shall be well."

Now it happened about this time that the son of a great king had come from abroad to ask Gold-tree for marrying. The King now agreed to this, and they went abroad.

The king then went and sent his lads to the hunting-hill for a he-goat, and he gave its heart and its liver to his wife to eat; and she rose well and healthy.

A year after this Silver-tree went to the glen, where there was the well in which there was the trout.

“Troutie, bonny little fellow,” said she, “am not I the most beautiful queen in the world?”

“Oh! indeed you are not.”

“Who then?”

“Why, Gold-tree, your daughter.”

“Oh! well, it is long since she was living. It is a year since I ate her heart and liver.”

“Oh! indeed she is not dead. She is married to a great prince abroad.”

Silver-tree went home, and begged the king to put the long-ship in order, and said, “I am going to see my dear Gold-tree, for it is so long since I saw her.” The long-ship was put in order, and they went away.

It was Silver-tree herself that was at the helm, and she steered the ship so well that they were not long at all before they arrived.

The prince was out hunting on the hills. Gold-tree knew the long-ship of her father coming.

“Oh!” said she to the servants, “my mother is coming, and she will kill me.”

“She shall not kill you at all; we will lock you in a room where she cannot get near you.”

This is how it was done; and when Silver-tree came ashore, she began to cry out:

“Come to meet your own mother, when she comes to see you,” Gold-tree said that she could not, that she was locked in the room, and that she could not get out of it.

“Will you not put out,” said Silver-tree, “your little finger through the keyhole, so that your own mother may give a kiss to it?”

She put out her little finger, and Silver-tree went and put a poisoned stab in it, and Gold-tree fell dead.

When the prince came home, and found Gold-tree dead, he was in great sorrow, and when he saw how beautiful she was, he did not bury her at all, but he locked her in a room where nobody would get near her.

In the course of time he married again, and the whole house was under the hand of this wife but one room, and he himself always kept the key of that room. On a certain day of the days he forgot to take the key with him, and the second wife got into the room. What did she see there but the most beautiful woman that she ever saw.

She began to turn and try to wake her, and she noticed the poisoned stab in her finger. She took the stab out, and Gold-tree rose alive, as beautiful as she was ever.

At the fall of night the prince came home from the hunting-hill, looking very downcast.

“What gift,” said his wife, “would you give me that I could make you laugh?”

“Oh! indeed, nothing could make me laugh, except Gold-tree were to come alive again.”

“Well, you’ll find her alive down there in the room.”

When the prince saw Gold-tree alive he made great rejoicings, and he began to kiss her, and kiss her, and kiss her. Said the second wife, “Since she is the first one you had it is better for you to stick to her, and I will go away.”

“Oh! indeed you shall not go away, but I shall have both of you.”

At the end of the year, Silver-tree went to the glen, where there was the well, in which there was the trout.

“Troutie, bonny little fellow,” said she, “am not I the most beautiful queen in the world?”

“Oh! indeed you are not.”

“Who then?”

“Why, Gold-tree, your daughter.”

“Oh! well, she is not alive. It is a year since I put the poisoned stab into her finger.”

“Oh! indeed she is not dead at all, at all.”

Silver-tree went home, and begged the king to put the long-ship in order, for that she was going to see her dear Gold-tree, as it was so long since she saw her. The long-ship was put in order, and they went away. It was Silver-tree herself that was at the helm, and she steered the ship so well that they were not long at all before they arrived.

The prince was out hunting on the hills. Gold-tree knew her father’s ship coming.

“Oh!” said she, “my mother is coming, and she will kill me.”

“Not at all,” said the second wife; “we will go down to meet her.”

Silver-tree came ashore. “Come down, Gold-tree, love,” said she, “for your own mother has come to you with a precious drink.”

“It is a custom in this country,” said the second wife, “that the person who offers a drink takes a draught out of it first.”

Silver-tree put her mouth to it, and the second wife went and struck it so that some of it went down her throat, and she fell dead. They had only to carry her home a dead corpse and bury her.

The prince and his two wives were long alive after this, pleased and peaceful. I left them there.



Little Red Cap

JACOB AND WILHELM GRIMM

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a sweet little girl. Everyone who saw her liked her, but most of all her grandmother, who did not know what to give the child next. Once she gave her a little cap made of red velvet. Because it suited her so well, and she wanted to wear it all the time, she came to be known as Little Red Cap.

One day her mother said to her, “Come Little Red Cap. Here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine. Take them to your grandmother. She is sick and weak, and they will do her well. Mind your manners and give her my greetings. Behave yourself on the way, and do not leave the path, or you might fall down and break the glass, and then there will be nothing for your sick grandmother.”

Little Red Cap promised to obey her mother. The grandmother lived out in the woods, a half hour from the village. When Little Red Cap entered the woods a wolf came up to her. She did not know what a wicked animal he was, and was not afraid of him.

“Good day to you, Little Red Cap.”

“Thank you, wolf.”

“Where are you going so early, Little Red Cap?”

“To grandmother’s.”

“And what are you carrying under your apron?”

“Grandmother is sick and weak, and I am taking her some cake and wine. We baked yesterday, and they should give her strength.”

“Little Red Cap, just where does your grandmother live?”

“Her house is a good quarter hour from here in the woods, under the three large oak trees. There’s a hedge of hazel bushes there. You must know the place,” said Little Red Cap.

The wolf thought to himself, “Now there is a tasty bite for me. Just how are you going to catch her?” Then he said, “Listen, Little Red Cap, haven’t you seen the beautiful flowers that are blossoming in the woods? Why don’t you go and take a look? And I don’t believe you can hear how beautifully the birds are singing. You

are walking along as though you were on your way to school in the village. It is very beautiful in the woods.”

Little Red Cap opened her eyes and saw the sunlight breaking through the trees and how the ground was covered with beautiful flowers. She thought, “If I take a bouquet to grandmother, she will be very pleased. Anyway, it is still early, and I’ll be home on time.” And she ran off into the woods looking for flowers. Each time she picked one she thought that she could see an even more beautiful one a little way off, and she ran after it, going further and further into the woods. But the wolf ran straight to the grandmother’s house and knocked on the door.

“Who’s there?”

“Little Red Cap. I’m bringing you some cake and wine. Open the door for me.”

“Just press the latch,” called out the grandmother. “I’m too weak to get up.”

The wolf pressed the latch, and the door opened. He stepped inside, went straight to the grandmother’s bed, and ate her up. Then he took her clothes, put them on, and put her cap on his head. He got into her bed and pulled the curtains shut.

Little Red Cap had run after flowers, and did not continue on her way to grandmother’s until she had gathered all that she could carry. When she arrived, she found, to her surprise, that the door was open. She walked into the parlor, and everything looked so strange that she thought, “Oh, my God, why am I so afraid? I usually like it at grandmother’s.” Then she went to the bed and pulled back the curtains. Grandmother was lying there with her cap pulled down over her face and looking very strange.

“Oh, grandmother, what big ears you have!”

“All the better to hear you with.”

“Oh, grandmother, what big eyes you have!”

“All the better to see you with.”

“Oh, grandmother, what big hands you have!”

“All the better to grab you with!”

“Oh, grandmother, what a horribly big mouth you have!”

“All the better to eat you with!” And with that he jumped out of bed, jumped on top of poor Little Red Cap, and ate her up. As soon as the wolf had finished this tasty bite, he climbed back into bed, fell asleep, and began to snore very loudly.

A huntsman was just passing by. He thought it strange that the old woman was snoring so loudly, so he decided to take a look. He stepped inside, and in the bed there lay the wolf that he had been hunting for such a long time. “He has eaten the grandmother, but perhaps she still can be saved. I won’t shoot him,” thought the huntsman. So he took a pair of scissors and cut open his belly.

He had cut only a few strokes when he saw the red cap shining through. He cut a little more, and the girl jumped out and cried, "Oh, I was so frightened! It was so dark inside the wolf's body!"

And then the grandmother came out alive as well. Then Little Red Cap fetched some large heavy stones. They filled the wolf's body with them, and when he woke up and tried to run away, the stones were so heavy that he fell down dead.

The three of them were happy. The huntsman took the wolf's pelt. The grandmother ate the cake and drank the wine that Little Red Cap had brought. And Little Red Cap thought to herself, "As long as I live, I will never leave the path and run off into the woods by myself if mother tells me not to."

They also tell how Little Red Cap was taking some baked things to her grandmother another time, when another wolf spoke to her and wanted her to leave the path. But Little Red Cap took care and went straight to grandmother's. She told her that she had seen the wolf, and that he had wished her a good day, but had stared at her in a wicked manner. "If we hadn't been on a public road, he would have eaten me up," she said.

"Come," said the grandmother. "Let's lock the door, so he can't get in."

Soon afterward the wolf knocked on the door and called out, "Open up, grandmother. It's Little Red Cap, and I'm bringing you some baked things."

They remained silent, and did not open the door. The wicked one walked around the house several times, and finally jumped onto the roof. He wanted to wait until Little Red Cap went home that evening, then follow her and eat her up in the darkness. But the grandmother saw what he was up to. There was a large stone trough in front of the house.

"Fetch a bucket, Little Red Cap," she said. "Yesterday I cooked some sausage. Carry the water that I boiled them with to the trough." Little Red Cap carried water until the large, large trough was clear full. The smell of sausage arose into the wolf's nose. He sniffed and looked down, stretching his neck so long that he could no longer hold himself, and he began to slide. He slid off the roof, fell into the trough, and drowned. And Little Red Cap returned home happily and safely.



Cinderella; or, The Little Glass Slipper (1889)

CHARLES PERRAULT

ONCE THERE WAS A GENTLEMAN who married, for his second wife, the proudest and most haughty woman that was ever seen. She had, by a former husband, two daughters of her own, who were, indeed, exactly like her in all things. He had likewise, by another wife, a young daughter, but of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper, which she took from her mother, who was the best creature in the world.

No sooner were the ceremonies of the wedding over but the stepmother began to show herself in her true colors. She could not bear the good qualities of this pretty girl, and the less because they made her own daughters appear the more odious. She employed her in the meanest work of the house. She scoured the dishes, tables, etc., and cleaned madam's chamber, and those of misses, her daughters. She slept in a sorry garret, on a wretched straw bed, while her sisters slept in fine rooms, with floors all inlaid, on beds of the very newest fashion, and where they had looking glasses so large that they could see themselves at their full length from head to foot.

The poor girl bore it all patiently, and dared not tell her father, who would have scolded her; for his wife governed him entirely. When she had done her work, she used to go to the chimney corner, and sit down there in the cinders and ashes, which caused her to be called Cinderwench. Only the younger sister, who was not so rude and uncivil as the older one, called her Cinderella. However, Cinderella, notwithstanding her coarse apparel, was a hundred times more beautiful than her sisters, although they were always dressed very richly.

It happened that the king's son gave a ball, and invited all persons of fashion to it. Our young misses were also invited, for they cut a very grand figure among those of quality. They were mightily delighted at this invitation, and wonderfully busy in selecting the gowns, petticoats, and hair dressing that would best become them. This was a new difficulty for Cinderella; for it was she who ironed her sister's linen and pleated their ruffles. They talked all day long of nothing but how they should be dressed.

“For my part,” said the eldest, “I will wear my red velvet suit with French trimming.”

“And I,” said the youngest, “shall have my usual petticoat; but then, to make amends for that, I will put on my gold-flowered cloak, and my diamond stomacher, which is far from being the most ordinary one in the world.”

They sent for the best hairdresser they could get to make up their headpieces and adjust their hairdos, and they had their red brushes and patches from Mademoiselle de la Poche.

They also consulted Cinderella in all these matters, for she had excellent ideas, and her advice was always good. Indeed, she even offered her services to fix their hair, which they very willingly accepted. As she was doing this, they said to her, “Cinderella, would you not like to go to the ball?”

“Alas!” said she, “you only jeer me; it is not for such as I am to go to such a place.”

“You are quite right,” they replied. “It would make the people laugh to see a Cinderwench at a ball.”

Anyone but Cinderella would have fixed their hair awry, but she was very good, and dressed them perfectly well. They were so excited that they hadn't eaten a thing for almost two days. Then they broke more than a dozen laces trying to have themselves laced up tightly enough to give them a fine slender shape. They were continually in front of their looking glass. At last the happy day came. They went to court, and Cinderella followed them with her eyes as long as she could. When she lost sight of them, she started to cry.

Her godmother, who saw her all in tears, asked her what was the matter.

“I wish I could. I wish I could.” She was not able to speak the rest, being interrupted by her tears and sobbing.

This godmother of hers, who was a fairy, said to her, “You wish that you could go to the ball; is it not so?”

“Yes,” cried Cinderella, with a great sigh.

“Well,” said her godmother, “be but a good girl, and I will contrive that you shall go.” Then she took her into her chamber, and said to her, “Run into the garden, and bring me a pumpkin.”

Cinderella went immediately to gather the finest she could get, and brought it to her godmother, not being able to imagine how this pumpkin could help her go to the ball. Her godmother scooped out all the inside of it, leaving nothing but the rind. Having done this, she struck the pumpkin with her wand, and it was instantly turned into a fine coach, gilded all over with gold.

She then went to look into her mousetrap, where she found six mice, all alive, and ordered Cinderella to lift up a little the trapdoor. She gave each mouse, as it went out, a little tap with her wand, and the mouse was that moment turned into

a fine horse, which altogether made a very fine set of six horses of a beautiful mouse colored dapple gray.

Being at a loss for a coachman, Cinderella said, "I will go and see if there is not a rat in the rat trap that we can turn into a coachman."

"You are right," replied her godmother, "Go and look."

Cinderella brought the trap to her, and in it there were three huge rats. The fairy chose the one which had the largest beard, touched him with her wand, and turned him into a fat, jolly coachman, who had the smartest whiskers that eyes ever beheld.

After that, she said to her, "Go again into the garden, and you will find six lizards behind the watering pot. Bring them to me."

She had no sooner done so but her godmother turned them into six footmen, who skipped up immediately behind the coach, with their liveries all bedaubed with gold and silver, and clung as close behind each other as if they had done nothing else their whole lives. The fairy then said to Cinderella, "Well, you see here an equipage fit to go to the ball with; are you not pleased with it?"

"Oh, yes," she cried; "but must I go in these nasty rags?"

Her godmother then touched her with her wand, and, at the same instant, her clothes turned into cloth of gold and silver, all beset with jewels. This done, she gave her a pair of glass slippers, the prettiest in the whole world. Being thus decked out, she got up into her coach; but her godmother, above all things, commanded her not to stay past midnight, telling her, at the same time, that if she stayed one moment longer, the coach would be a pumpkin again, her horses mice, her coachman a rat, her footmen lizards, and that her clothes would become just as they were before.

She promised her godmother to leave the ball before midnight; and then drove away, scarcely able to contain herself for joy. The king's son, who was told that a great princess, whom nobody knew, had arrived, ran out to receive her. He gave her his hand as she alighted from the coach, and led her into the hall, among all the company. There was immediately a profound silence. Everyone stopped dancing, and the violins ceased to play, so entranced was everyone with the singular beauties of the unknown newcomer.

Nothing was then heard but a confused noise of, "How beautiful she is! How beautiful she is!"

The king himself, old as he was, could not help watching her, and telling the queen softly that it was a long time since he had seen so beautiful and lovely a creature.

All the ladies were busied in considering her clothes and headdress, hoping to have some made next day after the same pattern, provided they could find such fine materials and as able hands to make them.

The king's son led her to the most honorable seat, and afterwards took her out to dance with him. She danced so very gracefully that they all more and more admired her. A fine meal was served up, but the young prince ate not a morsel, so intently was he busied in gazing on her.

She went and sat down by her sisters, showing them a thousand civilities, giving them part of the oranges and citrons which the prince had presented her with, which very much surprised them, for they did not know her. While Cinderella was thus amusing her sisters, she heard the clock strike eleven and three-quarters, whereupon she immediately made a courtesy to the company and hurried away as fast as she could.

Arriving home, she ran to seek out her godmother, and, after having thanked her, she said she could not but heartily wish she might go to the ball the next day as well, because the king's son had invited her.

As she was eagerly telling her godmother everything that had happened at the ball, her two sisters knocked at the door, which Cinderella ran and opened.

"You stayed such a long time!" she cried, gaping, rubbing her eyes and stretching herself as if she had been sleeping; she had not, however, had any manner of inclination to sleep while they were away from home.

"If you had been at the ball," said one of her sisters, "you would not have been tired with it. The finest princess was there, the most beautiful that mortal eyes have ever seen. She showed us a thousand civilities, and gave us oranges and citrons."

Cinderella seemed very indifferent in the matter. Indeed, she asked them the name of that princess; but they told her they did not know it, and that the king's son was very uneasy on her account and would give all the world to know who she was. At this Cinderella, smiling, replied, "She must, then, be very beautiful indeed; how happy you have been! Could not I see her? Ah, dear Charlotte, do lend me your yellow dress which you wear every day."

"Yes, to be sure!" cried Charlotte; "lend my clothes to such a dirty Cinderwench as you are! I should be such a fool."

Cinderella, indeed, well expected such an answer, and was very glad of the refusal; for she would have been sadly put to it, if her sister had lent her what she asked for jestingly.

The next day the two sisters were at the ball, and so was Cinderella, but dressed even more magnificently than before. The king's son was always by her, and never ceased his compliments and kind speeches to her. All this was so far from being tiresome to her, and, indeed, she quite forgot what her godmother had told her. She thought that it was no later than eleven when she counted the clock striking twelve. She jumped up and fled, as nimble as a deer. The prince followed, but could not overtake her. She left behind one of her glass slippers, which the

prince picked up most carefully. She reached home, but quite out of breath, and in her nasty old clothes, having nothing left of all her finery but one of the little slippers, the mate to the one that she had dropped.

The guards at the palace gate were asked if they had not seen a princess go out. They replied that they had seen nobody leave but a young girl, very shabbily dressed, and who had more the air of a poor country wench than a gentlewoman.

When the two sisters returned from the ball Cinderella asked them if they had been well entertained, and if the fine lady had been there.

They told her, yes, but that she hurried away immediately when it struck twelve, and with so much haste that she dropped one of her little glass slippers, the prettiest in the world, which the king's son had picked up; that he had done nothing but look at her all the time at the ball, and that most certainly he was very much in love with the beautiful person who owned the glass slipper.

What they said was very true; for a few days later, the king's son had it proclaimed, by sound of trumpet, that he would marry her whose foot this slipper would just fit. They began to try it on the princesses, then the duchesses and all the court, but in vain; it was brought to the two sisters, who did all they possibly could to force their foot into the slipper, but they did not succeed.

Cinderella, who saw all this, and knew that it was her slipper, said to them, laughing, "Let me see if it will not fit me."

Her sisters burst out laughing, and began to banter with her. The gentleman who was sent to try the slipper looked earnestly at Cinderella, and, finding her very handsome, said that it was only just that she should try as well, and that he had orders to let everyone try.

He had Cinderella sit down, and, putting the slipper to her foot, he found that it went on very easily, fitting her as if it had been made of wax. Her two sisters were greatly astonished, but then even more so, when Cinderella pulled out of her pocket the other slipper, and put it on her other foot. Then in came her god-mother and touched her wand to Cinderella's clothes, making them richer and more magnificent than any of those she had worn before.

And now her two sisters found her to be that fine, beautiful lady whom they had seen at the ball. They threw themselves at her feet to beg pardon for all the ill treatment they had made her undergo. Cinderella took them up, and, as she embraced them, said that she forgave them with all her heart, and wanted them always to love her.

She was taken to the young prince, dressed as she was. He thought she was more charming than before, and, a few days after, married her. Cinderella, who was no less good than beautiful, gave her two sisters lodgings in the palace, and that very same day matched them with two great lords of the court.



Shirley Jackson

[1919–1965]

At once a doting mother who wrote humorous accounts of her family life and a self-described witch who penned incisive studies of psychologic aberration and unsettling tales of the supernatural, SHIRLEY JACKSON explored the unstable boundary between domesticity and horror. Considered one of the finest American fiction writers of the 1950s and 1960s, Jackson is now best known for the widely anthologized short story “The Lottery” (1948).

Jackson was born in 1919 in San Francisco, the first child of an affluent and conservative family. During childhood and adolescence and well into adulthood, this unruly and overweight daughter struggled against her mother Geraldine’s firmly held standards of propriety and femininity. As she resisted the conventions of class and gender, Jackson developed her gift of seeing beneath the decorous surface of middle-class life into its vicious core. In the sunny and seemingly placid northern California suburb of Burlingame, where she attended high school and began writing poetry and short stories, Jackson discerned her neighbors’ intolerance and cruelty—traits that later characterized the suburbanites of her fiction.

*In 1933 Jackson’s family moved to Rochester, New York. After attending the University of Rochester from 1934 to 1936, Jackson withdrew from school and spent a year at home, writing a thousand words a day. In 1937 she entered Syracuse University, where she edited the campus humor magazine, won second prize in a poetry contest, and founded the literary magazine *Spectre*. She married the magazine’s managing editor, Stanley Edgar Hyman, immediately after her graduation in 1940. The couple moved to New York City, where Jackson held a variety of unsatisfying jobs while continuing to write. In 1941 her experience selling books at Macy’s formed the basis for “My Life with R. H. Macy,” published in the *New Republic*. This success was followed by the birth of her first child and the publication of many stories in the *New Yorker*. Her reputation as a writer of short fiction grew, and in 1944 “Come Dance with Me in Ireland” was the first of her four stories chosen for Best American Short Stories.*

*Jackson’s family continued to grow, and her body of writing continued to expand after she moved to North Bennington, Vermont. She had three more children and published short stories, novels, family chronicles, a one-act play, a children’s book, and a nonfictional account of witchcraft in Salem. Her works were made into plays, films, and television shows. “The Lottery” appeared as a short play, a television drama, a radio show, an opera, and a ballet. The family chronicles *Life Among the Savages* (1953) and *Raising Demons* (1957) were best-sellers, and Jackson’s popular success was matched by critical acclaim for her short fiction and novels alike. These latter include *The Road Through the Wall* (1948),*

a look at the dark side of suburban life inspired by Jackson's years in Burlingame; Hangsaman (1951) and The Bird's Nest (1954), two penetrating depictions of mental illness; and The Sundial (1958), a Gothic fantasy about the end of the world. Jackson's last two novels, The Haunting of Hill House (1959) and We Have Always Lived in the Castle (1962), are her best. At once chilling and tender, these haunted-house stories transcend their genre, portraying the often-strained relationship between mother and daughter with consummate sympathy and skill. Three years after We Have Always Lived in the Castle appeared on the bestseller list and was named one of the year's best novels by Time magazine, Shirley Jackson died of heart failure on August 8, 1965.

—Jamil Mustafa, *Lewis University*



The Lottery

SHIRLEY JACKSON

THE MORNING OF JUNE 27TH was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The people of the village began to gather in the square, between the post office and the bank, around ten o'clock; in some towns there were so many people that the lottery took two days and had to be started on June 26th, but in this village, where there were only about three hundred people, the whole lottery took less than two hours, so it could begin at ten o'clock in the morning and still be through in time to allow the villagers to get home for noon dinner.

The children assembled first, of course. School was recently over for the summer, and the feeling of liberty sat uneasily on most of them; they tended to gather together quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play, and their talk was still of the classroom and the teacher, of books and reprimands. Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones; Bobby and Harry Jones and Dickie Delacroix—the villagers pronounced this name “Dellacroy”—eventually made a great pile of stones in one corner of the square and guarded it against the raids of the other boys. The girls stood aside, talking among themselves, looking over their shoulders at the boys, and the very small children rolled in the dust or clung to the hands of their older brothers or sisters.

Soon the men began to gather, surveying their own children, speaking of planting and rain, tractors and taxes. They stood together, away from the pile of stones in the corner, and their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laughed. The women, wearing faded house dresses and sweaters, came shortly after their menfolk. They greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip as they went to join their husbands. Soon the women, standing by their husbands, began to call to their children, and the children came reluctantly, having to be called four or five times. Bobby Martin ducked under his mother's grasping hand and ran, laughing, back to the pile of stones. His father spoke up sharply, and Bobby came quickly and took his place between his father and his oldest brother.

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The lottery was conducted—as were the square dances, the teenage club, the Halloween program—by Mr. Summers, who had time and energy to devote to civic activities. He was a round-faced, jovial man and he ran the coal business, and people were sorry for him, because he had no children and his wife was a scold. When he arrived in the square, carrying the black wooden box, there was a murmur of conversation among the villagers, and he waved and called, “Little late today, folks.” The postmaster, Mr. Graves, followed him, carrying a three-legged stool, and the stool was put in the center of the square and Mr. Summers set the black box down on it. The villagers kept their distance, leaving a space between themselves and the stool, and when Mr. Summers said, “Some of you fellows want to give me a hand?” there was a hesitation before two men, Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxter, came forward to hold the box steady on the stool while Mr. Summers stirred up the papers inside it.

The original paraphernalia for the lottery had been lost long ago, and the black box now resting on the stool had been put into use even before Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town, was born. Mr. Summers spoke frequently to the villagers about making a new box, but no one liked to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box. There was a story that the present box had been made with some pieces of the box that had preceded it, the one that had been constructed when the first people settled down to make a village here. Every year, after the lottery, Mr. Summers began talking again about a new box, but every year the subject was allowed to fade off without anything’s being done. The black box grew shabbier each year; by now it was no longer completely black but splintered badly along one side to show the original wood color, and in some places faded or stained.

Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxter, held the black box securely on the stool until Mr. Summers had stirred the papers thoroughly with his hand. Because so much of the ritual had been forgotten or discarded, Mr. Summers had been successful in having slips of paper substituted for the chips of wood that had been used for generations. Chips of wood, Mr. Summers had argued, had been all very well when the village was tiny, but now that the population was more than three hundred and likely to keep on growing, it was necessary to use something that would fit more easily into the black box. The night before the lottery, Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves made up the slips of paper and put them in the box, and it was then taken to the safe of Mr. Summers’ coal company and locked up until Mr. Summers was ready to take it to the square next morning. The rest of the year, the box was put away, sometimes one place, sometimes another; it had spent one year in Mr. Graves’s barn and another year underfoot in the post office, and sometimes it was set on a shelf in the Martin grocery and left there.

There was a great deal of fussing to be done before Mr. Summers declared the lottery open. There were the lists to make up—of heads of families, heads of households in each family, members of each household in each family. There was the proper swearing-in of Mr. Summers by the postmaster, as the official of the lottery; at one time, some people remembered, there had been a recital of some sort, performed by the official of the lottery, a perfunctory, tuneless chant that had been rattled off duly each year; some people believed that the official of the lottery used to stand just so when he said or sang it, others believed that he was supposed to walk among the people, but years and years ago this part of the ritual had been allowed to lapse. There had been, also, a ritual salute, which the official of the lottery had had to use in addressing each person who came up to draw from the box, but this also had changed with time, until now it was felt necessary only for the official to speak to each person approaching. Mr. Summers was very good at all this; in his clean white shirt and blue jeans, with one hand resting carelessly on the black box, he seemed very proper and important as he talked interminably to Mr. Graves and the Martins.

Just as Mr. Summers finally left off talking and turned to the assembled villagers, Mrs. Hutchinson came hurriedly along the path to the square, her sweater thrown over her shoulders, and slid into place in the back of the crowd. “Clean forgot what day it was,” she said to Mrs. Delacroix, who stood next to her, and they both laughed softly. “Thought my old man was out back stacking wood,” Mrs. Hutchinson went on, “and then I looked out the window and the kids were gone, and then I remembered it was the twentyseventh and came a-running.” She dried her hands on her apron, and Mrs. Delacroix said, “You’re in time, though. They’re still talking away up there.”

Mrs. Hutchinson craned her neck to see through the crowd and found her husband and children standing near the front. She tapped Mrs. Delacroix on the arm as a farewell and began to make her way through the crowd. The people separated good-humoredly to let her through; two or three people said, in voices just loud enough to be heard across the crowd, “Here comes your Missus, Hutchinson,” and “Bill, she made it after all.” Mrs. Hutchinson reached her husband, and Mr. Summers, who had been waiting, said cheerfully, “Thought we were going to have to get on without you, Tessie.” Mrs. Hutchinson said, grinning, “Wouldn’t have me leave m’dishes in the sink, now, would you, Joe?” and soft laughter ran through the crowd as the people stirred back into position after Mrs. Hutchinson’s arrival.

“Well, now,” Mr. Summers said soberly, “guess we better get started, get this over with, so’s we can go back to work. Anybody ain’t here?”

“Dunbar,” several people said. “Dunbar, Dunbar.”

Mr. Summers consulted his list. "Clyde Dunbar," he said. "That's right. He's broke his leg, hasn't he? Who's drawing for him?"

"Me, I guess," a woman said, and Mr. Summers turned to look at her. "Wife draws for her husband," Mr. Summers said. "Don't you have a grown boy to do it for you, Janey?" Although Mr. Summers and everyone else in the village knew the answer perfectly well, it was the business of the official of the lottery to ask such questions formally. Mr. Summers waited with an expression of polite interest while Mrs. Dunbar answered.

"Horace's not but sixteen yet," Mrs. Dunbar said regretfully. "Guess I gotta fill in for the old man this year."

"Right," Mr. Summers said. He made a note on the list he was holding. Then he asked, "Watson boy drawing this year?"

A tall boy in the crowd raised his hand. "Here," he said. "I'm drawing for m'mother and me." He blinked his eyes nervously and ducked his head as several voices in the crowd said things like "Good fellow, Jack," and "Glad to see your mother's got a man to do it."

"Well," Mr. Summers said, "guess that's everyone. Old Man Warner make it?"

"Here," a voice said, and Mr. Summers nodded.

A sudden hush fell on the crowd as Mr. Summers cleared his throat and looked at the list. "All ready?" he called. "Now, I'll read the names—heads of families first—and the men come up and take a paper out of the box. Keep the paper folded in your hand without looking at it until everyone has had a turn. Everything clear?"

The people had done it so many times that they only half listened to the directions; most of them were quiet, wetting their lips, not looking around. Then Mr. Summers raised one hand high and said, "Adams." A man disengaged himself from the crowd and came forward. "Hi, Steve," Mr. Summers said, and Mr. Adams said, "Hi, Joe." They grinned at one another humorlessly and nervously. Then Mr. Adams reached into the black box and took out a folded paper. He held it firmly by one corner as he turned and went hastily back to his place in the crowd, where he stood a little apart from his family, not looking down at his hand.

"Allen," Mr. Summers said. "Anderson . . . Bentham."

"Seems like there's no time at all between lotteries any more," Mrs. Delacroix said to Mrs. Graves in the back row. "Seems like we got through with the last one only last week."

"Time sure goes fast," Mrs. Graves said.

"Clark . . . Delacroix."

"There goes my old man," Mrs. Delacroix said. She held her breath while her husband went forward.

“Dunbar,” Mr. Summers said, and Mrs. Dunbar went steadily to the box while one of the women said, “Go on, Janey,” and another said, “There she goes.”

“We’re next,” Mrs. Graves said. She watched while Mr. Graves came around from the side of the box, greeted Mr. Summers gravely, and selected a slip of paper from the box. By now, all through the crowd there were men holding the small folded papers in their large hands, turning them over and over nervously. Mrs. Dunbar and her two sons stood together, Mrs. Dunbar holding the slip of paper.

“Harburt . . . Hutchinson.”

“Get up there, Bill,” Mrs. Hutchinson said, and the people near her laughed.

“Jones.”

“They do say,” Mr. Adams said to Old Man Warner, who stood next to him, “that over in the north village they’re talking of giving up the lottery.”

Old Man Warner snorted. “Pack of crazy fools,” he said. “Listening to the young folks, nothing’s good enough for *them*. Next thing you know, they’ll be wanting to go back to living in caves, nobody work any more, live *that* way for a while. Used to be a saying about ‘Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon.’ First thing you know, we’d all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There’s *always* been a lottery,” he added petulantly. “Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody.”

“Some places have already quit lotteries,” Mrs. Adams said.

“Nothing but trouble in *that*,” Old Man Warner said stoutly. “Pack of young fools.”

“Martin.” And Bobby Martin watched his father go forward. “Overdyke . . . Percy.”

“I wish they’d hurry,” Mrs. Dunbar said to her older son. “I wish they’d hurry.”

“They’re almost through,” her son said.

“You get ready to run tell Dad,” Mrs. Dunbar said.

Mr. Summers called his own name and then stepped forward precisely and selected a slip from the box. Then he called, “Warner.”

“Seventy-seventh year I been in the lottery,” Old Man Warner said as he went through the crowd. “Seventy-seventh time.”

“Watson.” The tall boy came awkwardly through the crowd. Someone said, “Don’t be nervous, Jack,” and Mr. Summers said, “Take your time, son.”

“Zanini.”

After that, there was a long pause, a breathless pause, until Mr. Summers, holding his slip of paper in the air, said, “All right, fellows.” For a minute, no one moved, and then all the slips of paper were opened. Suddenly, all the

women began to speak at once, saying, "Who is it?" "Who's got it?" "Is it the Dunbars?" "Is it the Watsons?" Then the voices began to say, "It's Hutchinson. It's Bill," "Bill Hutchinson's got it."

"Go tell your father," Mrs. Dunbar said to her older son.

People began to look around to see the Hutchinsons. Bill Hutchinson was standing quiet, staring down at the paper in his hand. Suddenly, Tessie Hutchinson shouted to Mr. Summers, "You didn't give him time enough to take any paper he wanted. I saw you. It wasn't fair."

"Be a good sport, Tessie," Mrs. Delacroix called, and Mrs. Graves said, "All of us took the same chance."

"Shut up, Tessie," Bill Hutchinson said.

"Well, everyone," Mr. Summers said, "that was done pretty fast, and now we've got to be hurrying a little more to get done in time." He consulted his next list. "Bill," he said, "you draw for the Hutchinson family. You got any other households in the Hutchinsons?"

"There's Don and Eva," Mrs. Hutchinson yelled. "Make them take their chance!"

"Daughters draw with their husbands' families, Tessie," Mr. Summers said gently. "You know that as well as anyone else."

"It wasn't *fair*," Tessie said.

"I guess not, Joe," Bill Hutchinson said regretfully. "My daughter draws with her husband's family, that's only fair. And I've got no other family except the kids."

"Then, as far as drawing for families is concerned, it's you." Mr. Summers said in explanation, "and as far as drawing for households is concerned, that's you, too. Right?"

"Right," Bill Hutchinson said.

"How many kids, Bill?" Mr. Summers asked formally.

"Three," Bill Hutchinson said. "There's Bill, Jr., and Nancy, and little Dave. And Tessie and me."

"All right, then," Mr. Summers said. "Harry, you got their tickets back?"

Mr. Graves nodded and held up the slips of paper. "Put them in the box, then," Mr. Summers directed. "Take Bill's and put it in."

"I think we ought to start over," Mrs. Hutchinson said, as quietly as she could. "I tell you it wasn't *fair*. You didn't give him time enough to choose. *Everybody* saw that."

Mr. Graves had selected the five slips and put them in the box, and he dropped all the papers but those onto the ground, where the breeze caught them and lifted them off.

"Listen, everybody," Mrs. Hutchinson was saying to the people around her.

“Ready, Bill?” Mr. Summers asked, and Bill Hutchinson, with one quick glance around at his wife and children, nodded.

“Remember,” Mr. Summers said, “take the slips and keep them folded until each person has taken one. Harry, you help little Dave.” Mr. Graves took the hand of the little boy, who came willingly with him up to the box. “Take a paper out of the box, Davy,” Mr. Summers said. Davy put his hand into the box and laughed. “Take just *one* paper,” Mr. Summers said. “Harry, you hold it for him.” Mr. Graves took the child’s hand and removed the folded paper from the tight fist and held it while little Dave stood next to him and looked up at him wonderingly.

“Nancy next,” Mr. Summers said. Nancy was twelve, and her school friends breathed heavily as she went forward, switching her skirt, and took a slip daintily from the box. “Bill, Jr.,” Mr. Summers said, and Billy, his face red and his feet over-large, nearly knocked the box over as he got a paper out. “Tessie,” Mr. Summers said. She hesitated for a minute, looking around defiantly, and then set her lips and went up to the box. She snatched a paper out and held it behind her.

“Bill,” Mr. Summers said, and Bill Hutchinson reached into the box and felt around, bringing his hand out at last with the slip of paper in it.

The crowd was quiet. A girl whispered, “I hope it’s not Nancy,” and the sound of the whisper reached the edges of the crowd.

“It’s not the way it used to be,” Old Man Warner said clearly. “People ain’t the way they used to be.”

“All right,” Mr. Summers said. “Open the papers. Harry, you open little Dave’s.”

Mr. Graves opened the slip of paper and there was a general sigh through the crowd as he held it up and everyone could see that it was blank. Nancy and Bill, Jr., opened theirs at the same time, and both beamed and laughed, turning around to the crowd and holding their slips of paper above their heads.

“Tessie,” Mr. Summers said. There was a pause, and then Mr. Summers looked at Bill Hutchinson, and Bill unfolded his paper and showed it. It was blank.

“It’s Tessie,” Mr. Summers said, and his voice was hushed. “Show us her paper, Bill.”

Bill Hutchinson went over to his wife and forced the slip of paper out of her hand. It had a black spot on it, the black spot Mr. Summers had made the night before with the heavy pencil in the coal-company office. Bill Hutchinson held it up, and there was a stir in the crowd.

“All right, folks,” Mr. Summers said. “Let’s finish quickly.”

Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones. The pile of stones the boys had made

earlier was ready; there were stones on the ground with the blowing scraps of paper that had come out of the box. Mrs. Delacroix selected a stone so large she had to pick it up with both hands and turned, to Mrs. Dunbar. "Come on," she said. "Hurry up."

Mrs. Dunbar had small stones in both hands, and she said, gasping for breath, "I can't run at all. You'll have to go ahead and I'll catch up with you."

The children had stones already, and someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles.

Tessie Hutchinson was in the center of a cleared space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head.

Old Man Warner was saying, "Come on, come on, everyone." Steve Adams was in the front of the crowd of villagers, with Mrs. Graves beside him.

"It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her.

[1949]

QUESTIONS

SHIRLEY JACKSON, *The Lottery*

1. Where is the village located? How does the story's setting influence our response to its ending?
2. At what point do we suspect that the lottery is not what it appears to be? What is the significance of Old Man Warner's saying, "Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon"? What was the lottery's original function, and what is its current function?
3. How do characters' names reflect their personalities and roles?
4. How does irony function in the story?
5. What does the black box symbolize? What other symbols are important to the story?
6. What does the story suggest about tradition and change? about gender roles? about community?
7. Write an essay focused on Tessie Hutchinson as the story's protagonist. Identify her antagonist(s), and consider why she is late to the lottery.
8. Jackson tells the story from an omniscient point of view. Write an essay analyzing how this point of view contributes to the story's plot, especially its ending. Speculate about how the story might differ if it were told from another perspective.



William Faulkner

[1897–1962]

Born in New Albany, Mississippi, WILLIAM CUTHBERT FALKNER (*The writer added the “u” to his name as a young man*) moved with his family to Oxford, Mississippi in 1902, where his father worked as a livery stable owner, a hardware store owner, and finally as a business manager at the University of Mississippi. Although the presence of the university in this otherwise small, nondescript southern town likely influenced Faulkner’s decision to become a writer, it is more probable that he looked to his paternal grandfather, William Clark Falkner (1825–1889), as a source of inspiration. A writer and a figure out of antebellum mythology, the Old Colonel, as the family referred to him, lead a life of almost cartoonish violence and bravado, stories of which filled the young Faulkner with wonder. With some modifications, this larger-than-life figure made his way into Faulkner’s fiction as Colonel John Sartoris, a recurrent character in Faulkner’s fiction.

Faulkner’s relationships with both his parents also enhanced and complicated his literary aspirations. While his mother was devoted to reading and culture, his father was immersed in the masculine world of horses, whisky, and physical violence. These parental influences are evident in a body of fiction that is both dizzyingly intellectual and insistently physical. Though he demonstrated early precociousness at school, he was drifting away by the eighth grade, and he never managed to take a degree at the local university. In 1918 he volunteered for and was rejected by the Army Air Corps because of his diminutive size. Not to be cheated out of the opportunity to relive the martial grandeur of his grandfather, he traveled to Toronto and enlisted in the RAF in July 1918, only to have World War I end before he could complete his training. He returned to Oxford in December of that year sporting an RAF captain’s uniform, a phony limp, and a story about being shot down over enemy lines in France. Though no one in Oxford much believed him, he carried an obsession with World War I that stayed with him from his first novel, *Soldier’s Pay* (1926), through the late work *A Fable* (1954), both of which focus on the hollowness and hypocrisy that sometimes overshadow the heroics of war.

Faulkner’s literary career can be considered in terms of three phases. Throughout the early 1920s, Faulkner wrote a series of unsuccessful works—a collection of poetry titled *The Marble Faun* (1924) and the early novels *Soldier’s Pay*, *Mosquitoes* (1927), and *Flags in the Dust* (published in 1929 as *Sartoris*). This period is also marked by transience and uncertainty, as Faulkner moved to New York, New Orleans, and back to Oxford. He studied briefly at the University of Mississippi, served for a time as the university’s postmaster, and

worked at odd jobs about the town of Oxford. Despite its flaws, Flags in the Dust represents Faulkner's first attempt to use the history of his family and his region as a source for his art. The novel therefore heralds the second, mature phase of his career. Faulkner gained critical acclaim with The Sound and the Fury (1929), the story of a disintegrating Southern family told through the modernist techniques of stream-of-consciousness narration and multiple, fragmented points of view. In 1930, the noteworthy Faulkner then became somewhat notorious with the publication of Sanctuary, a lurid potboiler about bootlegging, prostitution, and rape. In the same year, Faulkner completed yet another important novel, As I Lay Dying. Here again presented through the distracted comments of several narrators (including a purported lunatic, a traumatized young boy, and a delusional religious zealot), this harrowing tale treats a poor rural family who struggle to carry their dead mother to a cemetery many miles away. In this story, the language of the rural South becomes a kind of mythological poetry. This burst of creative activity launched the major period of Faulkner's career, eleven or twelve years that saw the publication of Light in August (1932), Absalom, Absalom! (1935), The Unvanquished (1938), The Wild Palms (1939), and Go Down, Moses (1942). During this time Faulkner also wrote short stories and worked in Hollywood as a screenwriter, an occupation he loathed. His near destitution would only begin to abate in 1948, when he was paid \$50,000 by MGM for the film rights to his 1948 novel Intruder in the Dust and when, in 1949, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. The third and final phase of Faulkner's career is characterized by a mellowing of his artistic vision, as is evident in his final novel, The Reivers (1962). In his later years, Faulkner assumed the role of "elder man of letters." He traveled to Japan as a kind of literary ambassador, served as a writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia, and addressed cadets at West Point, where his son-in-law had gone to school. He also weighed in on the racial controversies of the time, but his comments seemed to anger equally those on all sides of the debate. As he aged, Faulkner's health suffered from his heavy drinking and from several falls sustained while riding horses. It is suspected that one of these falls landed him in the hospital on July 5, 1962, where he died of a heart attack the next day.

Critical reception of Faulkner's work ranged from prudish dismissal to adulation, but today he is widely regarded as the best American writer of the twentieth century. During the eighties and nineties many critics began to question this status, given the apparent racism and misogyny that color Faulkner's canon. This debate is ongoing, but what remains unimpeachable, besides the explosive beauty of his experiments with language and style, and with the form of the novel itself, is his quiet confidence in the perseverance of the human soul.

—David L. G. Arnold, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point



A Rose for Emily

WILLIAM FAULKNER

I

WHEN MISS EMILY GRIERSON DIED, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old manservant—a combined gardener and cook—had seen in at least ten years.

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

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

When the next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction. On the first of the year they mailed her a tax notice. February came, and there was no

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reply. They wrote her a formal letter, asking her to call at the sheriff's office at her convenience. A week later the mayor wrote her himself, offering to call or to send his car for her, and received in reply a note on paper of an archaic shape, in a thin, flowing calligraphy in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all. The tax notice was also enclosed, without comment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But, Miss Emily—"

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

II

So she vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell. That was two years after her father's death and a short time after her sweetheart—the one we believed would marry her—had deserted her. After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all. A few of the ladies had the temerity to call, but were not received, and the only sign of life about the place was the Negro man—a young man then—going in and out with a market basket.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

That was when people had begun to feel sorry for her. People in our town remembering how old lady Wyatt, her great-aunt, had gone completely crazy at last, believed that the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such. We had long thought of them as a tableau: Miss Emily a slen-

der figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the backflung front door. So when she got to be thirty and was still single, we were not pleased exactly, but vindicated; even with insanity in the family she wouldn't have turned down all of her chances if they had really materialized.

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

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

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

III

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

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

At first we were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest, because the ladies all said, "Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer." But there were still others, older people, who said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget *noblesse oblige*—without calling it *noblesse oblige*. They just said, "Poor Emily. Her kinsfolk should come

to her." She had some kin in Alabama; but years ago her father had fallen out with them over the estate of old lady Wyatt, the crazy woman, and there was no communication between the two families. They had not even been represented at the funeral.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I want arsenic."

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

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

IV

So the next day we all said, "She will kill herself"; and we said it would be the best thing. When she had first begun to be seen with Homer Barron, we had said, "She will marry him." Then we said, "She will persuade him yet,"

because Homer himself had remarked—he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elk's Club—that he was not a marrying man. Later we said, "Poor Emily," behind the jalousies as they passed on Sunday afternoon in the glittering buggy, Miss Emily with her head high and Homer Barron with his hat cocked and a cigar in his teeth, reins and whip in a yellow glove.

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

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

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

And that was the last we saw of Homer Barron. And of Miss Emily for some time. The Negro man went in and out with the market basket, but the front door remained closed. Now and then we would see her at a window for a moment, as the men did that night when they sprinkled the lime, but for almost six months she did not appear on the streets. Then we knew that this was to be expected too; as if that quality of her father which had thwarted her woman's life so many times had been too virulent and too furious to die.

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

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

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

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

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

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

V

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

The two female cousins came at once. They held the funeral on the second day, with the town coming to look at Miss Emily beneath a mass of bought flowers, with the crayon face of her father musing profoundly above the bier and the ladies sibilant and macabre; and the very old men—some in

their brushed Confederate uniforms—on the porch and the lawn, talking of Miss Emily as if she had been a contemporary of theirs, believing that they had danced with her and courted her perhaps, confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road, but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottleneck of the most recent decade of years.

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

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

The man himself lay in the bed.

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

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

[1930]

QUESTIONS

WILLIAM FAULKNER, *A Rose for Emily*

1. Describe your experience of reading “A Rose for Emily.” What portions of the story do you find intriguing, surprising, or unsettling?
2. How does Faulkner use the tactic of suspense and surprise to captivate the reader?
3. Who narrates this story? Why is this figure’s perspective important in the understanding we gain of Emily Grierson?
4. Describe Emily’s relationship with her father. How is this important in our attempt to understand Emily’s character?
5. How does the narrator describe Emily’s house and neighborhood? How is this description important in our attempt to understand Emily’s character?
6. Describe Homer Barron. How does his character and the relationship he develops with Emily help us understand Emily’s character?
7. In what sense does the notion that Emily has been sleeping beside a corpse suggest a critique of the South on Faulkner’s part?
8. Research and compose an interpretive essay about Faulkner’s participation in the literary Gothic. What are the basic conventions of Gothic literature? What are some of its cultural, philosophical, and even political implications? How does Faulkner interpret Gothic traditions in “A Rose for Emily”?



Little Red Riding Hood

JAMES FINN GARNER

THERE ONCE WAS A YOUNG PERSON named Red Riding Hood who lived with her mother on the edge of a large wood. One day her mother asked her to take a basket of fresh fruit and mineral water to her grandmother's house—not because this was womyn's work, mind you, but because the deed was generous and helped engender a feeling of community. Furthermore, her grandmother was not sick, but rather was in full physical and mental health and was fully capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult.

So Red Riding Hood set off with her basket through the woods. Many people believed that the forest was a foreboding and dangerous place and never set foot in it. Red Riding Hood, however, was confident enough in her own budding sexuality that such obvious Freudian imagery did not intimidate her.

On the way to Grandma's house, Red Riding Hood was accosted by a wolf who asked her what was in her basket. She replied, "Some healthful snacks for my grandmother, who is certainly capable of taking care of herself as a mature adult."

The wolf said, "You know, my dear, it isn't safe for a little girl to walk through these woods alone."

Red Riding Hood said, "I find your sexist remark offensive in the extreme, but I will ignore it because of your traditional status as an outcast from society, the stress of which has caused you to develop your own, entirely valid, worldview. Now, if you'll excuse me, I must be on my way."

Red Riding Hood walked on along the main path. But, because his status outside society had freed him from slavish adherence to linear, Western-style thought, the wolf knew a quicker route to Grandma's house. He burst into the house and ate Grandma, an entirely valid course of action for a carnivore such as himself. Then, unhampered by rigid, traditionalist notions of what was masculine or feminine, he put on Grandma's nightclothes and crawled into bed.

Red Riding Hood entered the cottage and said, "Grandma, I have brought you some fatfree, sodium-free snacks to salute you in your role of a wise and nurturing matriarch."

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From the bed, the wolf said softly, “Come closer, child, so that I might see you.”

Red Riding Hood said, “Oh, I forgot you are as optically challenged as a bat. Grandma, what big eyes you have!”

“They have seen much, and forgiven much, my dear.”

“Grandma, what a big nose you have, only relatively, of course, and certainly attractive in its own way.”

“It has smelled much, and forgiven much, my dear.”

“Grandma, what big teeth you have!”

The wolf said, “I am happy with who I am and what I am,” and leaped out of bed. He grabbed Red Riding Hood in his claws, intent on devouring her. Red Riding Hood screamed, not out of alarm at the wolf’s apparent tendency toward crossdressing, but because of his willful invasion of her personal space.

Her screams were heard by a passing woodchopperperson (or log-fuel technician, as he preferred to be called). When he burst into the cottage, he saw the melee and tried to intervene. But as he raised his ax, Red Riding Hood and the wolf both stopped.

“And just what do you think you’re doing?” asked Red Riding Hood.

The woodchopper-person blinked and tried to answer, but no words came to him.

“Bursting in here like a Neanderthal, trusting your weapon to do your thinking for you!” she exclaimed. “Sexist! Speciesist! How dare you assume that womyn and wolves can’t solve their own problems without a man’s help!”

When she heard Red Riding Hood’s impassioned speech, Grandma jumped out of the wolf’s mouth, seized the woodchopperperson’s ax, and cut his head off. After this ordeal, Red Riding Hood, Grandma, and the wolf felt a certain commonality of purpose. They decided to set up an alternative household based on mutual respect and cooperation, and they lived together in the woods happily ever after.



Guy de Maupassant

[1850–1893]

GUY DE MAUPASSANT *came from Château de Miromesniel, Dieppe. His youth was varied, moving from the study of law in Paris around 1869 but giving that up to serve in the army during the Franco-Prussian War. Later, around 1872, he became a civil servant, working for the ministry of maritime affairs and then at the ministry of education. He left the public employ in 1880. His poetry first appeared that year with *Des Vers* (1880), and his fiction with “Boule De Suif” (or “Ball of Fat” in the anthology *Soirées de Medan* edited by Emile Zola. During the next ten years, de Maupassant wrote over three hundred short stories, as well as six novels.*

*De Maupassant created a rich irony in his work, often characterized by a kind of humor that creates both amusement and discomfort at the same time. He was a “Naturalist,” who showed life as it was for the middle class and poor who surrounded him in his life. The stories ring true because they reflect human foibles and frailties that do not change with time and place. De Maupassant helps the reader see humans as they are and hope that they are not. He also wrote about the sadness of a life of toil in *A Woman’s Life*, 1883, and family struggles and conflicts in *Peter and John*, 1888.*

De Maupassant became a victim of syphilis when he was in his twenties, a condition that eventually led to madness and death, but not before it first led to stories of horror and distress. The later stories resemble those of the American writer Poe, showing the dark side of human life and the nightmarish qualities that can haunt an author in distress. His quite unpleasant story “The Horror” (1887) displays his movement toward madness and death.

In 1892 de Maupassant attempted suicide. He spent the final year of his life in a mental institution in Paris and died there at the end of the following year.



The Necklace

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

SHE WAS ONE OF THOSE PRETTY and charming girls, born by a blunder of destiny in a family of employees. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, married by a man rich and distinguished; and she let them make a match for her with a little clerk in the Department of Education.

She was simple since she could not be adorned; but she was unhappy as though kept out of her own class; for women have no caste and no descent, their beauty, their grace, and their charm serving them instead of birth and fortune. Their native keenness, their instinctive elegance, their flexibility of mind, are their only hierarchy; and these make the daughters of the people the equals of the most lofty dames.

She suffered intensely, feeling herself born for every delicacy and every luxury. She suffered from the poverty of her dwelling, from the worn walls, the abraded chairs, the ugliness of the stuffs. All these things, which another woman of her caste would not even have noticed, tortured her and made her indignant. The sight of the little girl from Brittany who did her humble housework awoke in her desolated regrets and distracted dreams. She let her mind dwell on the quiet vestibules, hung with Oriental tapestries, lighted by tall lamps of bronze, and on the two tall footmen in knee breeches who dozed in the large arm-chairs, made drowsy by the heat of the furnace. She let her mind dwell on the large parlors, decked with old silk, with their delicate furniture, supporting precious bric-a-brac, and on the coquettish little rooms, perfumed, prepared for the five o'clock chat with the most intimate friends, men well known and sought after, whose attentions all women envied and desired.

When she sat down to dine, before a tablecloth three days old, in front of her husband, who lifted the cover of the tureen, declaring with an air of satisfaction, "Ah, the good *pot-au-feu*. I don't know anything better than that," she was thinking of delicate repasts, with glittering silver, with tapestries peopling the walls with ancient figures and with strange birds in a fairy-like

forest; she was thinking of exquisite dishes, served in marvelous platters, of compliment whispered and heard with a sphinx-like smile, while she was eating the rosy flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no dresses, no jewelry, nothing. And she loved nothing else; she felt herself made for that only. She would so much have liked to please, to be envied, to be seductive and sought after.

She had a rich friend, a comrade of her convent days, whom she did not want to go and see any more, so much did she suffer as she came away. And she wept all day long, from chagrin, from regret, from despair, and from distress.

But one evening her husband came in with a proud air, holding in his hand a large envelope.

“There,” said he, “there’s something for you.”

She quickly tore the paper and took out of it a printed card which bore these words:—

“The Minister of Education and Mme. Georges Rampouneau beg M. and Mme. Loisel to do them the honor to pass the evening with them at the palace of the Ministry, on Monday, January 18.”

Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she threw the invitation on the table with annoyance, murmuring—

“What do you want me to do with that?”

“But, my dear, I thought you would be pleased. You never go out, and here’s a chance, a fine one. I had the hardest work to get it. Everybody is after them; they are greatly sought for and not many are given to the clerks. You will see there all the official world.”

She looked at him with an irritated eye and she declared with impatience:—

“What do you want me to put on my back to go there?”

He had not thought of that; he hesitated:—

“But the dress in which you go to the theater. That looks very well to me—”

He shut up, astonished and distracted at seeing that his wife was weeping. Two big tears were descending slowly from the corners of the eyes to the corners of the mouth. He stuttered:—

“What’s the matter? What’s the matter?”

But by a violent effort she had conquered her trouble, and she replied in a calm voice as she wiped her damp cheeks:—

“Nothing. Only I have no clothes, and in consequence I cannot go to this party. Give your card to some colleague whose wife has a better outfit than I.”

He was disconsolate. He began again:—

“See here, Mathilde, how much would this cost, a proper dress, which would do on other occasions; something very simple?”

She reflected a few seconds, going over her calculations, and thinking also of the sum which she might ask without meeting an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the frugal clerk.

“At last, she answered hesitatingly:—

“I don’t know exactly, but it seems to me that with four hundred francs I might do it.”

He grew a little pale, for he was reserving just that sum to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting, the next summer, on the plain of Nanterre, with some friends who used to shoot larks there on Sundays.

But he said:—

“All right. I will give you four hundred francs. But take care to have a pretty dress.”

The day of the party drew near, and Mme. Loisel seemed sad, restless, anxious. Yet her dress was ready. One evening her husband said to her:—

“What’s the matter? Come, now, you have been quite queer these last three days.”

And she answered:—

“It annoys me not to have a jewel, not a single stone, to put on. I shall look like a distress.

I would almost rather not go to this party.”

He answered:—

“You will wear some natural flowers. They are very stylish this time of the year. For ten francs you will have two or three magnificent roses.”

But she was not convinced.

“No; there’s nothing more humiliating than to look poor among a lot of rich women.”

But her husband cried:—

“What a goose you are! Go find your friend, Mme. Forester, and ask her to lend you some jewelry. You know her well enough to do that.”

She gave a cry of joy:—

“That’s true. I had not thought of it.”

The next day she went to her friend’s and told her about her distress.

Mme. Forester went to her mirrored wardrobe, took out a large casket, brought it, opened it, and said to Mme. Loisel:—

“Choose, my dear.”

She saw at first bracelets, then a necklace of pearls, then a Venetian cross of gold set with precious stones of an admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the glass, hesitated, and could not decide to take them off and to give them up. She kept on asking:—

“You haven’t anything else?”

“Yes, yes. Look. I do not know what will happen to please you.”

All at once she discovered, in a box of black satin, a superb necklace of diamonds, and her heart began to beat with boundless desire. Her hands trembled in taking it up. She fastened it round her throat, on her high dress, and remained in ecstasy before herself.

Then, she asked, hesitating, full of anxiety:—

“Can you lend me this, only this?”

“Yes, yes, certainly.”

She sprang to her friend’s neck, kissed her with ardor, and then escaped with her treasure.

The day of the party arrived. Mme. Loisel was a success. She was the prettiest of them all, elegant, gracious, smiling, and mad with joy. All the men were looking at her, inquiring her name, asking to be introduced. All the attaches of the Cabinet wanted to dance with her. The Minister took notice of her. She danced with delight, with passion, intoxicated with pleasure, thinking of nothing, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness made up of all these tributes, of all the admirations, of all these awakened desires, of this victory so complete and so sweet to a woman’s heart.

She went away about four in the morning. Since midnight—her husband has been dozing in a little anteroom with three other men whose wives were having a good time.

He threw over her shoulders the wraps he had brought to go home in, modest garments of every-day life, the poverty of which was out of keeping with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this, and wanted to fly so as not to be noticed by the other women, who were wrapping themselves up in rich furs. Loisel kept her back—

“Wait a minute; you will catch cold outside; I’ll call a cab.”

But she did not listen to him, and went downstairs rapidly. When they were in the street, they could not find a carriage, and they set out in search of one, hailing the drivers whom they saw passing in the distance.

They went down toward the Seine, disgusted, shivering. Finally, they found on the Quai one of those old night-hawk cabs which one sees in Paris only after night has fallen, as though they are ashamed of their misery in the daytime.

It brought them to their door, rue des Martyrs; and they went up their own stairs sadly. For her it was finished. And he was thinking that he would have to be at the Ministry at ten o’clock.

She took off the wraps with which she had covered her shoulders, before the mirror, so as to see herself once more in her glory. But suddenly she gave a cry. She no longer had the necklace around her throat!

Her husband, half undressed already, asked—

“What is the matter with you?”

She turned to him, terror-stricken:—

“I—I—I have not Mme. Forester’s diamond necklace!”

He jumped up, frightened—

“What? How? It is not possible!”

And they searched in the folds of the dress, in the folds of the wrap, in the pockets, everywhere. They did not find it.

He asked:—

“Are you sure you still had it when you left the ball?”

“Yes, I touched it in the vestibule of the Ministry.”

“But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab.”

“Yes. That is probable. Did you take the number?”

“No. And you—you did not even look at it?”

“No.”

They gazed at each other, crushed. At last Loisel dressed himself again.

“I’m going,” he said, “back the whole distance we came on foot, to see if I cannot find it.”

And he went out. She stayed there, in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, on a chair, without a fire, without a thought.

Her husband came back about seven o’clock. He had found nothing.

Then he went to police headquarters, to the newspapers to offer a reward, to the cab company; he did everything, in fact, that a trace of hope could urge him to.

She waited all day, in the same dazed state in face of this horrible disaster. Loisel came back in the evening, with his face worn and white; he had discovered nothing.

“You must write to your friend,” he said, “that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it repaired. That will give us time to turn around.”

She wrote as he dictated.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope. And Loisel, aged by five years, declared:—

“We must see how we can replace those jewels.”

The next day they took the case which had held them to the jeweler whose name was in the cover. He consulted his books.

“It was not I, madam, who sold this necklace. I only supplied the case.”

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, looking for a necklace like the other, consulting their memory,—sick both of them with grief and anxiety.

In a shop in the Palais Royal, they found a diamond necklace that seemed to them absolutely like the one they were seeking. It was priced forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

They begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days. And they made a bargain that he should take it back for thirty-four thousand, if the first was found before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He had to borrow the remainder.

He borrowed, asking a thousand francs from one, five hundred from another, five here, three louis there. He gave promissory notes, made ruinous agreements, dealt with usurers, with all kinds of lenders. He compromised the end of his life, risked his signature without even knowing whether it could be honored; and, frightened by all the anguish of the future, by the black misery which was about to settle down on him, by the perspective of all sorts of physical deprivations and of all sorts of moral tortures, he went to buy the new diamond necklace, laying down on the jeweler's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Mme. Loisel took back the necklace to Mme. Forester, the latter said, with an irritated air:—

“You ought to have brought it back sooner, for I might have needed it.”

She did not open the case, which her friend had been fearing. If she had noticed the substitution, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Might she not have been taken for a thief?

Mme. Loisel learned the horrible life of the needy. She made the best of it, moreover, frankly, heroically. The frightful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed the servant; they changed their rooms; they took an attic under the roof.

She learned the rough work of the household, the odious labors of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, wearing out her pink nails on the greasy pots and the bottoms of the pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and the towels, which she dried on a rope; she carried down the garbage to the street every morning, and she carried up the water, pausing for breath on every floor. And, dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, a basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, fighting for her wretched money, sou by sou.

Every month they had to pay notes, to renew others to gain time. The husband worked in the evening keeping up the books of a shopkeeper, and at night often he did copying at five sous the page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid everything back, everything, with the rates of usury and all the accumulation of heaped-up interest.

Mme. Loisel seemed aged now. She had become the robust woman, hard and rough, of a poor household. Badly combed, with her skirts awry and her hands red, her voice was loud, and she washed the floor with splashing water.

But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down by the window and she thought of that evening long ago, of that ball, where she had been so beautiful and so admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? Who knows? How singular life is, how changeable! What a little thing it takes to save you or to lose you.

Then, one Sunday, as she was taking a turn in the Champs Elysées, as a recreation after the labors of the week, she perceived suddenly a woman walking with a child. It was Mme. Forester, still young, still beautiful, still seductive.

Mme. Loisel felt moved. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid up, she would tell her all. Why not?

She drew near.

“Good morning, Jeanne.”

The other did not recognize her, astonished to be hailed thus familiarly by this woman of the people. She hesitated—

“But—madam—I don’t know—are you not making a mistake?”

“No. I am Mathilde Loisel.”

Her friend gave a cry—

“Oh!—My poor Mathilde, how you are changed.”

“Yes, I have had hard days since I saw you, and many troubles,—and that because of you.”

“Of me?—How so?”

“You remember that diamond necklace that you lent me to go to the ball at the Ministry?”

“Yes. And then?”

“Well, I lost it.”

“How can that be?—since you brought it back to me?”

“I brought you back another just like it. And now for ten years we have been paying for it. You will understand that it was not easy for us, who had nothing. At last, it is done, and I am mighty glad.”

Mme. Forester had guessed.

“You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?”

“Yes. You did not notice it, even, did you? They were exactly alike?”

And she smiled with proud and naïve joy.

Mme. Forester, much moved, took her by both hands:—

“Oh, my poor Mathilde. But mine were false. At most they were worth five hundred francs!”

[1907]

TRANSLATED BY BRANDER MATTHEWS (1852–1929)

QUESTIONS

GUY DE MAUPASSANT, *The Necklace*

1. Mme. Loisel is proud and will not go to a ball without a proper necklace, though her husband has struggled to get an invitation for them. Mme. Loisel borrows a necklace from her friend Mme. Foster to wear to the ball. What happens to the necklace?
2. In order to replace the necklace, what do the Loisels do? What happens to their lives? What happens to Mme. Loisel's pride and vanity?
3. What does Mme. Loisel find out about the necklace at the end of the story?
4. What are the consequences of trying to live above one's income? Why do we suffer when we overuse credit cards and other kinds of credit?
5. Social pressures can force us to do truly silly things. Why do we let ourselves be drawn in by fashion and style, even when we cannot afford new clothes?
6. How does irony of the kind we see in this story affect the reader? What is the feeling when the irony becomes clear? Does it caution the reader to be careful?
7. Why does the beginning of the story say that Mme. Loisel was born into a working class family by a "blunder of destiny"? What kind of family would Mme. Loisel have preferred?
8. How does the husband's indulgence lead to the problems in the story? Is he to blame for being so willing to please his wife at all costs? Is he likely still so indulgent after she has worked so hard at the end of the story?
9. In what ways does the final twist of the story reflect on what has gone before? Why does such an ending make such a story so memorable?
10. What kinds of people drive the entertainment industry? How do they dress, and what expectations do they set up in the young? Pick a particular entertainer, and write about how that person influences those who admire her or him.
11. Have you ever borrowed something from someone else or lent something to someone and have it go wrong? Write about the experience and its effect on your relationship.
12. Have you ever spent far too much for something that later did not mean much to you? How did you feel about your mistake? What did you learn from the experience?

Charles

SHIRLEY JACKSON

The day my son Laurie started kindergarten he renounced corduroy overalls with bibs and began wearing blue jeans with a belt. I watched him go off the first morning with the older girl next door, seeing clearly that an era of my life was ended, my sweet-voiced nursery-school tot replaced by a long-trousered, swaggering character who forgot to stop at the corner and wave good-bye to me.

He came home the same way, the front door slamming open, his hat on the floor, and the voice suddenly become raucous shouting, "Isn't anybody here?"

At lunch he spoke insolently to his father, spilled his baby sister's milk, and remarked that his teacher said we were not to take the name of the Lord in vain.

"How was school today?" I asked, elaborately casual.

"All right," he said.

"Did you learn anything?" his father asked. Laurie regarded his father coldly. "I didn't learn nothing," he said.

"Anything," I said. "Didn't learn anything."

"The teacher spanked a boy, though," Laurie said, addressing his bread and butter. "For being fresh," he added, with his mouth full.

"What did he do?" I asked. "Who was it?"

Laurie thought. "It was Charles," he said. "He was fresh. The teacher spanked him and made him stand in a corner. He was awfully fresh."

"What did he do?" I asked again, but Laurie slid off his chair, took a cookie, and left, while his father was still saying, "See here, young man."

The next day Laurie remarked at lunch, as soon as he sat down, "Well, Charles was bad again today." He grinned enormously and said, "Today Charles hit the teacher."

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“Good heavens,” I said, mindful of the Lord’s name. “I suppose he got spanked again?”

“He sure did,” Laurie said. “Look up,” he said to his father.

“What?” his father said, looking up.

“Look down,” Laurie said. “Look at my thumb. Gee, you’re dumb.” He began to laugh insanely.

“Why did Charles hit the teacher?” I asked quickly.

“Because she tried to make him color with red crayons,” Laurie said. “Charles wanted to color with green crayons so he hit the teacher and she spanked him and said nobody play with Charles but everybody did.”

The third day—it was Wednesday of the first week—Charles bounced a see-saw on the head of a little girl and made her bleed, and the teacher made him stay inside all during recess. Thursday Charles had to stand in a corner during story-time because he kept pounding his feet on the floor. Friday Charles was deprived of blackboard privileges because he threw chalk.

On Saturday I remarked to my husband, “Do you think kindergarten is too unsettling for Laurie? All this toughness and bad grammar, and this Charles boy sounds like such a bad influence.”

“It’ll be all right,” my husband said reassuringly. “Bound to be people like Charles in the world. Might as well meet them now as later.”

On Monday Laurie came home late, full of news. “Charles,” he shouted as he came up the hill; I was waiting anxiously on the front steps. “Charles,” Laurie yelled all the way up the hill, “Charles was bad again.”

“Come right in,” I said, as soon as he came close enough. “Lunch is waiting.”

“You know what Charles did?” he demanded, following me through the door. “Charles yelled so in school they sent a boy in from first grade to tell the teacher she had to make Charles keep quiet, and so Charles had to stay after school. And so all the children stayed to watch him.”

“What did he do?” I asked.

“He just sat there,” Laurie said, climbing into his chair at the table. “Hi, Pop, y’old dust mop.”

“Charles had to stay after school today,” I told my husband. “Everyone stayed with him.”

“What does this Charles look like?” my husband asked Laurie. “What’s his other name?”

“He’s bigger than me,” Laurie said, “And he doesn’t have any rubbers and he doesn’t ever wear a jacket.”

Monday night was the first Parent-Teachers meeting, and only the fact that the baby had a cold kept me from going; I wanted passionately to meet Charles’s mother. On Tuesday Laurie remarked suddenly, “Our teacher had a friend come to see her in school today.”

“Charles’s mother?” my husband and I asked simultaneously.

“Naaah,” Laurie said scornfully. “It was a man who came and made us do exercises, we had to touch our toes. Look.” He climbed down from his chair and squatted down and touched his toes. “Like this,” he said. He got solemnly back into his chair and said, picking up his fork, “Charles didn’t even do exercises.”

“That’s fine,” I said heartily. “Didn’t Charles want to do the exercises?”

“Naaah,” Laurie said. “Charles was so fresh to the teacher’s friend he wasn’t let to do exercises.”

“Fresh again,” I said.

“He kicked the teacher’s friend,” Laurie said. “The teacher’s friend told Charles to touch his toes like I just did and Charles kicked him.”

“What are they going to do about Charles, do you suppose?” Laurie’s father asked him.

Laurie shrugged elaborately. “Throw him out of school, I guess,” he said.

Wednesday and Thursday were routine; Charles yelled during story hour and hit a boy in the stomach and made him cry. On Friday Charles stayed after school again and so did all the other children.

With the third week of kindergarten Charles was an institution in our family; the baby was being a Charles when she cried all afternoon; Laurie did a Charles when he filled his wagon full of mud and pulled it through the kitchen; even my husband, when he caught his elbow in the telephone cord and pulled the telephone, ashtray, and a bowl of flowers off the table, said, after the first minute, “Looks like Charles.”

During the third and fourth weeks it looked like a reformation in Charles; Laurie reported grimly at lunch on Thursday of the third week, “Charles was so good today the teacher gave him an apple.”

“What?” I said, and my husband added warily, “You mean Charles?”

“Charles,” Laurie said. “He gave the crayons around and he picked up the books afterward and the teacher said he was her helper.”

“What happened?” I asked incredulously.

“He was her helper, that’s all,” Laurie said, and shrugged. “Can this be true, about Charles?” I asked my husband that night. “Can something like this happen?”

“Wait and see,” my husband said cynically. “When you’ve got a Charles to deal with, this may mean he’s only plotting.”

He seemed to be wrong. For over a week Charles was the teacher’s helper; each day he handed things out and he picked things up; no one had to stay after school.

“The PTA meeting’s next week again,” I told my husband one evening. “I’m going to find Charles’s mother there.”

“Ask her what happened to Charles,” my husband said. “I’d like to know.”

“I’d like to know myself,” I said.

On Friday of that week things were back to normal. “You know what Charles did today?” Laurie demanded at the lunch table, in a voice slightly awed. “He told a little girl to say a word and she said it and the teacher washed her mouth out with soap and Charles laughed.”

“What word?” his father asked unwisely, and Laurie said, “I’ll have to whisper it to you, it’s so bad.” He got down off his chair and went around to his father. His father bent his head down and Laurie whispered joyfully. His father’s eyes widened.

“Did Charles tell the little girl to say that?” he asked respectfully.

“She said it twice,” Laurie said. “Charles told her to say it twice.”

“What happened to Charles?” my husband asked.

“Nothing,” Laurie said. “He was passing out the crayons.”

Monday morning Charles abandoned the little girl and said the evil word himself three or four times, getting his mouth washed out with soap each time. He also threw chalk.

My husband came to the door with me that evening as I set out for the PTA meeting. “Invite her over for a cup of tea after the meeting,” he said. “I want to get a look at her.”

“If only she’s there,” I said prayerfully.

“She’ll be there,” my husband said. “I don’t see how they could hold a PTA meeting without Charles’s mother.”

At the meeting I sat restlessly, scanning each comfortable matronly face, trying to determine which one hid the secret of Charles. None of them looked to me haggard enough. No one stood up in the meeting and apologized for the way her son had been acting. No one mentioned Charles.

After the meeting I identified and sought out Laurie’s kindergarten teacher. She had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of chocolate cake; I had a plate with a cup of tea and a piece of marshmallow cake. We maneuvered up to one another cautiously, and smiled.

“I’ve been so anxious to meet you,” I said. “I’m Laurie’s mother.”

“We’re all so interested in Laurie,” she said.

“Well, he certainly likes kindergarten,” I said. “He talks about it all the time.”

“We had a little trouble adjusting, the first week or so,” she said primly, “but now he’s a fine little helper. With occasional lapses, of course.”

“Laurie usually adjusts very quickly,” I said. “I suppose this time it’s Charles’s influence.”

“Charles?”

“Yes,” I said, laughing, “you must have your hands full in that kindergarten, with Charles.”

“Charles?” she said. “We don’t have any Charles in the kindergarten.”