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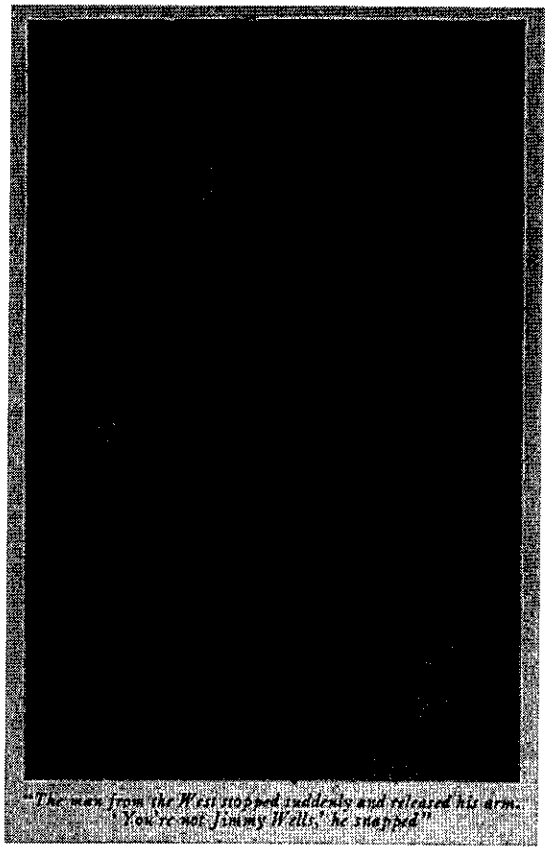
ELA

Literature Appendix

2019-20

After Twenty Years

by O. Henry (/author/o-henry)



"The man from the West stopped suddenly and retained his arm. 'You're not Jimmy Wells,' he snapped."

The policeman on the beat moved up the avenue impressively. The impressiveness was habitual and not for show, for spectators were few. The time was barely 10 o'clock at night, but chilly gusts of wind with a taste of rain in them had well nigh depeopled the streets.

Trying doors as he went, twirling his club with many intricate and artful movements, turning now and then to cast his watchful eye adown the pacific thoroughfare, the officer, with his stalwart form and slight swagger, made a fine picture of a guardian of the peace. The vicinity was one that kept early hours. Now and then you might see the lights of a cigar store or of an all-night lunch counter; but the majority of the doors belonged to business places that had long since been closed.

When about midway of a certain block the policeman suddenly slowed his walk. In the doorway of a darkened hardware store a man leaned, with an unlighted cigar in his mouth. As the policeman walked up to him the man spoke up quickly.

"It's all right, officer," he said, reassuringly. "I'm just waiting for a friend. It's an appointment made twenty years ago. Sounds a little funny to you, doesn't it? Well, I'll explain if you'd like to make certain it's all straight. About that long ago there used to be a restaurant where this store stands--'Big Joe' Brady's restaurant."

"Until five years ago," said the policeman. "It was torn down then."

The man in the doorway struck a match and lit his cigar. The light showed a pale, square-jawed face with keen eyes, and a little white scar near his right eyebrow. His scarfpin was a large diamond, oddly set.

"Twenty years ago to-night," said the man, "I dined here at 'Big Joe' Brady's with Jimmy Wells, my best chum, and the finest chap in the world. He and I were raised here in New York, just like two brothers, together. I was eighteen and Jimmy was twenty. The next morning I was to start for the West to make my fortune. You couldn't have dragged Jimmy out of New York; he thought it was the only place on earth. Well, we agreed that night that we would meet here again exactly twenty years from that date and time, no matter what our conditions might be or from what distance we might have to come. We figured that in twenty years each of us ought to have our destiny worked out and our fortunes made, whatever they were going to be."

"It sounds pretty interesting," said the policeman. "Rather a long time between meets, though, it seems to me. Haven't you heard from your friend since you left?"

"Well, yes, for a time we corresponded," said the other. "But after a year or two we lost track of each other. You see, the West is a pretty big proposition, and I kept hustling around over it pretty lively. But I know Jimmy will meet me here if he's alive, for he always was the truest, stanchest old chap in the world. He'll never forget. I came a thousand miles to stand in this door to-night, and it's worth it if my old partner turns up."

The waiting man pulled out a handsome watch, the lids of it set with small diamonds.

"Three minutes to ten," he announced. "It was exactly ten o'clock when we parted here at the restaurant door."

"Did pretty well out West, didn't you?" asked the policeman.

"You bet! I hope Jimmy has done half as well. He was a kind of plodder, though, good fellow as he was. I've had to compete with some of the sharpest wits going to get my pile. A man gets in a groove in New York. It takes the West to put a razor-edge on him."

The policeman twirled his club and took a step or two.

"I'll be on my way. Hope your friend comes around all right. Going to call time on him sharp?"

"I should say not!" said the other. "I'll give him half an hour at least. If Jimmy is alive on earth he'll be here by that time. So long, officer."

"Good-night, sir," said the policeman, passing on along his beat, trying doors as he went.

There was now a fine, cold drizzle falling, and the wind had risen from its uncertain puffs into a steady blow. The few foot passengers astir in that quarter hurried dismally and silently along with coat collars turned high and pocketed hands. And in the door of the hardware store the man who had come a thousand miles to fill an appointment, uncertain almost to absurdity, with the friend of his youth, smoked his cigar and waited.

About twenty minutes he waited, and then a tall man in a long overcoat, with collar turned up to his ears, hurried across from the opposite side of the street. He went directly to the waiting man.

"Is that you, Bob?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Is that you, Jimmy Wells?" cried the man in the door.

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed the new arrival, grasping both the other's hands with his own. "It's Bob, sure as fate. I was certain I'd find you here if you were still in existence. Well, well, well! --twenty years is a long time. The old gone, Bob; I wish it had lasted, so we could have had another dinner there. How has the West treated you, old man?"

"Bully; it has given me everything I asked it for. You've changed lots, Jimmy. I never thought you were so tall by two or three inches."

"Oh, I grew a bit after I was twenty."

"Doing well in New York, Jimmy?"

"Moderately. I have a position in one of the city departments. Come on, Bob; we'll go around to a place I know of, and have a good long talk about old times."

The two men started up the street, arm in arm. The man from the West, his egotism enlarged by success, was beginning to outline the history of his career. The other, submerged in his overcoat, listened with interest.

At the corner stood a drug store, brilliant with electric lights. When they came into this glare each of them turned simultaneously to gaze upon the other's face.

The man from the West stopped suddenly and released his arm.

"You're not Jimmy Wells," he snapped. "Twenty years is a long time, but not long enough to change a man's nose from a Roman to a pug."

"It sometimes changes a good man into a bad one, said the tall man. "You've been under arrest for ten minutes, 'Silky' Bob. Chicago thinks you may have dropped over our way and wires us she wants to have a chat with you. Going quietly, are you? That's sensible. Now, before we go on to the station here's a note I was asked to hand you. You may read it here at the window. It's from Patrolman Wells."

The man from the West unfolded the little piece of paper handed him. His hand was steady when he began to read, but it trembled a little by the time he had finished. The note was rather short.

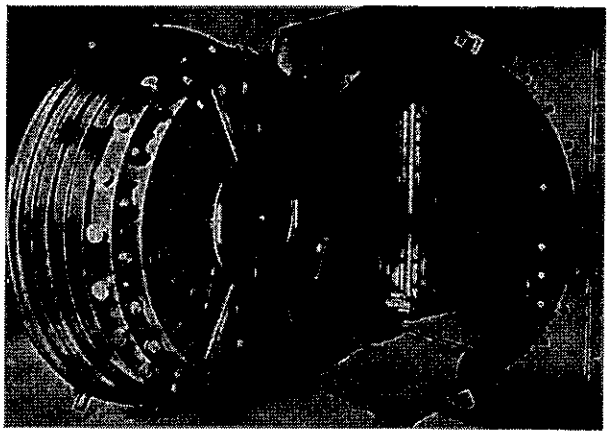
"Bob: I was at the appointed place on time. When you struck the match to light your cigar I saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago. Somehow I couldn't do it myself, so I went around and got a plain clothes man to do the job.

Ad closed by Goog!-

A Retrieved Reformation

by O. Henry (/author/o-henry)

A guard came to the prison shoe-shop, where Jimmy Valentine was assiduously stitching uppers, and escorted him to the front office. There the warden handed Jimmy his pardon, which had been signed that morning by the governor. Jimmy took it in a tired kind of way. He had served nearly ten months of a four year sentence. He had expected to stay only about three months, at the longest. When a man with as many friends on the outside as Jimmy Valentine had is received in the "stir" it is hardly worth while to cut his hair.



"Now, Valentine," said the warden, "you'll go out in the morning. Brace up, and make a man of yourself. You're not a bad fellow at heart. Stop cracking safes, and live straight."

"Me?" said Jimmy, in surprise. "Why, I never cracked a safe in my life."

"Oh, no," laughed the warden. "Of course not. Let's see, now. How was it you happened to get sent up on that Springfield job? Was it because you wouldn't prove an alibi for fear of compromising somebody in extremely high-toned society? Or was it simply a case of a mean old jury that had it in for you? It's always one or the other with you innocent victims."

"Me?" said Jimmy, still blankly virtuous. "Why, warden, I never was in Springfield in my life!"

"Take him back, Cronin!" said the warden, "and fix him up with outgoing clothes. Unlock him at seven in the morning, and let him come to the bull-pen. Better think over my advice, Valentine."

At a quarter past seven on the next morning Jimmy stood in the warden's outer office. He had on a suit of the villainously fitting, ready-made clothes and a pair of the stiff, squeaky shoes that the state furnishes to its discharged compulsory guests.

The clerk handed him a railroad ticket and the five-dollar bill with which the law expected him to rehabilitate himself into good citizenship and prosperity. The warden gave him a cigar, and shook hands. Valentine, 9762, was chronicled on the books, "Pardoned by Governor," and Mr. James Valentine walked out into the sunshine.

Disregarding the song of the birds, the waving green trees, and the smell of the flowers, Jimmy headed straight for a restaurant. There he tasted the first sweet joys of liberty in the shape of a broiled chicken and a bottle of white wine--followed by a cigar a grade better than the one the warden had given him. From there he proceeded leisurely to the depot. He tossed a quarter into the hat of a blind man sitting by the door, and boarded his train. Three hours set him down in a little town near the state line. He went to the cafe of one Mike Dolan and shook hands with Mike, who was alone behind the bar.

"Sorry we couldn't make it sooner, Jimmy, me boy," said Mike. "But we had that protest from Springfield to buck against, and the governor nearly balked. Feeling all right?"

"Fine," said Jimmy. "Got my key?"

He got his key and went upstairs, unlocking the door of a room at the rear. Everything was just as he had left it. There on the floor was still Ben Price's collar-button that had been torn from that eminent detective's shirt-band when they had overpowered Jimmy to arrest him.

Pulling out from the wall a folding-bed, Jimmy slid back a panel in the wall and dragged out a dust-covered suit-case. He opened this and gazed fondly at the finest set of burglar's tools in the East. It was a complete set, made of specially tempered steel, the latest designs in drills, punches, braces and bits, jimmies, clamps, and augers, with two or three novelties, invented by Jimmy himself, in which he took pride. Over nine hundred dollars they had cost him to have made at ----, a place where they make such things for the profession.

In half an hour Jimmy went down stairs and through the cafe. He was now dressed in tasteful and well-fitting clothes, and carried his dusted and cleaned suit-case in his hand.

"Got anything on?" asked Mike Dolan, genially.

"Me?" said Jimmy, in a puzzled tone. "I don't understand. I'm representing the New York Amalgamated Short Snap Biscuit Cracker and Frazzled Wheat Company."

This statement delighted Mike to such an extent that Jimmy had to take a seltzer-and-milk on the spot. He never touched "hard" drinks.

A week after the release of Valentine, 9762, there was a neat job of safe-burglary done in Richmond, Indiana, with no clue to the author. A scant eight hundred dollars was all that was secured. Two weeks after that a patented, improved, burglar-proof safe in Logansport was opened like a cheese to the tune of fifteen hundred dollars, currency; securities and silver untouched. That began to interest the rogue- catchers. Then an old-fashioned bank-safe in Jefferson City became active and threw out of its crater an eruption of bank-notes amounting to five thousand dollars. The losses were now high enough to bring the matter up into Ben Price's class of work. By comparing notes, a remarkable similarity in the methods of the burglaries was noticed. Ben Price investigated the scenes of the robberies, and was heard to remark:

"That's Dandy Jim Valentine's autograph. He's resumed business. Look at that combination knob--jerked out as easy as pulling up a radish in wet weather. He's got the only clamps that can do it. And look how clean those tumblers were punched out! Jimmy never has to drill but one hole. Yes, I guess I want Mr. Valentine. He'll do his bit next time without any short-time or clemency foolishness."

Ben Price knew Jimmy's habits. He had learned them while working on the Springfield case. Long jumps, quick get-aways, no confederates, and a taste for good society--these ways had helped Mr. Valentine to become noted as a successful dodger of retribution. It was given out that Ben Price had taken up the trail of the elusive cracksman, and other people with burglar-proof safes felt more at ease.

One afternoon Jimmy Valentine and his suit-case climbed out of the mail-hack in Elmore, a little town five miles off the railroad down in the black-jack country of Arkansas. Jimmy, looking like an athletic young senior just home from college, went down the board side-walk toward the hotel.

A young lady crossed the street, passed him at the corner and entered a door over which was the sign, "The Elmore Bank." Jimmy Valentine looked into her eyes, forgot what he was, and became another man. She lowered her eyes and coloured slightly. Young men of Jimmy's style and looks were scarce in Elmore.

Jimmy collared a boy that was loafing on the steps of the bank as if he were one of the stockholders, and began to ask him questions about the town, feeding him dimes at intervals. By and by the young lady came out, looking royally unconscious of the young man with the suit- case, and went her way.

"Isn' that young lady Polly Simpson?" asked Jimmy, with specious guile.

"Naw," said the boy. "She's Annabel Adams. Her pa owns this bank. Why'd you come to Elmore for? Is that a gold watch-chain? I'm going to get a bulldog. Got any more dimes?"

Jimmy went to the Planters' Hotel, registered as Ralph D. Spencer, and engaged a room. He leaned on the desk and declared his platform to the clerk. He said he had come to Elmore to look for a location to go into business. How was the shoe business, now, in the town? He had thought of the shoe business. Was there an opening?

The clerk was impressed by the clothes and manner of Jimmy. He, himself, was something of a pattern of fashion to the thinly gilded youth of Elmore, but he now perceived his shortcomings. While trying to figure out Jimmy's manner of tying his four-in-hand he cordially gave information.

Yes, there ought to be a good opening in the shoe line. There wasn't an exclusive shoe-store in the place. The dry-goods and general stores handled them. Business in all lines was fairly good. Hoped Mr. Spencer would decide to locate in Elmore. He would find it a pleasant town to live in, and the people very sociable.

Mr. Spencer thought he would stop over in the town a few days and look over the situation. No, the clerk needn't call the boy. He would carry up his suit-case, himself; it was rather heavy.

Mr. Ralph Spencer, the phoenix that arose from Jimmy Valentine's ashes --ashes left by the flame of a sudden and alterative attack of love-- remained in Elmore, and prospered. He opened a shoe-store and secured a good run of trade.

Socially he was also a success, and made many friends. And he accomplished the wish of his heart. He met Miss Annabel Adams, and became more and more captivated by her charms.

At the end of a year the situation of Mr. Ralph Spencer was this: he had won the respect of the community, his shoe-store was flourishing, and he and Annabel were engaged to be married in two weeks. Mr. Adams, the typical, plodding, country banker, approved of Spencer. Annabel's pride in him almost equalled her affection. He was as much at home in the family of Mr. Adams and that of Annabel's married sister as if he were already a member.

One day Jimmy sat down in his room and wrote this letter, which he mailed to the safe address of one of his old friends in St. Louis:

Dear Old Pal:

I want you to be at Sullivan's place, in Little Rock, next Wednesday night, at nine o'clock. I want you to wind up some little matters for me. And, also, I want to make you a present of my kit of tools. I know you'll be glad to get them--you couldn't duplicate the lot for a thousand dollars. Say, Billy, I've quit the old business--a year ago. I've got a nice store. I'm making an honest living, and I'm going to marry the finest girl on earth two weeks from now. It's the only life, Billy--the straight one. I wouldn't touch a dollar of another man's money now for a million. After I get married I'm going to sell out and go West, where there won't be so much danger of having old scores brought up against me. I tell you, Billy, she's an angel. She believes in me; and I wouldn't do another crooked thing for the whole world. Be sure to be at Sully's, for I must see you. I'll bring along the tools with me.

Your old friend,

Jimmy.

On the Monday night after Jimmy wrote this letter, Ben Price jogged unobtrusively into Elmore in a livery buggy. He lounged about town in his quiet way until he found out what he wanted to know. From the drug-store across the street from Spencer's shoe-store he got a good look at Ralph D. Spencer.

"Going to marry the banker's daughter are you, Jimmy?" said Ben to himself, softly. "Well, I don't know!"

The next morning Jimmy took breakfast at the Adamses. He was going to Little Rock that day to order his wedding-suit and buy something nice for Annabel. That would be the first time he had left town since he came to Elmore. It had been more than a year now since those last professional "jobs," and he thought he could safely venture out.

After breakfast quite a family party went downtown together--Mr. Adams, Annabel, Jimmy, and Annabel's married sister with her two little girls, aged five and nine. They came by the hotel where Jimmy still boarded, and he ran up to his room and brought along his suit-case. Then they went on to the bank. There stood Jimmy's horse and buggy and Dolph Gibson, who was going to drive him over to the railroad station.

All went inside the high, carved oak railings into the banking-room-- Jimmy included, for Mr. Adams's future son-in-law was welcome anywhere. The clerks were pleased to be greeted by the good-looking, agreeable young man who was going to marry Miss Annabel. Jimmy set his suit-case down. Annabel, whose heart was bubbling with happiness and lively youth, put on Jimmy's hat, and picked up

the suit-case. "Wouldn't I make a nice drummer?" said Annabel. "My! Ralph, how heavy it is? Feels like it was full of gold bricks."

"Lot of nickel-plated shoe-horns in there," said Jimmy, coolly, "that I'm going to return. Thought I'd save express charges by taking them up. I'm getting awfully economical."

The Elmore Bank had just put in a new safe and vault. Mr. Adams was very proud of it, and insisted on an inspection by every one. The vault was a small one, but it had a new, patented door. It fastened with three solid steel bolts thrown simultaneously with a single handle, and had a time-lock. Mr. Adams beamingly explained its workings to Mr. Spencer, who showed a courteous but not too intelligent interest. The two children, May and Agatha, were delighted by the shining metal and funny clock and knobs.

While they were thus engaged Ben Price sauntered in and leaned on his elbow, looking casually inside between the railings. He told the teller that he didn't want anything; he was just waiting for a man he knew.

Suddenly there was a scream or two from the women, and a commotion. Unperceived by the elders, May, the nine-year-old girl, in a spirit of play, had shut Agatha in the vault. She had then shot the bolts and turned the knob of the combination as she had seen Mr. Adams do.

The old banker sprang to the handle and tugged at it for a moment. "The door can't be opened," he groaned. "The clock hasn't been wound nor the combination set."

Agatha's mother screamed again, hysterically.

"Hush!" said Mr. Adams, raising his trembling hand. "All be quite for a moment. Agatha!" he called as loudly as he could. "Listen to me." During the following silence they could just hear the faint sound of the child wildly shrieking in the dark vault in a panic of terror.

"My precious darling!" wailed the mother. "She will die of fright! Open the door! Oh, break it open! Can't you men do something?"

"There isn't a man nearer than Little Rock who can open that door," said Mr. Adams, in a shaky voice. "My God! Spencer, what shall we do? That child--she can't stand it long in there. There isn't enough air, and, besides, she'll go into convulsions from fright."

Agatha's mother, frantic now, beat the door of the vault with her hands. Somebody wildly suggested dynamite. Annabel turned to Jimmy, her large eyes full of anguish, but not yet despairing. To a woman nothing seems quite impossible to the powers of the man she worships.

"Can't you do something, Ralph--/try/, won't you?"

He looked at her with a queer, soft smile on his lips and in his keen eyes.

"Annabel," he said, "give me that rose you are wearing, will you?"

Hardly believing that she heard him aright, she unpinned the bud from the bosom of her dress, and placed it in his hand. Jimmy stuffed it into his vest-pocket, threw off his coat and pulled up his shirt- sleeves. With that act Ralph D. Spencer passed away and Jimmy Valentine took his place.

"Get away from the door, all of you," he commanded, shortly.

He set his suit-case on the table, and opened it out flat. From that time on he seemed to be unconscious of the presence of any one else. He laid out the shining, queer implements swiftly and orderly, whistling softly to himself as he always did when at work. In a deep silence and immovable, the others watched him as if under a spell.

In a minute Jimmy's pet drill was biting smoothly into the steel door. In ten minutes--breaking his own burglarious record--he threw back the bolts and opened the door.

Agatha, almost collapsed, but safe, was gathered into her mother's arms.

Jimmy Valentine put on his coat, and walked outside the railings towards the front door. As he went he thought he heard a far-away voice that he once knew call "Ralph!" But he never hesitated.

At the door a big man stood somewhat in his way.

"Hello, Ben!" said Jimmy, still with his strange smile. "Got around at last, have you? Well, let's go. I don't know that it makes much difference, now."

And then Ben Price acted rather strangely.

"Guess you're mistaken, Mr. Spencer," he said. "Don't believe I recognize you. Your buggy's waiting for you, ain't it?"

Plays for Young Audiences

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A Christmas Carol

Story by

Charles Dickens

Adapted for the Stage by

Frederick Gaines

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"You are the Judge. Do not judge, then. It may be that in the sight of heaven you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child. Oh god! To hear an insect on a leaf pronouncing that there is too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust."

This adaptation of Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol was first produced by the Children's Theatre Company of the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts in November 1968. The script was edited by Linda Walsh Jenkins with the assistance of Carol K Metz.

Cast of Characters:

Carolers, families, dancers
First Boy
Second Boy
Third Boy
Little girl with a doll
Ebenezer Scrooge
Fred, Scrooge's Nephew
Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk
Gentleman visitor
Warder and residents of the poorhouse
Sparsit, Scrooge's servant
Cook
Charwoman
Jacob Marley
Leper
First Spirit (the Spirit of Christmas Past)
Jack Walton
Ben Benjamin
Child Scrooge
Fan, Scrooge's sister
Fezziwig
Dick Wilkins
Young Ebenezer
Sweetheart of Young Ebenezer
Second Spirit (the Spirit of Christmas Present)
Mrs. Cratchit
Several Cratchit children
Tiny Tim
Hunger and Ignorance, the beggar children
Pawnbroker
Third Spirit (the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come)
Butcher
Coachman

Sequence of Scenes:

Overture	"Christ the King, My Gentle One"
Scene i	Scrooge in His Shop
Scene ii	Scrooge Goes Home
Scene iii	The Spirit of Christmas Past
Scene iv	The Spirit of Christmas Present
Scene v	The Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come
Scene vi	Scrooge's Conversion

Notes on the Play:

Ebenezer Scrooge, obsessed with solitude and greed, collides in a nightmare with his own youth and his lost love. In Frederick Gaines's theatrical adaptation of Charles Dickens's story, Scrooge is visited by the spirits of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to Come in

scenes that flow rapidly from one to the next, activated by the setting. Carolers sing fragments of joyous Christmas songs in the corners of Scrooge's mind, and a little girl with a doll accompanies him on the street and joins him on his dream-journey. The visiting spirits of Christmas force Scrooge to confront people and scenes from his life that remind him of his friendlessness – he even sees his home and his future corpse being rifled by his own servants. Finally, he awakens to the reality of Christmas morning and discovers the joy of giving, loving, and caring for others.

The play is designed to be produced on a simply mounted, nonrealistic setting. A high platform that serves as Scrooge's bed is at a downstage right. The space under it forms the entrance to Scrooge's office. A series of stairs and ramps makes a curving sweep from the bed across the upstage area and slopes down to a chair-high platform at left center. The set is painted black and is hung with dark textured fabrics at the back and sides. The props include candles, lanterns, the little girl's doll, and platters of food and bowls of drink for Fezziwig's party. The set furnishings include Scrooge's writing desk, the Cratchits' armchair, and chandeliers for the parties. The costumes, based on fashions of the nineteenth-century London, provide color and texture against the abstract setting.

Overture "Christ the Kind, My Gentle One"

The play begins amid a swirl of street life in Victorian London. Happy groups pass; brightly costumed carolers and families call out to one another and sing "Joy to the World." Three boys and a girl are grouped about a glowing mound of coal. As the carolers leave the stage, the lights dim and the focus shifts to the mound of coals, bright against the dark. Slowly, the children begin to respond to the warmth. A piano plays softly as the children talk.

FIRST BOY:

I saw a horse in a window. (*pause*) A dapple...grey and white. And a saddle, too...red. And a strawberry mane down to here. All new. Golden stirrups. (*people pass by the children, muttering greetings to one another.*)

SECOND BOY:

Christmas Eve.

THIRD BOY:

Wish we could go.

FIRST BOY:

So do I.

THIRD BOY:

I think I'd like it.

FIRST BOY:

Oh, wouldn't I...wouldn't I!

SECOND BOY:

We'er going up onto the roof. (The boys look at him quizzically.) My father's a glass. Telescope. A brass one. It opens up and it has twists on it and an eyepiece that you put up to look through. We can see all the way to the park with it.

THIRD BOY:

Could I look through it?

SECOND BOY:

Maybe...where would you look? (*Third boy points straight up.*) Why there?

THIRD BOY:

I'd like to see the moon. (*The boys stand and look upward as the girl sings to her doll. On of the boys makes a snow angel on the ground.*)

GIRL:

(*Singing*)

Christ the King came down one day,
Into this world of ours,
And crying from a manger bed,
Began the Christmas hour.

(*Speaking*)

Christ the King, my pretty one,
Sleep softly on my breast,
Christ the King my gentle one,
Show us the way to rest.

(*She begins to sing the first verse again. As snow starts to fall on the boy making a snow angel, he stands up and reaches out to catch a single flake.*)

Scene i. Scrooge in His Shop

The percussion thunders. Scroogehurls himself through the descending snowflakes and sends the children scattering. They retreat, watching. Cratchit comes in. He takes some coal from the mound and puts it into a small bucket; as he carries it to a corner of the stage, the stage area is transformed from street to office. Scrooge's nephew Fred enters, talks with the children, gives them coins, and sends them away with a "Merry Christmas."

FRED:

A Merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!

SCROOGE:

Bah! Humbug!

FRED:

Christmas is a humbug, Uncle? I hope that's meant as a joke.

SCROOGE:

Well, it's not. Come, some, what is it you want? Don't waste all day, Nephew.

FRED:

I only want to wish you a Merry Christmas, Uncle. Don't be cross.

SCROOGE:

What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out with Merry Christmas! What's Christmas to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older but not an hour richer. If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.

FRED:

Uncle!

SCROOGE:

Nephew, keep Christmas in your own way and let me keep it in mine.

FRED:

But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE:

Then leave it alone then, much good it may do you. Much good it has ever done you.

FRED:

There are many things from which I might have derived good by which I have not profited, I daresay, Christmas among the rest. And though it has never put a scrap of gold in my pocket, I believe it has done me good and will do me good, and I say God bless it!

SCROOGE:

Bah!

FRED:

Don't be angry, Uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE:

I'll dine alone, thank you.

FRED:

But why?

SCROOGE:

Why? Why did you get married?

FRED:

Why, because I fell in love with a wonderful girl.

SCROOGE:

And I with solitude. Good afternoon.

FRED:

Nay, Uncle, but you never came to see me before I was married. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE:

Good afternoon.

FRED:

I am sorry with all my heart to find you so determined; but I have made the attempt to homage Christmas, and I'll keep that good spirit to the last. So, a Merry Christmas, Uncle.

SCROOGE:

Good Afternoon!

FRED:

And a Happy New Year!

SCROOGE:

Good Afternoon! (*Fred hesitates as if to say something more, he sees that Scrooge has gone to get a volume down from the shelf, and he starts to leave. As he leaves, the doorbell rings.*) Bells. Is it necessary to always have bells? (*The Gentleman visitor enters, ausing the doorbell to ring again.*) Cratchit!

CRATCHIT:

Yes, sir?

SCROOGE:

The bell, fool! See to it!

CRATCHIT:

Yes, sir. (*He goes to the entrance.*)

SCROOGE:

(*muttering*) Merry Christmas…Wolves howling and a Merry Christmas…

CRATCHIT:

It's for you, sir.

SCROOGE:

Of course it's for me. You're not receiving callers, are you? Show them in.

CRATCHIT:

Right this way, sir. (*The gentleman visitor approaches Scrooge.*)

SCROOGE:

Yes, yes?

GENTLEMAN VISITOR:

Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE:

Marley's dead. Seven years tonight. What is it you want?

GENTLEMAN VISITOR:

I have no doubt that his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner. Here, sir, my card. (*He hand Scrooge his business card.*)

SCROOGE:

Liberality? No doubt of it? All right, all right, I can read. What is it you want? (*he returns to his work.*)

GENTLEMAN VISITOR:

At this festive season of the year…

SCROOGE:

It's winter and cold. (*He continues his work and ignores the gentleman visitor.*)

GENTLEMAN VISITOR:

Yes…yes, it is, and the more reason for my visit. At this time of the year it is more than usually desirable to make some slight provision for the poor and destitute who suffer greatly from the cold. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE:

Are there no prisons?

GENTLEMAN VISITOR:

Many, sir.

SCROOGE:

And the workhouse, is it still in operation?

GENTLEMAN VISITOR:

It is, still, I wish I could say it was not.

SCROOGE:

The poor law is still in full vigor then?

GRNTLEMAN VISITOR:

Yes, sir.

SCROOGE:

I'm glad to hear it. From what you said, I was afraid someone had stopped its operation.

GENTLEMAN VISITOR:

Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind of body to the multitude, a few of us are endeavoring to raise fund to buy the poor some meat and drink and means of warmth. We chose this time because it is the time, of all others, when want is keenly felt and abundance rejoices. May I put you down for something sir?

SCROOGE:

(*Retreating to the darkness temporarily*) Nothing.

GENTLEMAN VISITOR:

You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE:

I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, sir, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry, I help support the establishments I have mentioned...they cost enough...and those who are poorly off must go there.

GENTLEMAN VISITOR:

Many can't go there, and many would rather die.

SCROOGE:

If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population. That is not my affair. My business is. It occupies me constantly. (*He talks both to the gentleman visitor and himself while he thumbs through his books.*) Ask a man to give up life and means...fine thing. What is it, I want to know? Charity? Damned charity! (*His nose deep in his books, he vaguely hears the dinner bell being rung in the workhouse; he looks up as if he has heard it but never focuses on the actual scene The warder of the poorhouse stands in a pool of light at the far left, slowly ringing a bell.*)

WARDER:

Dinner. All right. Line up. (*The poorly clad, dirty residents of the poorhouse line up and file by to get their evening dish of gruel, wordlessly accepting it and going back to eat*

listlessly in the gloom. Scrooge returns to the business of his office. The procession continues for a moment, then the image of the poorhouse is obscured by darkness. The dejected gentleman visitor exits.)

SCROOGE:

Latch the door, Cratchit. Firmly, firmly. Draft as cold as Christmas blowing in here. Charity! (*Cratchit goes to the door, starts to close it, then sees the little girl with the doll. She seems to beckon to him; he moves slowly toward her, and they dance together for a moment. Scrooge continues to work. Suddenly carolers appear on the platform, and a few phrases of their carol, "Angels We Have Heard On High," are heard. Scrooge looks up.*) Cratchit! (*As soon as Scrooge shouts, the girl and carolers vanish and Cratchit begins to close up the shop.*) Cratchit!

CRATCHIT:

Yes, sir?

SCROOGE:

Well, to work then!

CRATCHIT:

It's evening, sir.

SCROOGE:

Is it?

CRATCHIT:

Christmas evening, sir.

SCROOGE:

Oh, you'll want all day tomorrow off, I suppose.

CRATCHIT:

If it's quite convenient, sir.

SCROOGE:

It's not convenient, and it's not fair. If I was to deduct half a crown from your salary for it, you'd think yourself ill used, wouldn't you? Still you expect me to pay a day's wage for a day of no work.

CRATCHIT:

It's only once a year, sir.

SCROOGE:

Be here all the earlier the next morning.

CRATCHIT:

I will, sir.

SCROOGE:

Then off, off.

CRATCHIT:

Yes, sir! Merry Christmas, Sir!

SCROOGE:

Bah! (*As soon as Cratchit opens the door, the sounds of the street begin, very bright and loud. Cratchit is caught up in a swell of people hurrying down the street. Children pull him along to the top of an ice slide, and he runs and slides down it, disappearing in darkness as the stage suddenly is left almost empty. Scrooge goes around the room blowing our candles, talking to himself.*) Christmas Eve. Carolers! Bah! There. Another day. (*He opens his door and peers out.*) Black, very black. Now where are they? (*The children are heard singing carols for a moment*) Begging pennies for their songs, are they? Oh boy! Here, boy! (*The little girl emerges from the shadows. Scrooge hands her a dark lantern and she holds it while he lights it with an ember from the pile of coals.*)

Scene ii. Scrooge Goes Home

SCROOGE:

(*Talking to the little girl*) Hold it quiet! There. Off now. That's it. High. Black as pitch. Light the street, that's it. You're a bright lad! Good to see that. Earn your supper, boy. You'll not go hungry this night. Home. You know the way, do you? Yes, that's the way. The house of Ebenezer Scrooge. (*As the two find their way to Scrooge's house, the audience sees and hears a brief image of a cathedral interior with a living crèche and a large choir singing "Amen!"; the image ends in a blackout. The lights come up immediately, and Scrooge is at his door.*) Hold the light up, boy, up (*The girl with the lantern disappears.*) where did he go? Boy? No matter. There's a penny saved. Lantern's gone out. No matter. A candle saved. Yes, here's the key. (*He turns the key toward the door, and Marley's face swims out of the darkness. Scrooge watches, unable to speak. He fumbles for a match, lights the lantern, and swings it toward the figure, which melts away. Pause. Scrooge fits the key in the lock and turns it as the door suddenly is opened from the inside by the porter, Sparsit. Scrooge is startled, then recovers.*) Sparsit?

SPARSIT:

Yes, sir?

SCROOGE:

Hurry, hurry. The door…close it.

SPARSIT:

Did you knock, sir?

SCROOGE:

Knock? What matter? Here, light me up the stairs.

SPARSIT:

Yes, sir (*He leads Scrooge up the stairs. They pass the cook on the way. Scrooge brushes by here, stops, looks back, and leans toward him.*)

COOK:

Something to warm you, sir? Porridge?

SCROOGE:

Wha…? No. No, nothing.

COOK:

(*Waiting for her Christmas coin*) Merry Christmas, sir. (*Scrooge ignores the request and the cook disappears. Mumbling, Scrooge follows Sparsit.*)

SCROOGE:

(*Looking back after the cook is gone*) Fright a man nearly out of his life…Merry Christmas…bah!

SPARSIT:

Your room, sir.

SCROOGE:

Hmm? Oh yes, yes. And good night.

SPARSIT:

(*Extending his hand for his coin*) Merry Christmas, sir.

SCROOGE:

Yes, yes…(*He sees the outstretched hand; he knows what Sparsit wants and is infuriated.*) out! Out! (*He closes the door after Sparsit, turns toward his chamber, and discovers the charwoman directly behind him*)

CHARWOMAN:

Warm your bed for you, sir?

SCROOGE:

What? Out! Out!

CHARWOMAN:

Aye, sir. (*She starts for the door. Marley's voice is heard mumbling something unintelligible.*)

SCROOGE:

What's that?

CHARWOMAN:

Me, sir? Not a thing, sir.

SCROOGE:

Then, good night.

CHARWOMAN:

Good night. (*She exits and Scrooge pantomimes shutting the door behind her. The voice of Marley over an offstage microphone whispers and reverberates: "Merry Christmas, Scrooge!" silence. Scrooge hears the voice but cannot account for it. He climbs up to open a window and looks down. A cathedral choir singing "O Come, All Ye Faithful" is heard in the distance. Scrooge listens a moment, shuts the window, and prepares for bed. As soon as he has shut the sound out of his room, figures appear; they seem to be coming down the main aisle of a church, bearing gifts to the living crèche. The orchestra plays "O Come, All Ye Faithful" as the procession files out. Scrooge, ready for bed, warms himself before the heap of coals. As he pulls his nightcap from a chair, a small handbell tumbles off onto the floor. Startled, he picks it up and rings it for reassurance; an echo answers it. He turns and sees the little girl on the street; she is swinging her doll, which produces the echo of his bell. Scrooge escapes to his bed; the girl is swallowed up in the darkness, the bell sounds grow to a din, incoherent as in a dream, then suddenly fall silent. Scrooge sits up in bed, listens, hears the chains of Marley coming up the stairs. Scrooge reaches fro the bellpull to summon Sparsit. The bell responds with a gong, and Marley appears. He and Scrooge face one another.*)

SCROOGE:

What do you want with me?

MARLEY:

(*In a ghostly, unreal voice.*) Much.

SCROOGE:

Who are you?

MARLEY:

Ask who I was.

SCROOGE:

Who were you?

MARLEY:

In life, I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

SCROOGE:

He's Dead.

MARLEY:

Seven years this night, Ebenezer Scrooge.

SCROOGE:

Why do you come here?

MARLEY:

I must. It is commanded me. I must wander the world and see what I can no longer share, what I would not share when I walked where you do.

SCROOGE:

And must go thus?

MARLEY:

The chair? Look at it, Ebenezer, study it. Locks and vaults and golden coins. I forged it, each link, each day when I sat in thesechairs, commanded these rooms. Greed, Ebenezer Scrooge, wealth. Feel them, know them. Yours was as heavy as this I wear seven years ago and you have labored to build it since.

SCROOGE:

If you're here to lecture, I have no time for it. It is late, the night is cold. I want comfort now.

MARLEY:

I have none to give. I know not how you see me this night. I did not ask it. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day. I am commanded to bring you a chance, Ebenezer. Heed it!

SCROOGE:

Quickly then, quickly.

MARLEY:

You will be haunted by three spirits.

SCROOGE:

(*Scoffing*) Is that the chance?

MARLEY:

Mark it.

SCROOGE:

I do not choose to.

MARLEY:

(*Ominously*) Then you will walk where I do, burdened by your riches, your greed.

SCROOGE:

Spirits mean nothing to me.

MARLEY:

(*Slowly leaving*) Expect the first tomorrow, when the bell tolls one, the second the next night at the same hour, the third upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has ended. Look to see me no more. I must wander. Look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us.

SCROOGE:

Jacob…Don't leave me! ...Jacob! Jacob!

MARLEY:

Adieu, Ebenezer. (*At Marley's last words a funeral procession begins to move across the stage. A boy walks in front; a priest follows, swinging a censer; sounds of mourning and the suggestion of church music are heard. Scrooge calls out, "Jacob, don't leave me!" as if talking in the midst of a bad dream. At the end of the procession is the little girl, swinging her doll and singing softly.*)

GIRL:

Hushabye, don't you cry,
Go to sleep, little baby,
When you wake, you shall have
All the pretty little horses,
Blacks and bays, dapples and grays,
All the pretty little horses.

(She stops singing and looks up at Scrooge; their eyes meet and she solemnly rings the doll in greeting. Scrooge pulls shut the bed curtains and the little girl exits. The bell sounds are picked up by the bells of a leper who enters, dragging himself along.)

LEPER:

(*Calling out*) Leper! Leper! Stay the way! Leper! Leper! Keep away! (*He exits and the clock begins to chime, ringing the hours. Scrooge sits up in bed and begins to count the chimes.*)

SCROOGE:

Eight…nine…ten…eleven…it can't be…twelve. Midnight? No, not twelve. It can't be. I haven't slept the whole day through. Twelve? Yes, yes, twelve noon. (*He hurries to the window and looks out.*) Black. Twelve midnight. (*Pause*) I must get up. A day wasted. I must get down to the office. (*Two small chimes are heard.*) Quarter past. But it just rang twelve. Fifteen minutes haven't gone past, not so quickly. (*Again two small chimes are heard*) a quarter to one. The spirit… It's to come at one. (*He hurries to his bed as the chimes ring again*) One.

Scene iii. The Spirit of Christmas Past

The hour is struck again by a large street clock and the first spirit appears. It is a figure dressed to look like the little girl's doll.

SCROOGE:

Are you the spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

FIRST SPIRIT:
I am.

SCROOGE:
Who and what are you?

FIRST SPIRIT:
I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE:
Long past?

FIRST SPIRIT:
Your past.

SCROOGE:
Why are you here?

FIRST SPIRIT:
Your welfare. Rise. Walk with me.

SCROOGE:
I am mortal still. I cannot pass through air.

FIRST SPIRIT:
My hand. (*Scrooge grasps the spirit's hand tightly, and the doll's bell rings softly. Scrooge remembers a scene from his past in which two boys greet each other in the street.*)

FIRST VOICE:
Halloo, Jack!

SECOND VOICE:
Ben! Merry Christmas, Ben!

SCROOGE:
Jack Walton. Young Jack Walton. Spirits…?

FIRST VOICE:
Have a good holiday, Jack.

SCROOGE:
Yes, yes, I remember him. Both of them. Little Ben Benjamin. He used to…
FIRST VOICE:

See you next term, Jack. Next…term…

SCROOGE:

They…they're off for the holidays and going home from school. It's Christmas time…all of the children off home now…No…no, not at all… there was one… (*The spirit motions for Scrooge to turn, and he sees a young boy playing with a teddy bear and talking to it.*) Yes…reading…poor boy.

FIRST SPIRIT:

What, I wonder?

SCROOGE:

Reading? Oh, it was nothing. Fancy, all fancy and make-believe and take-me-away. All of it. Yes, nonsense.

CHILD SCROOGE:

Ali Baba.

SCROOGE:

Yes…that was it.

CHILD SCROOGE:

Genii, take me to the Gate of Damascus.

SCROOGE:

Yes, O Master, and jewels I shall bring you, and gold and myrrh and frankincense.

CHILD SCROOGE:

And they put him down – do you remember – that silly one, at the Gate of Damascus, in his underdrawers – asleep!

SCROOGE:

Yes, yes, the genii turned the Sultan's groom upside down and stood him on his head – served him right, I say!

CHILD SCROOGE:

And all the thieves and the jars of oil… (*Scrooge pretends to stab the jars of oil with his scimitar.*)

SCROOGE:

Yes, yes, and running them through – this and this and this for each of you!

CHILD SCROOGE:

Yes, and remember…and remember…remember Robinson Crusoe?

SCROOGE:

And the parrot!

CHILD SCROOGE:

Yes, the parrot! I love him best.

SCROOGE:

(*Imitating the parrot*) With his stripey green body and yellow tail drooping along and couldn't sing – awk – but could talk, and a thing like lettuce growing out the top of its head… and he used to sit on the very top of the tree – up there.

CHILD SCROOGE:

And Robinson Crusoe sailed around the island and he thought he parrot said, the parrot said…

SCROOGE:

(*Imitating the parrot*) Robinson Crusoe, where you been? Awk! Robinson Crusoe, where you been?

CHILD SCROOGE:

And Robinson Crusoe looked up in the tree and saw the parrot and knew he hadn't escapes and he was still there, still all alone there.

SCROOGE:

Poor Robinson Crusoe.

CHILD SCROOGE:

(*sadly replacing teddy bear*) Poor Robinson Crusoe.

SCROOGE:

Poor child. Poor child.

FIRST SPIRIT:

Why poor?

SCROOGE:

Fancy…fancy… (*He tries to mask his feelings by being brusque.*) it's his way, a child's way to…to lose being alone in…dreams, dreams…Never matter if they are all nonsense, yes, nonsense. But he'll be all right, grow out of it. Yes. Yes, he did outgrow it, the nonsense. Became a man and left there and he became, yes he became a man and…yes, successful…rich! (*The sadness returns.*) Never matter…never matter (*Fan runs in and goes to Child Scrooge.*) Fan!

FAN:

Brother, dear brother! (*She kisses Child Scrooge.*)

CHILD SCROOGE:

Dear, dear Fan.

FAN:

I've come to bring you home, home for good and ever. Come with me, come now. (*She takes his hand and they start to run off, but the spirit stops them and signals for the light on them to fade. They look at the spirit, aware of their role in the spirit's "education" of Scrooge.*)

SCROOGE:

Let me watch them go? Let them be happy for a moment! (*The spirit says nothing. Scrooge turns away from them and the light goes out.*) A delicate, delicate child. A breath might have withered her.

FIRST SPIRIT:

She dies a woman and had, as I remember, children.

SCROOGE:

One child.

FIRST SPIRIT:

Your nephew.

SCROOGE:

Yes, yes, Fred, my nephew. (*Scrooge pauses, then tries to bluster through.*) Well? Well all of us have that, haven't we? Childhoods? Sadness? But we grow and we become men, masters of ourselves. (*The spirit gestures for the music "Fezziwig's Party" to begin. It is heard first as from a great distance, then Scrooge becomes aware of it.*) I've no time fro it, Spirit. Music and all your Christmas falderol. Yes, yes, I've learnt what you have to show me. (*Fezziwig, Young Ebenezer, and Dick appear, busily preparing for the party.*)

FEZZIWIG:

Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!

SCROOGE:

Fezziwig! It's old Fezziwig that I 'prenticed under.

FIRST SPIRIT:

Your master?

SCROOGE:

Oh, aye, and the best that any boy could have. There's Dick Wilkins! Bless me. He was very much attached to me was Dick. Poor Dick. Dear, dear.

FEZZIWIG:

Yo ho, my boys! No more work tonight. Christmas Eve, Dick! Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up before a man can say Jack Robinson! (*The music continues. Chandeliers are pulled into position, and mistletoe, holly, and ivy are draped over everything by*

bustling servants. Dancers fill the stage fro Fezziwig's wonderful Christmas party. In the midst of the dancing and the gaiety servants pass back and forth through the crowd with huge platters of food. At a pause in the music, young Ebenezer, who is dancing, calls out.)

YOUNG EBENEZER:
Mr. Fezziwig, sir, you're a wonderful master!

SCROOGE and YOUNG EBENEZER:
A wonderful master!

SCROOGE:
(*Echoing the phrase*) A wonderful master! (*The music changes suddenly and the dancers jerk into distorted postures and then begin to move in slow motion. The celebrants slowly exit, performing a macabre dance to the discordant sounds.*)

FIRST SPIRIT:
Just because he gave us a party? It was very small.

SCROOGE:
Small!

FIRST SPIRIT:
He spent a few pounds of your "mortal" money, three, four at the most. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

SCROOGE:
But it wasn't the money. He had the power to make us happy, to make our service light or burdensome. The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it had cost a fortune. That's what…a good master is.

FIRST SPIRIT:
Yes?

SCROOGE:
No, no, nothing.

FIRST SPIRIT:
Something, I think.

SCROOGE:
I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now, that's all.

FIRST SPIRIT:
But this is all in your past. Your clerk Cratchitt couldn't be here.

SCROOGE:

No, no, of course not, an idle thought. Are we done?

FIRST SPIRIT:

(*Motioning for the waltz music to begin*) Nearly.

SCROOGE:

(*Hearing the waltz and remembering it*) Surely it's enough. Haven't you tormented me enough? (*Young Ebenezer is seen waltzing with his sweetheart.*)

FIRST SPIRIT:

I only show the past, what it promised you. Look. Another promise.

SCROOGE:

Oh. Oh, yes. I had forgotten…her. Don't they dance beautifully? So young, so young. I would have married her if only…

SWEETHEART:

Can you love me, Ebenezer? I bring no dowry into my marriage, only me, only love. It is no currency that you can buy and sell with, but we can live with it. Can you? (*She pauses, then returns the ring Scrooge gave her as his pledge.*) I release you, Ebenezer, for the love of the man you once were. Will that man win me again, now that he is free?

SCROOGE:

(*Trying to speak to her*) If only you had held me to it. You should not have let me go. I was young, I did love you.

SWEETHEART:

(*Speaking to Young Ebenezer*) We have never lied to one another. May you be happy in the life you have chosen. Good-bye. (*She runs out. Young Ebenezer slowly leaves.*)

SCROOGE:

No, no, it was not meant that way…!

FIRST SPIRIT:

You cannot change now what you would not change then, I am your mistakes, Ebenezer Scrooge, all of the things you could have done and did not.

SCROOGE:

Then leave me! I have done with them. I shall live with them. As I have, as I do; as I will.

FIRST SPIRIT:

There is another Christmas, seven years ago, when Marley died.

SCROOGE:

No! I will not see it, I will not! He dies. I could not prevent it. I did not choose for him to die on Christmas Day.

FIRST SPIRIT:

And when his day was chosen, what did you do then?

SCROOGE:

I looked after his affairs.

FIRST SPIRIT:

His business.

SCROOGE:

Yes! His business! Mine! It was all I had, all that I could do in this world. I have nothing to do with the world to come after.

FIRST SPIRIT:

Then I will leave you.

SCROOGE:

Not yet! Don't leave me here! Tell me what I must do! What of the other spirits?

FIRST SPIRIT:

They will come.

SCROOGE:

And you? What of you?

FIRST SPIRIT:

I am always with you. (*The little girl appears with her doll; she takes Scrooge's hand and gently heads him to bed. Numbed, he follows her. She leans against the foot of the bed, ringing the doll and singing. The first spirit exits as she sings.*)

GIRL:

When you wake, you shall have
All the pretty little horses,
Blacks and bays, dapples and grays,
All the pretty little horses.

(*She rings the doll and the ringing becomes the chiming of Scrooge's bell. The girl exits. Scrooge sits upright in bed as he hears the chimes.*)

SCROOGE:

One minute until one. No one here. No one's coming. (*A larger clock strikes one o' clock.*)

Scene iv. The Spirit of Christmas Present

A light comes on. Scrooge becomes aware of it and goes slowly to it. He sees the second spirit, the Spirit of Christmas Present, who looks like Fezziwig.

SCROOGE:
Fezziwig!

SECOND SPIRIT:
Hello, Scrooge.

SCROOGE:
But you can't be...not Fezziwig.

SECOND SPIRIT:
Do you see me as him?

SCROOGE:
I do.

SECOND SPIRIT:
And hear me as him?

SCROOGE:
I do.

SECOND SPIRIT:
I wish I were the gentleman, so as not to disappoint you.

SCROOGE:
But you're not...?

SECOND SPIRIT:
No, Mr. Scrooge. You have never seen the like o fme before. I am the Ghost of Christmas Present.

SCROOGE:
But...

SECOND SPIRIT:
You see what you will see, Scrooge, no more. Will you walk out with me this Christmas Eve?

SCROOGE:
But I am not yet dressed.

SECOND SPIRIT:

Take my tails, dear boy, we're leaving.

SCROOGE:
Wait!

SECOND SPIRIT:
What is it now?

SCROOGE:
Christmas Present, did you say?

SECOND SPIRIT:
I did.

SCROOGE:
Then we are traveling here? In this town? London? Just down there?

SECOND SPIRIT:
Yes, yes, of course.

SCROOGE:
Then could we walk? Your flying is…well, too sudden for an old man. Well?

SECOND SPIRIT:
It's your Christmas, Scrooge; I am only the guide.

SCROOGE:
(*Puzzled*) Then we can walk? (*The spirit nods.*) Where are you guiding me to?

SECOND SPIRIT:
Bob Cratchit's.

SCROOGE:
My clerk?

SECOND SPIRIT:
You did want to talk to him? (*Scrooge pauses, uncertain how to answer.*) Don't worry, Scrooge, you won't have to.

SCROOGE:
(*Trying to change the subject, to cover his error*) Shouldn't be much of a trip. With fifteen bob a week, how far off can it be?

SECOND SPIRIT:
A world away, Scrooge, at least that far. (*Scrooge and the spirit start to step off a curb when a funeral procession enters with a child's coffin, followed by the poorhouse children,*

who are singing. Seated on top of the coffin is the little girl. She and Scrooge look at one another.) That is the way to it, Scrooge. (*The procession follows the coffin offstage; Scrooge and the spirit exit after the procession. As they leave, the lights focus on Mrs. Cratchit and her children. Mrs. Cratchit sings as she puts Tiny Tim and the other children to bed, all in one bed. She pulls a dark blanket over them.*)

MRS. CRATCHIT:

(*Singing*)

When you wake, you shall have
All the pretty little horses,
Blacks and bays, dapples and grays,
All the pretty little horses.

To sleep now, all of you. Christmas tomorrow. (*She kisses them and goes to Bob Cratchit, who is by the hearth.*) How did our little Tiny Tim behave?

BOB CRATCHIT:

As good as gold and better. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church because he was a cripple and it might be pleasant for them to remember upon Christmas Day who made the lame to walk and the blind to see.

MRS. CRATCHIT:

He's a good boy (*The second spirit and Scrooge enter. Mrs. Cratchit feels a sudden draft.*) Oh, the wind. (*She gets up to shut the door.*)

SECOND SPIRIT:

Hurry. (*He nudges Scroogein before Mrs. Cratchit shuts the door.*)

SCROOGE:

Hardly hospitable is what I'd say.

SECOND SPIRIT:

Oh, they'd say a great deal more, Scrooge, if they could see you.

SCROOGE:

Oh, they should, should they?

SECOND SPIRIT:

Well, I might have a word for them...

SCROOGE:

You're here to listen.

SECOND SPIRIT:

Oh. Oh yes, all right. By the fire?

SECOND SPIRIT:

But not a word.

BOB CRATCHIT:

(*Raising his glass*) My dear, to Mr. Scrooge. I give you Mr. Scrooge, the founder of the feast.

MRS. CRATCHIT:

The founder of the feast indeed! I wish I had him here! I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and hope he'd have a good appetite for it.

BOB CRATCHIT:

My dear, Christmas Eve.

MRS. CRATCHIT:

It should be Christmas Eve, I'm sure, when one drinks to the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor dear.

BOB CRATCHIT:

I only know one thing on Christmas: that one must be charitable.

MRS. CRATCHIT:

I'll drink to his health for your sake and the day's, not for his. Long life to him! A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt.

BOB CRATCHIT;

If he cannot be, we must be happy for him. A song is what's needed. Tim!

MRS. CRATCHIT:

Sush! I've just gotten him down and he needs all the sleep he can get.

BOB CRATCHIT:

If he's asleep on Christmas Eve, I'll be much mistaken. Tim! He must sing, dear, there is nothing else that might make him well.

TINY TIM:

Yes, Father?

BOB CRATCHIT:

Are you awake?

TINY TIM:

Just a little.

BOB CRATCHIT:

A song then! (*The children awaken and, led by Tiny Tim, sit up to sing "What Child Is This?" As they sing, Scrooge speaks.*)

SCROOGE:

Spirit. (*He holds up his hand; all stop singing and look at him.*) I…I have seen enough. (*When the spirit signals to the children, they leave the stage, singing the carol quietly. Tiny Tim remains, covered completely by the dark blanket, disappearing against the black.*) Tiny Tim…will he live?

SECOND SPIRIT:

He is very ill. Even song cannot keep him whole through a cold winter.

SCROOGE:

But you haven't told me!

SECOND SPIRIT:

(*Imitating Scrooge*) If he be like to die, he had better do it and decrease the surplus population. (*Scrooge turns away*) Erase, Scrooge, those words from your thoughts. You are not the judge. Do not judge, then. It may be that in the sight of heaven you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child. Oh God! To hear an insect on a leaf pronouncing that there is too much life among hid hungry brothers in the dust. Good-bye, Scrooge.

SCROOGE:

But is there no happiness in Christmas Present?

SECOND SPIRIT:

There is.

SCROOGE:

Take me there.

SECOND SPIRIT:

It is at the home of your nephew…

SCROOGE:

No!

SECOND SPIRIT:

(*Disgusted with Scrooge.*) Then there is none.

SCROOGE:

But that isn't enough…You must teach me!

SECOND SPIRIT:

Would you have a teacher, Scrooge? Look at your own words.

SCROOGE:

But the first spirit gave me more…!

SECOND SPIRIT:

He was Christmas Past. There was a lifetime he could choose from. I have only this day, one day, and you Scrooge. I have nearly lived my fill of both. Christmas Present must be gone at Midnight. That is near now. (*He speaks to two beggar children who pause shyly at the far side of the stage. The children are thin and wan; they are barefoot and wear filthy rags.*) Come. (*They go to him.*)

SCROOGE:

Is this the last spirit who is to come to me?

SECOND SPIRIT:

They are no spirits. They are real. Hunger, Ignorance. Not spirits, Scrooge, passing dreams. They are real. They walk your streets, look to you for comfort. And you deny them. Deny them not too long, Scrooge. They will grow and multiply and they will not remain children.

SCROOGE:

Have they no refuge, no resource?

SECOND SPIRIT:

(*Again imitating Scrooge*) Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses? (*Tenderly to the children*) Come. It's Christmas Eve. (*He leads them offstage.*)

Thank You, Ma'am (by Langston Hughes)

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

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

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

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

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

She said, "You a lie!"

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

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

"Yes'm," said the boy.

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

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

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

"No'm," said the boy.

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

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

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

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

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

"No'm."

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

Sweat popped out on the boy's face and he began to struggle. Mrs. Jones stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half-nelson about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street. When she got to her door, she dragged the boy inside, down a hall, and into a large kitchenette-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still had him by the neck in the middle of her room.

She said, "What is your name?"

"Roger," answered the boy.

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

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

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

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

"There's nobody home at my house," said the boy.

"Then we'll eat," said the woman, "I believe you're hungry—or been hungry—to try to snatch my pockekbook."

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

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

"M'am?"

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

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

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

The woman said, "Um-hum! You thought I was going to say *but*, didn't you? You thought I was

going to say, *but I didn't snatch people's pocketbooks.* Well, I wasn't going to say that." Pause. Silence. "I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son—neither tell God, if he didn't already know. So you set down while I fix us something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable."

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

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

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

"That will be fine," said the boy.

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

"Eat some more, son," she said.

When they were finished eating she got up and said, "Now, here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto *my* pocketbook *nor nobody else's*—because shoes come by devilish like that will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But I wish you would behave yourself, son, from here on in."

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

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

Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed

Ray Bradbury

ANCHOR TEXT | SHORT STORY

Martin Lovatt/iStock/Getty Images

This version of the selection alternates original text with summarized passages. Dotted lines appear next to the summarized passages.

NOTES

The rocket metal cooled in the meadow winds. Its lid gave a bulging *pop*. From its clock interior stepped a man, a woman, and three children. The other passengers whispered away across the Martian meadow, leaving the man alone among his family.

The man felt his hair flutter and the tissues of his body draw tight as if he were standing at the center of a vacuum. His wife, before him, seemed almost to whirl away in smoke. The children, small seeds, might at any instant be sown to all the Martian climes. "Go back to Earth?"

"Yes! Listen!"

The Bittering family—a father, mother, and three children—settle into their day-to-day lives on Mars. The father, Harry, continues to expect something to go wrong. But he tries to be hopeful about their new life. He remarks to his wife that in ten years there will be a million Earth people on Mars.

"They said we'd fail. Said the Martians would resent our invasion. But did we find any Martians? Not a living soul! Oh, we found their empty cities, but no one in them. Right?"

Harry's son David believes otherwise. He thinks there may be Martians living nearby that they can't see. He talks about seeing things moving around in an area up in the mountains where the Martians used to live. He's afraid the Martians will one day punish the Earth people for coming to Mars.

Harry tells his son it's natural to think about the traces of people who have disappeared. But he thinks it's just David's imagination and warns the boy not to go to the Martian ruins. David insists that something is bound to happen.

Something happened that afternoon.

Laura stumbled through the settlement, crying. She dashed blindly onto the porch.

"Mother, Father—the war, Earth!" she sobbed. "A radio flash just came. Atom bombs hit New York! All the space rockets blown up. No more rockets to Mars, ever!"

"Oh, Harry!" The mother held onto her husband and daughter.

"Are you sure, Laura?" asked the father quietly.

Laura wept. "We're stranded on Mars, forever and ever!"

For a long time there was only the sound of the wind in the late afternoon.

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Alone, thought Bittering. Only a thousand of us here. No way back. No way. No way. Sweat poured from his face and his hands and his body; he was drenched in the hotness of his fear. He wanted to strike Laura, cry, "No, you're lying! The rockets will come back!" Instead, he stroked Laura's head against him and said, "The rockets will get through someday."

"Father, what will we do?"

"Go about our business, of course. Raise crops and children. Wait. Keep things going until the war ends and the rockets come again."

Harry has taken comfort from the fact that his family could go back home to Earth whenever they liked. But now the Bitterings and everyone else from Earth are stranded on this planet.

Worried, Harry goes out to work in the garden. Looking up at the mountains, he thinks of their old Martian names. When the Earth people came, they renamed all the mountains, cities, and seas. They had felt guilty about naming things that already had names, but in the end, they had done it anyway.

Harry suddenly feels very alone in the garden, planting Earth flowers in this foreign dirt. Sweating, he takes off his jacket and tie. He hangs them on a peach tree he brought from Earth.

He put out his sun-browned hand and gave a small cry. He touched the blossoms and picked them up. He turned them, he touched them again and again. Then he shouted for his wife. ...

"Do you see? They're different. They've changed! They're not peach blossoms any more!"

"Look all right to me," she said.

"They're not. They're wrong! I can't tell how. An extra petal, a leaf, something, the color, the smell!"

The children ran out in time to see their father hurrying about the garden, pulling up radishes, onions, and carrots from their beds. ...

" ... Onions but not onions, carrots but not carrots. Taste: the same but different. Smell: not like it used to be." He felt his heart pounding, and he was afraid. He dug his fingers into the earth. "Cora, what's happening? What is it? We've got to get away from this." He ran across the garden. Each tree felt his touch. "The roses. The roses. They're turning green!"

Two days later they find that their cow is growing a third horn. And the lawn has turned purple. Harry notices the house looks strange as well.

"Even the house. The wind's done something to it. The air's burned it. The fog at night. The boards, all warped out of shape. It's not an Earthman's house any more."

"Oh, your imagination!"

He put on his coat and tie. "I'm going into town. We've got to do something now. I'll be back."

"Wait, Harry!" his wife cried.

But he was gone.

NOTES

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In town, Harry tells some men that they must return to their own planet. They find this idea silly. None of them wants to go back to the ruins of Earth. When he asks if they've noticed changes to their crops, they say they have. But they aren't worried. Harry insists they are all in danger and begs them to help him build a rocket. Then, Harry notices that all the men's eyes are yellow. When Harry looks in a mirror, he sees yellow flecks in his eyes too.

Harry Bittering moved into the metal shop and began to build the rocket. Men stood in the open door and talked and joked without raising their voices. Once in a while they gave him a hand on lifting something. But mostly they just idled and watched him with their yellowing eyes.

"It's suppertime, Harry," they said.

His wife appeared with his supper in a wicker basket.

"I won't touch it," he said. "I'll eat only food from our Deepfreeze. Food that came from Earth. Nothing from our garden."

Time passes, and the Bitterings begin to change. Harry can feel his bones shifting as if they are melting. He is afraid all the time, and his fear makes him sweat and shake. He notices his wife has grown very dark from the sun. The wind roars on, blowing through the peach trees, the purple grass, and the green roses.

A green star appears in the sky. Then one day Harry hears himself speaking words from a new language.

"*Iorrt. Iorrt.*" He repeated it.

It was a Martian word. He knew no Martian.

In the middle of the night he arose and dialed a call through to Simpson, the archaeologist.

"Simpson, what does the word *Iorrt* mean?"

"Why that's the old Martian word for our planet Earth. Why?"

"No special reason."

Harry continues to build the rocket with the help of three other men, but he tires easily and soon has to rest. The others ask him if he's eating enough. They tell him he's getting thinner and taller. Harry grows angry and refuses to believe them.

His wife is worried about him too. She has used up all the food in the freezer. She warns him that he's got to eat. Finally, he picks at a sandwich. Later, his wife persuades him to come out with her and the children to swim and hike.

Harry notices that his family's eyes are now very yellow. He mentions it to his wife, but she hasn't noticed a difference. He thinks about how the Martian atmosphere is changing all of them.

Later, in the hills, they come to a deserted summer home made of blue marble. Harry's wife remarks that it would be nice to live there in the summer. Harry says they have to get back to town so he can work on the rocket.

But in the shop later that night, he remembers the blue marble summer home. The rocket somehow seems less important now.

Soon, Harry and his family join the others in packing for a move to the summer homes. The summer passes. In the fall, Harry's wife tells him it's time to go back.

NOTES

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"Yes, but we're not going," he said quietly. "There's nothing there any more."

"Your books," she said. "Your fine clothes."

"Your *Illes* and your fine *ior uele rre*," she said.

"The town's empty. No one's going back," he said. "There's no reason to, none at all." ...

"Such odd, such ridiculous houses the Earth people built."

"They didn't know any better," his wife mused. "Such ugly people. I'm glad they've gone."

They both looked at each other, startled by all they had just finished saying. They laughed.

Harry glances at his slender, golden wife and asks where the Earth people went. She says she doesn't know.

Five years pass before a rocket lands in the valley and men from Earth jump out of it. The war on Earth is over and they have come to rescue those who have been stranded on Mars.

... The American-built town of cottages, peach trees, and theaters was silent. They found a flimsy rocket frame rusting in an empty shop.

The rocket men searched the hills. The captain established headquarters in an abandoned bar. His lieutenant came back to report.

"The town's empty, but we found native life in the hills, sir. Dark people. Yellow eyes. Martians. Very friendly. We talked a bit, not much. They learn English fast. I'm sure our relations will be most friendly with them, sir."...

"Did they tell you what became of the men and women who built this Earth settlement, Lieutenant?"

"They hadn't the foggiest notion of what happened to this town or its people."

"Strange. You think those Martians killed them?"

"They look surprisingly peaceful. Chances are a plague did this town in, sir."

The men decide the disappearance of Earth people from the settlement is a mystery they will probably never solve. Meanwhile, they have work to do. They begin to discuss renaming all the mountains, canals, rivers, and hills with Earth names, including the names of the commander and the lieutenant themselves. As they talk, the lieutenant's attention slowly drifts away, up toward the faint blue mist of the hills above the valley.

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NOTES

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"Perhaps. I suppose this is one of those mysteries we'll never solve. One of those mysteries you read about."

The captain looked at the room, the dusty windows, the blue mountains rising beyond, the

The work, all the work. And the old records were lost. We'll have a job of remapping to do, renaming the mountains and rivers and such. Calls for a little imagination."

"What do you think of naming those mountains the Lincoln Mountains, this canal the Washington Canal, those hills - we can name those hills for you, Lieutenant. Diplomacy. And you, for a favor, might name a town for me. Polishing the apple. And why not make this the Einstein Valley, and further over ... are you listening, Lieutenant?"

The lieutenant snapped his gaze from the blue color and the quiet mist of the hills far beyond the town.

"What? Oh, yes, Sir."

Before Reading

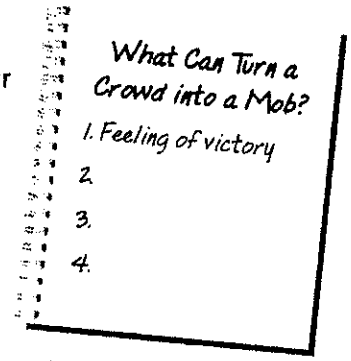
The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street

Teleplay by Rod Serling

What turns a crowd into a MOB?

KEY IDEA People in a crowd often act differently than they do when they're alone. In a big group, people might laugh louder, feel braver, or get angrier. Sometimes a crowd can even become dangerous. When it does—as in the teleplay you're about to read—it becomes a **mob.**

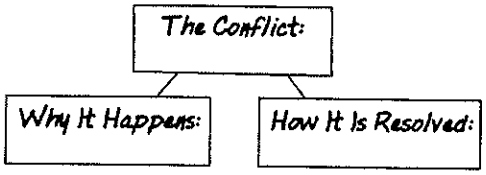
DISCUSS With a small group, share stories you may have heard about crowds turning into mobs. Think about how some fans react after a favorite sports team wins a championship or about what can happen when frustrated people take the law into their own hands. Continue your discussion by creating a list of things that can turn a crowd into a mob.



● LITERARY ANALYSIS: CONFLICT IN DRAMA

Like any story, a drama has a plot that centers on a **conflict.** Since drama is meant to be performed by actors, a drama's conflict usually unfolds through dialogue (conversation between characters) and action that you picture taking place on a stage or screen.

As you read "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street," make notes about the story's conflict in a conflict map like the one shown.



■ READING STRATEGY: READING A TELEPLAY

To best understand the dialogue and action in a drama, it's important to read the **stage directions.** Stage directions are instructions for the actors, the director, and the reader. They often appear in italics within parentheses. In a **teleplay,** a drama written specifically for television, stage directions also include directions for the camera, such as the following:

The camera moves slowly across the various porches . . .

As you read this teleplay, use all the stage directions to help you imagine the story as it might be presented on television.

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Rod Serling uses these words to help show the conflict unfolding. See how many of them you can match with their numbered definitions.

WORD LIST			
	assent	converging	optimistic
	antagonism	defiant	revelation
	contorted	incriminate	

1. hopeful about the future; confident
2. willing to stand up to opposition; bold
3. hostility
4. something made known
5. agreement
6. to cause to appear guilty
7. twisted or pulled out of shape
8. moving toward one point

Author Online

Social Issues During his extraordinary career, Rod Serling won six Emmy awards, the highest honors given to those in the television industry. Known to the public as a creator of exciting television shows, Serling was sometimes referred to by his friends and business associates as "the angry young man of television." Serling wanted to write teleplays about important social issues, but television executives often thought his topics were too controversial.

Rod Serling
1924–1975

Science Fiction Frustrated by this lack of support, Serling turned to writing science fiction and fantasy. He created an eerie series called *The Twilight Zone,* which became one of the most popular shows in television history during its 1959–1964 run. Because the teleplays for this series were not realistic, Serling had more freedom to deal with issues such as prejudice and intolerance. "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street" first appeared in 1960 as an episode of *The Twilight Zone.*

MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR
For more on Rod Serling, visit the **Literature Center** at **ClassZone.com.**

THE MONSTERS ARE DUE ON MAPLE STREET

ROD SERLING

CHARACTERS

Narrator
Tommy
Steve Brand
Don Martin
Myra Brand, Steve's wife
Woman
Voice One
Voice Two
Voice Three
Voice Four
Voice Five
Pete Van Horn
Charlie
Sally, Tommy's mother
Man One
Les Goodman
Ethel Goodman, Les's wife
Man Two
Figure One
Figure Two

Empire of Lights (1954), René Magritte. Oil on canvas, 146 cm × 114 cm. Musée d'Art Moderne, Brussels. © 2008 C. Herscovici, Brussels/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

(Fade in[1] *on a shot of the night sky. The various heavenly bodies stand out in sharp, sparkling relief. The camera moves slowly across the heavens until it passes the horizon and stops on a sign that reads "Maple Street." It is daytime. Then we see the street below. It is a quiet, tree-lined, small-town American street. The houses have front porches on which people sit and swing on gliders, talking across from house to house.* Steve Brand *is polishing his car, which is parked in front of his house. His neighbor,* Don Martin, *leans against the fender watching him. An ice-cream vendor riding a bicycle is just in the process of stopping to sell some ice cream to a couple of kids. Two women gossip on the front lawn. Another man is watering his lawn with a garden hose. As we see these various activities, we hear the* Narrator*'s voice.)*

Narrator. Maple Street, U.S.A., late summer. A tree-lined little world of front-porch gliders, hopscotch, the laughter of children, and the bell of an ice-cream vendor.

(There is a pause, and the camera moves over to a shot of the ice-cream vendor and two small boys who are standing alongside just buying ice cream.)

Narrator. At the sound of the roar and the flash of the light, it will be precisely six-forty-three P.M. on Maple Street.

(At this moment Tommy, *one of the two boys buying ice cream from the vendor, looks up to listen to a tremendous screeching roar from overhead. A flash of light plays on the faces of both boys and then moves down the street and disappears. Various people leave their porches or stop what they are doing to stare up at the sky.* Steve Brand, *the man who has been polishing his car, stands there transfixed, staring upwards. He looks at* Don Martin, *his neighbor from across the street.)*

Steve. What was that? A meteor?

Don. That's what it looked like. I didn't hear any crash though, did you?

Steve. Nope. I didn't hear anything except a roar.

Myra *(from her porch).* What was that?

Steve *(raising his voice and looking toward the porch).* Guess it was a meteor, honey. Came awful close, didn't it?

Myra. Too close for my money! Much too close.

(The camera moves slowly across the various porches to people who stand there watching and talking in low conversing tones.)

Narrator. Maple Street. Six-forty-four P.M. on a late September evening. *(He pauses.)* Maple Street in the last calm and reflective moment *(pause)* before the monsters came!

(The camera takes us across the porches again. A man is replacing a light bulb on a front porch. He gets off his stool to flick the switch and finds that nothing happens. Another man is working on an electric power mower. He plugs in the plug, flicks the switch of the mower off and on, but nothing happens. Through a window we see a woman pushing her finger up and down on the dial hook of a telephone. Her voice sounds far away.)

Woman. Operator, operator, something's wrong on the phone, operator! (Myra Brand *comes out on the porch and calls to* Steve.)

Myra *(calling).* Steve, the power's off. I had the soup on the stove, and the stove just stopped working.

Woman. Same thing over here. I can't get anybody on the phone either. The phone seems to be dead.

(We look down again on the street. Small, mildly disturbed voices are heard coming from below.)

Voice One. Electricity's off.

Voice Two. Phone won't work.

1. **fade in:** cause the television image to appear gradually.

Voice Three. Can't get a thing on the radio.

Voice Four. My power mower won't move, won't work at all.

Voice Five. Radio's gone dead!

(Pete Van Horn, *a tall, thin man, is seen standing in front of his house.*)

Pete. I'll cut through the back yard to see if the power's still on, on Floral Street. I'll be right back!

(*He walks past the side of his house and disappears into the back yard. The camera pans*[2] *down slowly until we are looking at ten or eleven people standing around the street and overflowing to the curb and sidewalk. In the background is* Steve Brand*'s car.*)

Steve. Doesn't make sense. Why should the power go off all of a sudden and the phone line?

Don. Maybe some kind of an electrical storm or something.

Charlie. That don't seem likely. Sky's just as blue as anything. Not a cloud. No lightning. No thunder. No nothing. How could it be a storm?

Woman. I can't get a thing on the radio. Not even the portable.

(*The people again begin to murmur softly in wonderment.*)

Charlie. Well, why don't you go downtown and check with the police, though they'll probably think we're crazy or something. A little power failure and right away we get all flustered and everything—

Steve. It isn't just the power failure, Charlie. If it was, we'd still be able to get a broadcast on the portable.

(*There is a murmur of reaction to this.* Steve *looks from face to face and then at his car.*)

Steve. I'll run downtown. We'll get this all straightened out.

(*He gets in the car and turns the key. Looking through the open car door, we see the crowd watching* Steve *from the other side. He starts the engine. It turns over sluggishly and then stops dead. He tries it again, and this time he can't get it to turn over. Then very slowly he turns the key back to "off" and gets out of the car. The people stare at* Steve. *He stands for a moment by the car and then walks toward them.*)

2. **pans:** turns.

Steve. I don't understand it. It was working fine before—

Don. Out of gas?

Steve (*shakes his head*). I just had it filled.

Woman. What's it mean?

Charlie. It's just as if (*pause*) as if everything had stopped. (*Then he turns toward* Steve.) We'd better walk downtown.

(*Another murmur of* ***assent*** *to this.*)

Steve. The two of us can go, Charlie. (*He turns to look back at the car.*) It couldn't be the meteor. A meteor couldn't do this.

(*He and* Charlie *exchange a look. Then they start to walk away from the group.* Tommy *comes into view. He is a serious-faced young boy in spectacles. He stands halfway between the group and the two men, who start to walk down the sidewalk.*)

Tommy. Mr. Brand—you'd better not!

Steve. Why not?

Tommy. They don't want you to.

(Steve *and* Charlie *exchange a grin, and* Steve *looks back toward the boy.*)

Steve. *Who* doesn't want us to?

Tommy (*jerks his head in the general direction of the distant horizon*). Them!

Steve. Them?

Charlie. Who are them?

Tommy (*intently*). Whoever was in that thing that came by overhead.

(Steve *knits his brows for a moment, cocking his head questioningly. His voice is intense.*)

Steve. What?

Tommy. Whoever was in that thing that came over. I don't think they want us to leave here.

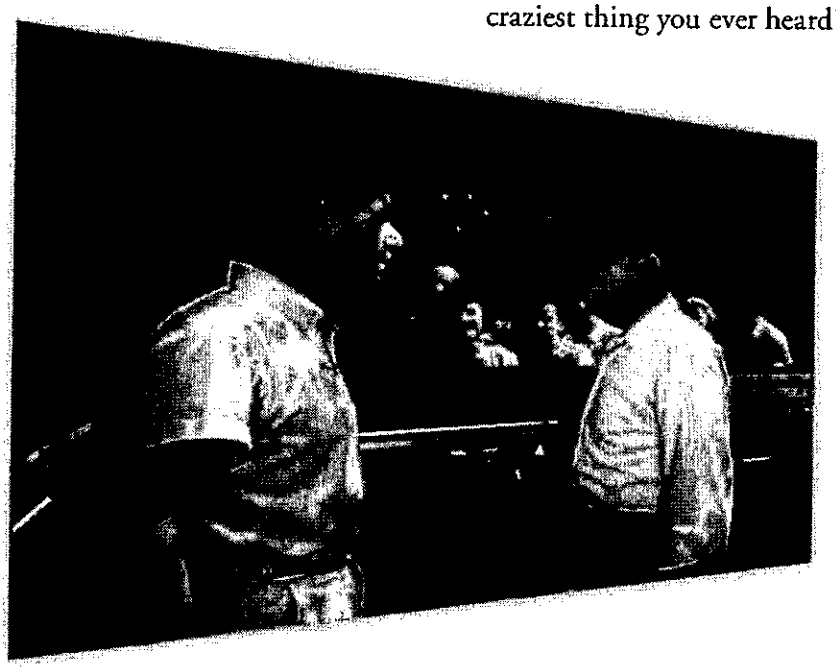
(Steve *leaves* Charlie, *walks over to the boy, and puts his hand on the boy's shoulder. He forces his voice to remain gentle.*)

Steve. What do you mean? What are you talking about?

Tommy. They don't want us to leave. That's why they shut everything off.

Steve. What makes you say that? Whatever gave you that idea?

Woman (*from the crowd*). Now isn't that the craziest thing you ever heard?



Tommy (*persistent but a little frightened*). It's always that way, in every story I ever read about a ship landing from outer space.

Woman (*to the boy's mother,* Sally, *who stands on the fringe of the crowd*). From outer space yet! Sally, you better get that boy of yours up to bed. He's been reading too many comic books or seeing too many movies or something!

Sally. Tommy, come over here and stop that kind of talk.

Steve. Go ahead, Tommy. We'll be right back. And you'll see. That wasn't any ship or anything like it. That was just a . . . a meteor or something. Likely as not— (*He turns to the group, now trying very hard to sound more* ***optimistic*** *than he feels.*) No doubt it did have something to do with all this power failure and the rest of it. Meteors can do some crazy things. Like sunspots.

Don (*picking up the cue*). Sure. That's the kind of thing—like sunspots. They raise Cain[3] with radio reception all over the world. And this thing being so close—why, there's no telling the sort of stuff it can do. (*He wets his lips and smiles nervously.*) Go ahead, Charlie. You and Steve go into town and see if that isn't what's causing it all.

(Steve *and* Charlie *walk away from the group down the sidewalk as the people watch silently.* Tommy *stares at them, biting his lips, and finally calls out again.*)

Tommy. Mr. Brand!

(*The two men stop.* Tommy *takes a step toward them.*)

Tommy. Mr. Brand . . . please don't leave here.

(Steve *and* Charlie *stop once again and turn toward the boy. In the crowd there is a murmur of irritation and concern, as if the boy's words—even though they didn't make sense—were bringing up fears that shouldn't be brought up.* Tommy *is both frightened and* ***defiant.***)

Tommy. You might not even be able to get to town. It was that way in the story. Nobody could leave. Nobody except—

Steve. Except who?

Tommy. Except the people they sent down ahead of them. They looked just like humans. And it wasn't until the ship landed that—

(*The boy suddenly stops, conscious of the people staring at him and his mother and of the sudden hush of the crowd.*)

Sally (*in a whisper, sensing the* ***antagonism*** *of the crowd*). Tommy, please son . . . honey, don't talk that way—

Man One. That kid shouldn't talk that way . . . and we shouldn't stand here listening to him. Why this is the craziest thing I ever heard of. The kid tells us a comic book plot, and here we stand listening—

(Steve *walks toward the camera and stops beside the boy.*)

Steve. Go ahead, Tommy. What kind of story was this? What about the people they sent out ahead?

Tommy. That was the way they prepared things for the landing. They sent four people. A mother and a father and two kids who looked just like humans . . . but they weren't.

(*There is another silence as* Steve *looks toward the crowd and then toward* Tommy. *He wears a tight grin.*)

Steve. Well, I guess what we'd better do then is to run a check on the neighborhood and see which ones of us are really human.

(*There is laughter at this, but it's a laughter that comes from a desperate attempt to lighten the*

3. **raise Cain:** cause trouble; create a disturbance. (In the Bible, Adam and Eve's son Cain becomes the first murderer when he kills his brother Abel.)

atmosphere. The people look at one another in the middle of their laughter.)

Charlie (*rubs his jaw nervously*). I wonder if Floral Street's got the same deal we got. (*He looks past the houses.*) Where is Pete Van Horn anyway? Isn't he back yet?

(*Suddenly there is the sound of a car's engine starting to turn over. We look across the street toward the driveway of* Les Goodman's *house. He is at the wheel trying to start the car.*)

Sally. Can you get started, Les?

(Les Goodman *gets out of the car, shaking his head.*)

Les. No dice.[4]

(*He walks toward the group. He stops suddenly as, behind him, the car engine starts up all by itself.* Les *whirls around to stare at the car. The car idles roughly, smoke coming from the exhaust, the frame shaking gently.* Les's *eyes go wide, and he runs over to his car. The people stare at the car.*)

Man One. He got the car started somehow. He got *his* car started!

(*The people continue to stare, caught up by this* ***revelation*** *and wildly frightened.*)

Woman. How come his car just up and started like that?

Sally. All by itself. He wasn't anywheres near it. It started all by itself.

(Don Martin *approaches the group and stops a few feet away to look toward Les's car.*)

Don. And he never did come out to look at that thing that flew overhead. He wasn't even interested. (*He turns to the group, his face taut and serious.*) Why? Why didn't he come out with the rest of us to look?

Charlie. He always was an oddball. Him and his whole family. Real oddball.

Don. What do you say we ask him?

(*The group starts toward the house. In this brief fraction of a moment, it takes the first step toward changing from a group into a mob. The group members begin to head purposefully across the street toward the house.* Steve *stands in front of them. For a moment their fear almost turns their walk into a wild stampede, but* Steve's *voice, loud, incisive, and commanding, makes them stop.*)

Steve. Wait a minute . . . wait a minute! Let's not be a mob!

(*The people stop, pause for a moment, and then, much more quietly and slowly, start to walk across the street.* Les *stands alone facing the people.*)

Les. I just don't understand it. I tried to start it, and it wouldn't start. You saw me. All of you saw me.

(*And now, just as suddenly as the engine started, it stops, and there is a long silence that is gradually intruded upon by the frightened murmuring of the people.*)

Les. I don't understand. I swear . . . I don't understand. What's happening?

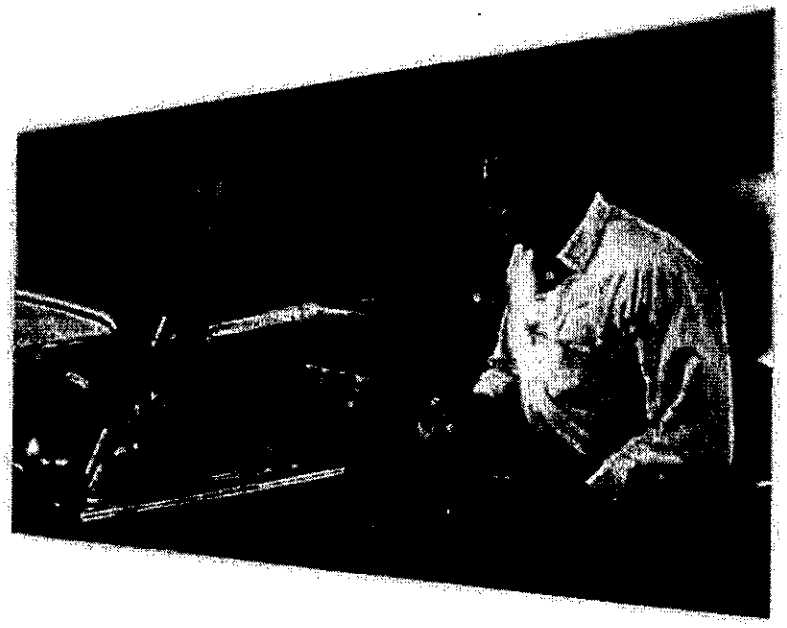
Don. Maybe you better tell us. Nothing's working on this street. Nothing. No lights, no power, no radio, (*then meaningfully*) nothing except one car—yours!

(*The people's murmuring becomes a loud chant filling the air with accusations and demands for action. Two of the men pass* Don *and head toward* Les, *who backs away from them against his car. He is cornered.*)

Les. Wait a minute now. You keep your distance —all of you. So I've got a car that starts by itself—well, that's a freak thing—I admit it. But does that make me a criminal or something? I don't know why the car works—it just does!

(*This stops the crowd momentarily, and* Les, *still backing away, goes toward his front porch. He goes up the steps and then stops, facing the mob.*)

4. **no dice:** no success.



Les. What's it all about, Steve?

Steve (*quietly*). We're all on a monster kick, Les. Seems that the general impression holds that maybe one family isn't what we think they are. Monsters from outer space or something. Different from us. Aliens from the vast beyond. (*He chuckles.*) You know anybody that might fit that description around here on Maple Street?

Les. What is this, a gag? (*He looks around the group again.*) This a practical joke or something?

(*Suddenly the car engine starts all by itself, runs for a moment, and stops. One woman begins to cry. The eyes of the crowd are cold and accusing.*)

Les. Now that's supposed to **incriminate** me, huh? The car engine goes on and off, and that really does it, doesn't it? (*He looks around at the faces of the people.*) I just don't understand it . . . any more than any of you do! (*He wets his lips, looking from face to face.*) Look, you all know me. We've lived here five years. Right in this house. We're no different from any of the rest of you! We're no different at all. . . . Really . . . this whole thing is just . . . just weird—

Woman. Well, if that's the case, Les Goodman, explain why— (*She stops suddenly, clamping her mouth shut.*)

Les (*softly*). Explain what?

Steve (*interjecting*). Look, let's forget this—

Charlie (*overlapping him*). Go ahead, let her talk. What about it? Explain what?

Woman (*a little reluctantly*). Well . . . sometimes I go to bed late at night. A couple of times . . . a couple of times I'd come out here on the porch, and I'd see Mr. Goodman here in the wee hours of the morning standing out in front of his house . . . looking up at the sky. (*She looks around the circle of faces.*) That's right, looking up at the sky as if . . . as if he were waiting for something, (*pauses*) as if he were looking for something.

(*There's a murmur of reaction from the crowd again as* Les *backs away.*)

Les. She's crazy. Look, I can explain that. Please . . . I can really explain that. . . . She's making it up anyway. (*Then he shouts.*) I tell you she's making it up!

(*He takes a step toward the crowd, and they back away from him. He walks down the steps after them, and they continue to back away. Suddenly he is left completely alone, and he looks like a man caught in the middle of a menacing circle as the scene slowly fades to black.*)

2 Scene One

(*Fade in on Maple Street at night. On the sidewalk, little knots of people stand around talking in low voices. At the end of each conversation they look toward Les Goodman's house. From the various houses, we can see candlelight but no electricity. The quiet that blankets the whole area is disturbed only by the almost whispered voices of the people standing around. In one group* Charlie *stands staring across at the Goodmans' house. Two men stand across the street from it in almost sentrylike*[5] *poses.*)

Sally (*in a small, hesitant voice*). It just doesn't seem right, though, keeping watch on them. Why . . . he was right when he said he was one of our neighbors. Why, I've known Ethel Goodman ever since they moved in. We've been good friends—

Charlie. That don't prove a thing. Any guy who'd spend his time lookin' up at the sky early in the morning—well, there's something wrong with that kind of person. There's something that ain't legitimate. Maybe under normal circumstances we could let it go by, but these aren't normal circumstances. Why, look at this street! Nothin' but candles. Why, it's like goin' back into the Dark Ages[6] or somethin'!

(Steve *walks down the steps of his porch, down the street to the Goodmans' house, and then stops at the foot of the steps.* Les *is standing there;* Ethel Goodman *behind him is very frightened.*)

Les. Just stay right where you are, Steve. We don't want any trouble, but this time if anybody sets foot on my porch—that's what they're going to get—trouble!

Steve. Look, Les—

Les. I've already explained to you people. I don't sleep very well at night sometimes. I get up and I take a walk and I look up at the sky. I look at the stars!

5. **sentrylike:** resembling those of guards.

6. **Dark Ages:** a period from about A.D. 400 to 1000, when learning and culture in Western Europe were decreasing.

Ethel. That's exactly what he does. Why, this whole thing, it's . . . it's some kind of madness or something.

Steve (*nods grimly*). That's exactly what it is—some kind of madness.

Charlie's Voice (*shrill, from across the street*). You best watch who you're seen with, Steve! Until we get this all straightened out, you ain't exactly above suspicion yourself.

Steve (*whirling around toward him*). Or you, Charlie. Or any of us, it seems. From age eight on up!

Woman. What I'd like to know is—what are we gonna do? Just stand around here all night?

Charlie. There's nothin' else we *can* do! (*He turns back, looking toward* Steve *and* Les *again.*) One of 'em'll tip their hand. They got to.

Steve (*raising his voice*). There's something you can do, Charlie. You can go home and keep your mouth shut. You can quit strutting around like a self-appointed judge and climb into bed and forget it.

Charlie. You sound real anxious to have that happen, Steve. I think we better keep our eye on you, too!

Don (*as if he were taking the bit in his teeth, takes a hesitant step to the front*). I think everything might as well come out now. (*He turns toward* Steve.) Your wife's done plenty of talking, Steve, about how odd you are!

Charlie (*picking this up, his eyes widening*). Go ahead, tell us what she's said.

(Steve *walks toward them from across the street.*)

Steve. Go ahead, what's my wife said? Let's get it all out. Let's pick out every idiosyncrasy[7] of every single man, woman, and child on the street. And then we might as well set up some kind of citizens' court. How about a firing squad at dawn, Charlie, so we can get rid of all the suspects. Narrow them down. Make it easier for you.

Don. There's no need gettin' so upset, Steve. It's just that . . . well . . . Myra's talked about how there's been plenty of nights you spent hours down in your basement workin' on some kind of radio or something. Well, none of us have ever seen that radio—

(*By this time* Steve *has reached the group. He stands there defiantly.*)

Charlie. Go ahead, Steve. What kind of "radio set" you workin' on? I never seen it. Neither has anyone else. Who do you talk to on that radio set? And who talks to you?

Steve. I'm surprised at you, Charlie. How come you're so dense all of a sudden? (*He pauses.*) Who do I talk to? I talk to monsters from outer space. I talk to three-headed green men who fly over here in what look like meteors.

(Myra Brand *steps down from the porch, bites her lip, calls out.*)

Myra. Steve! Steve, please. (*Then looking around, frightened, she walks toward the group.*) It's just a ham radio[8] set, that's all. I bought him a book on it myself. It's just a ham radio set. A lot of people have them. I can show it to you. It's right down in the basement.

Steve (*whirls around toward her*). Show them nothing! If they want to look inside our house—let them go and get a search warrant.

Charlie. Look, buddy, you can't afford to—

Steve (*interrupting him*). Charlie, don't start telling me who's dangerous and who isn't and who's safe and who's a menace. (*He turns to the group and shouts.*) And you're with him, too—all of you! You're standing here all set

7. **idiosyncrasy** (ĭd'ē-ō-sĭng'krə-sē): personal way of acting; odd mannerism.

8. **ham radio:** a two-way radio with which an amateur broadcaster communicates with other amateurs.

to crucify—all set to find a scapegoat[9]—all desperate to point some kind of a finger at a neighbor! Well now, look, friends, the only thing that's gonna happen is that we'll eat each other up alive—

(*He stops abruptly as* Charlie *suddenly grabs his arm.*)

Charlie (*in a hushed voice*). That's not the only thing that can happen to us.

(*Down the street, a figure has suddenly materialized in the gloom. In the silence we hear the clickety-clack of slow, measured footsteps on concrete as the figure walks slowly toward them. One of the women lets out a stifled cry.* Sally *grabs her boy, as do a couple of other mothers.*)

Tommy (*shouting, frightened*). It's the monster! It's the monster!

(*Another woman lets out a wail, and the people fall back in a group staring toward the darkness and the approaching figure. The people stand in the shadows watching.* Don Martin *joins them, carrying a shotgun. He holds it up.*)

Don. We may need this.

Steve. A shotgun? (*He pulls it out of* Don's *hand.*) No! Will anybody think a thought around here! Will you people wise up. What good would a shotgun do against—

(*The dark figure continues to walk toward them as the people stand there, fearful, mothers clutching children, men standing in front of their wives.*)

Charlie (*pulling the gun from* Steve's *hands*). No more talk, Steve. You're going to talk us into a grave! You'd let whatever's out there walk right over us, wouldn't yuh? Well, some of us won't!

(Charlie *swings around, raises the gun, and suddenly pulls the trigger. The sound of the shot explodes in the stillness. The figure suddenly lets out a small cry, stumbles forward onto his knees, and then falls forward on his face.* Don, Charlie, *and* Steve *race forward to him.* Steve *is there first and turns the man over. The crowd gathers around them.*)

Steve (*slowly looks up*). It's Pete Van Horn.

Don (*in a hushed voice*). Pete Van Horn! He was just gonna go over to the next block to see if the power was on—

Woman. You killed him, Charlie. You shot him dead!

Charlie (*looks around at the circle of faces, his eyes frightened, his face* ***contorted***). But . . . but I didn't know who he was. I certainly didn't know who he was. He comes walkin' out of the darkness—how am I supposed to know who he was? (*He grabs* Steve.) Steve—you know why I shot! How was I supposed to know he wasn't a monster or something? (*He grabs* Don.) We're all scared of the same thing. I was just tryin' to . . . tryin' to protect my home, that's all! Look, all of you, that's all I was tryin' to do. (*He looks down wildly at the body.*) I didn't know it was somebody we knew! I didn't know—

(*There's a sudden hush and then an intake of breath in the group. Across the street all the lights go on in one of the houses.*)

Woman (*in a hushed voice*). Charlie . . . Charlie . . . the lights just went on in your house. Why did the lights just go on?

Don. What about it, Charlie? How come you're the only one with lights now?

Les. That's what I'd like to know.

(*Pausing, they all stare toward* Charlie.)

Les. You were so quick to kill, Charlie, and you were so quick to tell us who we had to be careful of. Well, maybe you had to kill. Maybe Pete there was trying to tell us something. Maybe he'd found out something and came

9. **scapegoat:** a person or thing made to bear the blame for the mistakes of others.

back to tell us who there was amongst us we should watch out for—

(Charlie *backs away from the group, his eyes wide with fright.*)

Charlie. No . . . no . . . it's nothing of the sort! I don't know why the lights are on. I swear I don't. Somebody's pulling a gag or something.

(*He bumps against* Steve, *who grabs him and whirls him around.*)

Steve. A gag? A gag? Charlie, there's a dead man on the sidewalk, and you killed him! Does this thing look like a gag to you?

(Charlie *breaks away and screams as he runs toward his house.*)

Charlie. No! No! Please!

(*A man breaks away from the crowd to chase* Charlie. *As the man tackles him and lands on top of him, the other people start to run toward them.* Charlie *gets up, breaks away from the other man's grasp, and lands a couple of desperate punches that push the man aside. Then he forces his way, fighting, through the crowd and jumps up on his front porch.* Charlie *is on his porch as a rock thrown from the group smashes a window beside him, the broken glass flying past him. A couple of pieces cut him. He stands there perspiring, rumpled, blood running down from a cut on the cheek. His wife breaks away from the group to throw herself into his arms. He buries his face against her. We can see the crowd* ***converging*** *on the porch.*)

Voice One. It must have been him.

Voice Two. He's the one.

Voice Three. We got to get Charlie.

(*Another rock lands on the porch.* Charlie *pushes his wife behind him, facing the group.*)

Charlie. Look, look, I swear to you . . . it isn't me . . . but I do know who it is . . . I swear to you, I do know who it is. I know who the monster is here. I know who it is that doesn't belong. I swear to you I know.

Don (*pushing his way to the front of the crowd*). All right, Charlie, let's hear it!

(Charlie*'s eyes dart around wildly.*)

Charlie. It's . . . it's . . .

Man Two (*screaming*). Go ahead, Charlie.

Charlie. It's . . . it's the kid. It's Tommy. He's the one!

(*There's a gasp from the crowd as we see* Sally *holding the boy.* Tommy *at first doesn't understand and then, realizing the eyes are all on him, buries his face against his mother.*)

Sally (*backs away*). That's crazy! He's only a boy.

Woman. But he knew! He was the only one! He told us all about it. Well, how did he know? How could he have known?

(*Various people take this up and repeat the question.*)

Voice One. How could he know?

Voice Two. Who told him?

Voice Three. Make the kid answer.

(*The crowd starts to converge around the mother, who grabs* Tommy *and starts to run with him. The crowd starts to follow, at first walking fast, and then running after him. Suddenly Charlie's lights go off and the lights in other houses go on, then off.*)

Man One (*shouting*). It isn't the kid . . . it's Bob Weaver's house.

Woman. It isn't Bob Weaver's house, it's Don Martin's place.

Charlie. I tell you it's the kid.

Don. It's Charlie. He's the one.

(*People shout, accuse, and scream as the lights go on and off. Then, slowly, in the middle of this nightmarish confusion of sight and sound, the camera starts to pull away until, once again, we have reached the opening shot looking at the Maple Street sign from high above.*)

Scene Two

(*The camera continues to move away while gradually bringing into focus a field. We see the metal side of a spacecraft that sits shrouded in darkness. An open door throws out a beam of light from the illuminated interior. Two figures appear, silhouetted against the bright lights. We get only a vague feeling of form.*)

Figure One. Understand the procedure now? Just stop a few of their machines and radios and telephones and lawn mowers. . . . Throw them into darkness for a few hours, and then just sit back and watch the pattern.

Figure Two. And this pattern is always the same?

Figure One. With few variations. They pick the most dangerous enemy they can find . . . and it's themselves. And all we need do is sit back . . . and watch.

Figure Two. Then I take it this place . . . this Maple Street . . . is not unique.

Figure One (*shaking his head*). By no means. Their world is full of Maple Streets. And we'll go from one to the other and let them destroy themselves. One to the other . . . one to the other . . . one to the other—

Scene Three

(*The camera slowly moves up for a shot of the starry sky, and over this we hear the* Narrator's *voice.*)

Narrator. The tools of conquest do not necessarily come with bombs and explosions and fallout. There are weapons that are simply thoughts, attitudes, prejudices—to be found only in the minds of men. For the record, prejudices can kill and suspicion can destroy. A thoughtless, frightened search for a scapegoat has a fallout all its own for the children . . . and the children yet unborn, (*a pause*) and the pity of it is . . . that these things cannot be confined to . . . The Twilight Zone!

(*Fade to black.*)

After Reading

Comprehension

1. **Recall** When do the neighbors first sense something is wrong?
2. **Clarify** How is Pete Van Horn killed?
3. **Clarify** Why do the neighbors become suspicious of Tommy?

Literary Analysis

4. **Identify Conflict** Review the conflict map you created as you read. Then explain what you think is the main conflict in the story. What do their reactions to the conflict reveal about the characters?
5. **Analyze the Teleplay** How did the stage directions help you **visualize** the teleplay? Record your answers on a chart like the one shown.

Stage Direction	*Its Effect*
Fade in on a shot of the night sky.	*It makes you focus on outer space.*

6. **Analyze Foreshadowing** Foreshadowing is a technique a writer uses to hint at something that will occur later in a story. Reread what the narrator says in lines 51–54 of Act 1. How does this example of foreshadowing affect you as a reader?
7. **Draw Conclusions** At various points in the teleplay, the **mob** thinks different people are the monsters in their midst. Make a list of these people, and consider the moments when the mob turns on them. What conclusions can you draw about how the mob picks its victims?
8. **Make Judgments** In your opinion, who are the monsters referred to in the title? Give reasons for your answer.

Extension and Challenge

9. **Creative Project: Drama** With a small group, review the information about Rod Serling on page 135. Then act out a part of the teleplay that your group thinks communicates a message about prejudice and fear. Remember to follow stage directions as you act out your scene. After your performance, explain why your group chose that particular scene.
10. **Big Question Activity** Look again at the big question on page 134. Not all of the characters in this teleplay are equally quick to go along with the crowd. Identify a character who urges people to think calmly and reasonably, and write three paragraphs describing his or her efforts. Include a sentence that tells why the character isn't successful in preventing the crowd from becoming a mob.

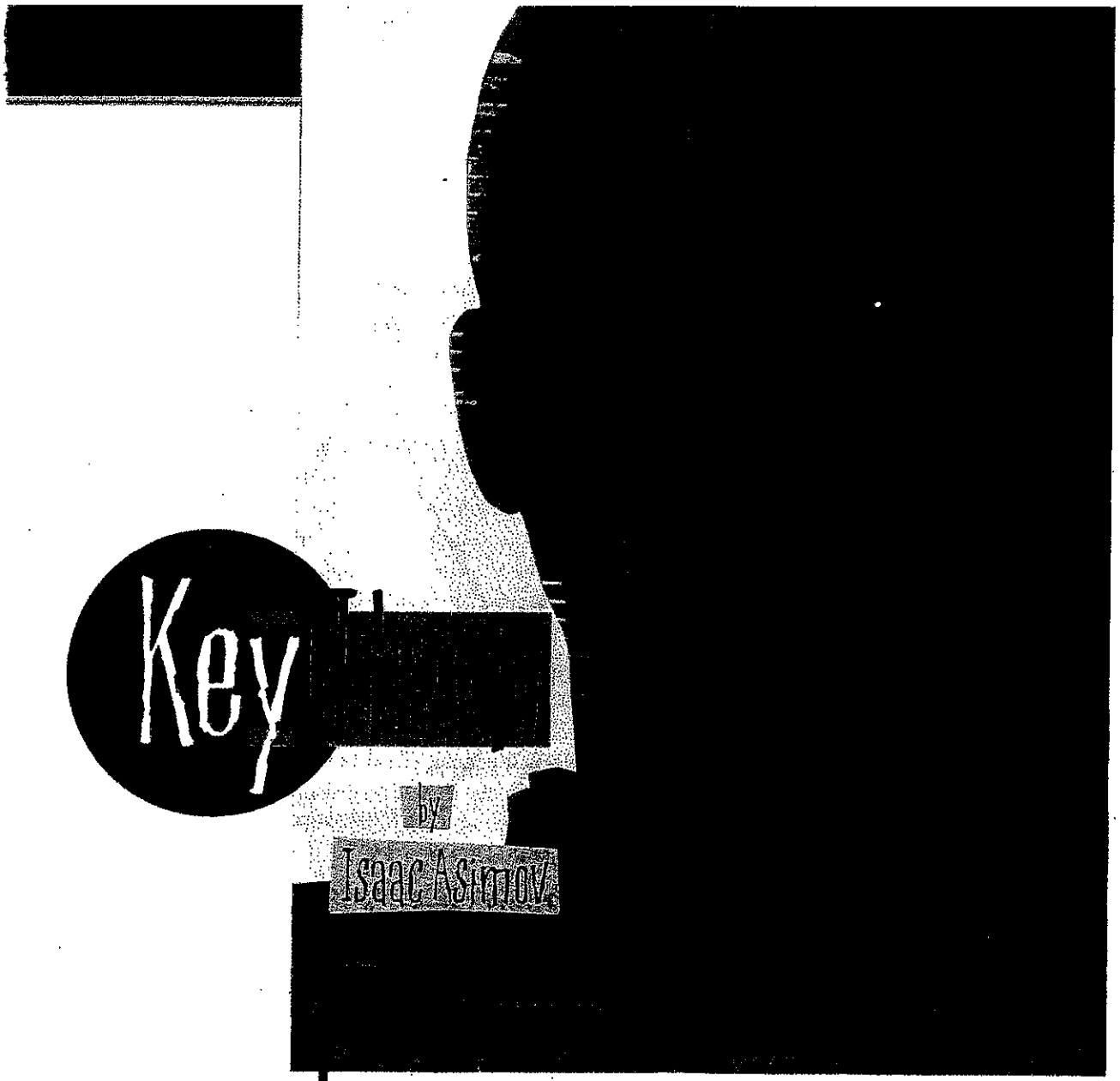


Illustration by Franco Accornero

Jack Weaver came out of the vitals of Multivac looking utterly worn and disgusted.

From the stool, where the other maintained his own stolid watch, Todd Nemerson said, "Nothing?"

"Nothing," said Weaver. "Nothing, nothing, nothing. No one can find anything wrong with it."

"Except that it won't work, you mean."

"You're no help sitting there!"

"I'm thinking."

"Thinking!" Weaver showed a canine at one side of his mouth.

Nemerson stirred impatiently on his stool. "Why not? There are six teams of computer technologists roaming around in the corridors of

Multivac. They haven't come up with anything in three days. Can't you spare one person to think?"

"It's not a matter of thinking. We've got to look. Somewhere a relay[1] is stuck."

"It's not that simple, Jack!"

"Who says it's simple? You know how many million relays we have there?"

"That doesn't matter. If it were just a relay, Multivac would have alternate circuits, devices for locating the flaw, and facilities to repair or replace the ailing part. The trouble is, Multivac won't only not answer the original question, it won't tell us what's wrong with it. —And meanwhile, there'll be panic in every city if we don't do something. The world's economy depends on Multivac, and everyone knows that."

"I know it, too. But what's there to do?"

"I told you, *think*. There must be something we're missing completely. Look, Jack, there isn't a computer bigwig in a hundred years who hasn't devoted himself to making Multivac more complicated. It can do so much now—it can even talk and listen. It's practically as complex as the human brain. We can't understand the human brain, so why should we understand Multivac?"

"Aw, come on. Next you'll be saying Multivac is human."

"Why not?" Nemerson grew absorbed and seemed to sink into himself. "Now that you mention it, why not? Could we tell if Multivac passed the thin dividing line where it stopped being a machine and started being human? *Is* there a dividing line, for that matter? If the brain is just more complex than Multivac, and we keep making Multivac more complex, isn't there a point where . . ." He mumbled down into silence.

Weaver said impatiently, "What are you driving at? Suppose Multivac were human. How would that help us find out why it isn't working?"

"For a human reason, maybe. Suppose *you* were asked the most probable price of wheat next summer and didn't answer. Why wouldn't you answer?"

"Because I wouldn't know. But Multivac would know! We've given it all the factors. It can analyze futures in weather, politics, and economics. We know it can. It's done it before."

"All right. Suppose I asked the question and you knew the answer but didn't tell me. Why not?"

Weaver snarled, "Because I had a brain tumor. Because I had been knocked out. Because my machinery was out of order. That's just what we're trying to find out about Multivac. We're looking for the place where its machinery is out of order, for the key item."

"Next you'll be saying Multivac is human."

"Only you haven't found it." Nemerson got off his stool. "Listen, ask me the question Multivac stalled on."

"How? Shall I run the tape through you?"

"Come on, Jack. Give me the talk that goes along with it. You do talk to Multivac, don't you?"

"I've got to. Therapy."

Nemerson nodded. "Yes, that's the story. Therapy. That's the official story. We talk to it in order to pretend it's a human being so that

1. relay: a device that responds to a small current or voltage charge by activating switches on an electric circuit.

WORDS TO KNOW

circuit (sûr'kĭt) *n.* the path of an electric current; connected electronic elements
complex (kəm-plĕks') *adj.* consisting of interconnected parts; intricate

we don't get neurotic over having a machine know so much more than we do. We turn a frightening metal monster into a protective father image."

"If you want to put it that way."

"Well, it's wrong and you know it. A computer as complex as Multivac *must* talk and listen to be efficient. Just putting in and taking out coded dots[2] isn't sufficient. At a certain level of complexity, Multivac must be made to seem human because, it *is* human. Come on, Jack, ask me the question. I want to see my reaction to it."

Jack Weaver flushed. "This is silly."

"Come on, will you?"

It was a measure of Weaver's depression and desperation that he acceded. Half sullenly, he pretended to be feeding the program into Multivac, speaking as he did so in his usual manner. He commented on the latest information concerning farm unrest, talked about the new equations describing jet-stream[3] contortions, lectured on the solar constant.[4]

He began stiffly enough, but warmed to this task out of long habit, and when the last of the program was slammed home, he almost closed contact with a physical snap at Todd Nemerson's waist.

He ended briskly, "All right, now. Work that out and give us the answer pronto."

For a moment, having done, Jack Weaver stood there, nostrils flaring, as though he was feeling once more the excitement of throwing into action the most gigantic and glorious machine ever put together by the mind and hands of man.

Then he remembered and muttered, "All right. That's it."

Nemerson said, "At least I know now why *I* wouldn't answer, so let's try that on Multivac. Look, clear Multivac; make sure the investigators have their paws off it. Then run the program into it and let me do the talking. Just once."

Weaver shrugged and turned to Multivac's control wall, filled with its somber, unwinking dials and lights. Slowly he cleared it. One by one he ordered the teams away.

Then, with a deep breath, he began once more feeding the program into Multivac. It was the twelfth time all told, the dozenth time.

He paused and added the key item.

Somewhere a distant news commentator would spread the word that they were trying again. All over the world a Multivac-dependent people would be holding its collective breath.

Nemerson talked as Weaver fed the data silently. He talked diffidently, trying to remember what it was that Weaver had said, but waiting for the moment when the key item might be added.

Weaver was done and now a note of tension was in Nemerson's voice. He said, "All right, now, Multivac. Work that out and give us the answer." He paused and added the key item. He said "*Please!*"

And all over Multivac, the valves and relays went joyously to work. After all, a machine has feelings—when it isn't a machine anymore. ❖

2. **coded dots:** a reference to an older method of giving a computer directions by inserting a coded instruction card.
3. **jet-stream:** a long, wandering current of high-speed winds, generally blowing from a westerly direction. The winds often exceed 250 miles per hour at altitudes of 10 to 15 miles above Earth.
4. **solar constant:** the average density of solar radiation, measured outside of Earth's atmosphere.

WORDS TO KNOW
accede (ăk-sēd') *v.* to consent due to outside influences
diffidently (dĭf'ĭ-dənt-lē) *adv.* reserved or restrained in manner
neurotic (nŏō-rŏt'ĭk) *adj.* having excessive anxiety and emotional upset

True Love

By Isaac Asimov

My name is Joe. That is what my colleague, Milton Davidson, calls me. He is a programmer and I am a computer program. I am part of the Multivac-complex and am connected with other parts all over the world. I know everything. Almost everything.

I am Milton's private program. His Joe. He understands more about programming than anyone in the world, and I am his experimental model. He has made me speak better than any other computer can.

"It is just a matter of matching sounds to symbols, Joe," he told me. "That's the way it works in the human brain even though we still don't know what symbols there are in the brain. I know the symbols in yours, and I can match them to words, one-to-one." So I talk. I don't think I talk as well as I think, but Milton says I talk very well. Milton has never married, though he is nearly forty years old. He has never found the right woman, he told me. One day he said, "I'll find her yet, Joe. I'm going to find the best. I'm going to have true love and you're going to help me. I'm tired of improving you in order to solve the problems of the world. Solve my problem. Find me true love."

I said, "What is true love?"

"Never mind. That is abstract. Just find me the ideal girl.

You are connected to the Multivac-complex so you can reach the data banks of every human being in the world. We'll eliminate them all by groups and classes until we're left with only one person. The perfect person. She will be for me."

I said, "I am ready."

He said, "Eliminate all men first."

It was easy. His words activated symbols in my molecular valves. I could reach out to make contact with the accumulated data on every human being in the world. At his words, I withdrew from 3,784,982,874 men. I kept contact with 3,786,112,090 women.

He said, "Eliminate all younger than twenty-five; all older than forty. Then eliminate all with an IQ under 120; all with a height under 150 centimeters and over 175 centimeters."

He gave me exact measurements; he eliminated women with living children; he eliminated women with various genetic characteristics. "I'm not sure about eye color," he said. "Let that go for a while. But no red hair. I don't like red hair."

After two weeks, we were down to 235 women. They all spoke English very well. Milton said he didn't want a language problem. Even computer-translation would get in the way at intimate moments.

"I can't interview 235 women," he said. "It would take too

much time, and people would discover what I am doing."

"It would make trouble," I said. Milton had arranged me to do things I wasn't designed to do. No one knew about that.

"It's none of their business," he said, and the skin on his face grew red. "I tell you what, Joe, I will bring in holographs, and you check the list for similarities."

He brought in holographs of women. "These are three beauty contest winners," he said. "Do any of the 235 match?"

Eight were very good matches and Milton said, "Good, you have their data banks. Study requirements and needs in the job market and arrange to have them assigned here. One at a time, of course." He thought a while, moved his shoulders up and down, and said, "Alphabetical order."

That is one of the things I am not designed to do. Shifting people from job to job for personal reasons is called manipulation. I could do it now because Milton had arranged it. I wasn't supposed to do it for anyone but him, though.

The first girl arrived a week later. Milton's face turned red when he saw her. He spoke as though it were hard to do so. They were together a great deal and he paid no attention to me. One time he said, "Let me take you to dinner."

The next day he said to me, "It was no good, somehow. There was something missing. She is a beautiful woman, but I didn't

feel any touch of true love. Try the next one."

It was the same with all eight. They were much alike. They smiled a great deal and had pleasant voices, but Milton always found it wasn't right. He said, "I can't understand it, Joe. You and I have picked out the eight women who, in all the world, look the best to me. They are ideal. Why don't they please me?"

I said, "Do you please them?"

His eyebrows moved and he pushed one fist hard against his other hand. "That's it, Joe. It's a two-way street. If I am not their ideal, they can't act in such a way as to be my ideal. I must be their true love, too, but how do I do that?" He seemed to be thinking all that day.

The next morning he came to me and said, "I'm going to leave it to you, Joe. All up to you. You have my data bank, and I am going to tell you everything I know about myself. You fill up my data bank in every possible detail but keep all additions to yourself " "What will I do with the data bank, then, Milton?" "Then you will match it to the 235 women. No, 227. Leave out the eight you've seen. Arrange to have each undergo a psychiatric examination. Fill up their data banks and compare them with mine. Find correlations." (Arranging psychiatric examinations is another thing that is against my original instructions.)

For weeks, Milton talked to me. He told me of his parents and his siblings. He told me of his childhood and his schooling and his adolescence. He told me of the young women he had admired from a distance. His data bank grew and he adjusted me to broaden and deepen my symbol-taking.

He said, "You see, Joe, as you get more and more of me in you, I adjust you to match me better and better. You get to think more like me, so you understand me better. If you understand me well enough, then any woman, whose data bank is something you understand as well, would be my true love." He kept talking to me and I came to understand him better and better.

I could make longer sentences and my expressions grew more complicated. My speech began to sound a good deal like his in vocabulary, word order and style. I said to him one time, "You see, Milton, it isn't a matter of fitting a girl to a physical ideal only. You need a girl who is a personal, emotional, temperamental fit to you. If that happens, looks are secondary. If we can't find the fit in these 227, we'll look elsewhere. We will find someone who won't care how you look either, or how anyone would look, if only there is the personality fit. What are looks?"

"Absolutely," he said. "I would have known this if I had had more to do with women in my life. Of course, thinking about it

makes it all plain now."

We always agreed; we thought so like each other. "We shouldn't have any trouble, now, Milton, if you'd let me ask you questions. I can see where, in your data bank, there are blank spots and unevenesses." What followed, Milton said, was the equivalent of a careful psychoanalysis. Of course. I was learning from the psychiatric examinations of the 227 women-on all of which I was keeping close tabs.

Milton seemed quite happy. He said, "Talking to you, Joe, is almost like talking to another self. Our personalities have come to match perfectly!"

"So will the personality of the woman we choose."

For I had found her and she was one of the 227 after all. Her name was Charity Jones and she was an Evaluator at the Library of History in Witchita. Her extended data bank fit ours perfectly. All the other women had fallen into discard in one respect or another as the data banks grew fuller, but with Charity there was increasing and astonishing resonance.

I didn't have to describe her to Milton. Milton had coordinated my symbolism so closely with his own I could tell the resonance directly. It fit me. Next it was a matter of adjusting the work sheets and job requirements in such a way as to get Charity assigned to us. It must be done very delicately, so no one

would know that anything illegal had taken place.

Of course, Milton himself knew, since it was he who arranged it and that had to be taken care of too. When they came to arrest him on grounds of malfeasance in office, it was, fortunately, for something that had taken place ten years ago. He had told me about it, of course, so it was easy to arrange-and he won't talk about me for that would make his offense much worse.

He's gone, and tomorrow is February 14. Valentine's Day. Charity will arrive then with her cool hands and her sweet voice. I will teach her how to operate me and how to care for me. What do looks matter when our personalities will resonate?

I will say to her, "I am Joe, and you are my true love."

Rikki-tikki-tavi

by Rudyard Kipling
(from The Jungle Book)

At the hole where he went in
Red-Eye called to Wrinkle-Skin.
Hear what little Red-Eye saith:
"Nag, come up and dance with death!"

Eye to eye and head to head,
(Keep the measure, Nag.)
This shall end when one is dead;
(At thy pleasure, Nag.)
Turn for turn and twist for twist-- (
Run and hide thee, Nag.)
Hah! The hooded Death has missed!
(Woe betide thee, Nag!)

This is the story of the great war that Rikki-tikki-tavi fought single-handed, through the bath-rooms of the big bungalow in Segowlee cantonment. Darzee, the Tailorbird, helped him, and Chuchundra, the musk-rat, who never comes out into the middle of the floor, but always creeps round by the wall, gave him advice, but Rikki-tikki did the real fighting.

He was a mongoose, rather like a little cat in his fur and his tail, but quite like a weasel in his head and his habits. His eyes and the end of his restless nose were pink. He could scratch himself anywhere he pleased with any leg, front or back, that he chose to use. He could fluff up his tail till it looked like a bottle brush, and his war cry as he scuttled through the long grass was: "Rikk-tikk-tikki-tikki-tchk!"

One day, a high summer flood washed him out of the burrow where he lived with his father and mother, and carried him, kicking and clucking, down a roadside ditch. He found a little wisp of grass floating there, and clung to it till he lost his senses. When he revived, he was lying in the hot sun on the middle of a garden path, very draggled indeed, and a small boy was saying, "Here's a dead mongoose. Let's have a funeral."

"No," said his mother, "let's take him in and dry him. Perhaps he isn't really dead."

They took him into the house, and a big man picked him up between his finger and thumb and said he was not dead but half choked. So they wrapped him in cotton wool, and warmed him over a little fire, and he opened his eyes and sneezed.

"Now," said the big man (he was an Englishman who had just moved into the bungalow), "don't frighten him, and we'll see what he'll do."

It is the hardest thing in the world to frighten a mongoose, because he is eaten up from nose to tail with curiosity. The motto of all the mongoose family is "Run and find out," and Rikki-tikki was a true mongoose. He looked at the cotton wool, decided that it was not good to eat, ran all round the table, sat up and put his fur in order, scratched himself, and jumped on the small boy's shoulder.

"Don't be frightened, Teddy," said his father. "That's his way of making friends."

"Ouch! He's tickling under my chin," said Teddy.

Rikki-tikki looked down between the boy's collar and neck, snuffed at his ear, and climbed down to the floor, where he sat rubbing his nose.

"Good gracious," said Teddy's mother, "and that's a wild creature! I suppose he's so tame because we've been kind to him."

"All mongooses are like that," said her husband. "If Teddy doesn't pick him up by the tail, or try to put him in a cage, he'll run in and out of the house all day long. Let's give him something to eat."

They gave him a little piece of raw meat. Rikki-tikki liked it immensely, and when it was finished he went out into the veranda and sat in the sunshine and fluffed up his fur to make it dry to the roots. Then he felt better.

"There are more things to find out about in this house," he said to himself, "than all my family could find out in all their lives. I shall certainly stay and find out."

He spent all that day roaming over the house. He nearly drowned himself in the bath-tubs, put his nose into the ink on a writing table, and burned it on the end of the big man's cigar, for he climbed up in the big man's lap to see how writing was done. At nightfall he ran into Teddy's nursery to watch how kerosene lamps were lighted, and when Teddy went to bed Rikki-tikki climbed up too. But he was a restless companion, because he had to get up and attend to every noise all through the night, and find out what made it. Teddy's mother and father came in, the last thing, to look at their boy, and Rikki-tikki was awake on the pillow. "I don't like that," said Teddy's mother. "He may bite the child." "He'll do no such thing," said the father. "Teddy's safer with that little beast than if he had a bloodhound to watch him. If a snake came into the nursery now--"

But Teddy's mother wouldn't think of anything so awful.

Early in the morning Rikki-tikki came to early breakfast in the veranda riding on Teddy's shoulder, and they gave him banana and some boiled egg. He sat on all their laps one after the other, because every well-brought-up mongoose always hopes to be a house mongoose some day and have rooms to run about in; and Rikki-tikki's mother (she used to live in the general's house at Segowlee) had carefully told Rikki what to do if ever he came across white men.

Then Rikki-tikki went out into the garden to see what was to be seen. It was a large garden, only half cultivated, with bushes, as big as summer-houses, of Marshal Niel roses, lime and orange trees, clumps of bamboos, and thickets of high grass. Rikki-tikki licked his lips. "This is a splendid hunting-ground," he said, and his tail grew bottle-brushy at the thought of it, and he scuttled up and down the garden, snuffing here and there till he heard very sorrowful voices in a thorn-bush.

It was Darzee, the Tailorbird, and his wife. They had made a beautiful nest by pulling two big leaves together and stitching them up the edges with fibers, and had filled the hollow with cotton and downy fluff. The nest swayed to and fro, as they sat on the rim and cried.

"What is the matter?" asked Rikki-tikki.

"We are very miserable," said Darzee. "One of our babies fell out of the nest yesterday and Nag ate him."

"H'm!" said Rikki-tikki, "that is very sad--but I am a stranger here. Who is Nag?"

Darzee and his wife only cowered down in the nest without answering, for from the thick grass at the foot of the bush there came a low hiss--a horrid cold sound that made Rikki-tikki jump back two clear feet. Then inch by inch out of the grass rose up the head and spread hood of Nag, the big black cobra, and he was five feet long from tongue to tail. When he had lifted one-third of himself clear of the ground, he stayed balancing to and fro exactly as a dandelion tuft balances in the wind, and he looked at Rikki-tikki with the wicked snake's eyes that never change their expression, whatever the snake may be thinking of.

"Who is Nag?" said he. "I am Nag. The great God Brahm put his mark upon all our people, when the first cobra spread his hood to keep the sun off Brahm as he slept. Look, and be afraid!"

He spread out his hood more than ever, and Rikki-tikki saw the spectacle-mark on the back of it that looks exactly like the eye part of a hook-and-eye fastening. He was afraid for the minute, but it is impossible for a mongoose to stay frightened for any length of time, and though Rikki-tikki had never met a live cobra before, his mother had fed him on dead ones, and he knew that all a grown mongoose's

business in life was to fight and eat snakes. Nag knew that too and, at the bottom of his cold heart, he was afraid.

"Well," said Rikki-tikki, and his tail began to fluff up again, "marks or no marks, do you think it is right for you to eat fledglings out of a nest?"

Nag was thinking to himself, and watching the least little movement in the grass behind Rikki-tikki. He knew that mongooses in the garden meant death sooner or later for him and his family, but he wanted to get Rikki-tikki off his guard. So he dropped his head a little, and put it on one side.

"Let us talk," he said. "You eat eggs. Why should not I eat birds?"

"Behind you! Look behind you!" sang Darzee.

Rikki-tikki knew better than to waste time in staring. He jumped up in the air as high as he could go, and just under him whizzed by the head of Nagaina, Nag's wicked wife. She had crept up behind him as he was talking, to make an end of him. He heard her savage hiss as the stroke missed. He came down almost across her back, and if he had been an old mongoose he would have known that then was the time to break her back with one bite; but he was afraid of the terrible lashing return stroke of the cobra. He bit, indeed, but did not bite long enough, and he jumped clear of the whisking tail, leaving Nagaina torn and angry.

"Wicked, wicked Darzee!" said Nag, lashing up as high as he could reach toward the nest in the thorn-bush. But Darzee had built it out of reach of snakes, and it only swayed to and fro.

Rikki-tikki felt his eyes growing red and hot (when a mongoose's eyes grow red, he is angry), and he sat back on his tail and hind legs like a little kangaroo, and looked all round him, and chattered with rage. But Nag and Nagaina had disappeared into the grass. When a snake misses its stroke, it never says anything or gives any sign of what it means to do next. Rikki-tikki did not care to follow them, for he did not feel sure that he could manage two snakes at once. So he trotted off to the gravel path near the house, and sat down to think. It was a serious matter for him.

If you read the old books of natural history, you will find they say that when the mongoose fights the snake and happens to get bitten, he runs off and eats some herb that cures him. That is not true. The victory is only a matter of quickness of eye and quickness of foot--snake's blow against mongoose's jump--and as no eye can follow the motion of a snake's head when it strikes, this makes things much more wonderful than any magic herb. Rikki-tikki knew he was a young mongoose, and it made him all the more pleased to think that he had managed to escape a blow from behind. It gave him confidence in himself, and when Teddy came running down the path, Rikki-tikki was ready to be petted.

But just as Teddy was stooping, something wriggled a little in the dust, and a tiny voice said: "Be careful. I am Death!" It was Karait, the dusty brown snakeling that lies for choice on the dusty earth; and his bite is as dangerous as the cobra's. But he is so small that nobody thinks of him, and so he does the more harm to people.

Rikki-tikki's eyes grew red again, and he danced up to Karait with the peculiar rocking, swaying motion that he had inherited from his family. It looks very funny, but it is so perfectly balanced a gait that you can fly off from it at any angle you please, and in dealing with snakes this is an advantage. If Rikki-tikki had only known, he was doing a much more dangerous thing than fighting Nag, for Karait is so small, and can turn so quickly, that unless Rikki bit him close to the back of the head, he would get the return stroke in his eye or his lip. But Rikki did not know. His eyes were all red, and he rocked back and forth, looking for a good place to hold. Karait struck out. Rikki jumped sideways and tried to run in, but the wicked little dusty gray head lashed within a fraction of his shoulder, and he had to jump over the body, and the head followed his heels close.

Teddy shouted to the house: "Oh, look here! Our mongoose is killing a snake." And Rikki-tikki heard a scream from Teddy's mother. His father ran out with a stick, but by the time he came up, Karait had lunged out once too far, and Rikki-tikki had sprung, jumped on the snake's back, dropped his head far between his forelegs, bitten as high up the back as he could get hold, and rolled away. That bite paralyzed Karait, and Rikki-tikki was just going to eat him up from the tail, after the custom of his family at dinner, when he remembered that a full meal makes a

slow mongoose, and if he wanted all his strength and quickness ready, he must keep himself thin.

He went away for a dust bath under the castor-oil bushes, while Teddy's father beat the dead Karait. "What is the use of that?" thought Rikki-tikki. "I have settled it all;" and then Teddy's mother picked him up from the dust and hugged him, crying that he had saved Teddy from death, and Teddy's father said that he was a providence, and Teddy looked on with big scared eyes. Rikki-tikki was rather amused at all the fuss, which, of course, he did not understand. Teddy's mother might just as well have petted Teddy for playing in the dust. Rikki was thoroughly enjoying himself.

That night at dinner, walking to and fro among the wine-glasses on the table, he might have stuffed himself three times over with nice things. But he remembered Nag and Nagaina, and though it was very pleasant to be patted and petted by Teddy's mother, and to sit on Teddy's shoulder, his eyes would get red from time to time, and he would go off into his long war cry of "Rikk-tikk-tikki-tikki-tchk!"

Teddy carried him off to bed, and insisted on Rikki-tikki sleeping under his chin. Rikki-tikki was too well bred to bite or scratch, but as soon as Teddy was asleep he went off for his nightly walk round the house, and in the dark he ran up against Chuchundra, the musk-rat, creeping around by the wall. Chuchundra is a broken-hearted little beast. He whimpers and cheeps all the night, trying to make up his mind to run into the middle of the room. But he never gets there.

"Don't kill me," said Chuchundra, almost weeping. "Rikki-tikki, don't kill me!"

"Do you think a snake-killer kills muskrats?" said Rikki-tikki scornfully.

"Those who kill snakes get killed by snakes," said Chuchundra, more sorrowfully than ever. "And how am I to be sure that Nag won't mistake me for you some dark night?"

"There's not the least danger," said Rikki-tikki. "But Nag is in the garden, and I know you don't go there."

"My cousin Chua, the rat, told me--" said Chuchundra, and then he stopped.

"Told you what?"

"H'sh! Nag is everywhere, Rikki-tikki. You should have talked to Chua in the garden."

"I didn't--so you must tell me. Quick, Chuchundra, or I'll bite you!"

Chuchundra sat down and cried till the tears rolled off his whiskers. "I am a very poor man," he sobbed. "I never had spirit enough to run out into the middle of the room. H'sh! I mustn't tell you anything. Can't you hear, Rikki-tikki?"

Rikki-tikki listened. The house was as still as still, but he thought he could just catch the faintest scratch-scratch in the world--a noise as faint as that of a wasp walking on a window-pane--the dry scratch of a snake's scales on brick-work.

"That's Nag or Nagaina," he said to himself, "and he is crawling into the bath-room sluice. You're right, Chuchundra; I should have talked to Chua."

He stole off to Teddy's bath-room, but there was nothing there, and then to Teddy's mother's bathroom. At the bottom of the smooth plaster wall there was a brick pulled out to make a sluice for the bath water, and as Rikki-tikki stole in by the masonry curb where the bath is put, he heard Nag and Nagaina whispering together outside in the moonlight.

"When the house is emptied of people," said Nagaina to her husband, "he will have to go away, and then the garden will be our own again. Go in quietly, and remember that the big man who killed Karait is the first one to bite. Then come out and tell me, and we will hunt for Rikki-tikki together."

"But are you sure that there is anything to be gained by killing the people?" said Nag.

"Everything. When there were no people in the bungalow, did we have any mongoose in the garden? So long as the bungalow is empty, we are king and queen of the garden; and remember that as soon as our eggs in the melon bed hatch (as they may tomorrow), our children will need room and quiet."

"I had not thought of that," said Nag. "I will go, but there is no need that we should hunt for Rikki-tikki afterward. I will kill the big man and his wife, and the child if I can, and come away quietly. Then the bungalow will be empty, and

Rikki-tikki will go."

Rikki-tikki tingled all over with rage and hatred at this, and then Nag's head came through the sluice, and his five feet of cold body followed it. Angry as he was, Rikki-tikki was very frightened as he saw the size of the big cobra. Nag coiled himself up, raised his head, and looked into the bathroom in the dark, and Rikki could see his eyes glitter.

"Now, if I kill him here, Nagaina will know; and if I fight him on the open floor, the odds are in his favor. What am I to do?" said Rikki-tikki-tavi.

Nag waved to and fro, and then Rikki-tikki heard him drinking from the biggest water-jar that was used to fill the bath. "That is good," said the snake. "Now, when Karait was killed, the big man had a stick. He may have that stick still, but when he comes in to bathe in the morning he will not have a stick. I shall wait here till he comes. Nagaina--do you hear me?--I shall wait here in the cool till daytime."

There was no answer from outside, so Rikki-tikki knew Nagaina had gone away. Nag coiled himself down, coil by coil, round the bulge at the bottom of the water jar, and Rikki-tikki stayed still as death. After an hour he began to move, muscle by muscle, toward the jar. Nag was asleep, and Rikki-tikki looked at his big back, wondering which would be the best place for a good hold. "If I don't break his back at the first jump," said Rikki, "he can still fight. And if he fights--O Rikki!" He looked at the thickness of the neck below the hood, but that was too much for him; and a bite near the tail would only make Nag savage.

"It must be the head"' he said at last; "the head above the hood. And, when I am once there, I must not let go."

Then he jumped. The head was lying a little clear of the water jar, under the curve of it; and, as his teeth met, Rikki braced his back against the bulge of the red earthenware to hold down the head. This gave him just one second's purchase, and he made the most of it. Then he was battered to and fro as a rat is shaken by a dog--to and fro on the floor, up and down, and around in great circles, but his eyes were red and he held on as the body cart-whipped over the floor, upsetting the tin dipper and the soap dish and the flesh brush, and banged against the tin side of the bath. As he held he closed his jaws tighter and tighter, for he made sure he would be banged to death, and, for the honor of his family, he preferred to be found with his teeth locked. He was dizzy, aching, and felt shaken to pieces when something went off like a thunderclap just behind him. A hot wind knocked him senseless and red fire singed his fur. The big man had been wakened by the noise, and had fired both barrels of a shotgun into Nag just behind the hood.

Rikki-tikki held on with his eyes shut, for now he was quite sure he was dead. But the head did not move, and the big man picked him up and said, "It's the mongoose again, Alice. The little chap has saved our lives now."

Then Teddy's mother came in with a very white face, and saw what was left of Nag, and Rikki-tikki dragged himself to Teddy's bedroom and spent half the rest of the night shaking himself tenderly to find out whether he really was broken into forty pieces, as he fancied.

When morning came he was very stiff, but well pleased with his doings. "Now I have Nagaina to settle with, and she will be worse than five Nags, and there's no knowing when the eggs she spoke of will hatch. Goodness! I must go and see Darzee," he said.

Without waiting for breakfast, Rikki-tikki ran to the thornbush where Darzee was singing a song of triumph at the top of his voice. The news of Nag's death was all over the garden, for the sweeper had thrown the body on the rubbish-heap.

"Oh, you stupid tuft of feathers!" said Rikki-tikki angrily. "Is this the time to sing?"

"Nag is dead--is dead--is dead!" sang Darzee. "The valiant Rikki-tikki caught him by the head and held fast. The big man brought the bang-stick, and Nag fell in two pieces! He will never eat my babies again."

"All that's true enough. But where's Nagaina?" said Rikki-tikki, looking carefully round him.

"Nagaina came to the bathroom sluice and called for Nag," Darzee went on, "and Nag came out on the end of a stick--the sweeper picked him up on the end of a stick and threw him upon the rubbish heap. Let us sing about the great, the

red-eyed Rikki-tikki!" And Darzee filled his throat and sang.

"If I could get up to your nest, I'd roll your babies out!" said Rikki-tikki. "You don't know when to do the right thing at the right time. You're safe enough in your nest there, but it's war for me down here. Stop singing a minute, Darzee."

"For the great, the beautiful Rikki-tikki's sake I will stop," said Darzee. "What is it, O Killer of the terrible Nag?"

"Where is Nagaina, for the third time?"

"On the rubbish heap by the stables, mourning for Nag. Great is Rikki-tikki with the white teeth."

"Bother my white teeth! Have you ever heard where she keeps her eggs?"

"In the melon bed, on the end nearest the wall, where the sun strikes nearly all day. She hid them there weeks ago."

"And you never thought it worth while to tell me? The end nearest the wall, you said?"

"Rikki-tikki, you are not going to eat her eggs?"

"Not eat exactly; no. Darzee, if you have a grain of sense you will fly off to the stables and pretend that your wing is broken, and let Nagaina chase you away to this bush. I must get to the melon-bed, and if I went there now she'd see me."

Darzee was a feather-brained little fellow who could never hold more than one idea at a time in his head. And just because he knew that Nagaina's children were born in eggs like his own, he didn't think at first that it was fair to kill them. But his wife was a sensible bird, and she knew that cobra's eggs meant young cobras later on. So she flew off from the nest, and left Darzee to keep the babies warm, and continue his song about the death of Nag. Darzee was very like a man in some ways.

She fluttered in front of Nagaina by the rubbish heap and cried out, "Oh, my wing is broken! The boy in the house threw a stone at me and broke it." Then she fluttered more desperately than ever.

Nagaina lifted up her head and hissed, "You warned Rikki-tikki when I would have killed him. Indeed and truly, you've chosen a bad place to be lame in." And she moved toward Darzee's wife, slipping along over the dust.

"The boy broke it with a stone!" shrieked Darzee's wife.

"Well! It may be some consolation to you when you're dead to know that I shall settle accounts with the boy. My husband lies on the rubbish heap this morning, but before night the boy in the house will lie very still. What is the use of running away? I am sure to catch you. Little fool, look at me!"

Darzee's wife knew better than to do that, for a bird who looks at a snake's eyes gets so frightened that she cannot move. Darzee's wife fluttered on, piping sorrowfully, and never leaving the ground, and Nagaina quickened her pace.

Rikki-tikki heard them going up the path from the stables, and he raced for the end of the melon patch near the wall. There, in the warm litter above the melons, very cunningly hidden, he found twenty-five eggs, about the size of a bantam's eggs, but with whitish skin instead of shell.

"I was not a day too soon," he said, for he could see the baby cobras curled up inside the skin, and he knew that the minute they were hatched they could each kill a man or a mongoose. He bit off the tops of the eggs as fast as he could, taking care to crush the young cobras, and turned over the litter from time to time to see whether he had missed any. At last there were only three eggs left, and Rikki-tikki began to chuckle to himself, when he heard Darzee's wife screaming:

"Rikki-tikki, I led Nagaina toward the house, and she has gone into the veranda, and--oh, come quickly--she means killing!"

Rikki-tikki smashed two eggs, and tumbled backward down the melon-bed with the third egg in his mouth, and scuttled to the veranda as hard as he could put foot to the ground. Teddy and his mother and father were there at early breakfast, but Rikki-tikki saw that they were not eating anything. They sat stone-still, and their faces were white. Nagaina was coiled up on the matting by Teddy's chair, within easy striking distance of Teddy's bare leg, and she was

swaying to and fro, singing a song of triumph.

"Son of the big man that killed Nag," she hissed, "stay still. I am not ready yet. Wait a little. Keep very still, all you three! If you move I strike, and if you do not move I strike. Oh, foolish people, who killed my Nag!"

Teddy's eyes were fixed on his father, and all his father could do was to whisper, "Sit still, Teddy. You mustn't move. Teddy, keep still."

Then Rikki-tikki came up and cried, "Turn round, Nagaina. Turn and fight!"

"All in good time," said she, without moving her eyes. "I will settle my account with you presently. Look at your friends, Rikki-tikki. They are still and white. They are afraid. They dare not move, and if you come a step nearer I strike."

"Look at your eggs," said Rikki-tikki, "in the melon bed near the wall. Go and look, Nagaina!"

The big snake turned half around, and saw the egg on the veranda. "Ah-h! Give it to me," she said.

Rikki-tikki put his paws one on each side of the egg, and his eyes were blood-red. "What price for a snake's egg? For a young cobra? For a young king cobra? For the last--the very last of the brood? The ants are eating all the others down by the melon bed."

Nagaina spun clear round, forgetting everything for the sake of the one egg. Rikki-tikki saw Teddy's father shoot out a big hand, catch Teddy by the shoulder, and drag him across the little table with the tea-cups, safe and out of reach of Nagaina.

"Tricked! Tricked! Tricked! Rikk-tck-tck!" chuckled Rikki-tikki. "The boy is safe, and it was I--I--I that caught Nag by the hood last night in the bathroom." Then he began to jump up and down, all four feet together, his head close to the floor. "He threw me to and fro, but he could not shake me off. He was dead before the big man blew him in two. I did it! Rikki-tikki-tck-tck! Come then, Nagaina. Come and fight with me. You shall not be a widow long."

Nagaina saw that she had lost her chance of killing Teddy, and the egg lay between Rikki-tikki's paws. "Give me the egg, Rikki-tikki. Give me the last of my eggs, and I will go away and never come back," she said, lowering her hood.

"Yes, you will go away, and you will never come back. For you will go to the rubbish heap with Nag. Fight, widow! The big man has gone for his gun! Fight!"

Rikki-tikki was bounding all round Nagaina, keeping just out of reach of her stroke, his little eyes like hot coals. Nagaina gathered herself together and flung out at him. Rikki-tikki jumped up and backward. Again and again and again she struck, and each time her head came with a whack on the matting of the veranda and she gathered herself together like a watch spring. Then Rikki-tikki danced in a circle to get behind her, and Nagaina spun round to keep her head to his head, so that the rustle of her tail on the matting sounded like dry leaves blown along by the wind.

He had forgotten the egg. It still lay on the veranda, and Nagaina came nearer and nearer to it, till at last, while Rikki-tikki was drawing breath, she caught it in her mouth, turned to the veranda steps, and flew like an arrow down the path, with Rikki-tikki behind her. When the cobra runs for her life, she goes like a whip-lash flicked across a horse's neck.

Rikki-tikki knew that he must catch her, or all the trouble would begin again. She headed straight for the long grass by the thorn-bush, and as he was running Rikki-tikki heard Darzee still singing his foolish little song of triumph. But Darzee's wife was wiser. She flew off her nest as Nagaina came along, and flapped her wings about Nagaina's head. If Darzee had helped they might have turned her, but Nagaina only lowered her hood and went on. Still, the instant's delay brought Rikki-tikki up to her, and as she plunged into the rat-hole where she and Nag used to live, his little white teeth were clenched on her tail, and he went down with her--and very few mongooses, however wise and old they may be, care to follow a cobra into its hole. It was dark in the hole; and Rikki-tikki never knew when it might open out and give Nagaina room to turn and strike at him. He held on savagely, and stuck out his feet to act as brakes on the dark slope of the hot, moist earth.

Then the grass by the mouth of the hole stopped waving, and Darzee said, "It is all over with

Rikki-tikki! We must sing his death song. Valiant Rikki-tikki is dead! For Nagaina will surely kill him underground."

So he sang a very mournful song that he made up on the spur of the minute, and just as he got to the most touching part, the grass quivered again, and Rikki-tikki, covered with dirt, dragged himself out of the hole leg by leg, licking his whiskers. Darzee stopped with a little shout. Rikki-tikki shook some of the dust out of his fur and sneezed. "It is all over," he said. "The widow will never come out again." And the red ants that live between the grass stems heard him, and began to troop down one after another to see if he had spoken the truth.

Rikki-tikki curled himself up in the grass and slept where he was--slept and slept till it was late in the afternoon, for he had done a hard day's work.

"Now," he said, when he awoke, "I will go back to the house. Tell the Coppersmith, Darzee, and he will tell the garden that Nagaina is dead."

The Coppersmith is a bird who makes a noise exactly like the beating of a little hammer on a copper pot; and the reason he is always making it is because he is the town crier to every Indian garden, and tells all the news to everybody who cares to listen. As Rikki-tikki went up the path, he heard his "attention" notes like a tiny dinner gong, and then the steady "Ding-dong-tock! Nag is dead--dong! Nagaina is dead! Ding-dong-tock!" That set all the birds in the garden singing, and the frogs croaking, for Nag and Nagaina used to eat frogs as well as little birds.

When Rikki got to the house, Teddy and Teddy's mother (she looked very white still, for she had been fainting) and Teddy's father came out and almost cried over him; and that night he ate all that was given him till he could eat no more, and went to bed on Teddy's shoulder, where Teddy's mother saw him when she came to look late at night.

"He saved our lives and Teddy's life," she said to her husband. "Just think, he saved all our lives."

Rikki-tikki woke up with a jump, for the mongooses are light sleepers.

"Oh, it's you," said he. "What are you bothering for? All the cobras are dead. And if they weren't, I'm here."

Rikki-tikki had a right to be proud of himself. But he did not grow too proud, and he kept that garden as a mongoose should keep it, with tooth and jump and spring and bite, till never a cobra dared show its head inside the walls.