

HS 305 Reading Literature

An introduction to the study of literature, which will explore an array of literary genres, concepts, questions and interpretive approaches.



The course will be taught in TWO segments by TWO different instructors.

Segment A**Instructor: sharmila**

"Reading is approaching something that is about to be, and no one yet knows what it will be."

— Italo Calvino

"Reading a book is like re-writing it for yourself. You bring to a novel, anything you read, all your experience of the world. You bring your history and you read it in your own terms."

— Angela Carter

"One must be an inventor to read well"

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

THIS segment of the course we will consider questions such as

- What are the uses of literature?
- Why study literature?
- What counts as literature?

As we proceed to read the texts prescribed for this course, the emphasis will be on active and responsive reading. As you engage with these pieces, you will find that there is often more than one way of interpreting a text. But this does not mean that anything goes; that any reading is as good as any other. This course will introduce you to the following modes of enquiry.

- What is “close reading” and how can we undertake a close reading of texts?
- How can we analyze the structure and language of a text? How do literary concepts help in this enterprise?
- How can we recognize the textual/generic features of a text?
- What is the project of the text you read?
- How does literature shape and gets shaped by textual traditions, culture, society, and politics?

In this segment of the course we will be reading fiction and creative nonfiction.

You will find an underlying theme which runs through all these texts—the idea of **“reading”**. Thus, we will not only read these texts, but will also explore how these texts thematize the idea of reading.

By the end of this course, it is hoped that you will have become incurably addicted to the adventure of reading.

Readings [Segment A]**[Instructor: Sharmila]**

1. "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" (1903), Arthur Conan Doyle (short story)
2. "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" (1896) and "I dwell in Possibility" ((1890), Emily Dickinson (poems)
3. "The Adivasi will not Dance" (2015), Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar
4. "Backwards" (2014), Warsan Shire (poem)
5. "The Distance of the Moon" (1965, English translation 1968), Italo Calvino (Translated by William Weaver)
6. "His Face All Red" (2010), E. M. Carroll (graphic narrative/web comics)
<https://emcarroll.com/comics/faceallred/01.html>

* Along with these readings, you will also find some “bonus” readings. These are not *prescribed* for the course, but is presented as recommended reading for those who want to read more. And yes, this does mean that you will not be tested and evaluated on these segments.

Course Requirement:

Classes will have a lecture-discussion format.

It is absolutely necessary that **you should have done the required readings before you come to class.**

And that you **bring the text(s) to class.**

Course Evaluation: 50 marks

A short assignment (10 marks)

Mid-semester examination (40 marks)

Policy of Reasonable Accommodation for Disabilities

Please do let me know if you have any accessibility requests regarding the conduct of this course. These could include, but need not be confined to, the availability of readings in different formats, visual aids, approaches to discussion boards, moodle, teaching aids, software, other resources. Confidentiality will be ensured. The course will strive to make reasonable accommodations.

Zero-Tolerance Policy on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of taking another's work and representing it as your own. Whether it is copying someone else's essay or even copying sentences from passages without proper citing and quotation marks. There is a Zero Tolerance policy on plagiarism in this course.

The Adventure of the Dancing Men

Arthur Conan Doyle

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Pictures for "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" were taken from a 1915 edition of "The Return of Sherlock Holmes" by Smith, Elder & Co. of London.

This text comes from the collection's version 3.1.

HOLMES HAD been seated for some hours in silence with his long, thin back curved over a chemical vessel in which he was brewing a particularly malodorous product. His head was sunk upon his breast, and he looked from my point of view like a strange, lank bird, with dull grey plumage and a black top-knot.

"So, Watson," said he, suddenly, "you do not propose to invest in South African securities?"

I gave a start of astonishment. Accustomed as I was to Holmes's curious faculties, this sudden intrusion into my most intimate thoughts was utterly inexplicable.

"How on earth do you know that?" I asked.

He wheeled round upon his stool, with a steaming test-tube in his hand and a gleam of amusement in his deep-set eyes. {setting, PoV, mood, characterisation}

"Now, Watson, confess yourself utterly taken aback," said he.

"I am."

"I ought to make you sign a paper to that effect."

"Why?"

"Because in five minutes you will say that it is all so absurdly simple."

"I am sure that I shall say nothing of the kind."

"You see, my dear Watson"—he propped his test-tube in the rack and began to lecture with the air of a professor addressing his class—"it is not really difficult to construct a series of inferences, each dependent upon its predecessor and each simple in itself. If, after doing so, one simply knocks out all the central inferences and presents one's audience with the starting-point and the conclusion, one may produce a startling, though possibly a meretricious, effect. Now, it was not really difficult, by an inspection of the groove between your left forefinger and thumb, to feel sure that you did *not* propose to invest your small capital in the goldfields."

"I see no connection."

"Very likely not; but I can quickly show you a close connection. Here are the missing links of the very simple chain: 1. You had chalk between your left finger and thumb when you returned from the club last night. 2. You put chalk there when you play billiards to steady the cue. 3. You never play billiards except with Thurston. 4. You told me four weeks ago that Thurston had an option on some South African property which would expire in a month, and which he desired you to share with him. 5. Your cheque-book is locked in my drawer,

and you have not asked for the key. 6. You do not propose to invest your money in this manner."

"How absurdly simple!" I cried.

"Quite so!" said he, a little nettled. "Every problem becomes very childish when once it is explained to you. Here is an unexplained one. See what you can make of that, friend Watson." He tossed a sheet of paper upon the table and turned once more to his chemical analysis.

I looked with amazement at the absurd hieroglyphics upon the paper.

"Why, Holmes, it is a child's drawing," I cried.

"Oh, that's your idea!"

"What else should it be?"

"That is what Mr. Hilton Cubitt, of Ridling Thorpe Manor, Norfolk, is very anxious to know. This little conundrum came by the first post, and he was to follow by the next train. There's a ring at the bell, Watson. I should not be very much surprised if this were he."

A heavy step was heard upon the stairs, and an instant later there entered a tall, ruddy, clean-shaven gentleman, whose clear eyes and florid cheeks told of a life led far from the fogs of Baker Street. He seemed to bring a whiff of his strong, fresh, bracing, east-coast air with him as he entered. Having shaken hands with each of us, he was about to sit down when his eye rested upon the paper with the curious markings, which I had just examined and left upon the table.

"Well, Mr. Holmes, what do you make of these?" he cried. "They told me that you were fond of queer mysteries, and I don't think you can find a queerer one than that. I sent the paper on ahead so that you might have time to study it before I came."

"It is certainly rather a curious production," said Holmes. "At first sight it would appear to be some childish prank. It consists of a number of absurd little figures dancing across the paper upon which they are drawn. Why should you attribute any importance to so grotesque an object?"

"I never should, Mr. Holmes. But my wife does. It is frightening her to death. She says nothing, but I can see terror in her eyes. That's why I want to sift the matter to the bottom."

Holmes held up the paper so that the sunlight shone full upon it. It was a page torn from a notebook. The markings were done in pencil, and ran in this way:



making meaning!

depends on PoV.
Fan boy Watson's
characterisation seems
to add to ours of
Holmes

↑
characterization
goes on
{direct &
indirect)

Indirect
char.

inferential
chain ↗

Holmes examined it for some time, and then, folding it carefully up, he placed it in his pocket-book.

"This promises to be a most interesting and unusual case," said he. "You gave me a few particulars in your letter, Mr. Hilton Cubitt, but I should be very much obliged if you would kindly go over it all again for the benefit of my friend, Dr. Watson."

"I'm not much of a story-teller," said our visitor, nervously clasping and unclasping his great, strong hands. "You'll just ask me anything that I don't make clear. I'll begin at the time of my marriage last year; but I want to say first of all that, though I'm not a rich man, my people have been at Ridling Thorpe for a matter of five centuries, and there is no better known family in the County of Norfolk. Last year I came up to London for the Jubilee, and I stopped at a boarding-house in Russell Square, because Parker, the vicar of our parish, was staying in it. There was an American young lady there—Patrick was the name—Elsie Patrick. In some way we became friends, until before my month was up I was as much in love as a man could be. We were quietly married at a registry office, and we returned to Norfolk a wedded couple. You'll think it very mad, Mr. Holmes, that a man of a good old family should marry a wife in this fashion, knowing nothing of her past or of her people; but if you saw her and knew her it would help you to understand.

"She was very straight about it, was Elsie. I can't say that she did not give me every chance of getting out of it if I wished to do so. 'I have had some very disagreeable associations in my life,' said she; 'I wish to forget all about them. I would rather never allude to the past, for it is very painful to me. If you take me, Hilton, you will take a woman who has nothing that she need be personally ashamed of; but you will have to be content with my word for it, and to allow me to be silent as to all that passed up to the time when I became yours. If these conditions are too hard, then go back to Norfolk and leave me to the lonely life in which you found me.' It was only the day before our wedding that she said those very words to me. I told her that I was content to take her on her own terms, and I have been as good as my word.

"Well, we have been married now for a year, and very happy we have been. But about a month ago, at the end of June, I saw for the first time signs of trouble. One day my wife received a letter from America. I saw the American stamp. She turned deadly white, read the letter, and threw it into the fire. She made no allusion to it afterwards, and

I made none, for a promise is a promise; but she has never known an easy hour from that moment. There is always a look of fear upon her face—a look as if she were waiting and expecting. She would do better to trust me. She would find that I was her best friend. But until she speaks I can say nothing. Mind you, she is a truthful woman, Mr. Holmes, and whatever trouble there may have been in her past life it has been no fault of hers. I am only a simple Norfolk squire, but there is not a man in England who ranks his family honour more highly than I do. She knows it well, and she knew it well before she married me. She would never bring any stain upon it—of that I am sure.

"Well, now I come to the queer part of my story. About a week ago—it was the Tuesday of last week—I found on one of the window-sills a number of absurd little dancing figures, like these upon the paper. They were scrawled with chalk. I thought that it was the stable-boy who had drawn them, but the lad swore he knew nothing about it. Anyhow, they had come there during the night. I had them washed out, and I only mentioned the matter to my wife afterwards. To my surprise she took it very seriously, and begged me if any more came to let her see them. None did come for a week, and then yesterday morning I found this paper lying on the sun-dial in the garden. I showed it to Elsie, and down she dropped in a dead faint. Since then she has looked like a woman in a dream, half dazed, and with terror always lurking in her eyes. It was then that I wrote and sent the paper to you, Mr. Holmes. It was not a thing that I could take to the police, for they would have laughed at me, but you will tell me what to do. I am not a rich man; but if there is any danger threatening my little woman I would spend my last copper to shield her."

He was a fine creature, this man of the old English soil, simple, straight, and gentle, with his great, earnest blue eyes and broad, comely face. His love for his wife and his trust in her shone in his features. Holmes had listened to his story with the utmost attention, and now he sat for some time in silent thought.

"Don't you think, Mr. Cubitt," said he, at last, "that your best plan would be to make a direct appeal to your wife, and to ask her to share her secret with you?"

Hilton Cubitt shook his massive head.

"A promise is a promise, Mr. Holmes. If Elsie wished to tell me she would. If not, it is not for me to force her confidence. But I am justified in taking my own line—and I will."

"Then I will help you with all my heart. In the first place, have you heard of any strangers being seen in your neighbourhood?"

"No."

"I presume that it is a very quiet place. Any fresh face would cause comment?"

"In the immediate neighbourhood, yes. But we have several small watering-places not very far away. And the farmers take in lodgers."

"These hieroglyphics have evidently a meaning. If it is a purely arbitrary one it may be impossible for us to solve it. If, on the other hand, it is systematic, I have no doubt that we shall get to the bottom of it. But this particular sample is so short that I can do nothing, and the facts which you have brought me are so indefinite that we have no basis for an investigation. I would suggest that you return to Norfolk, that you keep a keen look-out, and that you take an exact copy of any fresh dancing men which may appear. It is a thousand pities that we have not a reproduction of those which were done in chalk upon the window-sill. Make a discreet inquiry also as to any strangers in the neighbourhood. When you have collected some fresh evidence come to me again. That is the best advice which I can give you, Mr. Hilton Cubitt. If there are any pressing fresh developments I shall be always ready to run down and see you in your Norfolk home."

The interview left Sherlock Holmes very thoughtful, and several times in the next few days I saw him take his slip of paper from his note-book and look long and earnestly at the curious figures inscribed upon it. He made no allusion to the affair, however, until one afternoon a fortnight or so later. I was going out when he called me back.

"You had better stay here, Watson."

"Why?"

"Because I had a wire from Hilton Cubitt this morning—you remember Hilton Cubitt, of the dancing men? He was to reach Liverpool Street at one-twenty. He may be here at any moment. I gather from his wire that there have been some new incidents of importance."

We had not long to wait, for our Norfolk squire came straight from the station as fast as a hansom could bring him. He was looking worried and depressed, with tired eyes and a lined forehead.

"It's getting on my nerves, this business, Mr. Holmes," said he, as he sank, like a wearied man, into an arm-chair. "It's bad enough to feel that you are surrounded by unseen, unknown folk, who have some kind of design upon you; but when, in addition to that, you know that it is just killing your

wife by inches, then it becomes as much as flesh and blood can endure. She's wearing away under it—just wearing away before my eyes."

"Has she said anything yet?"

"No, Mr. Holmes, she has not. And yet there have been times when the poor girl has wanted to speak, and yet could not quite bring herself to take the plunge. I have tried to help her; but I dare say I did it clumsily, and scared her off from it. She has spoken about my old family, and our reputation in the county, and our pride in our unsullied honour, and I always felt it was leading to the point; but somehow it turned off before we got there."

"But you have found out something for yourself?"

"A good deal, Mr. Holmes. I have several fresh dancing men pictures for you to examine, and, what is more important, I have seen the fellow."

"What, the man who draws them?"

"Yes, I saw him at his work. But I will tell you everything in order. When I got back after my visit to you, the very first thing I saw next morning was a fresh crop of dancing men. They had been drawn in chalk upon the black wooden door of the tool-house, which stands beside the lawn in full view of the front windows. I took an exact copy, and here it is." He unfolded a paper and laid it upon the table. Here is a copy of the hieroglyphics:—



"Excellent!" said Holmes. "Excellent! Pray continue."

"When I had taken the copy I rubbed out the marks; but two mornings later a fresh inscription had appeared. I have a copy of it here":—



Holmes rubbed his hands and chuckled with delight.

"Our material is rapidly accumulating," said he.

"Three days later a message was left scrawled upon paper, and placed under a pebble upon the sun-dial. Here it is. The characters are, as you see, exactly the same as the last one. After that I determined to lie in wait; so I got out my revolver and I sat up in my study, which overlooks the lawn and garden. About two in the morning I was seated by the window, all being dark save for the moonlight outside, when I heard steps behind me, and there was my wife in her dressing-gown. She implored me to come to bed. I told her frankly that I wished to see who it was who played such absurd tricks

upon us. She answered that it was some senseless practical joke, and that I should not take any notice of it.

"If it really annoys you, Hilton, we might go and travel, you and I, and so avoid this nuisance."

"What, be driven out of our own house by a practical joker?" said I. "Why, we should have the whole county laughing at us."

"Well, come to bed," said she, "and we can discuss it in the morning."

"Suddenly, as she spoke, I saw her white face grow whiter yet in the moonlight, and her hand tightened upon my shoulder. Something was moving in the shadow of the tool-house. I saw a dark, creeping figure which crawled round the corner and squatted in front of the door. Seizing my pistol I was rushing out, when my wife threw her arms round me and held me with convulsive strength. I tried to throw her off, but she clung to me most desperately. At last I got clear, but by the time I had opened the door and reached the house the creature was gone. He had left a trace of his presence, however, for there on the door was the very same arrangement of dancing men which had already twice appeared, and which I have copied on that paper. There was no other sign of the fellow anywhere, though I ran all over the grounds. And yet the amazing thing is that he must have been there all the time, for when I examined the door again in the morning he had scrawled some more of his pictures under the line which I had already seen."

"Have you that fresh drawing?"

"Yes; it is very short, but I made a copy of it, and here it is."

Again he produced a paper. The new dance was in this form:—



"Tell me," said Holmes—and I could see by his eyes that he was much excited—"was this a mere addition to the first, or did it appear to be entirely separate?"

"It was on a different panel of the door."

"Excellent! This is far the most important of all for our purpose. It fills me with hopes. Now, Mr. Hilton Cubitt, please continue your most interesting statement."

"I have nothing more to say, Mr. Holmes, except that I was angry with my wife that night for having held me back when I might have caught the skulking rascal. She said that she feared that I might

come to harm. For an instant it had crossed my mind that perhaps what she really feared was that he might come to harm, for I could not doubt that she knew who this man was and what he meant by these strange signals. But there is a tone in my wife's voice, Mr. Holmes, and a look in her eyes which forbid doubt, and I am sure that it was indeed my own safety that was in her mind. There's the whole case, and now I want your advice as to what I ought to do. My own inclination is to put half-a-dozen of my farm lads in the shrubbery, and when this fellow comes again to give him such a hiding that he will leave us in peace for the future."

"I fear it is too deep a case for such simple remedies," said Holmes. "How long can you stay in London?"

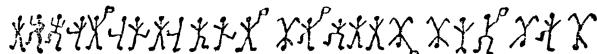
"I must go back to-day. I would not leave my wife alone all night for anything. She is very nervous and begged me to come back."

"I dare say you are right. But if you could have stopped I might possibly have been able to return with you in a day or two. Meanwhile you will leave me these papers, and I think that it is very likely that I shall be able to pay you a visit shortly and to throw some light upon your case."

Sherlock Holmes preserved his calm professional manner until our visitor had left us, although it was easy for me, who knew him so well, to see that he was profoundly excited. The moment that Hilton Cubitt's broad back had disappeared through the door my comrade rushed to the table, laid out all the slips of paper containing dancing men in front of him, and threw himself into an intricate and elaborate calculation. For two hours I watched him as he covered sheet after sheet of paper with figures and letters, so completely absorbed in his task that he had evidently forgotten my presence. Sometimes he was making progress and whistled and sang at his work; sometimes he was puzzled, and would sit for long spells with a furrowed brow and a vacant eye. Finally he sprang from his chair with a cry of satisfaction, and walked up and down the room rubbing his hands together. Then he wrote a long telegram upon a cable form. "If my answer to this is as I hope, you will have a very pretty case to add to your collection, Watson," said he. "I expect that we shall be able to go down to Norfolk to-morrow, and to take our friend some very definite news as to the secret of his annoyance."

I confess that I was filled with curiosity, but I was aware that Holmes liked to make his disclosures at his own time and in his own way; so I waited until it should suit him to take me into his confidence.

But there was a delay in that answering telegram, and two days of impatience followed, during which Holmes pricked up his ears at every ring of the bell. On the evening of the second there came a letter from Hilton Cubitt. All was quiet with him, save that a long inscription had appeared that morning upon the pedestal of the sun-dial. He inclosed a copy of it, which is here reproduced:



frieze?

Holmes bent over this grotesque frieze for some minutes, and then suddenly sprang to his feet with an exclamation of surprise and dismay. His face was haggard with anxiety.

"We have let this affair go far enough," said he. "Is there a train to North Walsham to-night?"

I turned up the time-table. The last had just gone.

"Then we shall breakfast early and take the very first in the morning," said Holmes. "Our presence is most urgently needed. Ah! here is our expected cablegram. One moment, Mrs. Hudson; there may be an answer. No, that is quite as I expected. This message makes it even more essential that we should not lose an hour in letting Hilton Cubitt know how matters stand, for it is a singular and a dangerous web in which our simple Norfolk squire is entangled."

So, indeed, it proved, and as I come to the dark conclusion of a story which had seemed to me to be only childish and bizarre I experience once again the dismay and horror with which I was filled. Would that I had some brighter ending to communicate to my readers, but these are the chronicles of fact, and I must follow to their dark crisis the strange chain of events which for some days made Ridling Thorpe Manor a household word through the length and breadth of England.

We had hardly alighted at North Walsham, and mentioned the name of our destination, when the station-master hurried towards us. "I suppose that you are the detectives from London?" said he.

A look of annoyance passed over Holmes's face.
"What makes you think such a thing?"

"Because Inspector Martin from Norwich has just passed through. But maybe you are the surgeons. She's not dead—or wasn't by last accounts. You may be in time to save her yet—though it be for the gallows."

Holmes's brow was dark with anxiety.

"We are going to Ridling Thorpe Manor," said he, "but we have heard nothing of what has passed there."

"It's a terrible business," said the station-master. "They are shot, both Mr. Hilton Cubitt and his wife. She shot him and then herself—so the servants say. He's dead and her life is despaired of. Dear, dear, one of the oldest families in the County of Norfolk, and one of the most honoured."

Without a word Holmes hurried to a carriage, and during the long seven miles' drive he never opened his mouth. Seldom have I seen him so utterly despondent. He had been uneasy during all our journey from town, and I had observed that he had turned over the morning papers with anxious attention; but now this sudden realization of his worst fears left him in a blank melancholy. He leaned back in his seat, lost in gloomy speculation. Yet there was much around to interest us, for we were passing through as singular a country-side as any in England, where a few scattered cottages represented the population of to-day, while on every hand enormous square-towered churches bristled up from the flat, green landscape and told of the glory and prosperity of old East Anglia. At last the violet rim of the German Ocean appeared over the green edge of the Norfolk coast, and the driver pointed with his whip to two old brick and timber gables which projected from a grove of trees. "That's Ridling Thorpe Manor," said he.

porticoed?

As we drove up to the porticoed front door I observed in front of it, beside the tennis lawn, the black tool-house and the pedestalled sun-dial with which we had such strange associations. A dapper little man, with a quick, alert manner and a waxed moustache, had just descended from a high dog-cart. He introduced himself as Inspector Martin, of the Norfolk Constabulary, and he was considerably astonished when he heard the name of my companion.

"Why, Mr. Holmes, the crime was only committed at three this morning. How could you hear of it in London and get to the spot as soon as I?"

"I anticipated it. I came in the hope of preventing it."

"Then you must have important evidence of which we are ignorant, for they were said to be a most united couple."

"I have only the evidence of the dancing men," said Holmes. "I will explain the matter to you later. Meanwhile, since it is too late to prevent this tragedy, I am very anxious that I should use the knowledge which I possess in order to ensure that justice be done. Will you associate me in your investigation, or will you prefer that I should act independently?"

"I should be proud to feel that we were acting together, Mr. Holmes," said the inspector, earnestly.

"In that case I should be glad to hear the evidence and to examine the premises without an instant of unnecessary delay."

Inspector Martin had the good sense to allow my friend to do things in his own fashion, and contented himself with carefully noting the results. The local surgeon, an old, white-haired man, had just come down from Mrs. Hilton Cubitt's room, and he reported that her injuries were serious, but not necessarily fatal. The bullet had passed through the front of her brain, and it would probably be some time before she could regain consciousness. On the question of whether she had been shot or had shot herself he would not venture to express any decided opinion. Certainly the bullet had been discharged at very close quarters. There was only the one pistol found in the room, two barrels of which had been emptied. Mr. Hilton Cubitt had been shot through the heart. It was equally conceivable that he had shot her and then himself, or that she had been the criminal, for the revolver lay upon the floor midway between them.

"Has he been moved?" asked Holmes.

"We have moved nothing except the lady. We could not leave her lying wounded upon the floor."

"How long have you been here, doctor?"

"Since four o'clock."

"Anyone else?"

"Yes, the constable here."

"And you have touched nothing?"

"Nothing."

"You have acted with great discretion. Who sent for you?"

"The housemaid, Saunders."

"Was it she who gave the alarm?"

"She and Mrs. King, the cook."

"Where are they now?"

"In the kitchen, I believe."

"Then I think we had better hear their story at once."

The old hall, oak-panelled and high-windowed, had been turned into a court of investigation. Holmes sat in a great, old-fashioned chair, his inexorable eyes gleaming out of his haggard face. I could read in them a set purpose to devote his life to this quest until the client whom he had failed to save should at last be avenged. The trim Inspector

Martin, the old, grey-headed country doctor, myself, and a stolid village policeman made up the rest of that strange company.

The two women told their story clearly enough. They had been aroused from their sleep by the sound of an explosion, which had been followed a minute later by a second one. They slept in adjoining rooms, and Mrs. King had rushed in to Saunders. Together they had descended the stairs. The door of the study was open and a candle was burning upon the table. Their master lay upon his face in the centre of the room. He was quite dead. Near the window his wife was crouching, her head leaning against the wall. She was horribly wounded, and the side of her face was red with blood. She breathed heavily, but was incapable of saying anything. The passage, as well as the room, was full of smoke and the smell of powder. The window was certainly shut and fastened upon the inside. Both women were positive upon the point. They had at once sent for the doctor and for the constable. Then, with the aid of the groom and the stable-boy, they had conveyed their injured mistress to her room. Both she and her husband had occupied the bed. She was clad in her dress—he in his dressing-gown, over his night clothes. Nothing had been moved in the study. So far as they knew there had never been any quarrel between husband and wife. They had always looked upon them as a very united couple.

These were the main points of the servants' evidence. In answer to Inspector Martin they were clear that every door was fastened upon the inside, and that no one could have escaped from the house. In answer to Holmes they both remembered that they were conscious of the smell of powder from the moment that they ran out of their rooms upon the top floor. "I commend that fact very carefully to your attention," said Holmes to his professional colleague. "And now I think that we are in a position to undertake a thorough examination of the room."

→ kill room

The study proved to be a small chamber, lined on three sides with books, and with a writing-table facing an ordinary window, which looked out upon the garden. Our first attention was given to the body of the unfortunate squire, whose huge frame lay stretched across the room. His disordered dress showed that he had been hastily aroused from sleep. The bullet had been fired at him from the front, and had remained in his body after penetrating the heart. His death had certainly been instantaneous and painless. There was no powder-marking either

upon his dressing-gown or on his hands. According to the country surgeon the lady had stains upon her face, but none upon her hand.

"The absence of the latter means nothing, though its presence may mean everything," said Holmes. "Unless the powder from a badly-fitting cartridge happens to spurt backwards, one may fire many shots without leaving a sign. I would suggest that Mr. Cubitt's body may now be removed. I suppose, doctor, you have not recovered the bullet which wounded the lady?"

"A serious operation will be necessary before that can be done. But there are still four cartridges in the revolver. Two have been fired and two wounds inflicted, so that each bullet can be accounted for."

"So it would seem," said Holmes. "Perhaps you can account also for the bullet which has so obviously struck the edge of the window?"

He had turned suddenly, and his long, thin finger was pointing to a hole which had been drilled right through the lower window-sash about an inch above the bottom.

"By George!" cried the inspector. "How ever did you see that?"

"Because I looked for it."

"Wonderful!" said the country doctor. "You are certainly right, sir. Then a third shot has been fired, and therefore a third person must have been present. But who could that have been and how could he have got away?"

"That is the problem which we are now about to solve," said Sherlock Holmes. "You remember, Inspector Martin, when the servants said that on leaving their room they were at once conscious of a smell of powder I remarked that the point was an extremely important one?"

"Yes, sir; but I confess I did not quite follow you."

"It suggested that at the time of the firing the window as well as the door of the room had been open. Otherwise the fumes of powder could not have been blown so rapidly through the house. A draught in the room was necessary for that. Both door and window were only open for a very short time, however."

"How do you prove that?"

"Because the candle has not guttered."

"Capital!" cried the inspector. "Capital!"

"Feeling sure that the window had been open at the time of the tragedy I conceived that there might have been a third person in the affair, who stood

outside this opening and fired through it. Any shot directed at this person might hit the sash. I looked, and there, sure enough, was the bullet mark!"

"But how came the window to be shut and fastened?"

"The woman's first instinct would be to shut and fasten the window. But, halloo! what is this?"

It was a lady's hand-bag which stood upon the study table—a trim little hand-bag of crocodile-skin and silver. Holmes opened it and turned the contents out. There were twenty fifty-pound notes of the Bank of England, held together by an india-rubber band—nothing else.

"This must be preserved, for it will figure in the trial," said Holmes, as he handed the bag with its contents to the inspector. "It is now necessary that we should try to throw some light upon this third bullet, which has clearly, from the splintering of the wood, been fired from inside the room. I should like to see Mrs. King, the cook, again. You said, Mrs. King, that you were awakened by a *loud* explosion. When you said that, did you mean that it seemed to you to be louder than the second one?"

"Well, sir, it wakened me from my sleep, and so it is hard to judge. But it did seem very loud."

"You don't think that it might have been two shots fired almost at the same instant?"

"I am sure I couldn't say, sir."

"I believe that it was undoubtedly so. I rather think, Inspector Martin, that we have now exhausted all that this room can teach us. If you will kindly step round with me, we shall see what fresh evidence the garden has to offer."

A flower-bed extended up to the study window, and we all broke into an exclamation as we approached it. The flowers were trampled down, and the soft soil was imprinted all over with footmarks. Large, masculine feet they were, with peculiarly long, sharp toes. Holmes hunted about among the grass and leaves like a retriever after a wounded bird. Then, with a cry of satisfaction, he bent forward and picked up a little brazen cylinder.

"I thought so," said he; "the revolver had an ejector, and here is the third cartridge. I really think, Inspector Martin, that our case is almost complete."

The country inspector's face had shown his intense amazement at the rapid and masterful progress of Holmes's investigation. At first he had shown some disposition to assert his own position; but now he was overcome with admiration and ready to follow without question wherever Holmes led.

"Whom do you suspect?" he asked.

"I'll go into that later. There are several points in this problem which I have not been able to explain to you yet. Now that I have got so far I had best proceed on my own lines, and then clear the whole matter up once and for all."

"Just as you wish, Mr. Holmes, so long as we get our man."

"I have no desire to make mysteries, but it is impossible at the moment of action to enter into long and complex explanations. I have the threads of this affair all in my hand. Even if this lady should never recover consciousness we can still reconstruct the events of last night and ensure that justice be done. First of all I wish to know whether there is any inn in this neighbourhood known as 'Elrige's'?"

The servants were cross-questioned, but none of them had heard of such a place. The stable-boy threw a light upon the matter by remembering that a farmer of that name lived some miles off in the direction of East Ruston.

"Is it a lonely farm?"

"Very lonely, sir."

"Perhaps they have not heard yet of all that happened here during the night?"

"Maybe not, sir."

Holmes thought for a little and then a curious smile played over his face.

"Saddle a horse, my lad," said he. "I shall wish you to take a note to Elrige's Farm."

He took from his pocket the various slips of the dancing men. With these in front of him he worked for some time at the study-table. Finally he handed a note to the boy, with directions to put it into the hands of the person to whom it was addressed, and especially to answer no questions of any sort which might be put to him. I saw the outside of the note, addressed in straggling, irregular characters, very unlike Holmes's usual precise hand. It was consigned to Mr. Abe Slaney, Elrige's Farm, East Ruston, Norfolk.

"I think, inspector," Holmes remarked, "that you would do well to telegraph for an escort, as, if my calculations prove to be correct, you may have a particularly dangerous prisoner to convey to the county jail. The boy who takes this note could no doubt forward your telegram. If there is an afternoon train to town, Watson, I think we should do well to take it, as I have a chemical analysis of some interest to finish, and this investigation draws rapidly to a close."

When the youth had been dispatched with the note, Sherlock Holmes gave his instructions to the servants. If any visitor were to call asking for Mrs. Hilton Cubitt no information should be given as to her condition, but he was to be shown at once into the drawing-room. He impressed these points upon them with the utmost earnestness. Finally he led the way into the drawing-room with the remark that the business was now out of our hands, and that we must while away the time as best we might until we could see what was in store for us. The doctor had departed to his patients, and only the inspector and myself remained.

"I think that I can help you to pass an hour in an interesting and profitable manner," said Holmes, drawing his chair up to the table and spreading out in front of him the various papers upon which were recorded the antics of the dancing men. "As to you, friend Watson, I owe you every atonement for having allowed your natural curiosity to remain so long unsatisfied. To you, inspector, the whole incident may appeal as a remarkable professional study. I must tell you first of all the interesting circumstances connected with the previous consultations which Mr. Hilton Cubitt has had with me in Baker Street." He then shortly recapitulated the facts which have already been recorded. "I have here in front of me these singular productions, at which one might smile had they not proved themselves to be the fore-runners of so terrible a tragedy. I am fairly familiar with all forms of secret writings, and am myself the author of a trifling monograph upon the subject, in which I analyze one hundred and sixty separate ciphers; but I confess that this is entirely new to me. The object of those who invented the system has apparently been to conceal that these characters convey a message, and to give the idea that they are the mere random sketches of children.

"Having once recognised, however, that the symbols stood for letters, and having applied the rules which guide us in all forms of secret writings, the solution was easy enough. The first message submitted to me was so short that it was impossible for me to do more than to say with some confidence that the symbol

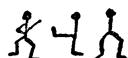


stood for E. As you are aware, E is the most common letter in the English alphabet, and it predominates to so marked an extent that even in a short sentence one would expect to find it most often. Out of fifteen symbols in the first message four were the same, so it was reasonable to set this

down as E. It is true that in some cases the figure was bearing a flag and in some cases not, but it was probable from the way in which the flags were distributed that they were used to break the sentence up into words. I accepted this as a hypothesis, and noted that E was represented by



"But now came the real difficulty of the inquiry. The order of the English letters after E is by no means well marked, and any preponderance which may be shown in an average of a printed sheet may be reversed in a single short sentence. Speaking roughly, T, A, O, I, N, S, H, R, D, and L are the numerical order in which letters occur; but T, A, O, and I are very nearly abreast of each other, and it would be an endless task to try each combination until a meaning was arrived at. I, therefore, waited for fresh material. In my second interview with Mr. Hilton Cubitt he was able to give me two other short sentences and one message, which appeared—since there was no flag—to be a single word. Here are the symbols. Now, in the single word I have already got the two E's coming second and fourth in a word of five letters. It might be 'sever,' or 'lever,' or 'never.' There can be no question that the latter as a reply to an appeal is far the most probable, and the circumstances pointed to its being a reply written by the lady. Accepting it as correct, we are now able to say that the symbols



stand respectively for N, V, and R.

"Even now I was in considerable difficulty, but a happy thought put me in possession of several other letters. It occurred to me that if these appeals came, as I expected, from someone who had been intimate with the lady in her early life, a combination which contained two E's with three letters between might very well stand for the name 'ELsie.' On examination I found that such a combination formed the termination of the message which was three times repeated. It was certainly some appeal to 'Elsie.' In this way I had got my L, S, and I. But what appeal could it be? There were only four letters in the word which preceded 'Elsie,' and it ended in E. Surely the word must be 'COME.' I tried all other four letters ending in E, but could find none to fit the case. So now I was in possession of C, O, and M, and I was in a position to attack the first message once more, dividing it into words and putting dots for each symbol which was still unknown. So treated it worked out in this fashion:

.M .ERE ..E SL.NE.

"Now the first letter *can* only be A, which is a most useful discovery, since it occurs no fewer than three times in this short sentence, and the H is also apparent in the second word. Now it becomes:—

AM HERE A.E SLANE.

Or, filling in the obvious vacancies in the name:—

AM HERE ABE SLANEY.

I had so many letters now that I could proceed with considerable confidence to the second message, which worked out in this fashion:—

A. ELRI.ES.

Here I could only make sense by putting T and G for the missing letters, and supposing that the name was that of some house or inn at which the writer was staying."

Inspector Martin and I had listened with the utmost interest to the full and clear account of how my friend had produced results which had led to so complete a command over our difficulties.

"What did you do then, sir?" asked the inspector.

"I had every reason to suppose that this Abe Slaney was an American, since Abe is an American contraction, and since a letter from America had been the starting-point of all the trouble. I had also every cause to think that there was some criminal secret in the matter. The lady's allusions to her past and her refusal to take her husband into her confidence both pointed in that direction. I therefore cabled to my friend, Wilson Hargreave, of the New York Police Bureau, who has more than once made use of my knowledge of London crime. I asked him whether the name of Abe Slaney was known to him. Here is his reply: 'The most dangerous crook in Chicago.' On the very evening upon which I had his answer Hilton Cubitt sent me the last message from Slaney. Working with known letters it took this form:—

ELSIE P RE P ARE TO MEET THY GOD

The addition of a P and a D completed a message which showed me that the rascal was proceeding from persuasion to threats, and my knowledge of the crooks of Chicago prepared me to find that he might very rapidly put his words into action. I at once came to Norfolk with my friend and colleague, Dr. Watson, but, unhappily, only in time to find that the worst had already occurred."

"It is a privilege to be associated with you in the handling of a case," said the inspector, warmly. "You will excuse me, however, if I speak frankly to you. You are only answerable to yourself, but I have to answer to my superiors. If this Abe Slaney, living at Elrige's, is indeed the murderer, and if

he has made his escape while I am seated here, I should certainly get into serious trouble."

"You need not be uneasy. He will not try to escape."

"How do you know?"

"To fly would be a confession of guilt."

"Then let us go to arrest him."

"I expect him here every instant."

"But why should he come?"

"Because I have written and asked him."

"But this is incredible, Mr. Holmes! Why should he come because you have asked him? Would not such a request rather rouse his suspicions and cause him to fly?"

"I think I have known how to frame the letter," said Sherlock Holmes. "In fact, if I am not very much mistaken, here is the gentleman himself coming up the drive."

A man was striding up the path which led to the door. He was a tall, handsome, swarthy fellow, clad in a suit of grey flannel, with a Panama hat, a bristling black beard, and a great, aggressive hooked nose, and flourishing a cane as he walked. He swaggered up the path as if the place belonged to him, and we heard his loud, confident peal at the bell.

"I think, gentlemen," said Holmes, quietly, "that we had best take up our position behind the door. Every precaution is necessary when dealing with such a fellow. You will need your handcuffs, inspector. You can leave the talking to me."

We waited in silence for a minute—one of those minutes which one can never forget. Then the door opened and the man stepped in. In an instant Holmes clapped a pistol to his head and Martin slipped the handcuffs over his wrists. It was all done so swiftly and deftly that the fellow was helpless before he knew that he was attacked. He glared from one to the other of us with a pair of blazing black eyes. Then he burst into a bitter laugh.

"Well, gentlemen, you have the drop on me this time. I seem to have knocked up against something hard. But I came here in answer to a letter from Mrs. Hilton Cubitt. Don't tell me that she is in this? Don't tell me that she helped to set a trap for me?"

"Mrs. Hilton Cubitt was seriously injured and is at death's door."

The man gave a hoarse cry of grief which rang through the house.

"You're crazy!" he cried, fiercely. "It was he that was hurt, not she. Who would have hurt little Elsie?"

I may have threatened her, God forgive me, but I would not have touched a hair of her pretty head. Take it back—you! Say that she is not hurt!"

"She was found badly wounded by the side of her dead husband."

He sank with a deep groan on to the settee and buried his face in his manacled hands. For five minutes he was silent. Then he raised his face once more, and spoke with the cold composure of despair.

"I have nothing to hide from you, gentlemen," said he. "If I shot the man he had his shot at me, and there's no murder in that. But if you think I could have hurt that woman, then you don't know either me or her. I tell you there was never a man in this world loved a woman more than I loved her. I had a right to her. She was pledged to me years ago. Who was this Englishman that he should come between us? I tell you that I had the first right to her, and that I was only claiming my own."

"She broke away from your influence when she found the man that you are," said Holmes, sternly. "She fled from America to avoid you, and she married an honourable gentleman in England. You dogged her and followed her and made her life a misery to her in order to induce her to abandon the husband whom she loved and respected in order to fly with you, whom she feared and hated. You have ended by bringing about the death of a noble man and driving his wife to suicide. That is your record in this business, Mr. Abe Slaney, and you will answer for it to the law."

"If Elsie dies I care nothing what becomes of me," said the American. He opened one of his hands and looked at a note crumpled up in his palm. "See here, mister," he cried, with a gleam of suspicion in his eyes, "you're not trying to scare me over this, are you? If the lady is hurt as bad as you say, who was it that wrote this note?" He tossed it forwards on to the table.

"I wrote it to bring you here."

"You wrote it? There was no one on earth outside the Joint who knew the secret of the dancing men. How came you to write it?"

"What one man can invent another can discover," said Holmes. "There is a cab coming to convey you to Norwich, Mr. Slaney. But, meanwhile, you have time to make some small reparation for the injury you have wrought. Are you aware that Mrs. Hilton Cubitt has herself lain under grave suspicion of the murder of her husband, and that it was only my presence here and the knowledge which I happened to possess which has saved her

from the accusation? The least that you owe her is to make it clear to the whole world that she was in no way, directly or indirectly, responsible for his tragic end."

"I ask nothing better," said the American. "I guess the very best case I can make for myself is the absolute naked truth."

"It is my duty to warn you that it will be used against you," cried the inspector, with the magnificent fair-play of the British criminal law.

Slaney shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll chance that," said he. "First of all, I want you gentlemen to understand that I have known this lady since she was a child. There were seven of us in a gang in Chicago, and Elsie's father was the boss of the Joint. He was a clever man, was old Patrick. It was he who invented that writing, which would pass as a child's scrawl unless you just happened to have the key to it. Well, Elsie learned some of our ways; but she couldn't stand the business, and she had a bit of honest money of her own, so she gave us all the slip and got away to London. She had been engaged to me, and she would have married me, I believe, if I had taken over another profession; but she would have nothing to do with anything on the cross. It was only after her marriage to this Englishman that I was able to find out where she was. I wrote to her, but got no answer. After that I came over, and, as letters were no use, I put my messages where she could read them.

"Well, I have been here a month now. I lived in that farm, where I had a room down below, and could get in and out every night, and no one the wiser. I tried all I could to coax Elsie away. I knew that she read the messages, for once she wrote an answer under one of them. Then my temper got the better of me, and I began to threaten her. She sent me a letter then, imploring me to go away and saying that it would break her heart if any scandal should come upon her husband. She said that she would come down when her husband was asleep at three in the morning, and speak with me through the end window, if I would go away afterwards and leave her in peace. She came down and brought money with her, trying to bribe me to go. This made me mad, and I caught her arm and tried to pull her through the window. At that moment in rushed the husband with his revolver in his hand. Elsie had sunk down upon the floor, and we were face to face. I was heeled also, and I held up my gun to scare him off and let me get away. He fired and missed me. I pulled off almost at the same

instant, and down he dropped. I made away across the garden, and as I went I heard the window shut behind me. That's God's truth, gentlemen, every word of it, and I heard no more about it until that lad came riding up with a note which made me walk in here, like a jay, and give myself into your hands."

A cab had driven up whilst the American had been talking. Two uniformed policemen sat inside. Inspector Martin rose and touched his prisoner on the shoulder.

"It is time for us to go."

"Can I see her first?"

"No, she is not conscious. Mr. Sherlock Holmes, I only hope that if ever again I have an important case I shall have the good fortune to have you by my side."

We stood at the window and watched the cab drive away. As I turned back my eye caught the pellet of paper which the prisoner had tossed upon the table. It was the note with which Holmes had decoyed him.

"See if you can read it, Watson," said he, with a smile.

It contained no word, but this little line of dancing men:



"If you use the code which I have explained," said Holmes, "you will find that it simply means 'Come here at once.' I was convinced that it was an invitation which he would not refuse, since he could never imagine that it could come from anyone but the lady. And so, my dear Watson, we have ended by turning the dancing men to good when they have so often been the agents of evil, and I think that I have fulfilled my promise of giving you something unusual for your note-book. Three-forty is our train, and I fancy we should be back in Baker Street for dinner."

Only one word of epilogue. The American, Abe Slaney, was condemned to death at the winter assizes at Norwich; but his penalty was changed to penal servitude in consideration of mitigating circumstances, and the certainty that Hilton Cubitt had fired the first shot. Of Mrs. Hilton Cubitt I only know that I have heard she recovered entirely, and that she still remains a widow, devoting her whole life to the care of the poor and to the administration of her husband's estate.

Rhythm: 4343 (#beats per line) (\uparrow = stress)

(Quatrains) Entire poem is in stanzas of four lines
(not paragraphs?)

I felt a funeral in my Brain
And mourners to and fro
gives a regular beat,
very oral poem
(entirely heard!)

Rhyme scheme = abcb (not perfect rhymes)

Begins with sound, ends with silence

repetition
Not peaceful/calm, but
sound has grown louder
from treading → beating

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
And Mourners to and fro
Kept treading - treading - till it seemed
That Sense was breaking through -
(rationality/sensation?) to what? (unclear)
And when they all were seated,
A Service, like a Drum -
Kept beating - beating - till I thought
My mind was going numb - \rightarrow mind is paralyzed.

The sound is blown open,
1. Church bell tolling
2. Sound resonates, occupied the space, i.e.
sound is even bigger
(sound is an absolute irritant, e.g. autistic child)
two some of I & Silence has been wrecked

And then I heard them lift a Box (I is in the coffin)
And creak across my Soul (wood of box is creaking in her soul)
With those same Boots of Lead, again, \rightarrow tread in 1st stanza was
Then Space - began to toll, \rightarrow heaviness, inertness, unfeelingness
 \equiv "lead"
As all the Heavens were a Bell, (death \rightarrow heaven, but it doesn't offer any solace)
And Being, but an Ear, (consciousness is now an ear) \rightarrow oppression of sound
And I, and Silence, some strange Race,
Wrecked, solitary, here - \rightarrow running race with silence

lower the coffin into the grave
[plank below coffin breaks (supports of reason)]
poem doesn't pin down the extended metaphor. So, wants to play with meaning.

another extended metaphor poetry more freedom than prose possibility
readers can't look at it from outside, need to enter it.
more beautiful/more just?

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
And I dropped down, and down - \rightarrow not just 6 feet of grave
And hit a World, at every plunge, \rightarrow traversing Worlds (no sound now)
And Finished knowing - then -
↳ Last line: disruption, incomplete
• Out of body extended death exp.? • Finished with bothering to know? (spiritually)
• Sinking into madness, irrationality? (no logic, reason)

I dwell in Possibility

another metaphor, we don't know what for.
e.g. poetry, thinking?
things are lost when stories are pressed into worlds
more windows & doors for possibility

I dwell in Possibility -
A fairer House than Prose -
More numerous of Windows -
Superior - for Doors -

Chambers are like tree but difficult for eye to see.
(impregnable: fortification)

Through the constraints, one can understand possibilities.
And for an everlasting Roof } possibility = sky itself, but,
The Gambrels of the Sky - } 1. House, 2. windows, 3. leak open roof
gentle sloping roof \rightarrow relaxing constraints

coming to house of possibility (readers)
"poet"
Of Visitors - the fairest - beauty/ethics, justice (play on word fair)
For Occupation - This -
The spreading wide my(narrow) Hands
To gather Paradise - conflict is continued
gather piece by piece (narrow hands)

Emily Dickinson

processes in the mind
tone, mood = sad, dark

mental disturbance
+ physical sensation

absence of the visual
(rely on the hearing)

ghostly voice

(we don't know for certain)

incomplete parts of a sensory experience
also with boots of lead

(found gives way to space)

effects of capitalization

- Proper nouns \rightarrow personified
- enjambed line
(And ... Box, And ... soul ...)
no punctuation, want to keep your breath.
- Sentence fragments
(wrecked, solitary here -)

Emily Dickinson

Quatrains
Rhyme scheme: ABCB

Once again, Nirmal was given first choice.

Without thinking, or even looking at all the girls, he chose Tina. He did not look in Sona's direction at all.

Nandu chose Sona.

'So I come to you again,' Nandu said to Sona, smiling, as he climbed over her, both of them naked. Sona smiled at him.

'Long time, very long time. I can't tell how much I missed you.' Nandu kissed Sona's nipples. 'Give me the same great fuck.' He held her buttocks and positioned her under his body. Sona complied. As Nandu began pumping himself inside Sona, he said some more things. But Sona did not hear all that. She just wrapped her legs around Nandu's hips and countered his thrusts. It made him happy. He dug his face into Sona's neck and kissed her deeply.

Problem : Democratic Republic
 (Nation-state) + Nation is the sovereign, delegates governance power to govt.
 Have adivasi elected govt, part of us?
 community (lateral linkage)

+ Have right to maintain control.
 Can't forcibly mainstream them (violence)
 Can't shut off mainstream (e.g. education).
 e.g. USA / Canada : indigenous / adivasi] we don't call them red Indians anymore.
 if nation

narrator = frustrated adivasi
 first person narrator
 guilt (not having informed others)

reservation camps → education. (violent mainstream)

stereotype : good at dance
 setting : place - Jharkhand (adivasi state)

The Adivasi Will Not Dance

mood = guilt, frustration

characters = I, musicians, dancers, police, "they"

exposition

They pinned me to the ground. They did not let me speak, they did not let me protest, they did not even let me raise my head and look at my fellow musicians and dancers as they were being beaten up by the police. All I could hear were their cries for mercy. I felt sorry for them. I had failed them. Because what I did, I did on my own. Yet, did I have a choice? Had I only spoken to them about my plan, I am sure they would have stood by me. For they too suffer, the same as I. They would have stood by me, they would have spoken with me and, together, our voices would have rung out loud. They would have travelled out of our Santhal Pargana, out of our Jharkhand, all the way to Dilli and all of Bharot-disom; the world itself would have come to know of our suffering. Then, perhaps, something would have been done for us. Then, perhaps, our President would have agreed with what I said to him.

territory ←

heater of public action in Jharkhand
 ↑
 nation state

Post 1960s: many disenfranchised writing back against narratives of pity.

Old bapu : mukl raj anand

Bapu joined his hands & looked at " - - "

Bapu shudder & could not speak.

- Never able to say anything
- old man is incapable of action

narrator ↔ reader asked to witness pity state know that he's oppressed but character has no way to challenge the world.

Narratives of protest

e.g. Nagarjun manjule (Rangoli)

e.g. Akrosh

- Boy throws stone at gentry
- Here, camera is towards the gentry, we are on the side of the oppressed

- Young boy coming from oppressed community
- Broken by little ways of oppression
- Picks up a stone & throws it at his oppressor (stone is thrown at you) → reader put in frame of oppressor.

Not silent, but silenced (exposition of story)

Narrator doesn't speak for something else, but speaking up & speaking "as" (stop speaking on behalf of us)

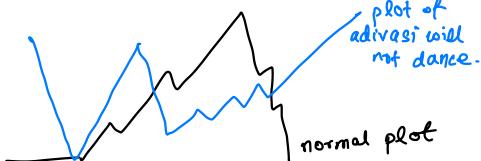
PLOT

Exposition : An event just after climax (begins not at beginning)

Flashback (narrative style)

This voice (canthal) is not usually present in literary landscape.

Compressed novel into a 10pg short story. Every event is a concentrate.



Conflicts : Man and world

different configurations of "they"

Endemic violence

Visible & "Invisible" violence

Pity ← illusion of being a better human.

{ Adivasi lives : seen as dispensable }

has a lot of hidden details

look at segments in a story like stanzas, retocus and reshape story.

"you" = addressee ? the reader
no space to be safely outside the story.

Continuous indirect characterization of narrator.

The narrative busts stereotypes. e.g. criminal Adivasi' (colonial state origin)
Adivasi (coal mines) ← no sustenance.
pathologisation social of "criminal" tribes.

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The Adivasi Will Not Dance

travel to past as flashbacks
+ story of Santhals & all adivasi creating of setting

Bengali president
(Pranab Mukherjee)

Rabindranath Tagore

Such a fool I am! A foolish Santhal. A foolish Adivasi.

(male)
My name is Mangal Murmu. I am a musician. No, wait... I am a farmer. Or... Was a farmer. Was a farmer is right. Because I don't farm anymore. In my village of Matijore,

Each rebeginning, refocused story in different temporalities for each beginning. Too complicated a story

non-Santhals

But we Santhals are fools, aren't we? All of us Adivasis are fools. Down the years, down generations, the Diku have taken advantage of our foolishness. Tell me if I am wrong.

I only said, 'We Adivasis will not dance anymore' — what is wrong with that? We are like toys—someone presses our 'ON' button, or turns a key in our backsides, and we Santhals start beating rhythms on our tamak and tumdak, or start blowing tunes on our tiriyo while someone snatches away our very dancing grounds. Tell me, am I wrong? → conversational voice (almost a challenge, rhetorical)

I had not expected things to go so wrong. I thought I was speaking to the best man in India, our President. I had thought he would listen to my words. Isn't he our neighbour? His forefathers were all from the Birbhum district next door. His ancestral house is still there.

Birbhum, where Rabin-haram lived in harmony with Santhals. I have been to that place Rabin-haram set up. What is it called? Yes, Santiniketan. I went there a long time ago, to perform with my troupe. I saw that we Santhals are held in high regard in Santiniketan. Santiniketan is in Birbhum, and our President is also from Birbhum. He should have heard me speak, no? But he didn't.

The Adivasi Will Not Dance

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in Amrapara block of the Pakur district, not many Santhals farm anymore. Only a few of us still have farmland; most of it has been acquired by a mining company. It is a rich company. It is not that we didn't fight the acquisition. We did.

While we were fighting, this political leader came, that political leader came, this Kiristan sister came, that Kiristan father came. Apparently to support us. But we lost. And after we lost, everyone left. The leaders went back to Ranchi and Dilli or wherever they had to go. The Kiristans returned to their missions. But our land did not come back to us. On the other hand, a Kiristan sister was killed and our boys were implicated in her murder.

The papers, the media, everyone blamed our boys. They reported that the Kiristan sister was fighting for our rights and yet our boys killed her. No one bothered to see that our boys had been fighting for our land and rights from even before that Kiristan sister came. Why would they kill her? Just because our boys did not have reporter friends, their fight went unseen; while the Kiristan sister, with her network of missionaries and their friends, got all the attention. Now that our boys are in jail on false charges of murder, who will fight for us? Where are the missionaries and their friends now? If the missionaries are our well-wishers and were fighting for us, why did they run away? Kill a well-known Kiristan sister, accuse a few unknown Santhal boys fighting for their lands of her murder, move both obstacles—the Kiristan sister and the Santhal boys—out of the way, grab as much land as possible, build as

description of losing farmlands

Kiristan = Christian

immigration due to displ. (internal), we don't talk about this!

many mines as possible and dig out all the coal. This is how this coal company works. Is this scenario so difficult to understand that the media does not get it?

If coal merchants have taken a part of our lands, the other part has been taken over by stone merchants, all Diku—Marwari, Sindhi, Mandal, Bhagat, Muslim. They turn our land upside down, inside out, with their heavy machines. They sell the stones they mine from our earth in faraway places—Dilli, Noida, Panjab. This coal company and these quarry owners, they earn so much money from our land. They have built big houses for themselves in town; they wear nice clothes; they send their children to good schools in faraway places; when sick, they get themselves treated by the best doctors in Ranchi, Patna, Bhagalpur, Malda, Bardhaman, Kolkata. What do we Santhals get in return? Tatters to wear. Barely enough food. Such diseases that we can't breathe properly, we cough blood and forever remain bare bones.

For education, our children are at the mercy of either those free government schools where teachers come only to cook the midday meal, or those Kiristan missionary schools where our children are constantly asked to stop worshipping our Bonga-Buru and start revering Jisu and Mariam. If our children refuse, the sisters and the fathers tell our boys that their Santhal names—Hopna, Som, Singrai—are not good enough. They are renamed David and Mikail and Kiristofer and whatnot. And as if that were not enough, Muslims barge into our homes, sleep with our women, and we Santhal men cannot do a thing.

But what *can* we do? They outnumber us. Village after village in our Santhal Pargana—which should have been a home for us Santhals—are turning into Muslim villages. Hindus live around Pakur town or in other places. Those few Hindus here, who live in Santhal villages, belong to the lower castes. They too are powerless and outnumbered. But why would the Hindus help us? The rich Hindus living in Pakur town are only interested in our land. They are only interested in making us sing and dance at their weddings. If they come to help us, they will say that we Santhals need to stop eating cow-meat and pig-meat, that we need to stop drinking haandi. They too want to make us forget our Sarna religion, convert us into Safa-Hor, and swell their numbers to become more valuable votebanks. Safa-Hor, the pure people, the clean people, but certainly not as clean and pure as themselves, that's for sure. Always a little lesser than they are. In the eyes of the Hindus, we Santhals can only either be Kiristan or the almost Safa-Hor. We are losing our Sarna faith, our identities, and our roots. We are becoming people from nowhere.

It's the coal and the stone, sir; they are making us lazy. The Koyla Road runs through our village. When the monstrous Hyvas ferry coal on the Koyla Road, there is no space for any other vehicle. They are so rough, these truck-drivers, they can run down any vehicle that comes in their way. They can't help it, it's their job. The more rounds they make, the more money they earn. And what if they kill? The coal company can't afford to have its business

slowed down by a few deaths. They give money to the family of the dead, the matter remains unreported, and the driver goes scot-free, ferrying another load for the company.

And we Santhals? Well, we wait for when there is NO ENTRY on the Koyla Road. For that is when all our men, women and children come out on to the road and swarm up these Hyvas. Then, using nails, fingers, hands, and whatever tools we can manage, we steal coal. The drivers can't stop us, nor can those pot-bellied Bihari security guards posted along the Koyla Road by the company. For they know that if they do not allow us to steal the coal, we will gherao the road and not let their trucks move.

But a few stolen quintals, when the company is mining tonnes and tonnes, hardly matters. They know that if we—the descendants of the great rebels Sido and Kanhu—make up our minds, we can stop all business in the area. So they behave sensibly, practically. After all, they already have our land, they are already stealing our coal, they don't want to snatch away from us our right to re-steal it.

It is this coal, sir, which is gobbling us up bit by bit. There is a blackness—deep, indelible—all along the Koyla Road. The trees and shrubs in our village bear black leaves. Our ochre earth has become black. The stones, the rocks, the sand, all black. The tiles on the roofs of our huts have lost their fire-burnt red. The vines and flowers and peacocks we Santhals draw on the outer walls of our houses are black. Our children—dark-skinned as they are—are forever

covered with fine black dust. When they cry, and tears stream down their faces, it seems as if a river is cutting across a drought-stricken land. Only our eyes burn red, like embers. Our children hardly go to school. But everyone—whether they attend school or not—remains on the alert, day and night, for ways to steal coal and for ways to sell it.

Segment 3 : coal

Santhals don't understand business. We get the coal easy yet we don't charge much for it; only enough for food, clothes and drink. But these Jolha—you call them Muslim, we, Jolha—they know the value of coal, they know the value of money. They charge the price that is best for them. And the farther coal travels from Matiajore, the higher its price becomes.

A decade earlier, when the Santhals of Matiajore were beginning their annual journey to share crop in the farms of Namal, four Jolha families turned up from nowhere and asked us for shelter. A poor lot, they looked as impoverished as us. Perhaps worse. In return, they offered us their services. They told us that in our absence they would look after our fields and farm them for a share of the produce. We trusted them. They started working on our fields and built four huts in a distant corner of Matiajore. Today, that small cluster of four huts has grown into a tola of more than a hundred houses. Houses, not huts. While we Santhals, in our own village, still live in our mud houses, each Jolha house has at least one brick wall and a cemented yard. This tola is now called the Jolha tola of Matiajore.

minority

Once, Matiajore used to be an exclusively Santhal village. Today, it has a Santhal tola and a Jolha tola, with the latter being the bigger. Sometimes I wonder who the olposonkhyok is here. These Jolha are hardworking, and they are always united. They may fight among themselves, they may break each other's scalps for petty matters, they may file FIRs against each other at the thana, they may drag each other to court; but if any non-Jolha says even one offensive word to a Jolha, the entire Jolha tola gets together against that person. Jolha leaders from Pakur and Sahebganj and where not come down to express solidarity. And we Santhals? Our men are beaten up, thrown into police lock-ups, into jails, for flimsy reasons, and on false charges. Our women are raped, some sell their bodies on Koyla Road. Most of us are fleeing our places of birth. How united are we? Where are our Santhal leaders? Those chor-chuhad leaders, where are they?

*end of
segment 3*

Forgive me. What can I do? I cannot help it. I am sixty years old and, sitting in this lock-up after being beaten black and blue, I have no patience anymore. Only anger. So, what was I saying? Yes, there are no shouters, no powerful voice among us Santhals. And we Santhals have no money—though we are born in lands under which are buried riches. We Santhals do not know how to protect our riches. We only know how to escape.

That is probably why thousands of Santhals from distant corners of Pakur district and elsewhere in the

Santhal Pargana board trains to Namal every farming season. They are escaping.

Segment 4 (music & dance)

*music, dance, farmer =
texture of life*

Did I tell you? I was once a farmer. Once. My sons farm now. The eldest stays back to work our fields while the other two migrate seasonally to Namal, along with their families. I used to compose songs. I still do. And I still maintain a dance troupe. Though it is not a regular one, the kind I had earlier, some fifteen–twenty years ago, when I was younger and full of energy, enthusiasm and hope. Matiajore, Patharkola, Amrapara—I had singers and dancers and musicians from all these villages. I used to compose songs and set them to music. And my troupe, young men and women, they used to bring my songs to life through their dances, through their voices, through the rhythms of the tamak and the tumdak and the trilling of the tiriyo and the banam.

At that time, our Santhal Pargana was not broken up into so many districts. Today, all Diku, Bihari and all, they have broken up our Santhal Pargana for their own benefits. If it suits them, they can go on breaking down districts and create a district measuring just ten feet by ten feet. At that time, when I was younger, even Jharkhand had not been broken away from Bihar. Yet, there used to be so much hope. We used to perform in our village, in neighbouring villages, in Pakur, in Dumka, in Sahebganj, in Deoghar, in Jamtara, in Patna, in Ranchi, even in Kolkata, and in Bhubaneshwar, where we were taken to see the sea at Puri.

What a sight it was! And we performed in Godda, too. Godda, where my daughter, Mugli, has been married. We used to be paid money. We used to be given good food, awarded medals and shields and certificates. We used to be written about in the papers.

All that has changed now. First, all the members of my troupe are now old. Some have even died. Many have migrated, or migrate seasonally. The ones who remain hum songs, sing to each other, but a stage performance? No, not again. Like me, even they are tired, disillusioned. All our certificates and shields, what did they give us? Diku children go to schools and colleges, get education, jobs. What do we Santhals get? We Santhals can sing and dance, and we are good at our art. Yet, what has our art given us? Displacement, tuberculosis.

I have turned sixty. Perhaps more. I am called Haram now. Haram, respectfully. I am having to wear thick glasses. Even my hearing has weakened. Though my voice is still quite good. People in my village say that my voice still impresses them. Sometimes they ask me to sing. I sing some of my old compositions. It makes them happy. I still compose songs. Not many. Maybe one song every six or eight months. One song of just six to eight lines. And because I had some fame in the past, I am still invited to perform at public functions in Pakur and Dumka and Ranchi.

But I keep putting together new troupes, though the members constantly change. I have a dancer today,

tomorrow he is growing potatoes for some Bangali zamindar in Bardhaman. So I have to replace him with some other dancer. Two days later, the original dancer returns. So I have to replace the substitute. This is how my troupes work nowadays. But it brings us some money. And when we are hosted in towns, we are usually fed good food. So we perform.

Our music, our dance, our songs are sacred to us Santhals. But hunger and poverty has driven us to sell what is sacred to us. When my boys perform at a Diku wedding, I am so foolish, I expect everyone to pay attention. Which Diku pays attention to our music? Even at those high-profile functions, most Diku just wait for our performance to end. Yet, be it an athletic meet, some inauguration, or any function organized by someone high and mighty—in the name of Adivasi culture and Jharkhandi culture, it is necessary to make Adivasis dance. Even Bihari and Bangali and Odia say that Jharkhand is theirs. They call their culture and music and dance superior to those of us Adivasi. Why don't they get their women to sing and dance in open grounds in the name of Jharkhandi culture? For every benefit, in job, in education, in whatever, the Diku are quick to call Jharkhand their own—let the Adivasi go to hell. But when it comes to displaying Jharkhandi culture, the onus of singing and dancing is upon the Adivasi alone.

last segment

So how did I land up in front of the President, you ask. Some three months ago, an official letter came to my man v man conflict

house in Matiajore: a thick white envelope bearing the emblem of the government of Jharkhand. The paper on which the letter was typed in Hindi was equally thick and crisp. In fewer than five sentences I was told that the government of Jharkhand sought the pleasure of my musical performance at some event, the identity and venue of which would be told to me later, and that I should gather a troupe for a fifteen–twenty-minute performance, and that all participants would be well paid. The letter was signed by some high-ranking IAS officer in Ranchi.

What does a hungry man need? Food. What does a poor man need? Money. So, here I was, needing both. And recognition too. We artistes are greedy people. We are hungry for acceptance, some acknowledgement, some remembrance. So, without thinking, I sent back a reply the very next day saying that yes, I would be happy to perform. I was so happy, I went to the big post office in Pakur, more than twenty kilometres away, all by myself, to register that letter. I went in a Vikram, packed with many other Santhals like me, all going to Pakur. Nearly all of us travellers were blackened by the dust from the Koyla Road. Yet, I was so happy that I did not notice it at all.

Around the time that I was preparing for our performance, selecting young men and women for my troupe, digging up old songs from memory, I was faced with a strange situation.

I told you that Mugli, my daughter, is married into a family in the Godda district, didn't I? Well, she began

calling me regularly on my mobile phone. I couldn't understand the situation clearly at first but it seemed to me that it had something to do with their land. Her husband was a farmer—they are a family of farmers—as are all the Santhal families in that village. There are more villages nearby, populated by Santhals, Paharias and low-caste Hindus.

*Rumors :
unrest
as he's
planning to
dance.*

What had happened was that the district administration had asked the inhabitants of all the villages to vacate their land—their village, farms, everything. Eleven villages! Can you imagine? The first question everyone asked was: What will the sarkar do with so much land?

Initially, I thought they were all rumours. And, I thought, how can anyone force Santhals to vacate their land in the Santhal Pargana? Didn't we have the Tenancy Act to protect us?

Still, when the rumours started floating, I went to Godda. We all marched to the block office in a huge group. The officers there assured us that they were all just rumours. The lands were safe. The villages were safe.

"dispensable"
↳ Yet, later, police were sent to the villages. They came with written orders from the district administration. The villages would have to be vacated to make room for a thermal power plant.

The villagers refused outright. Santhals, low-caste Hindus, Paharias, everyone began fighting for their land.

The district administration fought back. The agitators were all beaten up and thrown into police lock-ups. I called

*when people from margins speak, "chronicles of fact"
are demolished be point of view.*

my daughter and her small children to Matiajore after her husband was jailed. Mugli arrived, her children and in-laws in tow. It was strange: a village which annually empties itself every few months was suddenly providing shelter to immigrants.

How would I manage to provide for all these people who were dependent on me now? How could the members of my troupe feed all those who had come to seek refuge in their houses? We needed money. And our current—mysterious—assignment was our only hope. Despite our troubles, we kept practising.

In the meantime, some people arrived to help the villagers facing displacement in Godda. They wrote letters to the government, to people in Ranchi and Dilli. They even wrote letters to the businessman who was planning to build that thermal power plant in Godda. We heard that he was a very rich and very shrewd man. He was also a MP. We also heard that he liked polo—some game played with horses—and that his horses were far better off than all the Santhals of the whole of the Santhal Pargana.

News about the displacements taking place in Godda began to come in newspapers and the TV after a few days. All of us tried to concentrate on our practice, but how could we sing and dance with such a storm looming ahead? In between, I received phone calls from several officers in Ranchi and Dumka and Pakur. They asked me to keep working for the show. They never forgot to remind me that this show was of the utmost importance, that we were

going to perform before some very important people. Some officers from Dumka and Pakur even came to Matiajore to see if we were really practising or not. When they saw that we were really working hard, they were happy. They smiled and encouraged us, they talked to us very sweetly. So sweetly that we all wondered if they could really not see how troubled we were feeling. Many times, I felt like asking them: 'How can all of you be so indifferent? How can you expect us to sing and dance when our families are being uprooted from their villages?' At other times, I felt like asking: 'Which VIP is coming? The President of India? The President of America? You are making us Santhals dance in Pakur, and you are displacing Santhals from their villages in Godda? Isn't your VIP going to see that? Doesn't your VIP read the papers or watch news on TV? We foolish Santhals can see what damage is happening around us. Doesn't your VIP see all that?'

But I stayed silent.

Reality started dawning on us three weeks before the date of our performance. First as floating rumours which were, gradually, confirmed by newspaper reports.

The reality was that the businessman was certainly going to set up a thermal power plant in Godda. That plant would run on coal from the mines in Pakur and Sahebganj. If needed, coal would be brought from other places. That businessman, in fact, needed electricity for the iron and steel plants he was planning to set up in Jharkhand. The plant was to be set up for his own selfish

needs; but if he were to be believed, the whole of Jharkhand would receive electricity from his plant. Whole towns would be lit up non-stop, factories would never stop working for lack of power. There would be development and jobs and happiness all over. And, finally, news also reached us that the foundation stone of the plant would be laid by the President of India. We would be performing for him.

Yes, I was shocked. All of us were. Shocked and sad, but also surprised and delighted. We couldn't believe our luck. We had performed before ministers, chief ministers and governors. But never before the President of the country!

Then, we heard more news. People demonstrating and agitating against the forceful acquisition of land were being beaten up by the police, they were being thrown into lock-ups. Paramilitary forces, the CRPF, had been called in to control the situation. Four villages out of the eleven had already been razed to the ground by bulldozers to make room for the foundation-stone-laying ceremony.

But the papers carried glowing reports, along with pictures, of the roads which were being repaired or rebuilt in Ranchi and Dumka. Breathlessly, they reported that the President would stay in Jharkhand for three days. He would spend day one in Ranchi. On day two, he would preside over a university convocation in Dumka. On day three, he would visit Godda, lay the foundation stone, and fly out of Jharkhand.

We received official intimation of the event a week before it was to take place. One day before the event, we were taken to Godda by bus. The entire district, the district headquarters, was unrecognizable. A football ground had been converted into a massive helipad. There were hundreds of policemen and CRPF jawans. And everywhere we turned our heads, all we could see was a sea of people. I knew they had come to see the helicopter. Tucked away in the papers had been reports that all protestors had been detained and were being held somewhere. Perhaps my son-in-law too was among them.

From where I stood, the stage looked massive, but still not big enough for all the people who had climbed upon it. Ministers from Dilli and Ranchi, all dressed in their best neta clothes, laughing and chatting among themselves. All very happy with the progress, the development. The Santhal Pargana would now fly to the moon. The Santhal Pargana would now turn into Dilli and Bombay. The businessman was grinning widely. Patriotic songs in Hindi were playing from the loudspeakers placed at all corners of the field. 'Bharat mahaan,' someone was shouting from the stage, trying to rouse the audience, his voice amplified by numerous loudspeakers. What mahaan? I wondered. Which great nation displaces thousands of its people from their homes and livelihoods to produce electricity for cities and factories? And jobs? What jobs? An Adivasi farmer's job is to farm. Which other job should he be made to do? Become a servant in some billionaire's factory built on land that used to belong to that very Adivasi just a week earlier?

Reporters with cameras swarmed all over the place. Three vans with huge disc antennae on their roofs were parked near the venue. I identified the logo of a popular TV channel painted on the sides of one of those vans. I wondered if any of its reporters had visited the place where the villagers were being detained by the police.

My troupe was waiting in an enclosure built specially for the performers at that event. All the women were wearing red blouses, blue lungis and green panchhi, and huge, colourful plastic flowers in their buns. They were carrying steel lotas with flowers and leaves put inside them. All the men were wearing red football jerseys and green kacha and had tied green gumchhas around their heads. We all looked very good.

The helicopter arrived...thud thud thud... The rotors swirled dust from the playing field. The crowd was excited and a slow roar began.

The President was accompanied by his security staff to the stage. He was a short, thoughtful man. All Bangali look learned and thoughtful. Why should this Bangali President be any different?

The festivities began. The man who had been shouting 'Bharat mahaan' announced how fortunate the land of Jharkhand was that the iconic billionaire had deemed it suitable to set up a thermal power plant here. He didn't mention how fortunate the billionaire was that he got to come to Jharkhand—a place rich with mineral deposits beneath its earth; a naïve population upon it; and a bunch of shrewd, greedy, thief leaders, officers and businessmen

who ran the state and controlled its land, people and resources.

The 'Bharat mahaan' man announced the welcome dance and my troupe was ushered into the open space before the stage. We entered with our tamak, tumdak, tiriyo and banam. The President seemed impressed. The businessman looked bored.

When we had taken our places before the stage, I took the mic in my hand and bowed to the President. Then I tapped the mic to check if it was working and began in Hindi, as good Hindi as I could muster at the height of my emotions. Actually, it was a miracle that I did not weep and choke up.

Johar, Rashtrapati-babu. We are very proud and happy that you have come to our Santhal Pargana and we are also very proud that we have been asked to sing and dance before you and welcome you to our place. We will sing and dance before you but tell us, do we have a reason to sing and dance? Do we have a reason to be happy? You will now start building the power plant, but this plant will be the end of us all, the end of all the Adivasi. These men sitting beside you have told you that this power plant will change our fortunes, but these same men have forced us out of our homes and villages. We have nowhere to go, nowhere to grow our crops. How can this power plant be good for us? And how can we Adivasis dance and be happy? Unless we are given back our homes and land, we will not sing and dance. **We Adivasis will not dance. The Adivasi will not—'**

*ends with a refusal
(Narrative of protest)*

free verse, loose structure. punctuation = pause for dramatic effect

Backwards

Warsan Shire (2014)

irony: forwards in time

The poem can start with him walking backwards into a room.
He takes off his jacket and sits down for the rest of his life;
that's how we bring Dad back. → allusion to rocky rel^m with dad.

I can make the blood run back up my nose, ants rushing into a hole.
We grow into smaller bodies, my breasts disappear,
your cheeks soften, teeth sink back into gums.

I can make us loved, just say the word.

Give them stumps for hands if even once they touched us without
consent,
I can write the poem and make it disappear.

Step-Dad spits liquor back into glass,
Mum's body rolls back up the stairs, the bone pops back into place,
maybe she keeps the baby. → results in rel^m carriage by falling down stairs
Maybe we're okay kid?

I'll rewrite this whole life and this time there'll be so much love,
you won't be able to see beyond it.

You won't be able to see beyond it,
I'll rewrite this whole life and this time there'll be so much love.
Maybe we're okay kid,
maybe she keeps the baby.
Mum's body rolls back up the stairs, the bone pops back into place,
Step-Dad spits liquor back into glass.
I can write the poem and make it disappear,
give them stumps for hands if even once they touched us without
consent,
I can make us loved, just say the word.
Your cheeks soften, teeth sink back into gums
we grow into smaller bodies, my breasts disappear.
I can make the blood run back up my nose, ants rushing into a hole,
that's how we bring Dad back.
He takes off his jacket and sits down for the rest of his life.
The poem can start with him walking backwards into a room.

wistful thinking
to bring Dad back ←

(re-imaging reality)

other issues to
be reversed

Above

drinking issue

above ←

(shock at knowing what
happened)

Negatives ↑

(defined outcomes)
would've done differently

certain
positives

(wistfulness)

disorder → order
(rel^m with father)

Cosmicomics

by Italo Calvino

Translated from Italian by William Weaver

First published in 1965

Translation first published in 1968

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theme: conflict of desire, elusive distance,
impulse to stay back on earth-

The Distance of the Moon

Epigraph pins story to this scientific the

Epigraph usually
a form of
poetry. Here
it's a scientific
text

At one time, according to Sir George H. Darwin, the Moon was very close to the Earth. Then the tides gradually pushed her far away: the tides that the Moon herself causes in the Earth's waters, where the Earth slowly loses energy.

- recalls a sense of story telling
- time of narration (present), time about narration (fictional past)

How well I know! -- old Qfwfq cried, -- the rest of you can't remember, but I can. We had her on top of us all the time, that enormous Moon: when she was full -- nights as bright as day, but with a butter-colored light -- it looked as if she were going to crush us; when she was new, she rolled around the sky like a black umbrella blown by the wind; and when she was waxing, she came forward with her horns so low she seemed about to stick into the peak of a promontory and get caught there. But the whole business of the Moon's phases worked in a different way then: because the distances from the Sun were different, and the orbits, and the angle of something or other, I forget what; as for eclipses, with Earth and Moon stuck together the way they were, why, we had eclipses

- Don't think of any change as humans did

most lang. feminine moon.
Stereotypes of femininity play into female characterization.
• Illogical extreme where moon was earth's next door neighbor.
• Moon's character weighted by femininity

Fantasy is not escapist fiction. There's a lot of groundwork (philosophy like) cultural connections: longing, desire, changeful, translucence, moral greyness, serenity, melancholy, witness, detidence
fun, steady, brilliance, self generating  opposites

every minute: naturally, those two big monsters managed to put each other in the shade constantly, first one, then the other.

Orbit? Oh, elliptical, of course: for a while it would huddle against us and then it would take flight for a while. The tides, when the Moon swung closer, rose so high nobody could hold them back. There were nights when the Moon was full and very, very low, and the tide was so high that the Moon missed a ducking in the sea by a hair's-breadth; well, let's say a few yards anyway. Climb up on the Moon? Of course we did. All you had to do was row out to it in a boat and, when you were underneath, prop a ladder against her and scramble up.

The spot where the Moon was lowest, as she went by, was off the Zinc Cliffs. We used to go out with those little rowboats they had in those days, round and flat, made of cork. They held quite a few of us: me, Captain Vhd Vhd, his wife, my deaf cousin, and sometimes little Xlthlx -- she was twelve or so at that time. On those nights the water was very calm, so silvery it looked like mercury, and the fish in it, violet-colored, unable to resist the Moon's attraction, rose to the surface, all of them, and so did the octopuses and the saffron medusas. There was always a flight of tiny creatures -- little crabs, squid, and even some weeds, light and filmy, and coral plants -- that broke from the sea and ended up on the Moon, hanging down from that lime-white ceiling, or else they stayed in midair, a phosphorescent swarm we had to drive off, waving banana leaves at them.

Conflict : b/w
Creatures of Earth
and Moon

This is how we did the job: in the boat we had a ladder: one of us held it, another climbed to the top, and a third, at the oars, rowed until we were right under the Moon; that's why there had to be so many of us (I only mentioned the main ones). The man at the top of the ladder, as the boat approached the Moon, would become scared and start shouting: "Stop! Stop! I'm going to bang my head!" That was the impression you had, seeing her on top of you, immense, and all rough with sharp spikes and jagged, saw-tooth edges. It may be different now, but then the Moon, or rather the bottom, the underbelly of the Moon, the part that passed closest to the Earth and almost scraped it, was covered with a crust of sharp scales. It had come to resemble the belly of a fish, and the smell too, as I recall, if not downright fishy, was faintly similar, like smoked salmon.

In reality, from the top of the ladder, standing erect on the last rung, you could just touch the Moon if you held your arms up. We had taken the measurements carefully (we didn't yet suspect that she was moving away from us); the only thing you had to be very careful about was where you put your hands. I always chose a scale that seemed fast (we climbed up in groups of five or six at a time), then I would cling first with one hand, then with both, and immediately I would feel ladder and boat drifting away from below me, and the motion of the Moon would tear me from the Earth's attraction. Yes, the Moon was so strong that she pulled you up; you realized this the moment you passed from one to the other: you had to swing up abruptly, with a kind of somersault, grabbing the scales, throwing your legs over your head, until your feet were on the Moon's surface. Seen from the Earth, you looked as if you were hanging there with your head down, but for you, it was the normal position, and the only odd thing was that when you raised your eyes you saw the sea above you, glistening, with the boat and the others upside down, hanging like a bunch of grapes from the vine.

Reaching out
& being
held back.
(Central theme,
gravity &
attraction)

Becoming
Subject :
tones of risking
something
along with
desire.

My cousin, the Deaf One, showed a special talent for making those leaps. His clumsy hands, as soon as they touched the lunar surface (he was always the first to jump up from the ladder), suddenly became deft and sensitive. They found immediately the

* First intimations
of desire
(Bakhas
god of wine and
pleasure)

Q : feels different
than the rest of group → increasingly
differentiates himself
from others.

③ (Subject = differentiating
from other subjects)

sharp contrast b/w 2 and deaf one :

clumsy
OK

deft

efficient (moon milk)

why is the cousin "the Deaf one" ?

- idea of fraternal (a theme) {to be covered}

spot where he could hoist himself up; in fact just the pressure of his palms seemed enough to make him stick to the satellite's crust. Once I even thought I saw the Moon come toward him, as he held out his hands.

He was just as dextrous in coming back down to Earth, an operation still more difficult. For us, it consisted in jumping, as high as we could, our arms upraised (seen from the Moon, that is, because seen from the Earth it looked more like a dive, or like swimming downwards, arms at our sides), like jumping up from the Earth in other words, only now we were without the ladder, because there was nothing to prop it against on the Moon. But instead of jumping with his arms out, my cousin bent toward the Moon's surface, his head down as if for a somersault, then made a leap, pushing with his hands. From the boat we watched him, erect in the air as if he were supporting the Moon's enormous ball and were tossing it, striking it with his palms; then, when his legs came within reach, we managed to grab his ankles and pull him down on board.

Now, you will ask me what in the world we went up on the Moon for; I'll explain it to you. We went to collect the milk, with a big spoon and a bucket. Moon-milk was very thick, like a kind of cream cheese. It formed in the crevices between one scale and the next, through the fermentation of various bodies and substances of terrestrial origin which had flown up from the prairies and forests and lakes, as the Moon sailed over them. It was composed chiefly of vegetal juices, tadpoles, bitumen, lentils, honey, starch crystals, sturgeon eggs, molds, pollens, gelatinous matter, worms, resins, pepper, mineral salts, combustion residue. You had only to dip the spoon under the scales that covered the Moon's scabby terrain, and you brought it out filled with that precious muck. Not in the pure state, obviously; there was a lot of refuse. In the fermentation (which took place as the Moon passed over the expanses of hot air above the deserts) not all the bodies melted; some remained stuck in it: fingernails and cartilage, bolts, sea horses, nuts and peduncles, shards of crockery, fishhooks, at times even a comb. So this paste, after it was collected, had to be refined, filtered. But that wasn't the difficulty: the hard part was transporting it down to the Earth. This is how we did it: we hurled each spoonful into the air with both hands, using the spoon as a catapult. The cheese flew, and if we had thrown it hard enough, it stuck to the ceiling, I mean the surface of the sea. Once there, it floated, and it was easy enough to pull it into the boat. In this operation, too, my deaf cousin displayed a special gift; he had strength and a good aim; with a single, sharp throw, he could send the cheese straight into a bucket we held up to him from the boat. As for me, I occasionally misfired; the contents of the spoon would fail to overcome the Moon's attraction and they would fall back into my eye.

I still haven't told you everything, about the things my cousin was good at. That job of extracting lunar milk from the Moon's scales was child's play to him: instead of the spoon, at times he had only to thrust his bare hand under the scales, or even one finger. He didn't proceed in any orderly way, but went to isolated places, jumping from one to the other, as if he were playing tricks on the Moon, surprising her, or perhaps tickling her. And wherever he put his hand, the milk spurted out as if from a nanny goat's teats. So the rest of us had only to follow him and collect with our spoons the substance that he was pressing out, first here, then there, but always as if by chance, since the Deaf One's movements seemed to have no clear, practical sense.

There were places, for example, that he touched merely for the fun of touching them: gaps between two scales, naked and tender folds of lunar flesh. At times my cousin

Two feminine figures:
moon, Mrs. V.

erotic use of words
(embodiment of desire)
+
child longing
Mrs. V

Travel:
1 - Purposive

pressed not only his fingers but -- in a carefully gauged leap -- his big toe (he climbed onto the Moon barefoot) and this seemed to be the height of amusement for him, if we could judge by the chirping sounds that came from his throat as he went on leaping.

The soil of the Moon was not uniformly scaly, but revealed irregular bare patches of pale, slippery clay. These soft areas inspired the Deaf One to turn somersaults or to fly almost like a bird, as if he wanted to impress his whole body into the Moon's pulp. As he ventured farther in this way, we lost sight of him at one point. On the Moon there were vast areas we had never had any reason or curiosity to explore, and that was where my cousin vanished; I had suspected that all those somersaults and nudges he indulged in before our eyes were only a preparation, a prelude to something secret meant to take place in the hidden zones.

We fell into a special mood on those nights off the Zinc Cliffs: gay, but with a touch of suspense, as if inside our skulls, instead of the brain, we felt a fish, floating, attracted by the Moon. And so we navigated, playing and singing. The Captain's wife played the harp; she had very long arms, silvery as eels on those nights, and armpits as dark and mysterious as sea urchins; and the sound of the harp was sweet and piercing, so sweet and piercing it was almost unbearable, and we were forced to let out long cries, not so much to accompany the music as to protect our hearing from it

Transparent medusas rose to the sea's surface, throbbed there a moment, then flew off, swaying toward the Moon. Little Xlthlx amused herself by catching them in midair, though it wasn't easy. Once, as she stretched her little arms out to catch one, she jumped up slightly and was also set free. Thin as she was, she was an ounce or two short of the weight necessary for the Earth's gravity to overcome the Moon's attraction and bring her back: so she flew up among the medusas, suspended over the sea. She took fright, cried, then laughed and started playing, catching shellfish and minnows as they flew, sticking some into her mouth and chewing them. We rowed hard, to keep up with the child: the Moon ran off in her ellipse, dragging that swarm of marine fauna through the sky, and a train of long, entwined seaweeds, and Xlthlx hanging there in the midst. Her two wispy braids seemed to be flying on their own, outstretched toward the Moon; but all the while she kept wriggling and kicking at the air, as if she wanted to fight that influence, and her socks -- she had lost her shoes in the flight -- slipped off her feet and swayed, attracted by the Earth's force. On the ladder, we tried to grab them.

The idea of eating the little animals in the air had been a good one; the more weight Xlthlx gained, the more she sank toward the Earth; in fact, since among those hovering bodies hers was the largest, mollusks and seaweeds and plankton began to gravitate about her, and soon the child was covered with siliceous little shells, chitinous carapaces, and fibers of sea plants. And the farther she vanished into that tangle, the more she was freed of the Moon's influence, until she grazed the surface of the water and sank into the sea.

We rowed quickly, to pull her out and save her: her body had remained magnetized, and we had to work hard to scrape off all the things encrusted on her. Tender corals were wound about her head, and every time we ran the comb through her hair there was a shower of crayfish and sardines; her eyes were sealed shut by limpets clinging to the lids with their suckers; squids' tentacles were coiled around her arms and her neck; and her little dress now seemed woven only of weeds and sponges. We got the worst of it off her, but for weeks afterwards she went on pulling out fins and shells, and her skin,

Conflict of
desires

(An enchanted
time)

dotted with little diatoms, remained affected forever, looking -- to someone who didn't observe her carefully -- as if it were faintly dusted with freckles.

This should give you an idea of how the influences of Earth and Moon, practically equal, fought over the space between them. I'll tell you something else: a body that descended to the Earth from the satellite was still charged for a while with lunar force and rejected the attraction of our world. Even I, big and heavy as I was: **every time I had been up there, I took a while to get used to the Earth's up and its down, and the others would have to grab my arms and hold me**, clinging in a bunch in the swaying boat while I still had my head hanging and my legs stretching up toward the sky.

*Deaf bo
deaf one and
moon* } "Hold on! Hold on to us!" they shouted at me, and in all that groping, sometimes I ended up by seizing one of Mrs. Vhd Vhd's breasts, which were round and firm, and the contact was good and secure and had an attraction as strong as the Moon's or even stronger, especially if I managed, as I plunged down, to put my other arm around her hips, and with this I passed back into our world and fell with a thud into the bottom of the boat, where Captain Vhd Vhd brought me around, throwing a bucket of water in my face.

This is how the story of my love for the Captain's wife began, and my suffering. Because it didn't take me long to realize whom the lady kept looking at insistently: when my cousin's hands clasped the satellite, I watched Mrs. Vhd Vhd, and in her eyes I could read the thoughts that **the deaf man's familiarity with the Moon were arousing in her**; and when he disappeared in his mysterious lunar explorations, I saw her become restless, as if on pins and needles, and then it was all clear to me, **how Mrs. Vhd Vhd was becoming jealous of the Moon and I was jealous of my cousin**. Her eyes were made of diamonds, Mrs. Vhd Vhd's; they flared when she looked at the Moon, almost challengingly, as if she were saying: "You shan't have him!" And I felt like an outsider.

The one who least understood all of this was my deaf cousin. When we helped him down, pulling him -- as I explained to you -- by his legs, Mrs. Vhd Vhd lost all her self-control, doing everything she could to take his weight against her own body, folding her long silvery arms around him; I felt a pang in my heart (the times I clung to her, her body was soft and kind, but not thrust forward, the way it was with my cousin), while he was indifferent, still lost in his lunar bliss.

I looked at the Captain, wondering if he also noticed his wife's behavior; but there was never a trace of any expression on that face of his, eaten by brine, marked with tarry wrinkles. Since the Deaf One was always the last to break away from the Moon, his return was the signal for the boats to move off. Then, with an unusually polite gesture, Vhd Vhd picked up the harp from the bottom of the boat and handed it to his wife. She was obliged to take it and play a few notes. **Nothing could separate her more from the Deaf One than the sound of the harp**. I took to singing in a low voice that sad song that goes: "Every shiny fish is floating, floating; and every dark fish is at the bottom, at the bottom of the sea . . ." and all the others, except my cousin, echoed my words.

Every month, once the satellite had moved on, the Deaf One returned to his solitary detachment from the things of the world; **only the approach of the full Moon aroused him again**. That time I had arranged things so it wasn't my turn to go up, I could stay in the boat with the Captain's wife. But then, as soon as my cousin had climbed the ladder, Mrs. Vhd Vhd said: "This time I want to go up there, too!"

This had never happened before; the Captain's wife had never gone up on the Moon. But Vhd Vhd made no objection, in fact he almost pushed her up the ladder

bodily, exclaiming: "Go ahead then!" and we all started helping her, and I held her from behind, felt her round and soft on my arms, and to hold her up I began to press my face and the palms of my hands against her, and when I felt her rising into the Moon's sphere I was heartsick at that lost contact, so I started to rush after her, saying: "I'm going to go up for a while, too, to help out!"

I was held back as if in a vise. "You stay here; you have work to do later," the Captain commanded, without raising his voice.

At that moment each one's intentions were already clear. And yet I couldn't figure things out; even now I'm not sure I've interpreted it all correctly. Certainly the Captain's wife had for a long time been cherishing the desire to go off privately with my cousin up there (or at least to prevent him from going off alone with the Moon), but probably she had a still more ambitious plan, one that would have to be carried out in agreement with the Deaf One: she wanted the two of them to hide up there together and stay on the Moon for a month. But perhaps my cousin, deaf as he was, hadn't understood anything of what she had tried to explain to him, or perhaps he hadn't even realized that he was the object of the lady's desires. And the Captain? He wanted nothing better than to be rid of his wife; in fact, as soon as she was confined up there, we saw him give free rein to his inclinations and plunge into vice, and then we understood why he had done nothing to hold her back. But had he known from the beginning that the Moon's orbit was widening?

None of us could have suspected it. The Deaf One perhaps, but only he: in the shadowy way he knew things, he may have had a presentiment that he would be forced to bid the Moon farewell that night. This is why he hid in his secret places and reappeared only when it was time to come back down on board. It was no use for the Captain's wife to try to follow him: we saw her cross the scaly zone various times, length and breadth, then suddenly she stopped, looking at us in the boat, as if about to ask us whether we had seen him.

Surely there was something strange about that night. The sea's surface, instead of being taut as it was during the full Moon, or even arched a bit toward the sky, now seemed limp, sagging, as if the lunar magnet no longer exercised its full power. And the light, too, wasn't the same as the light of other full Moons; the night's shadows seemed somehow to have thickened. Our friends up there must have realized what was happening; in fact, they looked up at us with frightened eyes. And from their mouths and ours, at the same moment, came a cry: "The Moon's going away!"

The cry hadn't died out when my cousin appeared on the Moon, running. He didn't seem frightened, or even amazed: he placed his hands on the terrain, flinging himself into his usual somersault, but this time after he had hurled himself into the air he remained suspended, as little Xlthlx had. He hovered a moment between Moon and Earth, upside down, then laboriously moving his arms, like someone swimming against a current, he headed with unusual slowness toward our planet.

From the Moon the other sailors hastened to follow his example. Nobody gave a thought to getting the Moon-milk that had been collected into the boats, nor did the Captain scold them for this. They had already waited too long, the distance was difficult to cross by now; when they tried to imitate my cousin's leap or his swimming, they remained there groping, suspended in midair. "Cling together! Idiots! Cling together!" the Captain yelled. At this command, the sailors tried to form a group, a mass, to push all together until they reached the zone of the Earth's attraction: all of a sudden a cascade of

climax

↓
Falling Action

bodies plunged into the sea with a loud splash.

The boats were now rowing to pick them up. "Wait! The Captain's wife is missing!" I shouted. The Captain's wife had also tried to jump, but she was still floating only a few yards from the Moon, slowly moving her long, silvery arms in the air. I climbed up the ladder, and in a vain attempt to give her something to grasp I held the harp out toward her. "I can't reach her! We have to go after her!" and I started to jump up, brandishing the harp. Above me the enormous lunar disk no longer seemed the same as before: it had become much smaller, it kept contracting, as if my gaze were driving it away, and the emptied sky gaped like an abyss where, at the bottom, the stars had begun multiplying, and the night poured a river of emptiness over me, drowned me in dizziness and alarm.

"I'm afraid," I thought. "I'm too afraid to jump. I'm a coward!" and at that moment I jumped. I swam furiously through the sky, and held the harp out to her, and instead of coming toward me she rolled over and over, showing me first her impassive face and then her backside.

"Hold tight to me!" I shouted, and I was already overtaking her, entwining my limbs with hers. "If we cling together we can go down!" and I was concentrating all my strength on uniting myself more closely with her, and I concentrated my sensations as I enjoyed the fullness of that embrace. I was so absorbed I didn't realize at first that I was, indeed, tearing her from her weightless condition, but was making her fall back on the Moon. Didn't I realize it? Or had that been my intention from the very beginning? Before I could think properly, a cry was already bursting from my throat. "I'll be the one to stay with you for a month!" Or rather, "On you!" I shouted, in my excitement: "On you for a month!" and at that moment our embrace was broken by our fall to the Moon's surface, where we rolled away from each other among those cold scales.

Q lucks out → I raised my eyes as I did every time I touched the Moon's crust, sure that I would see above me the native sea like an endless ceiling, and I saw it, yes, I saw it this time, too, but much higher, and much more narrow, bound by its borders of coasts and cliffs and promontories, and how small the boats seemed, and how unfamiliar my friends' faces and how weak their cries! A sound reached me from nearby: Mrs. Vhd Vhd had discovered her harp and was caressing it, sketching out a chord as sad as weeping.

A long month began. The Moon turned slowly around the Earth. On the suspended globe we no longer saw our familiar shore, but the passage of oceans as deep as abysses and deserts of glowing lapilli, and continents of ice, and forests writhing with reptiles, and the rocky walls of mountain chains gashed by swift rivers, and swampy cities, and stone graveyards, and empires of clay and mud. The distance spread a uniform color over everything: the alien perspectives made every image alien; herds of elephants and swarms of locusts ran over the plains, so evenly vast and dense and thickly grown that there was no difference among them.

I should have been happy: as I had dreamed, I was alone with her, that intimacy with the Moon I had so often envied my cousin and with Mrs. Vhd Vhd was now my exclusive prerogative, a month of days and lunar nights stretched uninterrupted before us, the crust of the satellite nourished us with its milk, whose tart flavor was familiar to us, we raised our eyes up, up to the world where we had been born, finally traversed in all its various expanse, explored landscapes no Earth-being had ever seen, or else we contemplated the stars beyond the Moon, big as pieces of fruit, made of light, ripened on

the curved branches of the sky, and everything exceeded my most luminous hopes, and yet, and yet, it was, instead, exile.

I thought only of the Earth. It was the Earth that caused each of us to be that someone he was rather than someone else; up there, wrested from the Earth, it was as if I were no longer that I, nor she that She, for me. I was eager to return to the Earth, and I trembled at the fear of having lost it. The fulfillment of my dream of love had lasted only that instant when we had been united, spinning between Earth and Moon; torn from its earthly soil, my love now knew only the heart-rending nostalgia for what it lacked: a where, a surrounding, a before, an after.

This is what I was feeling. But she? As I asked myself, I was torn by my fears. Because if she also thought only of the Earth, this could be a good sign, a sign that she had finally come to understand me, but it could also mean that everything had been useless, that her longings were directed still and only toward my deaf cousin. Instead, she felt nothing. She never raised her eyes to the old planet, she went off, pale, among those wastelands, mumbling dirges and stroking her harp, as if completely identified with her temporary (as I thought) lunar state. Did this mean I had won out over my rival? No; I had lost: a hopeless defeat. Because she had finally realized that my cousin loved only the Moon, and the only thing she wanted now was to become the Moon, to be assimilated into the object of that extrahuman love.

When the Moon had completed its circling of the planet, there we were again over the Zinc Cliffs. I recognized them with dismay: not even in my darkest previsions had I thought the distance would have made them so tiny. In that mud puddle of the sea, my friends had set forth again, without the now useless ladders; but from the boats rose a kind of forest of long poles; everybody was brandishing one, with a harpoon or a grappling hook at the end, perhaps in the hope of scraping off a last bit of Moon-milk or of lending some kind of help to us wretches up there. But it was soon clear that no pole was long enough to reach the Moon; and they dropped back, ridiculously short, humbled, floating on the sea; and in that confusion some of the boats were thrown off balance and overturned. But just then, from another vessel a longer pole, which till then they had dragged along on the water's surface, began to rise: it must have been made of bamboo, of many, many bamboo poles stuck one into the other, and to raise it they had to go slowly because -- thin as it was -- if they let it sway too much it might break. Therefore, they had to use it with great strength and skill, so that the wholly vertical weight wouldn't rock the boat.

Suddenly it was clear that the tip of that pole would touch the Moon, and we saw it graze, then press against the scaly terrain, rest there a moment, give a kind of little push, or rather a strong push that made it bounce off again, then come back and strike that same spot as if on the rebound, then move away once more. And I recognized, we both -- the Captain's wife and I -- recognized my cousin: it couldn't have been anyone else, he was playing his last game with the Moon, one of his tricks, with the Moon on the tip of his pole as if he were juggling with her. And we realized that his virtuosity had no purpose, aimed at no practical result, indeed you would have said he was driving the Moon away, that he was helping her departure, that he wanted to show her to her more distant orbit. And this, too, was just like him: he was unable to conceive desires that went against the Moon's nature, the Moon's course and destiny, and if the Moon now tended to go away from him, then he would take delight in this separation just as, till now, he had

delighted in the Moon's nearness.

What could Mrs. Vhd Vhd do, in the face of this? It was only at this moment that she proved her passion for the deaf man hadn't been a frivolous whim but an irrevocable vow. If what my cousin now loved was the distant Moon, then she too would remain distant, on the Moon. I sensed this, seeing that she didn't take a step toward the bamboo pole, but simply turned her harp toward the Earth, high in the sky, and plucked the strings. I say I saw her, but to tell the truth I only caught a glimpse of her out of the corner of my eye, because the minute the pole had touched the lunar crust, I had sprung and grasped it, and now, fast as a snake, I was climbing up the bamboo knots, pushing myself along with jerks of my arms and knees, light in the rarefied space, driven by a natural power that ordered me to return to the Earth, oblivious of the motive that had brought me here, or perhaps more aware of it than ever and of its unfortunate outcome; and already my climb up the swaying pole had reached the point where I no longer had to make any effort but could just allow myself to slide, head-first, attracted by the Earth, until in my haste the pole broke into a thousand pieces and I fell into the sea, among the boats.

Perfect →
reunion

My return was sweet, my home refound, but my thoughts were filled only with grief at having lost her, and my eyes gazed at the Moon, forever beyond my reach, as I sought her. And I saw her. She was there where I had left her, lying on a beach directly over our heads, and she said nothing. She was the color of the Moon; she held the harp at her side and moved one hand now and then in slow arpeggios. I could distinguish the shape of her bosom, her arms, her thighs, just as I remember them now, just as now, when the Moon has become that flat, remote circle, I still look for her as soon as the first sliver appears in the sky, and the more it waxes, the more clearly I imagine I can see her, her or something of her, but only her, in a hundred, a thousand different vistas, she who makes the Moon the Moon and, whenever she is full, sets the dogs to howling all night long, and me with them.

AT DAYBREAK

The planets of the solar system, G. P. Kuiper explains, began to solidify in the darkness, through the condensation of a fluid, shapeless nebula. All was cold and dark. Later the Sun began to become more concentrated until it was reduced almost to its present dimensions, and in this process the temperature rose and rose, to thousands of degrees, and the Sun started emitting radiations in space.

Pitch dark it was, old Qfwfq confirmed, I was only a child, I can barely remember it. We were there, as usual, with Father and Mother, Granny Bb'b, some uncles and aunts who were visiting, Mr. Hnw, the one who later became a horse, and us little ones. I think I've told you before the way we lived on the nebulae: it was like lying down, we were flat and very still, turning as they turned. Not that we were lying outside, you understand, on the nebula's surface; no, it was too cold out there. We were underneath, as if we had been tucked in under a layer of fluid, grainy matter. There was no way of telling time; whenever we started counting the nebula's turns there were disagreements, because