

Д. Г. Лоуренс | D. H. Lawrence

**Любовник
леди Чаттерлей**

**Lady Chatterley's
 Lover**



Бестселлер на все времена

Дэвид Лоуренс

**Любовник леди Чаттерлей /
Lady Chatterley's Lover**

«ЭКСМО»

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Лоуренс Д. Г.

Любовник леди Чаттерлей / Lady Chatterley's Lover /
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времена)

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Чтение оригинальных произведений – простой и действенный способ погрузиться в языковую среду и совершенствоваться в иностранном языке. Серия «Бестселлер на все времена» – это возможность улучшить свой английский, читая лучшие произведения англоязычных авторов, любимые миллионами читателей. Для лучшего понимания текста в книгу включены краткий словарь и комментарии, поясняющие языковые и лингвострановедческие вопросы, исторические и культурные реалии описываемой эпохи. Констанция Чаттерлей искренне любит своего мужа, прикованного к инвалидному креслу. Но желание иметь наследника подталкивает супругов к нелегкому решению: Констанции нужно завести роман, если она встретит подходящего мужчину. Каким будет любовник леди Чаттерлей и чем обернется эта связь? Книга предназначена для тех, кто изучает английский язык на продолжающем или продвинутом уровне и стремится к его совершенствованию.

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Lady Chatterley's Lover

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* * *

«Языковая компетенция – вещь капризная. Это как балет, как умение играть на музыкальном инструменте, как гимнастика, как любое действие, которое требует навыка. Либо вы идете вперед, либо начинаете сползать назад.

А самое главное – не прекращать изучение языка. Это может быть чтение оригинальной литературы. Любите читать про любовь – читайте про любовь, любите фантастику – читайте фантастику. Но читайте обязательно!»
Н. А. Бонк, лингвист, педагог, автор наиболее популярных в России учебников английского языка

Chapter 1

Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen.

This was more or less Constance Chatterley's position. The war¹ had brought the roof down over her head. And she had realized that one must live and learn.

She married Clifford Chatterley in 1917, when he was home for a month on leave. They had a month's honeymoon. Then he went back to Flanders:² to be shipped over to England again six months later, more or less in bits. Constance, his wife, was then twenty-three years old, and he was twenty-nine.

His hold on life was marvellous. He didn't die, and the bits seemed to grow together again. For two years he remained in the doctor's hands. Then he was pronounced a cure, and could return to life again, with the lower half of his body, from the hips down, paralysed for ever.

This was in 1920. They returned, Clifford and Constance, to his home, Wragby Hall, the family "seat". His father had died, Clifford was now a baronet,³ Sir Clifford, and Constance was Lady Chatterley.⁴ They came to start housekeeping and married life in the rather forlorn home of the Chatterleys on a rather inadequate income. Clifford had a sister, but she had departed. Otherwise there were no near relatives. The elder brother was dead in the war. Crippled⁵ for ever, knowing he could never have any children, Clifford came home to the smoky Midlands to keep the Chatterley name alive while he could.

He was not really downcast. He could wheel himself about in a wheeled chair, and he had a bath-chair with a small motor attachment, so he could drive himself slowly round the garden and into the line melancholy park, of which he was really so proud, though he pretended to be flippant about it.

Having suffered so much, the capacity for suffering had to some extent left him. He remained strange and bright and cheerful, almost, one might say, chirpy, with his ruddy, healthy-looking face, and his pale-blue, challenging bright eyes. His shoulders were broad and strong, his hands were very strong. He was expensively dressed, and wore handsome neckties from Bond Street.⁶ Yet still in his face one saw the watchful look, the slight vacancy of a cripple.

He had so very nearly lost his life, that what remained was wonderfully precious to him. It was obvious in the anxious brightness of his eyes, how proud he was, after the great shock, of being alive. But he had been so much hurt that something inside him had perished, some of his feelings had gone. There was a blank of insentience.

Constance, his wife, was a ruddy, country-looking girl with soft brown hair and sturdy body, and slow movements, full of unusual energy. She had big, wondering eyes, and a soft mild voice,

¹ Первая Мировая война (1914–1918 гг.)

² Фландрия, или поля Фландрии – обобщенное название зоны боевых действий Первой Мировой войны, приходившихся в основном на территорию Фламандского региона Бельгии; «поехать во Фландрию» – отправиться на фронт.

³ Баронет – британский аристократический титул, передающийся по наследству по мужской линии, обычно вместе с именем.

⁴ К носителю титула баронета обращаются «сэр» и по имени (сэр Клиффорд), а к его супруге – «леди» и по фамилии (леди Чаттерлей).

⁵ Слово *cripple* (калека) и его производные, используемые в отношении инвалидов, в современном английском языке считаются оскорбительными.

⁶ Бонд-стрит – улица в торговом районе Лондона, где располагались дорогие и престижные магазины одежды, обслуживавшие представителей элиты.

and seemed just to have come from her native village. It was not so at all. Her father was the once well-known R. A.,⁷ old Sir Malcolm Reid. Her mother had been one of the cultivated Fabians⁸ in the palmy, rather pre-Raphaelite⁹ days. Between artists and cultured socialists, Constance and her sister Hilda had had what might be called an aesthetically unconventional upbringing. They had been taken to Paris and Florence and Rome to breathe in art, and they had been taken also in the other direction, to the Hague and Berlin, to great Socialist conventions, where the speakers spoke in every civilized tongue, and no one was abashed.

The two girls, therefore, were from an early age not the least daunted by either art or ideal politics. It was their natural atmosphere. They were at once cosmopolitan and provincial, with the cosmopolitan provincialism of art that goes with pure social ideals.

They had been sent to Dresden at the age of fifteen, for music among other things. And they had had a good time there. They lived freely among the students, they argued with the men over philosophical, sociological and artistic matters, they were just as good as the men themselves: only better, since they were women. And they tramped off to the forests with sturdy youths bearing guitars, twang-twang! They sang the Wandervogel¹⁰ songs, and they were free. Free! That was the great word. Out in the open world, out in the forests of the morning, with lusty and splendid-throated young fellows, free to do as they liked, and – above all – to say what they liked. It was the talk that mattered supremely: the impassioned interchange of talk. Love was only a minor accompaniment.

Both Hilda and Constance had had their tentative love-affairs by the time they were eighteen. The young men with whom they talked so passionately and sang so lustily and camped under the trees in such freedom wanted, of course, the love connexion. The girls were doubtful, but then the thing was so much talked about, it was supposed to be so important. And the men were so humble and craving. Why couldn't a girl be queenly, and give the gift of herself?

So they had given the gift of themselves, each to the youth with whom she had the most subtle and intimate arguments. The arguments, the discussions were the great thing: the love-making and connexion were only a sort of primitive reversion and a bit of an anti-climax. One was less in love with the boy afterwards, and a little inclined to hate him, as if he had trespassed on one's privacy and inner freedom. For, of course, being a girl, one's whole dignity and meaning in life consisted in the achievement of an absolute, a perfect, a pure and noble freedom. What else did a girl's life mean? To shake off the old and sordid connexions and subjections.

And however one might sentimentalize it, this sex business was one of the most ancient, sordid connexions and subjections. Poets who glorified it were mostly men. Women had always known there was something better, something higher. And now they knew it more definitely than ever. The beautiful pure freedom of a woman was infinitely more wonderful than any sexual love. The only unfortunate thing was that men lagged so far behind women in the matter. They insisted on the sex thing like dogs.

And a woman had to yield. A man was like a child with his appetites. A woman had to yield him what he wanted, or like a child he would probably turn nasty and flounce away and spoil what was a very pleasant connexion. But a woman could yield to a man without yielding her inner, free self. That the poets and talkers about sex did not seem to have taken sufficiently into account. A

⁷ R. A. – Royal Academician – член Королевской Академии художеств.

⁸ Фабианское общество – британская социалистическая организация реформистского направления, отличавшаяся на описываемый период прогрессивными взглядами.

⁹ Прерафаэлиты – направление в английской литературе и искусстве второй половины XIX в., противопоставлявшее устоявшимся принципам искусства викторианской эпохи новые веяния, вдохновленные идеалами Возрождения. Их основным оппонентом была Королевская Академия художеств, как учреждение, преимущественно определявшее развитие британского искусства.

¹⁰ Wandervogel (нем. «вольная птица») – популярное немецкое молодежное движение, основанное в 1901 г. вокруг идей избавления от наложенных обществом ограничений, возвращения к природе, свободы духа.

woman could take a man without really giving herself away. Certainly she could take him without giving herself into his power. Rather she could use this sex thing to have power over him. For she only had to hold herself back in sexual intercourse, and let him finish and expend himself without herself coming to the crisis: and then she could prolong the connexion and achieve her orgasm and her crisis while he was merely her tool.

Both sisters had had their love experience by the time the war came, and they were hurried home. Neither was ever in love with a young man unless he and she were verbally very near: that is unless they were profoundly interested, talking to one another. The amazing, the profound, the unbelievable thrill there was in passionately talking to some really clever young man by the hour, resuming day after day for months... this they had never realized till it happened! The paradisaical promise: Thou shalt have men to talk to! – had never been uttered. It was fulfilled before they knew what a promise it was.

And if after the roused intimacy of these vivid and soul-enlightened discussions the sex thing became more or less inevitable, then let it. It marked the end of a chapter. It had a thrill of its own too: a queer vibrating thrill inside the body, a final spasm of self-assertion, like the last word, exciting, and very like the row of asterisks that can be put to show the end of a paragraph, and a break in the theme.

When the girls came home for the summer holidays of 1913, when Hilda was twenty and Connie eighteen, their father could see plainly that they had had the love experience.

L'amour avait passe par la,¹¹ as somebody puts it. But he was a man of experience himself, and let life take its course. As for the mother a nervous invalid in the last few months of her life, she wanted her girls to be "free", and to "fulfil themselves". She herself had never been able to be altogether herself: it had been denied her. Heaven knows why, for she was a woman who had her own income and her own way. She blamed her husband. But as a matter of fact, it was some old impression of authority on her own mind or soul that she could not get rid of. It had nothing to do with Sir Malcolm, who left his nervously hostile, high-spirited wife to rule her own roost, while he went his own way.

So the girls were "free", and went back to Dresden, and their music, and the university and the young men. They loved their respective young men, and their respective young men loved them with all the passion of mental attraction. All the wonderful things the young men thought and expressed and wrote, they thought and expressed and wrote for the young women. Connie's young man was musical, Hilda's was technical. But they simply lived for their young women. In their minds and their mental excitements, that is. Somewhere else they were a little rebuffed, though they did not know it.

It was obvious in them too that love had gone through them: that is, the physical experience. It is curious what a subtle but unmistakable transmutation it makes, both in the body of men and women: the woman more blooming, more subtly rounded, her young angularities softened, and her expression either anxious or triumphant: the man much quieter, more inward, the very shapes of his shoulders and his buttocks less assertive, more hesitant.

In the actual sex-thrill within the body, the sisters nearly succumbed to the strange male power. But quickly they recovered themselves, took the sex-thrill as a sensation, and remained free. Whereas the men, in gratitude to the woman for the sex experience, let their souls go out to her. And afterwards looked rather as if they had lost a shilling and found sixpence. Connie's man could be a bit sulky, and Hilda's a bit jeering. But that is how men are! Ungrateful and never satisfied. When you don't have them they hate you because you won't; and when you do have them they hate you again, for some other reason. Or for no reason at all, except that they are discontented children, and can't be satisfied whatever they get, let a woman do what she may.

¹¹ «Здесь прошла любовь» (фр.)

However, came the war, Hilda and Connie were rushed home again after having been home already in May, to their mother's funeral. Before Christmas of 1914 both their German young men were dead: whereupon the sisters wept, and loved the young men passionately, but underneath forgot them. They didn't exist any more.

Both sisters lived in their father's, really their mother's, Kensington house mixed with the young Cambridge group, the group that stood for "freedom" and flannel trousers, and flannel shirts open at the neck, and a well-bred sort of emotional anarchy, and a whispering, murmuring sort of voice, and an ultra-sensitive sort of manner. Hilda, however, suddenly married a man ten years older than herself, an elder member of the same Cambridge group, a man with a fair amount of money, and a comfortable family job in the government: he also wrote philosophical essays. She lived with him in a smallish house in Westminster, and moved in that good sort of society of people in the government who are not tip-toppers,¹² but who are, or would be, the real intelligent power in the nation: people who know what they're talking about, or talk as if they did.

Connie did a mild form of war-work, and consorted with the flannel-trousers Cambridge intransigents, who gently mocked at everything, so far. Her "friend" was a Clifford Chatterley, a young man of twenty-two, who had hurried home from Bonn, where he was studying the technicalities of coal-mining. He had previously spent two years at Cambridge. Now he had become a first lieutenant in a smart regiment, so he could mock at everything more becomingly in uniform.

Clifford Chatterley was more upper-class than Connie. Connie was well-to-do intelligentsia, but he was aristocracy. Not the big sort, but still it. His father was a baronet, and his mother had been a viscount's¹³ daughter.

But Clifford, while he was better bred than Connie, and more "society", was in his own way more provincial and more timid. He was at his ease in the narrow "great world", that is, landed aristocracy society, but he was shy and nervous of all that other big world which consists of the vast hordes of the middle and lower classes, and foreigners. If the truth must be told, he was just a little bit frightened of middle-and lower-class humanity, and of foreigners not of his own class. He was, in some paralysing way, conscious of his own defencelessness, though he had all the defence of privilege. Which is curious, but a phenomenon of our day.

Therefore the peculiar soft assurance of a girl like Constance Reid fascinated him. She was so much more mistress of herself in that outer world of chaos than he was master of himself.

Nevertheless he too was a rebel: rebelling even against his class. Or perhaps rebel is too strong a word; far too strong. He was only caught in the general, popular recoil of the young against convention and against any sort of real authority. Fathers were ridiculous: his own obstinate one supremely so. And governments were ridiculous: our own wait-and-see sort especially so. And armies were ridiculous, and old buffers of generals altogether, the red-faced Kitchener¹⁴ supremely. Even the war was ridiculous, though it did kill rather a lot of people.

In fact everything was a little ridiculous, or very ridiculous: certainly everything connected with authority, whether it were in the army or the government or the universities, was ridiculous to a degree. And as far as the governing class made any pretensions to govern, they were ridiculous too. Sir Geoffrey, Clifford's father, was intensely ridiculous, chopping down his trees, and weeding men out of his colliery to shove them into the war; and himself being so safe and patriotic; but, also, spending more money on his country than he'd got.

When Miss Chatterley – Emma – came down to London from the Midlands to do some nursing work, she was very witty in a quiet way about Sir Geoffrey and his determined patriotism.

¹² Уничижительное название людей из высшего общества.

¹³ Виконт – британский аристократический титул.

¹⁴ Горацио Герберт Китченер – британский военный деятель, в годы Первой Мировой войны был военным министром Великобритании. Одной из его запоминающихся черт были неизменно красные щеки – результат обгорания под пустынным солнцем во время многочисленных военных кампаний.

Herbert, the elder brother and heir, laughed outright, though it was his trees that were falling for trench props. But Clifford only smiled a little uneasily. Everything was ridiculous, quite true. But when it came too close and oneself became ridiculous too...? At least people of a different class, like Connie, were earnest about something. They believed in something.

They were rather earnest about the Tommies,¹⁵ and the threat of conscription, and the shortage of sugar and toffee for the children. In all these things, of course, the authorities were ridiculously at fault. But Clifford could not take it to heart. To him the authorities were ridiculous *ab ovo*,¹⁶ not because of toffee or Tommies.

And the authorities felt ridiculous, and behaved in a rather ridiculous fashion, and it was all a mad hatter's tea-party¹⁷ for a while. Till things developed over there, and Lloyd George¹⁸ came to save the situation over here. And this surpassed even ridicule, the flippant young laughed no more.

In 1916 Herbert Chatterley was killed, so Clifford became heir. He was terrified even of this. His importance as son of Sir Geoffrey, and child of Wragby, was so ingrained in him, he could never escape it. And yet he knew that this too, in the eyes of the vast seething world, was ridiculous. Now he was heir and responsible for Wragby. Was that not terrible? and also splendid and at the same time, perhaps, purely absurd?

Sir Geoffrey would have none of the absurdity. He was pale and tense, withdrawn into himself, and obstinately determined to save his country and his own position, let it be Lloyd George or who it might. So cut off he was, so divorced from the England that was really England, so utterly incapable, that he even thought well of Horatio Bottomley.¹⁹ Sir Geoffrey stood for England and Lloyd George as his forebears had stood for England and St George: and he never knew there was a difference. So Sir Geoffrey felled timber and stood for Lloyd George and England, England and Lloyd George.

And he wanted Clifford to marry and produce an heir. Clifford felt his father was a hopeless anachronism. But wherein was he himself any further ahead, except in a wincing sense of the ridiculousness of everything, and the paramount ridiculousness of his own position? For willy-nilly he took his baronetcy and Wragby with the last seriousness.

The gay excitement had gone out of the war... dead. Too much death and horror. A man needed support and comfort. A man needed to have an anchor in the safe world. A man needed a wife.

The Chatterleys, two brothers and a sister, had lived curiously isolated, shut in with one another at Wragby, in spite of all their connexions. A sense of isolation intensified the family tie, a sense of the weakness of their position, a sense of defencelessness, in spite of, or because of, the title and the land. They were cut off from those industrial Midlands in which they passed their lives. And they were cut off from their own class by the brooding, obstinate, shut-up nature of Sir Geoffrey, their father, whom they ridiculed, but whom they were so sensitive about.

The three had said they would all live together always. But now Herbert was dead, and Sir Geoffrey wanted Clifford to marry. Sir Geoffrey barely mentioned it: he spoke very little. But his silent, brooding insistence that it should be so was hard for Clifford to bear up against.

But Emma said No! She was ten years older than Clifford, and she felt his marrying would be a desertion and a betrayal of what the young ones of the family had stood for.

¹⁵ «Томми» – сленговое название английских солдат, использовавшееся как англичанами, так и их противниками.

¹⁶ *Ab ovo* (лат. «от яйца») – устойчивый оборот, означающий «с самого начала».

¹⁷ «Чаепитие у безумного шляпника» – отсылка к ситуации из книги Льюиса Кэрролла «Алиса в Стране Чудес». Имеется в виду, что происходящее абсурдно и бессмысленно.

¹⁸ Дэвид Ллойд Джордж (1863–1945) – британский политический деятель, в 1916 г. стал премьер-министром коалиционного правительства и сыграл значительную роль в завершении Первой Мировой войны.

¹⁹ Горацио Боттомли (1860–1933) – известный британский журналист, издатель, финансист и политик; занимался спекуляциями и мошенничеством, неоднократно становился банкротом и разорял вкладчиков своих компаний.

Clifford married Connie, nevertheless, and had his month's honeymoon with her. It was the terrible year 1917, and they were intimate as two people who stand together on a sinking ship. He had been virgin when he married: and the sex part did not mean much to him. They were so close, he and she, apart from that. And Connie exulted a little in this intimacy which was beyond sex, and beyond a man's "satisfaction". Clifford anyhow was not just keen on his "satisfaction", as so many men seemed to be. No, the intimacy was deeper, more personal than that. And sex was merely an accident, or an adjunct, one of the curious obsolete, organic processes which persisted in its own clumsiness, but was not really necessary. Though Connie did want children: if only to fortify her against her sister-in-law Emma.

But early in 1918 Clifford was shipped home smashed, and there was no child. And Sir Geoffrey died of chagrin.

Chapter 2

Connie and Clifford came home to Wragby in the autumn of 1920. Miss Chatterley, still disgusted at her brother's defection, had departed and was living in a little flat in London.

Wragby was a long low old house in brown stone, begun about the middle of the eighteenth century, and added on to, till it was a warren of a place without much distinction. It stood on an eminence in a rather line old park of oak trees, but alas, one could see in the near distance the chimney of Tevershall pit, with its clouds of steam and smoke, and on the damp, hazy distance of the hill the raw straggle of Tevershall village, a village which began almost at the park gates, and trailed in utter hopeless ugliness for a long and gruesome mile: houses, rows of wretched, small, begrimed, brick houses, with black slate roofs for lids, sharp angles and wilful, blank dreariness.

Connie was accustomed to Kensington or the Scotch hills or the Sussex downs: that was her England. With the stoicism of the young she took in the utter, soulless ugliness of the coal-and-iron Midlands²⁰ at a glance, and left it at what it was: unbelievable and not to be thought about. From the rather dismal rooms at Wragby she heard the rattle-rattle of the screens at the pit, the puff of the winding-engine, the clink-clink of shunting trucks, and the hoarse little whistle of the colliery locomotives. Tevershall pit-bank²¹ was burning, had been burning for years, and it would cost thousands to put it out. So it had to burn. And when the wind was that way, which was often, the house was full of the stench of this sulphurous combustion of the earth's excrement. But even on windless days the air always smelt of something under-earth: sulphur, iron, coal, or acid. And even on the Christmas roses the smuts settled persistently, incredible, like black manna from the skies of doom.²²

Well, there it was: fated like the rest of things! It was rather awful, but why kick? You couldn't kick it away. It just went on. Life, like all the rest! On the low dark ceiling of cloud at night red blotches burned and quavered, dappling and swelling and contracting, like burns that give pain. It was the furnaces. At first they fascinated Connie with a sort of horror; she felt she was living underground. Then she got used to them. And in the morning it rained.

Clifford professed to like Wragby better than London. This country had a grim will of its own, and the people had guts. Connie wondered what else they had: certainly neither eyes nor minds. The people were as haggard, shapeless, and dreary as the countryside, and as unfriendly. Only there was something in their deep-mouthed slurring of the dialect, and the thresh-thresh of their hob-nailed pit-boots as they trailed home in gangs on the asphalt from work, that was terrible and a bit mysterious.

There had been no welcome home for the young squire, no festivities, no deputation, not even a single flower. Only a dank ride in a motor-car up a dark, damp drive, burrowing through gloomy trees, out to the slope of the park where grey damp sheep were feeding, to the knoll where the house spread its dark brown facade, and the housekeeper and her husband were hovering, like unsure tenants on the face of the earth, ready to stammer a welcome.

There was no communication between Wragby Hall and Tevershall village, none. No caps were touched, no curtseys bobbed.²³ The colliers merely stared; the tradesmen lifted their caps to Connie as to an acquaintance, and nodded awkwardly to Clifford; that was all. Gulf impassable,

²⁰ Центральные графства – неофициально выделяемая географическая и культурная зона, охватывающая центральную часть Англии, с характерным равнинным ландшафтом.

²¹ Верхняя приемная площадка ствола шахты.

²² Отсылка к библейскому мифу о манне небесной, посланной Богом иудеям в пустыне в качестве пищи и выглядевшей как мелкие белые крупинки.

²³ Уважительные жесты приветствия от лиц более низкого класса по отношению к аристократии: мужчины прикасаются к головному убору, женщины делают книксен.

and a quiet sort of resentment on either side. At first Connie suffered from the steady drizzle of resentment that came from the village. Then she hardened herself to it, and it became a sort of tonic, something to live up to. It was not that she and Clifford were unpopular, they merely belonged to another species altogether from the colliers. Gulf impassable, breach indescribable, such as is perhaps nonexistent south of the Trent. But in the Midlands and the industrial North gulf impassable, across which no communication could take place. You stick to your side, I'll stick to mine! A strange denial of the common pulse of humanity.

Yet the village sympathized with Clifford and Connie in the abstract. In the flesh it was – You leave me alone! – on either side.

The rector²⁴ was a nice man of about sixty, full of his duty, and reduced, personally, almost to a nonentity by the silent – You leave me alone! – of the village. The miners' wives were nearly all Methodists.²⁵ The miners were nothing. But even so much official uniform as the clergyman wore was enough to obscure entirely the fact that he was a man like any other man. No, he was Mester Ashby, a sort of automatic preaching and praying concern.

This stubborn, instinctive – We think ourselves as good as you, if you are Lady Chatterley! – puzzled and baffled Connie at first extremely. The curious, suspicious, false amiability with which the miners' wives met her overtures; the curiously offensive tinge of – Oh dear me! I am somebody now, with Lady Chatterley talking to me! But she needn't think I'm not as good as her for all that! – which she always heard twanging in the women's half-fawning voices, was impossible. There was no getting past it. It was hopelessly and offensively nonconformist.

Clifford left them alone, and she learnt to do the same: she just went by without looking at them, and they stared as if she were a walking wax figure. When he had to deal with them, Clifford was rather haughty and contemptuous; one could no longer afford to be friendly. In fact he was altogether rather supercilious and contemptuous of anyone not in his own class. He stood his ground, without any attempt at conciliation. And he was neither liked nor disliked by the people: he was just part of things, like the pit-bank and Wragby itself.

But Clifford was really extremely shy and self-conscious now he was lamed.²⁶ He hated seeing anyone except just the personal servants. For he had to sit in a wheeled chair or a sort of bath-chair. Nevertheless he was just as carefully dressed as ever, by his expensive tailors, and he wore the careful Bond Street neckties just as before, and from the top he looked just as smart and impressive as ever. He had never been one of the modern ladylike young men: rather bucolic even, with his ruddy face and broad shoulders. But his very quiet, hesitating voice, and his eyes, at the same time bold and frightened, assured and uncertain, revealed his nature. His manner was often offensively supercilious, and then again modest and self-effacing, almost tremulous.

Connie and he were attached to one another, in the aloof modern way. He was much too hurt in himself, the great shock of his maiming, to be easy and flippant. He was a hurt thing. And as such Connie stuck to him passionately.

But she could not help feeling how little connexion he really had with people. The miners were, in a sense, his own men; but he saw them as objects rather than men, parts of the pit rather than parts of life, crude raw phenomena rather than human beings along with him. He was in some way afraid of them, he could not bear to have them look at him now he was lame. And their queer, crude life seemed as unnatural as that of hedgehogs.

He was remotely interested; but like a man looking down a microscope, or up a telescope. He was not in touch. He was not in actual touch with anybody, save, traditionally, with Wragby,

²⁴ Ректор – приходской священник в англиканской церкви.

²⁵ Методизм – одна из протестантских конфессий, отделившаяся от англиканства.

²⁶ Слово lame (охрометь, потерять способность ходить) в современном английском языке считается уничижительным и используется редко.

and, through the close bond of family defence, with Emma. Beyond this nothing really touched him. Connie felt that she herself didn't really, not really touch him; perhaps there was nothing to get at ultimately; just a negation of human contact.

Yet he was absolutely dependent on her, he needed her every moment. Big and strong as he was, he was helpless. He could wheel himself about in a wheeled chair, and he had a sort of bath-chair with a motor attachment, in which he could puff slowly round the park. But alone he was like a lost thing. He needed Connie to be there, to assure him he existed at all.

Still he was ambitious. He had taken to writing stories; curious, very personal stories about people he had known. Clever, rather spiteful, and yet, in some mysterious way, meaningless. The observation was extraordinary and peculiar. But there was no touch, no actual contact. It was as if the whole thing took place in a vacuum. And since the field of life is largely an artificially-lighted stage today, the stories were curiously true to modern life, to the modern psychology, that is.

Clifford was almost morbidly sensitive about these stories. He wanted everyone to think them good, of the best, *ne plus ultra*.²⁷ They appeared in the most modern magazines, and were praised and blamed as usual. But to Clifford the blame was torture, like knives goading him. It was as if the whole of his being were in his stories.

Connie helped him as much as she could. At first she was thrilled. He talked everything over with her monotonously, insistently, persistently, and she had to respond with all her might. It was as if her whole soul and body and sex had to rouse up and pass into theme stories of his. This thrilled her and absorbed her.

Of physical life they lived very little. She had to superintend the house. But the housekeeper had served Sir Geoffrey for many years, and the dried-up, elderly, superlatively correct female you could hardly call her a parlour-maid, or even a woman... who waited at table, had been in the house for forty years. Even the very housemaids were no longer young. It was awful! What could you do with such a place, but leave it alone! All these endless rooms that nobody used, all the Midlands routine, the mechanical cleanliness and the mechanical order! Clifford had insisted on a new cook, an experienced woman who had served him in his rooms in London. For the rest the place seemed run by mechanical anarchy. Everything went on in pretty good order, strict cleanliness, and strict punctuality; even pretty strict honesty. And yet, to Connie, it was a methodical anarchy. No warmth of feeling united it organically. The house seemed as dreary as a disused street.

What could she do but leave it alone? So she left it alone. Miss Chatterley came sometimes, with her aristocratic thin face, and triumphed, finding nothing altered. She would never forgive Connie for ousting her from her union in consciousness with her brother. It was she, Emma, who should be bringing forth the stories, these books, with him; the Chatterley stories, something new in the world, that they, the Chatterleys, had put there. There was no other standard. There was no organic connexion with the thought and expression that had gone before. Only something new in the world: the Chatterley books, entirely personal.

Connie's father, where he paid a flying visit to Wragby, and in private to his daughter: As for Clifford's writing, it's smart, but there's nothing in it. It won't last! Connie looked at the burly Scottish knight who had done himself well all his life, and her eyes, her big, still-wondering blue eyes became vague. Nothing in it! What did he mean by nothing in it? If the critics praised it, and Clifford's name was almost famous, and it even brought in money... what did her father mean by saying there was nothing in Clifford's writing? What else could there be?

For Connie had adopted the standard of the young: what there was in the moment was everything. And moments followed one another without necessarily belonging to one another.

²⁷ *Ne plus ultra* (лат.) – «самый лучший», «верх совершенства».

It was in her second winter at Wragby her father said to her: "I hope, Connie, you won't let circumstances force you into being a demi-vierge."²⁸

"A demi-vierge!" replied Connie vaguely. "Why? Why not?"

"Unless you like it, of course!" said her father hastily. To Clifford he said the same, when the two men were alone: "I'm afraid it doesn't quite suit Connie to be a demi-vierge."

"A half-virgin!" replied Clifford, translating the phrase to be sure of it.

He thought for a moment, then flushed very red. He was angry and offended.

"In what way doesn't it suit her?" he asked stiffly.

"She's getting thin... angular. It's not her style. She's not the pilchard sort of little slip of a girl, she's a bonny Scotch trout."

"Without the spots, of course!" said Clifford.

He wanted to say something later to Connie about the demi-vierge business... the half-virgin state of her affairs. But he could not bring himself to do it. He was at once too intimate with her and not intimate enough. He was so very much at one with her, in his mind and hers, but bodily they were non-existent to one another, and neither could bear to drag in the corpus delicti.²⁹ They were so intimate, and utterly out of touch.

Connie guessed, however, that her father had said something, and that something was in Clifford's mind. She knew that he didn't mind whether she were demi-vierge or demi-monde,³⁰ so long as he didn't absolutely know, and wasn't made to see. What the eye doesn't see and the mind doesn't know, doesn't exist.

Connie and Clifford had now been nearly two years at Wragby, living their vague life of absorption in Clifford and his work. Their interests had never ceased to flow together over his work. They talked and wrestled in the throes of composition, and felt as if something were happening, really happening, really in the void.

And thus far it was a life: in the void. For the rest it was non-existence. Wragby was there, the servants... but spectral, not really existing. Connie went for walks in the park, and in the woods that joined the park, and enjoyed the solitude and the mystery, kicking the brown leaves of autumn, and picking the primroses of spring. But it was all a dream; or rather it was like the simulacrum of reality. The oak-leaves were to her like oak-leaves seen ruffling in a mirror, she herself was a figure somebody had read about, picking primroses that were only shadows or memories, or words. No substance to her or anything... no touch, no contact! Only this life with Clifford, this endless spinning of webs of yarn, of the minutiae of consciousness, these stories Sir Malcolm said there was nothing in, and they wouldn't last. Why should there be anything in them, why should they last? Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Sufficient unto the moment is the appearance of reality.

Clifford had quite a number of friends, acquaintances really, and he invited them to Wragby. He invited all sorts of people, critics and writers, people who would help to praise his books. And they were flattered at being asked to Wragby, and they praised. Connie understood it all perfectly. But why not? This was one of the fleeting patterns in the mirror. What was wrong with it?

She was hostess to these people... mostly men. She was hostess also to Clifford's occasional aristocratic relations. Being a soft, ruddy, country-looking girl, inclined to freckles, with big blue eyes, and curling, brown hair, and a soft voice, and rather strong, female loins she was considered a little old-fashioned and "womanly". She was not a "little pilchard sort of fish", like a boy, with a boy's flat breast and little buttocks. She was too feminine to be quite smart.

²⁸ Demi-vierge (*фр.*) – «полудевственница» – женщина, остающаяся девственницей физически, но знакомая со всеми сторонами интимной жизни.

²⁹ Corpus delicti (*лат.*) – юридический термин, означающий «состав преступления» или «вещественные доказательства». В данном случае используется как «неоспоримый факт».

³⁰ Demi-monde (*фр.*) – «дама полусвета» – женщина легкого поведения.

So the men, especially those no longer young, were very nice to her indeed. But, knowing what torture poor Clifford would feel at the slightest sign of flirting on her part, she gave them no encouragement at all. She was quiet and vague, she had no contact with them and intended to have none. Clifford was extraordinarily proud of himself.

His relatives treated her quite kindly. She knew that the kindness indicated a lack of fear, and that these people had no respect for you unless you could frighten them a little. But again she had no contact. She let them be kindly and disdainful, she let them feel they had no need to draw their steel in readiness. She had no real connexion with them.

Time went on. Whatever happened, nothing happened, because she was so beautifully out of contact. She and Clifford lived in their ideas and his books. She entertained... there were always people in the house. Time went on as the clock does, half past eight instead of half past seven.

Chapter 3

Connie was aware, however, of a growing restlessness. Out of her disconnexion, a restlessness was taking possession of her like madness. It twitched her limbs when she didn't want to twitch them, it jerked her spine when she didn't want to jerk upright but preferred to rest comfortably. It thrilled inside her body, in her womb, somewhere, till she felt she must jump into water and swim to get away from it; a mad restlessness. It made her heart beat violently for no reason. And she was getting thinner.

It was just restlessness. She would rush off across the park, abandon Clifford, and lie prone in the bracken. To get away from the house... she must get away from the house and everybody. The work was her one refuge, her sanctuary.

But it was not really a refuge, a sanctuary, because she had no connexion with it. It was only a place where she could get away from the rest. She never really touched the spirit of the wood itself... if it had any such nonsensical thing.

Vaguely she knew herself that she was going to pieces in some way. Vaguely she knew she was out of connexion: she had lost touch with the substantial and vital world. Only Clifford and his books, which did not exist... which had nothing in them! Void to void. Vaguely she knew. But it was like beating her head against a stone.

Her father warned her again: "Why don't you get yourself a beau, Connie? Do you all the good in the world."

That winter Michaelis came for a few days. He was a young Irishman who had already made a large fortune by his plays in America. He had been taken up quite enthusiastically for a time by smart society in London, for he wrote smart society plays. Then gradually smart society realized that it had been made ridiculous at the hands of a down-at-heel Dublin street-rat, and revulsion came. Michaelis was the last word in what was caddish and boulderish. He was discovered to be anti-English, and to the class that made this discovery this was worse than the dirtiest crime. He was cut dead, and his corpse thrown into the refuse can.

Nevertheless Michaelis had his apartment in Mayfair, and walked down Bond Street the image of a gentleman, for you cannot get even the best tailors to cut their low-down customers, when the customers pay.

Clifford was inviting the young man of thirty at an inauspicious moment in that young man's career. Yet Clifford did not hesitate. Michaelis had the ear of a few million people, probably; and, being a hopeless outsider, he would no doubt be grateful to be asked down to Wragby at this juncture, when the rest of the smart world was cutting him. Being grateful, he would no doubt do Clifford "good" over there in America. Kudos! A man gets a lot of kudos, whatever that may be, by being talked about in the right way, especially "over there". Clifford was a coming man; and it was remarkable what a sound publicity instinct he had. In the end Michaelis did him most nobly in a play, and Clifford was a sort of popular hero. Till the reaction, when he found he had been made ridiculous.

Connie wondered a little over Clifford's blind, imperious instinct to become known: known, that is, to the vast amorphous world he did not himself know, and of which he was uneasily afraid; known as a writer, as a first-class modern writer. Connie was aware from successful, old, hearty, bluffing Sir Malcolm, that artists did advertise themselves, and exert themselves to put their goods over. But her father used channels ready-made, used by all the other R. A.s who sold their pictures. Whereas Clifford discovered new channels of publicity, all kinds. He had all kinds of people at Wragby, without exactly lowering himself. But, determined to build himself a monument of a reputation quickly, he used any handy rubble in the making.

Michaelis arrived duly, in a very neat car, with a chauffeur and a manservant. He was absolutely Bond Street! But at sight of him something in Clifford's county soul recoiled. He wasn't exactly... not exactly... in fact, he wasn't at all, well, what his appearance intended to imply. To Clifford this was final and enough. Yet he was very polite to the man; to the amazing success in him. The bitch-goddess, as she is called, of Success, roamed, snarling and protective, round the half-humble, half-defiant Michaelis' heels, and intimidated Clifford completely: for he wanted to prostitute himself to the bitch-goddess, Success also, if only she would have him.

Michaelis obviously wasn't an Englishman, in spite of all the tailors, hatters, barbers, booters of the very best quarter of London. No, no, he obviously wasn't an Englishman: the wrong sort of flattish, pale face and bearing; and the wrong sort of grievance. He had a grudge and a grievance: that was obvious to any true-born English gentleman, who would scorn to let such a thing appear blatant in his own demeanour. Poor Michaelis had been much kicked, so that he had a slightly tail-between-the-legs look even now. He had pushed his way by sheer instinct and sheerer effrontery on to the stage and to the front of it, with his plays. He had caught the public. And he had thought the kicking days were over. Alas, they weren't... They never would be. For he, in a sense, asked to be kicked. He pined to be where he didn't belong... among the English upper classes. And how they enjoyed the various kicks they got at him! And how he hated them!

Nevertheless he travelled with his manservant and his very neat car, this Dublin mongrel.

There was something about him that Connie liked. He didn't put on airs to himself, he had no illusions about himself. He talked to Clifford sensibly, briefly, practically, about all the things Clifford wanted to know. He didn't expand or let himself go. He knew he had been asked down to Wragby to be made use of, and like an old, shrewd, almost indifferent business man, or big-business man, he let himself be asked questions, and he answered with as little waste of feeling as possible.

"Money!" he said. "Money is a sort of instinct. It's a sort of property of nature in a man to make money. It's nothing you do. It's no trick you play. It's a sort of permanent accident of your own nature; once you start, you make money, and you go on; up to a point, I suppose."

"But you've got to begin," said Clifford.

"Oh, quite! You've got to get in. You can do nothing if you are kept outside. You've got to beat your way in. Once you've done that, you can't help it."

"But could you have made money except by plays?" asked Clifford.

"Oh, probably not! I may be a good writer or I may be a bad one, but a writer and a writer of plays is what I am, and I've got to be. There's no question of that."

"And you think it's a writer of popular plays that you've got to be?" asked Connie.

"There, exactly!" he said, turning to her in a sudden flash. "There's nothing in it! There's nothing in popularity. There's nothing in the public, if it comes to that. There's nothing really in my plays to make them popular. It's not that. They just are like the weather... the sort that will have to be... for the time being."

He turned his slow, rather full eyes, that had been drowned in such fathomless disillusion, on Connie, and she trembled a little. He seemed so old... endlessly old, built up of layers of disillusion, going down in him generation after generation, like geological strata; and at the same time he was forlorn like a child. An outcast, in a certain sense; but with the desperate bravery of his rat-like existence.

"At least it's wonderful what you've done at your time of life," said Clifford contemplatively.

"I'm thirty... yes, I'm thirty!" said Michaelis, sharply and suddenly, with a curious laugh; hollow, triumphant, and bitter.

"And are you alone?" asked Connie.

"How do you mean? Do I live alone? I've got my servant. He's a Greek, so he says, and quite incompetent. But I keep him. And I'm going to marry. Oh, yes, I must marry."

"It sounds like going to have your tonsils cut," laughed Connie. "Will it be an effort?"

He looked at her admiringly. "Well, Lady Chatterley, somehow it will! I find... excuse me... I find I can't marry an Englishwoman, not even an Irishwoman..."

"Try an American," said Clifford.

"Oh, American!" He laughed a hollow laugh. "No, I've asked my man if he will find me a Turk or something... something nearer to the Oriental."

Connie really wondered at this queer, melancholy specimen of extraordinary success; it was said he had an income of fifty thousand dollars from America alone. Sometimes he was handsome: sometimes as he looked sideways, downwards, and the light fell on him, he had the silent, enduring beauty of a carved ivory Negro³¹ mask, with his rather full eyes, and the strong queerly-arched brows, the immobile, compressed mouth; that momentary but revealed immobility, an immobility, a timelessness which the Buddha aims at, and which Negroes express sometimes without ever aiming at it; something old, old, and acquiescent in the race! Aeons of acquiescence in race destiny, instead of our individual resistance. And then a swimming through, like rats in a dark river. Connie felt a sudden, strange leap of sympathy for him, a leap mingled with compassion, and tinged with repulsion, amounting almost to love. The outsider! The outsider! And they called him a bounder! How much more bounderish and assertive Clifford looked! How much stupider!

Michaelis knew at once he had made an impression on her. He turned his full, hazel, slightly prominent eyes on her in a look of pure detachment. He was estimating her, and the extent of the impression he had made. With the English nothing could save him from being the eternal outsider, not even love. Yet women sometimes fell for him... Englishwomen too.

He knew just where he was with Clifford. They were two alien dogs which would have liked to snarl at one another, but which smiled instead, perforce. But with the woman he was not quite so sure.

Breakfast was served in the bedrooms; Clifford never appeared before lunch, and the dining-room was a little dreary. After coffee Michaelis, restless and ill-sitting soul, wondered what he should do. It was a fine November day... fine for Wragby. He looked over the melancholy park. My God! What a place!

He sent a servant to ask, could he be of any service to Lady Chatterley: he thought of driving into Sheffield. The answer came, would he care to go up to Lady Chatterley's sitting-room.

Connie had a sitting-room on the third floor, the top floor of the central portion of the house. Clifford's rooms were on the ground floor, of course. Michaelis was flattered by being asked up to Lady Chatterley's own parlour. He followed blindly after the servant... He never noticed things, or had contact with his surroundings. In her room he did glance vaguely round at the fine German reproductions of Renoir and Cezanne.

"It's very pleasant up here," he said, with his queer smile, as if it hurt him to smile, showing his teeth. "You are wise to get up to the top."

"Yes, I think so," she said.

Her room was the only gay, modern one in the house, the only spot in Wragby where her personality was at all revealed. Clifford had never seen it, and she asked very few people up.

Now she and Michaelis sit on opposite sides of the fire and talked. She asked him about himself, his mother and father, his brothers... other people were always something of a wonder to her, and when her sympathy was awakened she was quite devoid of class feeling. Michaelis talked frankly about himself, quite frankly, without affectation, simply revealing his bitter, indifferent, stray-dog's soul, then showing a gleam of revengeful pride in his success.

"But why are you such a lonely bird?" Connie asked him; and again he looked at her, with his full, searching, hazel look.

³¹ Слово Negro (негр) в современном английском языке считается оскорбительным.

"Some birds are that way," he replied. Then, with a touch of familiar irony: "but, look here, what about yourself? Aren't you by way of being a lonely bird yourself?" Connie, a little startled, thought about it for a few moments, and then she said: "Only in a way! Not altogether, like you!"

"Am I altogether a lonely bird?" he asked, with his queer grin of a smile, as if he had toothache; it was so wry, and his eyes were so perfectly unchangingly melancholy, or stoical, or disillusioned or afraid.

"Why?" she said, a little breathless, as she looked at him. "You are, aren't you?"

She felt a terrible appeal coming to her from him, that made her almost lose her balance.

"Oh, you're quite right!" he said, turning his head away, and looking sideways, downwards, with that strange immobility of an old race that is hardly here in our present day. It was that that really made Connie lose her power to see him detached from herself.

He looked up at her with the full glance that saw everything, registered everything. At the same time, the infant crying in the night was crying out of his breast to her, in a way that affected her very womb.

"It's awfully nice of you to think of me," he said laconically.

"Why shouldn't I think of you?" she exclaimed, with hardly breath to utter it.

He gave the wry, quick hiss of a laugh.

"Oh, in that way!.. May I hold your hand for a minute?" he asked suddenly, fixing his eyes on her with almost hypnotic power, and sending out an appeal that affected her direct in the womb.

She stared at him, dazed and transfixed, and he went over and knelt beside her, and took her two feet close in his two hands, and buried his face in her lap, remaining motionless. She was perfectly dim and dazed, looking down in a sort of amazement at the rather tender nape of his neck, feeling his face pressing her thighs. In all her burning dismay, she could not help putting her hand, with tenderness and compassion, on the defenceless nape of his neck, and he trembled, with a deep shudder.

Then he looked up at her with that awful appeal in his full, glowing eyes. She was utterly incapable of resisting it. From her breast flowed the answering, immense yearning over him; she must give him anything, anything.

He was a curious and very gentle lover, very gentle with the woman, trembling uncontrollably, and yet at the same time detached, aware, aware of every sound outside.

To her it meant nothing except that she gave herself to him. And at length he ceased to quiver any more, and lay quite still, quite still. Then, with dim, compassionate fingers, she stroked his head, that lay on her breast.

When he rose, he kissed both her hands, then both her feet, in their suede slippers, and in silence went away to the end of the room, where he stood with his back to her. There was silence for some minutes. Then he turned and came to her again as she sat in her old place by the fire.

"And now, I suppose you'll hate me!" he said in a quiet, inevitable way. She looked up at him quickly.

"Why should I?" she asked.

"They mostly do," he said; then he caught himself up. "I mean... a woman is supposed to."

"This is the last moment when I ought to hate you," she said resentfully.

"I know! I know! It should be so! You're frightfully good to me..." he cried miserably.

She wondered why he should be miserable. "Won't you sit down again?" she said. He glanced at the door.

"Sir Clifford!" he said, "won't he... won't he be...?" She paused a moment to consider. "Perhaps!" she said. And she looked up at him. "I don't want Clifford to know not even to suspect. It would hurt him so much. But I don't think it's wrong, do you?"

"Wrong! Good God, no! You're only too infinitely good to me... I can hardly bear it."

He turned aside, and she saw that in another moment he would be sobbing.

“But we needn’t let Clifford know, need we?” she pleaded. “It would hurt him so. And if he never knows, never suspects, it hurts nobody.”

“Me!” he said, almost fiercely; “he’ll know nothing from me! You see if he does. Me give myself away! Ha! Ha!” he laughed hollowly, cynically, at such an idea. She watched him in wonder. He said to her: “May I kiss your hand and go? I’ll run into Sheffield I think, and lunch there, if I may, and be back to tea. May I do anything for you? May I be sure you don’t hate me? – and that you won’t?” – he ended with a desperate note of cynicism.

“No, I don’t hate you,” she said. “I think you’re nice.”

“Ah!” he said to her fiercely, “I’d rather you said that to me than said you love me! It means such a lot more... Till afternoon then. I’ve plenty to think about till then.” He kissed her hands humbly and was gone.

“I don’t think I can stand that young man,” said Clifford at lunch.

“Why?” asked Connie.

“He’s such a bounder underneath his veneer... just waiting to bounce us.”

“I think people have been so unkind to him,” said Connie.

“Do you wonder? And do you think he employs his shining hours doing deeds of kindness?”

“I think he has a certain sort of generosity.”

“Towards whom?”

“I don’t quite know.”

“Naturally you don’t. I’m afraid you mistake unscrupulousness for generosity.”

Connie paused. Did she? It was just possible. Yet the unscrupulousness of Michaelis had a certain fascination for her. He went whole lengths where Clifford only crept a few timid paces. In his way he had conquered the world, which was what Clifford wanted to do. Ways and means...? Were those of Michaelis more despicable than those of Clifford? Was the way the poor outsider had shoved and bounced himself forward in person, and by the back doors, any worse than Clifford’s way of advertising himself into prominence? The bitch-goddess, Success, was trailed by thousands of gasping dogs with lolling tongues. The one that got her first was the real dog among dogs, if you go by success! So Michaelis could keep his tail up.

The queer thing was, he didn’t. He came back towards tea-time with a large handful of violets and lilies, and the same hang-dog expression. Connie wondered sometimes if it were a sort of mask to disarm opposition, because it was almost too fixed. Was he really such a sad dog?

His sad-dog sort of extinguished self persisted all the evening, though through it Clifford felt the inner effrontery. Connie didn’t feel it, perhaps because it was not directed against women; only against men, and their presumptions and assumptions. That indestructible, inward effrontery in the meagre fellow was what made men so down on Michaelis. His very presence was an affront to a man of society, cloak it as he might in an assumed good manner.

Connie was in love with him, but she managed to sit with her embroidery and let the men talk, and not give herself away. As for Michaelis, he was perfect; exactly the same melancholic, attentive, aloof young fellow of the previous evening, millions of degrees remote from his hosts, but laconically playing up to them to the required amount, and never coming forth to them for a moment. Connie felt he must have forgotten the morning. He had not forgotten. But he knew where he was... in the same old place outside, where the born outsiders are. He didn’t take the love-making altogether personally. He knew it would not change him from an ownerless dog, whom everybody begrudges its golden collar, into a comfortable society dog.

The final fact being that at the very bottom of his soul he was an outsider, and anti-social, and he accepted the fact inwardly, no matter how Bond-Streety he was on the outside. His isolation was a necessity to him; just as the appearance of conformity and mixing-in with the smart people was also a necessity.

But occasional love, as a comfort and soothing, was also a good thing, and he was not ungrateful. On the contrary, he was burningly, poignantly grateful for a piece of natural, spontaneous kindness: almost to tears. Beneath his pale, immobile, disillusioned face, his child's soul was sobbing with gratitude to the woman, and burning to come to her again; just as his outcast soul was knowing he would keep really clear of her.

He found an opportunity to say to her, as they were lighting the candles in the hall:

"May I come?"

"I'll come to you," she said.

"Oh, good!"

He waited for her a long time... but she came.

He was the trembling excited sort of lover, whose crisis soon came, and was finished. There was something curiously childlike and defenceless about his naked body: as children are naked. His defences were all in his wits and cunning, his very instincts of cunning, and when these were in abeyance he seemed doubly naked and like a child, of unfinished, tender flesh, and somehow struggling helplessly.

He roused in the woman a wild sort of compassion and yearning, and a wild, craving physical desire. The physical desire he did not satisfy in her; he was always come and finished so quickly, then shrinking down on her breast, and recovering somewhat his effrontery while she lay dazed, disappointed, lost.

But then she soon learnt to hold him, to keep him there inside her when his crisis was over. And there he was generous and curiously potent; he stayed firm inside her, giving to her, while she was active... wildly, passionately active, coming to her own crisis. And as he felt the frenzy of her achieving her own orgasmic satisfaction from his hard, erect passivity, he had a curious sense of pride and satisfaction.

"Ah, how good!" she whispered tremulously, and she became quite still, clinging to him. And he lay there in his own isolation, but somehow proud.

He stayed that time only the three days, and to Clifford was exactly the same as on the first evening; to Connie also. There was no breaking down his external man.

He wrote to Connie with the same plaintive melancholy note as ever, sometimes witty, and touched with a queer, sexless affection. A kind of hopeless affection he seemed to feel for her, and the essential remoteness remained the same. He was hopeless at the very core of him, and he wanted to be hopeless. He rather hated hope. "Une immense esprance a travers la terre",³² he read somewhere, and his comment was: ' – and it's darned-well drowned everything worth having.'

Connie never really understood him, but, in her way, she loved him. And all the time she felt the reflection of his hopelessness in her. She couldn't quite, quite love in hopelessness. And he, being hopeless, couldn't ever quite love at all.

So they went on for quite a time, writing, and meeting occasionally in London. She still wanted the physical, sexual thrill she could get with him by her own activity, his little orgasm being over. And he still wanted to give it her. Which was enough to keep them connected.

And enough to give her a subtle sort of self-assurance, something blind and a little arrogant. It was an almost mechanical confidence in her own powers, and went with a great cheerfulness.

She was terrifically cheerful at Wragby. And she used all her aroused cheerfulness and satisfaction to stimulate Clifford, so that he wrote his best at this time, and was almost happy in his strange blind way. He really reaped the fruits of the sensual satisfaction she got out of Michaelis' male passivity erect inside her. But of course he never knew it, and if he had, he wouldn't have said thank you!

³² Une immense esprance a travers la terre (*фр.*) – «великая надежда проходит по земле» – строка из стихотворения французского поэта Альфреда де Мюссе (1810–1857) «Надежда на Бога» (*L'Espoir en Dieu*), 1837 г.

Yet when those days of her grand joyful cheerfulness and stimulus were gone, quite gone, and she was depressed and irritable, how Clifford longed for them again! Perhaps if he'd known he might even have wished to get her and Michaelis together again.

Chapter 4

Connie always had a foreboding of the hopelessness of her affair with Mick, as people called him. Yet other men seemed to mean nothing to her. She was attached to Clifford. He wanted a good deal of her life and she gave it to him. But she wanted a good deal from the life of a man, and this Clifford did not give her; could not. There were occasional spasms of Michaelis. But, as she knew by foreboding, that would come to an end. Mick couldn't keep anything up. It was part of his very being that he must break off any connexion, and be loose, isolated, absolutely lone dog again. It was his major necessity, even though he always said: She turned me down!

The world is supposed to be full of possibilities, but they narrow down to pretty few in most personal experience. There's lots of good fish in the sea... maybe... but the vast masses seem to be mackerel or herring, and if you're not mackerel or herring yourself you are likely to find very few good fish in the sea.

Clifford was making strides into fame, and even money. People came to see him. Connie nearly always had somebody at Wragby. But if they weren't mackerel they were herring, with an occasional cat-fish, or conger-eel.

There were a few regular men, constants; men who had been at Cambridge with Clifford. There was Tommy Dukes, who had remained in the army, and was a Brigadier-General.³³ "The army leaves me time to think, and saves me from having to face the battle of life," he said.

There was Charles May, an Irishman, who wrote scientifically about stars. There was Hammond, another writer. All were about the same age as Clifford; the young intellectuals of the day. They all believed in the life of the mind. What you did apart from that was your private affair, and didn't much matter. No one thinks of inquiring of another person at what hour he retires to the privy. It isn't interesting to anyone but the person concerned.

And so with most of the matters of ordinary life... how you make your money, or whether you love your wife, or if you have "affairs". All these matters concern only the person concerned, and, like going to the privy, have no interest for anyone else.

"The whole point about the sexual problem," said Hammond, who was a tall thin fellow with a wife and two children, but much more closely connected with a typewriter, "is that there is no point to it. Strictly there is no problem. We don't want to follow a man into the w. c., so why should we want to follow him into bed with a woman? And therein lies the problem. If we took no more notice of the one thing than the other, there'd be no problem. It's all utterly senseless and pointless; a matter of misplaced curiosity."

"Quite, Hammond, quite! But if someone starts making love to Julia, you begin to simmer; and if he goes on, you are soon at boiling point."... Julia was Hammond's wife.

"Why, exactly! So I should be if he began to urinate in a corner of my drawing-room. There's a place for all these things."

"You mean you wouldn't mind if he made love to Julia in some discreet alcove?"

Charlie May was slightly satirical, for he had flirted a very little with Julia, and Hammond had cut up very roughly.

"Of course I should mind. Sex is a private thing between me and Julia; and of course I should mind anyone else trying to mix in."

"As a matter of fact," said the lean and freckled Tommy Dukes, who looked much more Irish than May, who was pale and rather fat: "As a matter of fact, Hammond, you have a strong property instinct, and a strong will to self-assertion, and you want success. Since I've been in the army

³³ Бригадный генерал – воинское звание в армии Великобритании; низший ранг среди званий высшего командного состава.

definitely, I've got out of the way of the world, and now I see how inordinately strong the craving for self-assertion and success is in men. It is enormously overdeveloped. All our individuality has run that way. And of course men like you think you'll get through better with a woman's backing. That's why you're so jealous. That's what sex is to you... a vital little dynamo between you and Julia, to bring success. If you began to be unsuccessful you'd begin to flirt, like Charlie, who isn't successful. Married people like you and Julia have labels on you, like travellers' trunks. Julia is labelled MRS Arnold B. Hammond – just like a trunk on the railway that belongs to somebody. And you are labelled Arnold B. Hammond, c/o Mrs Arnold B. Hammond. Oh, you're quite right, you're quite right! The life of the mind needs a comfortable house and decent cooking. You're quite right. It even needs posterity. But it all hinges on the instinct for success. That is the pivot on which all things turn."

Hammond looked rather piqued. He was rather proud of the integrity of his mind, and of his not being a time-server. None the less, he did want success.

"It's quite true, you can't live without cash," said May. "You've got to have a certain amount of it to be able to live and get along... even to be free to think you must have a certain amount of money, or your stomach stops you. But it seems to me you might leave the labels off sex. We're free to talk to anybody; so why shouldn't we be free to make love to any woman who inclines us that way?"

"There speaks the lascivious Celt," said Clifford.

"Lascivious! well, why not?... I can't see I do a woman any more harm by sleeping with her than by dancing with her... or even talking to her about the weather. It's just an interchange of sensations instead of ideas, so why not?"

"Be as promiscuous as the rabbits!" said Hammond.

"Why not? What's wrong with rabbits? Are they any worse than a neurotic, revolutionary humanity, full of nervous hate?"

"But we're not rabbits, even so," said Hammond.

"Precisely! I have my mind: I have certain calculations to make in certain astronomical matters that concern me almost more than life or death. Sometimes indigestion interferes with me. Hunger would interfere with me disastrously. In the same way starved sex interferes with me. What then?"

"I should have thought sexual indigestion from surfeit would have interfered with you more seriously," said Hammond satirically.

"Not it! I don't over-eat myself and I don't over-fuck myself. One has a choice about eating too much. But you would absolutely starve me."

"Not at all! You can marry."

"How do you know I can? It may not suit the process of my mind. Marriage might... and would... stultify my mental processes. I'm not properly pivoted that way... and so must I be chained in a kennel like a monk? All rot and funk, my boy. I must live and do my calculations. I need women sometimes. I refuse to make a mountain of it, and I refuse anybody's moral condemnation or prohibition. I'd be ashamed to see a woman walking around with my name-label on her, address and railway station, like a wardrobe trunk."

These two men had not forgiven each other about the Julia flirtation.

"It's an amusing idea, Charlie," said Dukes, "that sex is just another form of talk, where you act the words instead of saying them. I suppose it's quite true. I suppose we might exchange as many sensations and emotions with women as we do ideas about the weather, and so on. Sex might be a sort of normal physical conversation between a man and a woman. You don't talk to a woman unless you have ideas in common: that is you don't talk with any interest. And in the same way, unless you had some emotion or sympathy in common with a woman you wouldn't sleep with her. But if you had..."

"If you have the proper sort of emotion or sympathy with a woman, you ought to sleep with her," said May. "It's the only decent thing, to go to bed with her. Just as, when you are interested talking to someone, the only decent thing is to have the talk out. You don't prudishly put your tongue between your teeth and bite it. You just say out your say. And the same the other way."

"No," said Hammond. "It's wrong. You, for example, May, you squander half your force with women. You'll never really do what you should do, with a fine mind such as yours. Too much of it goes the other way."

"Maybe it does... and too little of you goes that way, Hammond, my boy, married or not. You can keep the purity and integrity of your mind, but it's going damned dry. Your pure mind is going as dry as fiddlesticks, from what I see of it. You're simply talking it down."

Tommy Dukes burst into a laugh.

"Go it, you two minds!" he said. "Look at me... I don't do any high and pure mental work, nothing but jot down a few ideas. And yet I neither marry nor run after women. I think Charlie's quite right; if he wants to run after the women, he's quite free not to run too often. But I wouldn't prohibit him from running. As for Hammond, he's got a property instinct, so naturally the straight road and the narrow gate are right for him. You'll see he'll be an English Man of Letters before he's done. A. B. C. from top to toe. Then there's me. I'm nothing. Just a squib. And what about you, Clifford? Do you think sex is a dynamo to help a man on to success in the world?"

Clifford rarely talked much at these times. He never held forth; his ideas were really not vital enough for it, he was too confused and emotional. Now he blushed and looked uncomfortable.

"Well!" he said, "being myself hors de combat,³⁴ I don't see I've anything to say on the matter."

"Not at all," said Dukes; "the top of you's by no means hors de combat. You've got the life of the mind sound and intact. So let us hear your ideas."

"Well," stammered Clifford, "even then I don't suppose I have much idea... I suppose marry-and-have-done-with-it would pretty well stand for what I think. Though of course between a man and woman who care for one another, it is a great thing."

"What sort of great thing?" said Tommy.

"Oh... it perfects the intimacy," said Clifford, uneasy as a woman in such talk.

"Well, Charlie and I believe that sex is a sort of communication like speech. Let any woman start a sex conversation with me, and it's natural for me to go to bed with her to finish it, all in due season. Unfortunately no woman makes any particular start with me, so I go to bed by myself; and am none the worse for it... I hope so, anyway, for how should I know? Anyhow I've no starry calculations to be interfered with, and no immortal works to write. I'm merely a fellow skulking in the army..."

Silence fell. The four men smoked. And Connie sat there and put another stitch in her sewing... Yes, she sat there! She had to sit mum. She had to be quiet as a mouse, not to interfere with the immensely important speculations of these highly-mental gentlemen. But she had to be there. They didn't get on so well without her; their ideas didn't flow so freely. Clifford was much more hedgy and nervous, he got cold feet much quicker in Connie's absence, and the talk didn't run. Tommy Dukes came off best; he was a little inspired by her presence. Hammond she didn't really like; he seemed so selfish in a mental way. And Charles May, though she liked something about him, seemed a little distasteful and messy, in spite of his stars.

How many evenings had Connie sat and listened to the manifestations of these four men! these, and one or two others. That they never seemed to get anywhere didn't trouble her deeply. She liked to hear what they had to say, especially when Tommy was there. It was fun. Instead of

³⁴ Hors de combat (*фр.*) – вышедший из строя (в результате ранения).

men kissing you, and touching you with their bodies, they revealed their minds to you. It was great fun! But what cold minds!

And also it was a little irritating. She had more respect for Michaelis, on whose name they all poured such withering contempt, as a little mongrel arriviste, and uneducated bounder of the worst sort. Mongrel and bounder or not, he jumped to his own conclusions. He didn't merely walk round them with millions of words, in the parade of the life of the mind.

Connie quite liked the life of the mind, and got a great thrill out of it. But she did think it overdid itself a little. She loved being there, amidst the tobacco smoke of those famous evenings of the cronies, as she called them privately to herself. She was infinitely amused, and proud too, that even their talking they could not do, without her silent presence. She had an immense respect for thought... and these men, at least, tried to think honestly. But somehow there was a cat, and it wouldn't jump. They all alike talked at something, though what it was, for the life of her she couldn't say. It was something that Mick didn't clear, either.

But then Mick wasn't trying to do anything, but just get through his life, and put as much across other people as they tried to put across him. He was really anti-social, which was what Clifford and his cronies had against him. Clifford and his cronies were not anti-social; they were more or less bent on saving mankind, or on instructing it, to say the least.

There was a gorgeous talk on Sunday evening, when the conversation drifted again to love.

“Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in kindred something-or-other” —

said Tommy Dukes. “I'd like to know what the tie is... The tie that binds us just now is mental friction on one another. And, apart from that, there's damned little tie between us. We bust apart, and say spiteful things about one another, like all the other damned intellectuals in the world. Damned everybodies, as far as that goes, for they all do it. Else we bust apart, and cover up the spiteful things we feel against one another by saying false sugaries. It's a curious thing that the mental life seems to flourish with its roots in spite, ineffable and fathomless spite. Always has been so! Look at Socrates,³⁵ in Plato,³⁶ and his bunch round him! The sheer spite of it all, just sheer joy in pulling somebody else to bits... Protagoras,³⁷ or whoever it was! And Alcibiades,³⁸ and all the other little disciple dogs joining in the fray! I must say it makes one prefer Buddha, quietly sitting under a bo-tree, or Jesus, telling his disciples little Sunday stories, peacefully, and without any mental fireworks. No, there's something wrong with the mental life, radically. It's rooted in spite and envy, envy and spite. Ye shall know the tree by its fruit.”

“I don't think we're altogether so spiteful,” protested Clifford.

“My dear Clifford, think of the way we talk each other over, all of us. I'm rather worse than anybody else, myself. Because I infinitely prefer the spontaneous spite to the concocted sugaries; now they are poison; when I begin saying what a fine fellow Clifford is, etc., etc., then poor Clifford is to be pitied. For God's sake, all of you, say spiteful things about me, then I shall know I mean something to you. Don't say sugaries, or I'm done.”

“Oh, but I do think we honestly like one another,” said Hammond.

³⁵ Сократ (470/469–399 гг. д. н. э.) – древнегреческий философ, учитель Платона.

³⁶ Платон (428/427–348/347 гг. д. н. э.) – древнегреческий философ, ученик Сократа. Первый античный философ, чьи учения сохранились в виде написанных им самим трудов. В своих произведениях в форме диалогов описывает высказывания и учения других философов (в том числе упомянутых здесь Сократа, Протагора, Алкивиада) и дискуссии между ними.

³⁷ Протагор (ок. 485–410 гг. д. н. э.) – древнегреческий философ, основоположник движения софистов. Платон подвергал его идеи серьезной критике.

³⁸ Алкивиад (ок. 450–404 гг. д. н. э.) – древнегреческий политик и оратор, появляется как персонаж в работах Платона.

"I tell you we must... we say such spiteful things to one another, about one another, behind our backs! I'm the worst."

"And I do think you confuse the mental life with the critical activity. I agree with you, Socrates gave the critical activity a grand start, but he did more than that," said Charlie May, rather magisterially. The cronies had such a curious pomposity under their assumed modesty. It was all so ex cathedra, and it all pretended to be so humble.

Dukes refused to be drawn about Socrates.

"That's quite true, criticism and knowledge are not the same thing," said Hammond.

"They aren't, of course," chimed in Berry, a brown, shy young man, who had called to see Dukes, and was staying the night.

They all looked at him as if the ass had spoken.

"I wasn't talking about knowledge... I was talking about the mental life," laughed Dukes. "Real knowledge comes out of the whole corpus of the consciousness; out of your belly and your penis as much as out of your brain and mind. The mind can only analyse and rationalize. Set the mind and the reason to cock it over the rest, and all they can do is to criticize, and make a deadness. I say all they can do. It is vastly important. My God, the world needs criticizing today... criticizing to death. Therefore let's live the mental life, and glory in our spite, and strip the rotten old show. But, mind you, it's like this: while you live your life, you are in some way an Organic whole with all life. But once you start the mental life you pluck the apple. You've severed the connexion between the apple and the tree: the organic connexion. And if you've got nothing in your life but the mental life, then you yourself are a plucked apple... you've fallen off the tree. And then it is a logical necessity to be spiteful, just as it's a natural necessity for a plucked apple to go bad."

Clifford made big eyes: it was all stuff to him. Connie secretly laughed to herself.

"Well then we're all plucked apples," said Hammond, rather acidly and petulantly.

"So let's make cider of ourselves," said Charlie.

"But what do you think of Bolshevism?" put in the brown Berry, as if everything had led up to it.

"Bravo!" roared Charlie. "What do you think of Bolshevism?"

"Come on! Let's make hay of Bolshevism!" said Dukes.

"I'm afraid Bolshevism is a large question," said Hammond, shaking his head seriously.

"Bolshevism, it seems to me," said Charlie, "is just a superlative hatred of the thing they call the bourgeois; and what the bourgeois is, isn't quite defined. It is Capitalism, among other things. Feelings and emotions are also so decidedly bourgeois that you have to invent a man without them.

"Then the individual, especially the personal man, is bourgeois: so he must be suppressed. You must submerge yourselves in the greater thing, the Soviet-social thing. Even an organism is bourgeois: so the ideal must be mechanical. The only thing that is a unit, non-organic, composed of many different, yet equally essential parts, is the machine. Each man a machine-part, and the driving power of the machine, hate... hate of the bourgeois. That, to me, is Bolshevism."

"Absolutely!" said Tommy. "But also, it seems to me a perfect description of the whole of the industrial ideal. It's the factory-owner's ideal in a nut-shell; except that he would deny that the driving power was hate. Hate it is, all the same; hate of life itself. Just look at these Midlands, if it isn't plainly written up... but it's all part of the life of the mind, it's a logical development."

"I deny that Bolshevism is logical, it rejects the major part of the premisses," said Hammond.

"My dear man, it allows the material premiss; so does the pure mind... exclusively."

"At least Bolshevism has got down to rock bottom," said Charlie.

"Rock bottom! The bottom that has no bottom! The Bolsheviks will have the finest army in the world in a very short time, with the finest mechanical equipment.

"But this thing can't go on... this hate business. There must be a reaction..." said Hammond.

“Well, we’ve been waiting for years... we wait longer. Hate’s a growing thing like anything else. It’s the inevitable outcome of forcing ideas on to life, of forcing one’s deepest instincts; our deepest feelings we force according to certain ideas. We drive ourselves with a formula, like a machine. The logical mind pretends to rule the roost, and the roost turns into pure hate. We’re all Bolsheviks, only we are hypocrites. The Russians are Bolsheviks without hypocrisy.”

“But there are many other ways,” said Hammond, “than the Soviet way. The Bolsheviks aren’t really intelligent.”

“Of course not. But sometimes it’s intelligent to be half-witted: if you want to make your end. Personally, I consider Bolshevism half-witted; but so do I consider our social life in the west half-witted. So I even consider our far-famed mental life half-witted. We’re all as cold as cretins, we’re all as passionless as idiots. We’re all of us Bolsheviks, only we give it another name. We think we’re gods... men like gods! It’s just the same as Bolshevism. One has to be human, and have a heart and a penis if one is going to escape being either a god or a Bolshevik... for they are the same thing: they’re both too good to be true.”

Out of the disapproving silence came Berry’s anxious question:

“You do believe in love then, Tommy, don’t you?”

“You lovely lad!” said Tommy. “No, my cherub, nine times out of ten, no! Love’s another of those half-witted performances today. Fellows with swaying waists fucking little jazz girls with small boy buttocks, like two collar studs! Do you mean that sort of love? Or the joint-property, make-a-success-of-it, My-husband-my-wife sort of love? No, my fine fellow, I don’t believe in it at all!”

“But you do believe in something?”

“Me? Oh, intellectually I believe in having a good heart, a chirpy penis, a lively intelligence, and the courage to say “shit!” in front of a lady.”

“Well, you’ve got them all,” said Berry.

Tommy Dukes roared with laughter. “You angel boy! If only I had! If only I had! No; my heart’s as numb as a potato, my penis droops and never lifts its head up, I dare rather cut him clean off than say “shit!” in front of my mother or my aunt... they are real ladies, mind you; and I’m not really intelligent, I’m only a “mental-lifer”. It would be wonderful to be intelligent: then one would be alive in all the parts mentioned and unmentionable. The penis rouses his head and says: How do you do? – to any really intelligent person. Renoir said he painted his pictures with his penis³⁹... he did too, lovely pictures! I wish I did something with mine. God! when one can only talk! Another torture added to Hades!⁴⁰ And Socrates started it.”

“There are nice women in the world,” said Connie, lifting her head up and speaking at last.

The men resented it... she should have pretended to hear nothing. They hated her admitting she had attended so closely to such talk.

“My God!
If they be not nice to me
What care i how nice they be?”

“No, it’s hopeless! I just simply can’t vibrate in unison with a woman. There’s no woman I can really want when I’m faced with her, and I’m not going to start forcing myself to it... My God, no! I’ll remain as I am, and lead the mental life. It’s the only honest thing I can do. I can be

³⁹ Пьер Огюст Ренуар (1841–1919) – французский художник-импрессионист. Когда у него начался возрастной артрит, не позволявший удерживать кисть, Ренуар привязывал ее к пальцам. По легенде, когда какой-то журналист задал ему вопрос, как он рисует с такими скрюченными пальцами, раздраженный Ренуар ответил «Я рисую членом».

⁴⁰ Аид (гр.) – в античной мифологии мир мертвых; часто используется как синоним ада.

quite happy talking to women; but it's all pure, hopelessly pure. Hopelessly pure! What do you say, Hildebrand, my chicken?"

"It's much less complicated if one stays pure," said Berry.

"Yes, life is all too simple!"

Chapter 5

On a frosty morning with a little February sun, Clifford and Connie went for a walk across the park to the wood. That is, Clifford chuffed in his motor-chair, and Connie walked beside him.

The hard air was still sulphurous, but they were both used to it. Round the near horizon went the haze, opalescent with frost and smoke, and on the top lay the small blue sky; so that it was like being inside an enclosure, always inside. Life always a dream or a frenzy, inside an enclosure.

The sheep coughed in the rough, sere grass of the park, where frost lay bluish in the sockets of the tufts. Across the park ran a path to the wood-gate, a fine ribbon of pink. Clifford had had it newly gravelled with sifted gravel from the pit-bank. When the rock and refuse of the underworld had burned and given off its sulphur, it turned bright pink, shrimp-coloured on dry days, darker, crab-coloured on wet. Now it was pale shrimp-colour, with a bluish-white hoar of frost. It always pleased Connie, this underfoot of sifted, bright pink. It's an ill wind that brings nobody good.

Clifford steered cautiously down the slope of the knoll from the hall, and Connie kept her hand on the chair. In front lay the wood, the hazel thicket nearest, the purplish density of oaks beyond. From the wood's edge rabbits bobbed and nibbled. Rooks suddenly rose in a black train, and went trailing off over the little sky.

Connie opened the wood-gate, and Clifford puffed slowly through into the broad riding that ran up an incline between the clean-whipped thickets of the hazel. The wood was a remnant of the great forest where Robin Hood hunted, and this riding was an old, old thoroughfare coming across country. But now, of course, it was only a riding through the private wood. The road from Mansfield swerved round to the north.

In the wood everything was motionless, the old leaves on the ground keeping the frost on their underside. A jay called harshly, many little birds fluttered. But there was no game; no pheasants. They had been killed off during the war, and the wood had been left unprotected, till now Clifford had got his game-keeper again.

Clifford loved the wood; he loved the old oak-trees. He felt they were his own through generations. He wanted to protect them. He wanted this place inviolate, shut off from the world.

The chair chuffed slowly up the incline, rocking and jolting on the frozen clods. And suddenly, on the left, came a clearing where there was nothing but a ravel of dead bracken, a thin and spindly sapling leaning here and there, big sawn stumps, showing their tops and their grasping roots, lifeless. And patches of blackness where the woodmen had burned the brushwood and rubbish.

This was one of the places that Sir Geoffrey had cut during the war for trench timber. The whole knoll, which rose softly on the right of the riding, was denuded and strangely forlorn. On the crown of the knoll where the oaks had stood, now was bareness; and from there you could look out over the trees to the colliery railway, and the new works at Stacks Gate. Connie had stood and looked, it was a breach in the pure seclusion of the wood. It let in the world. But she didn't tell Clifford.

This denuded place always made Clifford curiously angry. He had been through the war, had seen what it meant. But he didn't get really angry till he saw this bare hill. He was having it replanted. But it made him hate Sir Geoffrey.

Clifford sat with a fixed face as the chair slowly mounted. When they came to the top of the rise he stopped; he would not risk the long and very jolty down-slope. He sat looking at the greenish sweep of the riding downwards, a clear way through the bracken and oaks. It swerved at the bottom of the hill and disappeared; but it had such a lovely easy curve, of knights riding and ladies on palfreys.

"I consider this is really the heart of England," said Clifford to Connie, as he sat there in the dim February sunshine.

"Do you?" she said, seating herself in her blue knitted dress, on a stump by the path.

"I do! this is the old England, the heart of it; and I intend to keep it intact."

"Oh yes!" said Connie. But, as she said it she heard the eleven-o'clock hooters at Stacks Gate colliery. Clifford was too used to the sound to notice.

"I want this wood perfect... untouched. I want nobody to trespass in it," said Clifford.

There was a certain pathos. The wood still had some of the mystery of wild, old England; but Sir Geoffrey's cuttings during the war had given it a blow. How still the trees were, with their crinkly, innumerable twigs against the sky, and their grey, obstinate trunks rising from the brown bracken! How safely the birds flitted among them! And once there had been deer, and archers, and monks padding along on asses. The place remembered, still remembered.

Clifford sat in the pale sun, with the light on his smooth, rather blond hair, his reddish full face inscrutable.

"I mind more, not having a son, when I come here, than any other time," he said.

"But the wood is older than your family," said Connie gently.

"Quite!" said Clifford. "But we've preserved it. Except for us it would go... it would be gone already, like the rest of the forest. One must preserve some of the old England!"

"Must one?" said Connie. "If it has to be preserved, and preserved against the new England? It's sad, I know."

"If some of the old England isn't preserved, there'll be no England at all," said Clifford. "And we who have this kind of property, and the feeling for it, must preserve it."

There was a sad pause. "Yes, for a little while," said Connie.

"For a little while! It's all we can do. We can only do our bit. I feel every man of my family has done his bit here, since we've had the place. One may go against convention, but one must keep up tradition." Again there was a pause.

"What tradition?" asked Connie.

"The tradition of England! of this!"

"Yes," she said slowly.

"That's why having a son helps; one is only a link in a chain," he said.

Connie was not keen on chains, but she said nothing. She was thinking of the curious impersonality of his desire for a son.

"I'm sorry we can't have a son," she said.

He looked at her steadily, with his full, pale-blue eyes.

"It would almost be a good thing if you had a child by another man, he said. "If we brought it up at Wragby, it would belong to us and to the place. I don't believe very intensely in fatherhood. If we had the child to rear, it would be our own, and it would carry on. Don't you think it's worth considering?"

Connie looked up at him at last. The child, her child, was just an "it" to him. It... it... it!

"But what about the other man?" she asked.

"Does it matter very much? Do these things really affect us very deeply?... You had that lover in Germany... what is it now? Nothing almost. It seems to me that it isn't these little acts and little connexions we make in our lives that matter so very much. They pass away, and where are they? Where... Where are the snows of yesteryear?... It's what endures through one's life that matters; my own life matters to me, in its long continuance and development. But what do the occasional connexions matter? And the occasional sexual connexions especially! If people don't exaggerate them ridiculously, they pass like the mating of birds. And so they should. What does it matter? It's the life-long companionship that matters. It's the living together from day to day, not the sleeping together once or twice. You and I are married, no matter what happens to us. We have the habit

of each other. And habit, to my thinking, is more vital than any occasional excitement. The long, slow, enduring thing... that's what we live by... not the occasional spasm of any sort. Little by little, living together, two people fall into a sort of unison, they vibrate so intricately to one another. That's the real secret of marriage, not sex; at least not the simple function of sex. You and I are interwoven in a marriage. If we stick to that we ought to be able to arrange this sex thing, as we arrange going to the dentist; since fate has given us a checkmate physically there."

Connie sat and listened in a sort of wonder, and a sort of fear. She did not know if he was right or not. There was Michaelis, whom she loved; so she said to herself. But her love was somehow only an excursion from her marriage with Clifford; the long, slow habit of intimacy, formed through years of suffering and patience. Perhaps the human soul needs excursions, and must not be denied them. But the point of an excursion is that you come home again.

"And wouldn't you mind what man's child I had?" she asked.

"Why, Connie, I should trust your natural instinct of decency and selection. You just wouldn't let the wrong sort of fellow touch you."

She thought of Michaelis! He was absolutely Clifford's idea of the wrong sort of fellow.

"But men and women may have different feelings about the wrong sort of fellow," she said.

"No," he replied. "You care for me. I don't believe you would ever care for a man who was purely antipathetic to me. Your rhythm wouldn't let you."

She was silent. Logic might be unanswerable because it was so absolutely wrong.

"And should you expect me to tell you?" she asked, glancing up at him almost furtively.

"Not at all, I'd better not know... But you do agree with me, don't you, that the casual sex thing is nothing, compared to the long life lived together? Don't you think one can just subordinate the sex thing to the necessities of a long life? Just use it, since that's what we're driven to? After all, do these temporary excitements matter? Isn't the whole problem of life the slow building up of an integral personality, through the years? living an integrated life? There's no point in a disintegrated life. If lack of sex is going to disintegrate you, then go out and have a love-affair. If lack of a child is going to disintegrate you, then have a child if you possibly can. But only do these things so that you have an integrated life, that makes a long harmonious thing. And you and I can do that together... don't you think?... if we adapt ourselves to the necessities, and at the same time weave the adaptation together into a piece with our steadily-lived life. Don't you agree?"

Connie was a little overwhelmed by his words. She knew he was right theoretically. But when she actually touched her steadily-lived life with him she... hesitated. Was it actually her destiny to go on weaving herself into his life all the rest of her life? Nothing else?

Was it just that? She was to be content to weave a steady life with him, all one fabric, but perhaps brocaded with the occasional flower of an adventure. But how could she know what she would feel next year? How could one ever know? How could one say Yes? for years and years? The little yes, gone on a breath! Why should one be pinned down by that butterfly word? Of course it had to flutter away and be gone, to be followed by other yes's and no's! Like the straying of butterflies.

"I think you're right, Clifford. And as far as I can see I agree with you. Only life may turn quite a new face on it all."

"But until life turns a new face on it all, you do agree?"

"Oh yes! I think I do, really."

She was watching a brown spaniel that had run out of a side-path, and was looking towards them with lifted nose, making a soft, fluffy bark. A man with a gun strode swiftly, softly out after the dog, facing their way as if about to attack them; then stopped instead, saluted, and was turning downhill. It was only the new game-keeper, but he had frightened Connie, he seemed to emerge with such a swift menace. That was how she had seen him, like the sudden rush of a threat out of nowhere.

He was a man in dark green velveteens and gaiters... the old style, with a red face and red moustache and distant eyes. He was going quickly downhill.

"Mellors!" called Clifford.

The man faced lightly round, and saluted with a quick little gesture, a soldier!

"Will you turn the chair round and get it started? That makes it easier," said Clifford.

The man at once slung his gun over his shoulder, and came forward with the same curious swift, yet soft movements, as if keeping invisible. He was moderately tall and lean, and was silent. He did not look at Connie at all, only at the chair.

"Connie, this is the new game-keeper, Mellors. You haven't spoken to her ladyship yet, Mellors?"

"No, Sir!" came the ready, neutral words.

The man lifted his hat as he stood, showing his thick, almost fair hair. He stared straight into Connie's eyes, with a perfect, fearless, impersonal look, as if he wanted to see what she was like. He made her feel shy. She bent her head to him shyly, and he changed his hat to his left hand and made her a slight bow, like a gentleman; but he said nothing at all. He remained for a moment still, with his hat in his hand.

"But you've been here some time, haven't you?" Connie said to him.

"Eight months, Madam... your Ladyship!" he corrected himself calmly.

"And do you like it?"

She looked him in the eyes. His eyes narrowed a little, with irony, perhaps with impudence.

"Why, yes, thank you, your Ladyship! I was reared here..."

He gave another slight bow, turned, put his hat on, and strode to take hold of the chair. His voice on the last words had fallen into the heavy broad drag of the dialect... perhaps also in mockery, because there had been no trace of dialect before. He might almost be a gentleman. Anyhow, he was a curious, quick, separate fellow, alone, but sure of himself.

Clifford started the little engine, the man carefully turned the chair, and set it nose-forwards to the incline that curved gently to the dark hazel thicket.

"Is that all then, Sir Clifford?" asked the man.

"No, you'd better come along in case she sticks. The engine isn't really strong enough for the uphill work." The man glanced round for his dog... a thoughtful glance. The spaniel looked at him and faintly moved its tail. A little smile, mocking or teasing her, yet gentle, came into his eyes for a moment, then faded away, and his face was expressionless. They went fairly quickly down the slope, the man with his hand on the rail of the chair, steadying it. He looked like a free soldier rather than a servant. And something about him reminded Connie of Tommy Dukes.

When they came to the hazel grove, Connie suddenly ran forward, and opened the gate into the park. As she stood holding it, the two men looked at her in passing, Clifford critically, the other man with a curious, cool wonder; impersonally wanting to see what she looked like. And she saw in his blue, impersonal eyes a look of suffering and detachment, yet a certain warmth. But why was he so aloof, apart?

Clifford stopped the chair, once through the gate, and the man came quickly, courteously, to close it.

"Why did you run to open?" asked Clifford in his quiet, calm voice, that showed he was displeased. "Mellors would have done it."

"I thought you would go straight ahead," said Connie. "And leave you to run after us?" said Clifford.

"Oh, well, I like to run sometimes!"

Mellors took the chair again, looking perfectly unheeding, yet Connie felt he noted everything. As he pushed the chair up the steepish rise of the knoll in the park, he breathed rather

quickly, through parted lips. He was rather frail really. Curiously full of vitality, but a little frail and quenched. Her woman's instinct sensed it.

Connie fell back, let the chair go on. The day had greyed over; the small blue sky that had poised low on its circular rims of haze was closed in again, the lid was down, there was a raw coldness. It was going to snow. All grey, all grey! the world looked worn out.

The chair waited at the top of the pink path. Clifford looked round for Connie.

"Not tired, are you?" he said.

"Oh, no!" she said.

But she was. A strange, weary yearning, a dissatisfaction had started in her. Clifford did not notice: those were not things he was aware of. But the stranger knew. To Connie, everything in her world and life seemed worn out, and her dissatisfaction was older than the hills.

They came to the house, and around to the back, where there were no steps. Clifford managed to swing himself over on to the low, wheeled house-chair; he was very strong and agile with his arms. Then Connie lifted the burden of his dead legs after him.

The keeper, waiting at attention to be dismissed, watched everything narrowly, missing nothing. He went pale, with a sort of fear, when he saw Connie lifting the inert legs of the man in her arms, into the other chair, Clifford pivoting round as she did so. He was frightened.

"Thanks, then, for the help, Mellors," said Clifford casually, as he began to wheel down the passage to the servants' quarters.

"Nothing else, Sir?" came the neutral voice, like one in a dream.

"Nothing, good morning!"

"Good morning, Sir."

"Good morning! it was kind of you to push the chair up that hill... I hope it wasn't heavy for you," said Connie, looking back at the keeper outside the door.

His eyes came to hers in an instant, as if wakened up. He was aware of her.

"Oh no, not heavy!" he said quickly. Then his voice dropped again into the broad sound of the vernacular: "Good mornin" to your Ladyship!"

"Who is your game-keeper?" Connie asked at lunch.

"Mellors! You saw him," said Clifford.

"Yes, but where did he come from?"

"Nowhere! He was a Tevershall boy... son of a collier, I believe."

"And was he a collier himself?"

"Blacksmith on the pit-bank, I believe: overhead smith. But he was keeper here for two years before the war... before he joined up. My father always had a good opinion of him, so when he came back, and went to the pit for a blacksmith's job, I just took him back here as keeper. I was really very glad to get him... its almost impossible to find a good man round here for a gamekeeper... and it needs a man who knows the people."

"And isn't he married?"

"He was. But his wife went off with... with various men... but finally with a collier at Stacks Gate, and I believe she's living there still."

"So this man is alone?"

"More or less! He has a mother in the village... and a child, I believe."

Clifford looked at Connie, with his pale, slightly prominent blue eyes, in which a certain vagueness was coming. He seemed alert in the foreground, but the background was like the Midlands atmosphere, haze, smoky mist. And the haze seemed to be creeping forward. So when he stared at Connie in his peculiar way, giving her his peculiar, precise information, she felt all the background of his mind filling up with mist, with nothingness. And it frightened her. It made him seem impersonal, almost to idiocy.

And dimly she realized one of the great laws of the human soul: that when the emotional soul receives a wounding shock, which does not kill the body, the soul seems to recover as the body recovers. But this is only appearance. It is really only the mechanism of the re-assumed habit. Slowly, slowly the wound to the soul begins to make itself felt, like a bruise, which only slowly deepens its terrible ache, till it fills all the psyche. And when we think we have recovered and forgotten, it is then that the terrible after-effects have to be encountered at their worst.

So it was with Clifford. Once he was “well”, once he was back at Wragby, and writing his stories, and feeling sure of life, in spite of all, he seemed to forget, and to have recovered all his equanimity. But now, as the years went by, slowly, slowly, Connie felt the bruise of fear and horror coming up, and spreading in him. For a time it had been so deep as to be numb, as it were non-existent. Now slowly it began to assert itself in a spread of fear, almost paralysis. Mentally he still was alert. But the paralysis, the bruise of the too-great shock, was gradually spreading in his affective self.

And as it spread in him, Connie felt it spread in her. An inward dread, an emptiness, an indifference to everything gradually spread in her soul. When Clifford was roused, he could still talk brilliantly and, as it were, command the future: as when, in the wood, he talked about her having a child, and giving an heir to Wragby. But the day after, all the brilliant words seemed like dead leaves, crumpling up and turning to powder, meaning really nothing, blown away on any gust of wind. They were not the leafy words of an effective life, young with energy and belonging to the tree. They were the hosts of fallen leaves of a life that is ineffectual.

So it seemed to her everywhere. The colliers at Tevershall were talking again of a strike, and it seemed to Connie there again it was not a manifestation of energy, it was the bruise of the war that had been in abeyance, slowly rising to the surface and creating the great ache of unrest, and stupor of discontent. The bruise was deep, deep, deep... the bruise of the false inhuman war. It would take many years for the living blood of the generations to dissolve the vast black clot of bruised blood, deep inside their souls and bodies. And it would need a new hope.

Poor Connie! As the years drew on it was the fear of nothingness in her life that affected her. Clifford's mental life and hers gradually began to feel like nothingness. Their marriage, their integrated life based on a habit of intimacy, that he talked about: there were days when it all became utterly blank and nothing. It was words, just so many words. The only reality was nothingness, and over it a hypocrisy of words.

There was Clifford's success: the bitch-goddess! It was true he was almost famous, and his books brought him in a thousand pounds. His photograph appeared everywhere. There was a bust of him in one of the galleries, and a portrait of him in two galleries. He seemed the most modern of modern voices. With his uncanny lame instinct for publicity, he had become in four or five years one of the best known of the young “intellectuals”. Where the intellect came in, Connie did not quite see. Clifford was really clever at that slightly humorous analysis of people and motives which leaves everything in bits at the end. But it was rather like puppies tearing the sofa cushions to bits; except that it was not young and playful, but curiously old, and rather obstinately conceited. It was weird and it was nothing. This was the feeling that echoed and re-echoed at the bottom of Connie's soul: it was all flag, a wonderful display of nothingness; At the same time a display. A display! a display! a display!

Michaelis had seized upon Clifford as the central figure for a play; already he had sketched in the plot, and written the first act. For Michaelis was even better than Clifford at making a display of nothingness. It was the last bit of passion left in these men: the passion for making a display. Sexually they were passionless, even dead. And now it was not money that Michaelis was after. Clifford had never been primarily out for money, though he made it where he could, for money is the seal and stamp of success. And success was what they wanted. They wanted, both of them,

to make a real display... a man's own very display of himself that should capture for a time the vast populace.

It was strange... the prostitution to the bitch-goddess. To Connie, since she was really outside of it, and since she had grown numb to the thrill of it, it was again nothingness. Even the prostitution to the bitch-goddess was nothingness, though the men prostituted themselves innumerable times. Nothingness even that.

Michaelis wrote to Clifford about the play. Of course she knew about it long ago. And Clifford was again thrilled. He was going to be displayed again this time, somebody was going to display him, and to advantage. He invited Michaelis down to Wragby with Act I.

Michaelis came: in summer, in a pale-coloured suit and white suede gloves, with mauve orchids for Connie, very lovely, and Act I was a great success. Even Connie was thrilled... thrilled to what bit of marrow she had left. And Michaelis, thrilled by his power to thrill, was really wonderful... and quite beautiful, in Connie's eyes. She saw in him that ancient motionlessness of a race that can't be disillusioned any more, an extreme, perhaps, of impurity that is pure. On the far side of his supreme prostitution to the bitch-goddess he seemed pure, pure as an African ivory mask that dreams impurity into purity, in its ivory curves and planes.

His moment of sheer thrill with the two Chatterleys, when he simply carried Connie and Clifford away, was one of the supreme moments of Michaelis' life. He had succeeded: he had carried them away. Even Clifford was temporarily in love with him... if that is the way one can put it.

So next morning Mick was more uneasy than ever; restless, devoured, with his hands restless in his trousers pockets. Connie had not visited him in the night... and he had not known where to find her. Coquetry!.. at his moment of triumph.

He went up to her sitting-room in the morning. She knew he would come. And his restlessness was evident. He asked her about his play... did she think it good? He had to hear it praised: that affected him with the last thin thrill of passion beyond any sexual orgasm. And she praised it rapturously. Yet all the while, at the bottom of her soul, she knew it was nothing.

"Look here!" he said suddenly at last. "Why don't you and I make a clean thing of it? Why don't we marry?"

"But I am married," she said, amazed, and yet feeling nothing.

"Oh that!.. he'll divorce you all right... Why don't you and I marry? I want to marry. I know it would be the best thing for me... marry and lead a regular life. I lead the deuce of a life, simply tearing myself to pieces. Look here, you and I, we're made for one another... hand and glove. Why don't we marry? Do you see any reason why we shouldn't?"

Connie looked at him amazed: and yet she felt nothing. These men, they were all alike, they left everything out. They just went off from the top of their heads as if they were squibs, and expected you to be carried heavenwards along with their own thin sticks.

"But I am married already," she said. "I can't leave Clifford, you know."

"Why not? but why not?" he cried. "He'll hardly know you've gone, after six months. He doesn't know that anybody exists, except himself. Why the man has no use for you at all, as far as I can see; he's entirely wrapped up in himself."

Connie felt there was truth in this. But she also felt that Mick was hardly making a display of selflessness.

"Aren't all men wrapped up in themselves?" she asked.

"Oh, more or less, I allow. A man's got to be, to get through. But that's not the point. The point is, what sort of a time can a man give a woman? Can he give her a damn good time, or can't he? If he can't he's no right to the woman..." He paused and gazed at her with his full, hazel eyes, almost hypnotic. "Now I consider," he added, "I can give a woman the darndest good time she can ask for. I think I can guarantee myself."

“And what sort of a good time?” asked Connie, gazing on him still with a sort of amazement, that looked like thrill; and underneath feeling nothing at all.

“Every sort of a good time, damn it, every sort! Dress, jewels up to a point, any nightclub you like, know anybody you want to know, live the pace... travel and be somebody wherever you go... Darn it, every sort of good time.”

He spoke it almost in a brilliancy of triumph, and Connie looked at him as if dazzled, and really feeling nothing at all. Hardly even the surface of her mind was tickled at the glowing prospects he offered her. Hardly even her most outside self responded, that at any other time would have been thrilled. She just got no feeling from it, she couldn't “go off”. She just sat and stared and looked dazzled, and felt nothing, only somewhere she smelt the extraordinarily unpleasant smell of the bitch-goddess.

Mick sat on tenterhooks, leaning forward in his chair, glaring at her almost hysterically: and whether he was more anxious out of vanity for her to say Yes! or whether he was more panic-stricken for fear she should say Yes! – who can tell?

“I should have to think about it,” she said. “I couldn't say now. It may seem to you Clifford doesn't count, but he does. When you think how disabled he is...”

“Oh damn it all! If a fellow's going to trade on his disabilities, I might begin to say how lonely I am, and always have been, and all the rest of the my-eye-Betty-Martin⁴¹ sob-stuff! Damn it all, if a fellow's got nothing but disabilities to recommend him...”

He turned aside, working his hands furiously in his trousers pockets. That evening he said to her:

“You're coming round to my room tonight, aren't you? I don't darn know where your room is.”

“All right!” she said.

He was a more excited lover that night, with his strange, small boy's frail nakedness. Connie found it impossible to come to her crisis before he had really finished his. And he roused a certain craving passion in her, with his little boy's nakedness and softness; she had to go on after he had finished, in the wild tumult and heaving of her loins, while he heroically kept himself up, and present in her, with all his will and self-offering, till she brought about her own crisis, with weird little cries.

When at last he drew away from her, he said, in a bitter, almost sneering little voice:

“You couldn't go off at the same time as a man, could you? You'd have to bring yourself off! You'd have to run the show!”

This little speech, at the moment, was one of the shocks of her life. Because that passive sort of giving himself was so obviously his only real mode of intercourse.

“What do you mean?” she said.

“You know what I mean. You keep on for hours after I've gone off... and I have to hang on with my teeth till you bring yourself off by your own exertions.”

She was stunned by this unexpected piece of brutality, at the moment when she was glowing with a sort of pleasure beyond words, and a sort of love for him. Because, after all, like so many modern men, he was finished almost before he had begun. And that forced the woman to be active.

“But you want me to go on, to get my own satisfaction?” she said.

He laughed grimly: “I want it!” he said. “That's good! I want to hang on with my teeth clenched, while you go for me!”

“But don't you?” she insisted.

⁴¹ All my eye and Betty Martin – устойчивое выражение, означающее «полная чушь». Вариации выражения «all my eye and...» с разными продолжениями используются в различных регионах Англии.

He avoided the question. "All the darned women are like that," he said. "Either they don't go off at all, as if they were dead in there... or else they wait till a chap's really done, and then they start in to bring themselves off, and a chap's got to hang on. I never had a woman yet who went off just at the same moment as I did."

Connie only half heard this piece of novel, masculine information. She was only stunned by his feeling against her... his incomprehensible brutality. She felt so innocent.

"But you want me to have my satisfaction too, don't you?" she repeated.

"Oh, all right! I'm quite willing. But I'm darned if hanging on waiting for a woman to go off is much of a game for a man..."

This speech was one of the crucial blows of Connie's life. It killed something in her. She had not been so very keen on Michaelis; till he started it, she did not want him. It was as if she never positively wanted him. But once he had started her, it seemed only natural for her to come to her own crisis with him. Almost she had loved him for it... almost that night she loved him, and wanted to marry him.

Perhaps instinctively he knew it, and that was why he had to bring down the whole show with a smash; the house of cards. Her whole sexual feeling for him, or for any man, collapsed that night. Her life fell apart from his as completely as if he had never existed.

And she went through the days drearily. There was nothing now but this empty treadmill of what Clifford called the integrated life, the long living together of two people, who are in the habit of being in the same house with one another.

Nothingness! To accept the great nothingness of life seemed to be the one end of living. All the many busy and important little things that make up the grand sum-total of nothingness!

Chapter 6

“Why don’t men and women really like one another nowadays?” Connie asked Tommy Dukes, who was more or less her oracle.

“Oh, but they do! I don’t think since the human species was invented, there has ever been a time when men and women have liked one another as much as they do today. Genuine liking! Take myself. I really like women better than men; they are braver, one can be more frank with them.”

Connie pondered this.

“Ah, yes, but you never have anything to do with them!” she said.

“I? What am I doing but talking perfectly sincerely to a woman at this moment?”

“Yes, talking...”

“And what more could I do if you were a man, than talk perfectly sincerely to you?”

“Nothing perhaps. But a woman...”

“A woman wants you to like her and talk to her, and at the same time love her and desire her; and it seems to me the two things are mutually exclusive.”

“But they shouldn’t be!”

“No doubt water ought not to be so wet as it is; it overdoes it in wetness. But there it is! I like women and talk to them, and therefore I don’t love them and desire them. The two things don’t happen at the same time in me.”

“I think they ought to.”

“All right. The fact that things ought to be something else than what they are, is not my department.

Connie considered this. “It isn’t true,” she said. “Men can love women and talk to them. I don’t see how they can love them without talking, and being friendly and intimate. How can they?”

“Well,” he said, “I don’t know. What’s the use of my generalizing? I only know my own case. I like women, but I don’t desire them. I like talking to them; but talking to them, though it makes me intimate in one direction, sets me poles apart from them as far as kissing is concerned. So there you are! But don’t take me as a general example, probably I’m just a special case: one of the men who like women, but don’t love women, and even hate them if they force me into a pretence of love, or an entangled appearance.

“But doesn’t it make you sad?”

“Why should it? Not a bit! I look at Charlie May, and the rest of the men who have affairs... No, I don’t envy them a bit! If fate sent me a woman I wanted, well and good. Since I don’t know any woman I want, and never see one... why, I presume I’m cold, and really like some women very much.”

“Do you like me?”

“Very much! And you see there’s no question of kissing between us, is there?”

“None at all!” said Connie. “But oughtn’t there to be?”

“Why, in God’s name? I like Clifford, but what would you say if I went and kissed him?”

“But isn’t there a difference?”

“Where does it lie, as far as we’re concerned? We’re all intelligent human beings, and the male and female business is in abeyance. Just in abeyance. How would you like me to start acting up like a continental⁴² male at this moment, and parading the sex thing?”

“I should hate it.”

⁴² Англичане называли «континентальной» культуру Западной Европы.

“Well then! I tell you, if I’m really a male thing at all, I never run across the female of my species. And I don’t miss her, I just like women. Who’s going to force me into loving or pretending to love them, working up the sex game?”

“No, I’m not. But isn’t something wrong?”

“You may feel it, I don’t.”

“Yes, I feel something is wrong between men and women. A woman has no glamour for a man any more.”

“Has a man for a woman?”

She pondered the other side of the question.

“Not much,” she said truthfully.

“Then let’s leave it all alone, and just be decent and simple, like proper human beings with one another. Be damned to the artificial sex-compulsion! I refuse it!”

Connie knew he was right, really. Yet it left her feeling so forlorn, so forlorn and stray. Like a chip on a dreary pond, she felt. What was the point, of her or anything?

It was her youth which rebelled. These men seemed so old and cold. Everything seemed old and cold. And Michaelis let one down so; he was no good. The men didn’t want one; they just didn’t really want a woman, even Michaelis didn’t.

And the bounders who pretended they did, and started working the sex game, they were worse than ever.

It was just dismal, and one had to put up with it. It was quite true, men had no real glamour for a woman: if you could fool yourself into thinking they had, even as she had fooled herself over Michaelis, that was the best you could do. Meanwhile you just lived on and there was nothing to it. She understood perfectly well why people had cocktail parties, and jazzed, and Charlestoned⁴³ till they were ready to drop. You had to take it out some way or other, your youth, or it ate you up. But what a ghastly thing, this youth! You felt as old as Methuselah, and yet the thing fizzed somehow, and didn’t let you be comfortable. A mean sort of life! And no prospect! She almost wished she had gone off with Mick, and made her life one long cocktail party, and jazz evening. Anyhow that was better than just mooning yourself into the grave.

On one of her bad days she went out alone to walk in the wood, ponderously, heeding nothing, not even noticing where she was. The report of a gun not far off startled and angered her.

Then, as she went, she heard voices, and recoiled. People! She didn’t want people. But her quick ear caught another sound, and she roused; it was a child sobbing. At once she attended; someone was ill-treating a child. She strode swinging down the wet drive, her sullen resentment uppermost. She felt just prepared to make a scene.

Turning the corner, she saw two figures in the drive beyond her: the keeper, and a little girl in a purple coat and moleskin cap, crying.

“Ah, shut it up, tha false little bitch!” came the man’s angry voice, and the child sobbed louder.

Constance strode nearer, with blazing eyes. The man turned and looked at her, saluting coolly, but he was pale with anger.

“What’s the matter? Why is she crying?” demanded Constance, peremptory but a little breathless.

A faint smile like a sneer came on the man’s face. “Nay, yo mun ax ‘er,” he replied callously, in broad vernacular.⁴⁴

Connie felt as if he had hit her in the face, and she changed colour. Then she gathered her defiance, and looked at him, her dark blue eyes blazing rather vaguely.

⁴³ To Charlestone – танцевать чарльстон – популярный ритмичный танец с элементами импровизации, получивший распространение в 1920-х гг.

⁴⁴ Broad vernacular – шотландский просторечный диалект.

"I asked you," she panted.

He gave a queer little bow, lifting his hat. "You did, your Ladyship," he said; then, with a return to the vernacular: "but I canna tell yer." And he became a soldier, inscrutable, only pale with annoyance.

Connie turned to the child, a ruddy, black-haired thing of nine or ten. "What is it, dear? Tell me why you're crying!" she said, with the conventionalized sweetness suitable. More violent sobs, self-conscious. Still more sweetness on Connie's part.

"There, there, don't you cry! Tell me what they've done to you!"... an intense tenderness of tone. At the same time she felt in the pocket of her knitted jacket, and luckily found a sixpence.

"Don't you cry then!" she said, bending in front of the child. "See what I've got for you!"

Sobs, snuffles, a fist taken from a blubbered face, and a black shrewd eye cast for a second on the sixpence. Then more sobs, but subduing. "There, tell me what's the matter, tell me!" said Connie, putting the coin into the child's chubby hand, which closed over it.

"It's the... it's the... pussy!"

Shudders of subsiding sobs.

"What pussy, dear?"

After a silence the shy fist, clenching on sixpence, pointed into the bramble brake.

"There!"

Connie looked, and there, sure enough, was a big black cat, stretched out grimly, with a bit of blood on it.

"Oh!" she said in repulsion.

"A poacher, your Ladyship," said the man satirically.

She glanced at him angrily. "No wonder the child cried," she said, "if you shot it when she was there. No wonder she cried!"

He looked into Connie's eyes, laconic, contemptuous, not hiding his feelings. And again Connie flushed; she felt she had been making a scene, the man did not respect her.

"What is your name?" she said playfully to the child. "Won't you tell me your name?"

Sniffs; then very affectedly in a piping voice: "Connie Mellors!"

"Connie Mellors! Well, that's a nice name! And did you come out with your Daddy, and he shot a pussy? But it was a bad pussy!"

The child looked at her, with bold, dark eyes of scrutiny, sizing her up, and her condolence.

"I wanted to stop with my Gran," said the little girl.

"Did you? But where is your Gran?"

The child lifted an arm, pointing down the drive. "At th' cottidge."

"At the cottage! And would you like to go back to her?"

Sudden, shuddering quivers of reminiscent sobs. "Yes!"

"Come then, shall I take you? Shall I take you to your Gran? Then your Daddy can do what he has to do." She turned to the man. "It is your little girl, isn't it?"

He saluted, and made a slight movement of the head in affirmation.

"I suppose I can take her to the cottage?" asked Connie.

"If your Ladyship wishes."

Again he looked into her eyes, with that calm, searching detached glance. A man very much alone, and on his own.

"Would you like to come with me to the cottage, to your Gran, dear?"

The child peeped up again. "Yes!" she simpered.

Connie disliked her; the spoilt, false little female. Nevertheless she wiped her face and took her hand. The keeper saluted in silence.

"Good morning!" said Connie.

It was nearly a mile to the cottage, and Connie senior was well bored by Connie junior by the time the game-keeper's picturesque little home was in sight. The child was already as full to the brim with tricks as a little monkey, and so self-assured.

At the cottage the door stood open, and there was a rattling heard inside. Connie lingered, the child slipped her hand, and ran indoors.

"Gran! Gran!"

"Why, are yer back a'ready!"

The grandmother had been blackleading the stove, it was Saturday morning. She came to the door in her sacking apron, a blacklead-brush in her hand, and a black smudge on her nose. She was a little, rather dry woman.

"Why, whatever?" she said, hastily wiping her arm across her face as she saw Connie standing outside.

"Good morning!" said Connie. "She was crying, so I just brought her home."

The grandmother looked around swiftly at the child:

"Why, wheer was yer Dad?"

The little girl clung to her grandmother's skirts and simpered.

"He was there," said Connie, "but he'd shot a poaching cat, and the child was upset."

"Oh, you'd no right t'ave bothered, Lady Chatterley, I'm sure! I'm sure it was very good of you, but you shouldn't 'ave bothered. Why, did ever you see!' – and the old woman turned to the child: "Fancy Lady Chatterley takin' all that trouble over yer! Why, she shouldn't 'ave bothered!"

"It was no bother, just a walk," said Connie smiling.

"Why, I'm sure 'twas very kind of you, I must say! So she was crying! I knew there'd be something afore they got far. She's frightened of 'im, that's wheer it is. Seems 'e's almost a stranger to 'er, fair a stranger, and I don't think they're two as'd hit it off very easy. He's got funny ways."

Connie didn't know what to say.

"Look, Gran!" simpered the child.

The old woman looked down at the sixpence in the little girl's hand.

"An' sixpence an' all! Oh, your Ladyship, you shouldn't, you shouldn't. Why, isn't Lady Chatterley good to yer! My word, you're a lucky girl this morning!"

She pronounced the name, as all the people did: Chat'ley. – Isn't Lady Chat'ley good to you! – Connie couldn't help looking at the old woman's nose, and the latter again vaguely wiped her face with the back of her wrist, but missed the smudge.

Connie was moving away "Well, thank you ever so much, Lady Chat'ley, I'm sure. Say thank you to Lady Chat'ley!" – this last to the child.

"Thank you," piped the child.

"There's a dear!" laughed Connie, and she moved away, saying "Good morning", heartily relieved to get away from the contact.

Curious, she thought, that that thin, proud man should have that little, sharp woman for a mother!

And the old woman, as soon as Connie had gone, rushed to the bit of mirror in the scullery, and looked at her face. Seeing it, she stamped her foot with impatience. "Of course she had to catch me in my coarse apron, and a dirty face! Nice idea she'd get of me!"

Connie went slowly home to Wragby. "Home!" ... it was a warm word to use for that great, weary warren. But then it was a word that had had its day. It was somehow cancelled. All the great words, it seemed to Connie, were cancelled for her generation: love, joy, happiness, home, mother, father, husband, all these great, dynamic words were half dead now, and dying from day to day. Home was a place you lived in, love was a thing you didn't fool yourself about, joy was a word you applied to a good Charleston, happiness was a term of hypocrisy used to bluff other people, a father was an individual who enjoyed his own existence, a husband was a man you lived with

and kept going in spirits. As for sex, the last of the great words, it was just a cocktail term for an excitement that bucked you up for a while, then left you more raggy than ever. Frayed! It was as if the very material you were made of was cheap stuff, and was fraying out to nothing.

All that really remained was a stubborn stoicism: and in that there was a certain pleasure. In the very experience of the nothingness of life, phase after phase, tape after tape, there was a certain grisly satisfaction. So that's that! Always this was the last utterance: home, love, marriage, Michaelis: So that's that! And when one died, the last words to life would be: So that's that!

Money? Perhaps one couldn't say the same there. Money one always wanted. Money, Success, the bitch-goddess, as Tommy Dukes persisted in calling it, after Henry James, that was a permanent necessity. You couldn't spend your last sou,⁴⁵ and say finally: So that's that! No, if you lived even another ten minutes, you wanted a few more sous for something or other. Just to keep the business mechanically going, you needed money. You had to have it. Money you have to have. You needn't really have anything else. So that's that!

Since, of course, it's not your own fault you are alive. Once you are alive, money is a necessity, and the only absolute necessity. All the rest you can get along without, at a pinch. But not money. Emphatically, that's that!

She thought of Michaelis, and the money she might have had with him; and even that she didn't want. She preferred the lesser amount which she helped Clifford to make by his writing. That she actually helped to make. – 'Clifford and I together, we make twelve hundred a year out of writing'; so she put it to herself. Make money! Make it! Out of nowhere. Wring it out of the thin air! The last feat to be humanly proud of! The rest all-my-eye-Betty-Martin.

So she plodded home to Clifford, to join forces with him again, to make another story out of nothingness: and a story meant money. Clifford seemed to care very much whether his stories were considered first-class literature or not. Strictly, she didn't care. Nothing in it! said her father. Twelve hundred pounds last year! was the retort simple and final.

If you were young, you just set your teeth, and bit on and held on, till the money began to flow from the invisible; it was a question of power. It was a question of will; a subtle, subtle, powerful emanation of will out of yourself brought back to you the mysterious nothingness of money a word on a bit of paper. It was a sort of magic, certainly it was triumph. The bitch-goddess! Well, if one had to prostitute oneself, let it be to a bitch-goddess! One could always despise her even while one prostituted oneself to her, which was good.

Clifford, of course, had still many childish taboos and fetishes. He wanted to be thought "really good", which was all cock-a-hoop nonsense. What was really good was what actually caught on. It was no good being really good and getting left with it. It seemed as if most of the "really good" men just missed the bus. After all you only lived one life, and if you missed the bus, you were just left on the pavement, along with the rest of the failures.

Connie was contemplating a winter in London with Clifford, next winter. He and she had caught the bus all right, so they might as well ride on top for a bit, and show it.

The worst of it was, Clifford tended to become vague, absent, and to fall into fits of vacant depression. It was the wound to his psyche coming out. But it made Connie want to scream. Oh God, if the mechanism of the consciousness itself was going to go wrong, then what was one to do? Hang it all, one did one's bit! Was one to be let down absolutely?

Sometimes she wept bitterly, but even as she wept she was saying to herself: Silly fool, wetting hankies! As if that would get you anywhere!

Since Michaelis, she had made up her mind she wanted nothing. That seemed the simplest solution of the otherwise insoluble. She wanted nothing more than what she'd got; only she wanted to get ahead with what she'd got: Clifford, the stories, Wragby, the Lady-Chatterley business,

⁴⁵ Су – мелкая монета во Франции.

money and fame, such as it was... she wanted to go ahead with it all. Love, sex, all that sort of stuff, just water-ices! Lick it up and forget it. If you don't hang on to it in your mind, it's nothing. Sex especially... nothing! Make up your mind to it, and you've solved the problem. Sex and a cocktail: they both lasted about as long, had the same effect, and amounted to about the same thing.

But a child, a baby! That was still one of the sensations. She would venture very gingerly on that experiment. There was the man to consider, and it was curious, there wasn't a man in the world whose children you wanted. Mick's children! Repulsive thought! As lief have a child to a rabbit! Tommy Dukes? he was very nice, but somehow you couldn't associate him with a baby, another generation. He ended in himself. And out of all the rest of Clifford's pretty wide acquaintance, there was not a man who did not rouse her contempt, when she thought of having a child by him. There were several who would have been quite possible as lover, even Mick. But to let them breed a child on you! Ugh! Humiliation and abomination.

So that was that!

Nevertheless, Connie had the child at the back of her mind. Wait! wait! She would sift the generations of men through her sieve, and see if she couldn't find one who would do. – “Go ye into the streets and by ways of Jerusalem, and see if you can find a man.”⁴⁶ It had been impossible to find a man in the Jerusalem of the prophet, though there were thousands of male humans. But a man! C'est une autre chose!⁴⁷

She had an idea that he would have to be a foreigner: not an Englishman, still less an Irishman. A real foreigner.

But wait! wait! Next winter she would get Clifford to London; the following winter she would get him abroad to the South of France, Italy. Wait! She was in no hurry about the child. That was her own private affair, and the one point on which, in her own queer, female way, she was serious to the bottom of her soul. She was not going to risk any chance comer, not she! One might take a lover almost at any moment, but a man who should beget a child on one... wait! wait! it's a very different matter. – “Go ye into the streets and byways of Jerusalem...” It was not a question of love; it was a question of a man. Why, one might even rather hate him, personally. Yet if he was the man, what would one's personal hate matter? This business concerned another part of oneself.

It had rained as usual, and the paths were too sodden for Clifford's chair, but Connie would go out. She went out alone every day now, mostly in the wood, where she was really alone. She saw nobody there.

This day, however, Clifford wanted to send a message to the keeper, and as the boy was laid up with influenza, somebody always seemed to have influenza at Wragby, Connie said she would call at the cottage.

The air was soft and dead, as if all the world were slowly dying. Grey and clammy and silent, even from the shuffling of the collieries, for the pits were working short time, and today they were stopped altogether. The end of all things!

In the wood all was utterly inert and motionless, only great drops fell from the bare boughs, with a hollow little crash. For the rest, among the old trees was depth within depth of grey, hopeless inertia, silence, nothingness.

Connie walked dimly on. From the old wood came an ancient melancholy, somehow soothing to her, better than the harsh insentience of the outer world. She liked the inwardness of the remnant of forest, the unspeaking reticence of the old trees. They seemed a very power of silence, and yet a vital presence. They, too, were waiting: obstinately, stoically waiting, and giving off a potency of silence. Perhaps they were only waiting for the end; to be cut down, cleared away, the end of the

⁴⁶ Цитата из Библии, Иеремия 5:1: «Походите по улицам Иерусалима, и посмотрите, и разведайте, и поищите на площадях его, не найдете ли человека...» В данном случае используется игра слов, так как в английском языке слово man обозначает и «человек», и «мужчина».

⁴⁷ C'est une autre chose (*фр.*) – это совсем другое дело!

forest, for them the end of all things. But perhaps their strong and aristocratic silence, the silence of strong trees, meant something else.

As she came out of the wood on the north side, the keeper's cottage, a rather dark, brown stone cottage, with gables and a handsome chimney, looked uninhabited, it was so silent and alone. But a thread of smoke rose from the chimney, and the little railed-in garden in the front of the house was dug and kept very tidy. The door was shut.

Now she was here she felt a little shy of the man, with his curious far-seeing eyes. She did not like bringing him orders, and felt like going away again. She knocked softly, no one came. She knocked again, but still not loudly. There was no answer. She peeped through the window, and saw the dark little room, with its almost sinister privacy, not wanting to be invaded.

She stood and listened, and it seemed to her she heard sounds from the back of the cottage. Having failed to make herself heard, her mettle was roused, she would not be defeated.

So she went round the side of the house. At the back of the cottage the land rose steeply, so the back yard was sunken, and enclosed by a low stone wall. She turned the corner of the house and stopped. In the little yard two paces beyond her, the man was washing himself, utterly unaware. He was naked to the hips, his velveteen breeches slipping down over his slender loins. And his white slim back was curved over a big bowl of soapy water, in which he ducked his head, shaking his head with a queer, quick little motion, lifting his slender white arms, and pressing the soapy water from his ears, quick, subtle as a weasel playing with water, and utterly alone. Connie backed away round the corner of the house, and hurried away to the wood. In spite of herself, she had had a shock. After all, merely a man washing himself, commonplace enough, Heaven knows!

Yet in some curious way it was a visionary experience: it had hit her in the middle of the body. She saw the clumsy breeches slipping down over the pure, delicate, white loins, the bones showing a little, and the sense of aloneness, of a creature purely alone, overwhelmed her. Perfect, white, solitary nudity of a creature that lives alone, and inwardly alone. And beyond that, a certain beauty of a pure creature. Not the stuff of beauty, not even the body of beauty, but a lambency, the warm, white flame of a single life, revealing itself in contours that one might touch: a body!

Connie had received the shock of vision in her womb, and she knew it; it lay inside her. But with her mind she was inclined to ridicule. A man washing himself in a back yard! No doubt with evil-smelling yellow soap! She was rather annoyed; why should she be made to stumble on these vulgar privacies?

So she walked away from herself, but after a while she sat down on a stump. She was too confused to think. But in the coil of her confusion, she was determined to deliver her message to the fellow. She would not be balked. She must give him time to dress himself, but not time to go out. He was probably preparing to go out somewhere.

So she sauntered slowly back, listening. As she came near, the cottage looked just the same. A dog barked, and she knocked at the door, her heart beating in spite of herself.

She heard the man coming lightly downstairs. He opened the door quickly, and startled her. He looked uneasy himself, but instantly a laugh came on his face.

"Lady Chatterley!" he said. "Will you come in?"

His manner was so perfectly easy and good, she stepped over the threshold into the rather dreary little room.

"I only called with a message from Sir Clifford," she said in her soft, rather breathless voice.

The man was looking at her with those blue, all-seeing eyes of his, which made her turn her face aside a little. He thought her comely, almost beautiful, in her shyness, and he took command of the situation himself at once.

"Would you care to sit down?" he asked, presuming she would not. The door stood open.

"No thanks! Sir Clifford wondered if you would and she delivered her message, looking unconsciously into his eyes again. And now his eyes looked warm and kind, particularly to a woman, wonderfully warm, and kind, and at ease.

"Very good, your Ladyship. I will see to it at once."

Taking an order, his whole self had changed, glazed over with a sort of hardness and distance. Connie hesitated, she ought to go. But she looked round the clean, tidy, rather dreary little sitting-room with something like dismay.

"Do you live here quite alone?" she asked.

"Quite alone, your Ladyship."

"But your mother...?"

"She lives in her own cottage in the village."

"With the child?" asked Connie.

"With the child!"

And his plain, rather worn face took on an indefinable look of derision. It was a face that changed all the time, baking.

"No," he said, seeing Connie stand at a loss, "my mother comes and cleans up for me on Saturdays; I do the rest myself."

Again Connie looked at him. His eyes were smiling again, a little mockingly, but warm and blue, and somehow kind. She wondered at him. He was in trousers and flannel shirt and a grey tie, his hair soft and damp, his face rather pale and worn-looking. When the eyes ceased to laugh they looked as if they had suffered a great deal, still without losing their warmth. But a pallor of isolation came over him, she was not really there for him.

She wanted to say so many things, and she said nothing. Only she looked up at him again, and remarked:

"I hope I didn't disturb you?"

The faint smile of mockery narrowed his eyes.

"Only combing my hair, if you don't mind. I'm sorry I hadn't a coat on, but then I had no idea who was knocking. Nobody knocks here, and the unexpected sounds ominous."

He went in front of her down the garden path to hold the gate. In his shirt, without the clumsy velveteen coat, she saw again how slender he was, thin, stooping a little. Yet, as she passed him, there was something young and bright in his fair hair, and his quick eyes. He would be a man about thirty-seven or eight.

She plodded on into the wood, knowing he was looking after her; he upset her so much, in spite of herself.

And he, as he went indoors, was thinking: "She's nice, she's real! She's nicer than she knows."

She wondered very much about him; he seemed so unlike a game-keeper, so unlike a working-man anyhow; although he had something in common with the local people. But also something very uncommon.

"The game-keeper, Mellors, is a curious kind of person," she said to Clifford; "he might almost be a gentleman."

"Might he?" said Clifford. "I hadn't noticed."

"But isn't there something special about him?" Connie insisted.

"I think he's quite a nice fellow, but I know very little about him. He only came out of the army last year, less than a year ago. From India, I rather think. He may have picked up certain tricks out there, perhaps he was an officer's servant, and improved on his position. Some of the men were like that. But it does them no good, they have to fall back into their old places when they get home again."

Connie gazed at Clifford contemplatively. She saw in him the peculiar tight rebuff against anyone of the lower classes who might be really climbing up, which she knew was characteristic of his breed.

“But don’t you think there is something special about him?” she asked.

“Frankly, no! Nothing I had noticed.”

He looked at her curiously, uneasily, half-suspiciously. And she felt he wasn’t telling her the real truth; he wasn’t telling himself the real truth, that was it. He disliked any suggestion of a really exceptional human being. People must be more or less at his level, or below it.

Connie felt again the tightness, niggardliness of the men of her generation. They were so tight, so scared of life!

Chapter 7

When Connie went up to her bedroom she did what she had not done for a long time: took off all her clothes, and looked at herself naked in the huge mirror. She did not know what she was looking for, or at, very definitely, yet she moved the lamp till it shone full on her.

And she thought, as she had thought so often, what a frail, easily hurt, rather pathetic thing a human body is, naked; somehow a little unfinished, incomplete!

She had been supposed to have rather a good figure, but now she was out of fashion: a little too female, not enough like an adolescent boy. She was not very tall, a bit Scottish and short; but she had a certain fluent, down-slipping grace that might have been beauty. Her skin was faintly tawny, her limbs had a certain stillness, her body should have had a full, down-slipping richness; but it lacked something.

Instead of ripening its firm, down-running curves, her body was flattening and going a little harsh. It was as if it had not had enough sun and warmth; it was a little greyish and sapless.

Disappointed of its real womanhood, it had not succeeded in becoming boyish, and unsubstantial, and transparent; instead it had gone opaque.

Her breasts were rather small, and dropping pear-shaped. But they were unripe, a little bitter, without meaning hanging there. And her belly had lost the fresh, round gleam it had had when she was young, in the days of her German boy, who really loved her physically. Then it was young and expectant, with a real look of its own. Now it was going slack, and a little flat, thinner, but with a slack thinness. Her thighs, too, they used to look so quick and glimpsy in their female roundness, somehow they too were going flat, slack, meaningless.

Her body was going meaningless, going dull and opaque, so much insignificant substance. It made her feel immensely depressed and hopeless. What hope was there? She was old, old at twenty-seven, with no gleam and sparkle in the flesh. Old through neglect and denial, yes, denial. Fashionable women kept their bodies bright like delicate porcelain, by external attention. There was nothing inside the porcelain; but she was not even as bright as that. The mental life! Suddenly she hated it with a rushing fury, the swindle!

She looked in the other mirror's reflection at her back, her waist, her loins. She was getting thinner, but to her it was not becoming. The crumple of her waist at the back, as she bent back to look, was a little weary; and it used to be so gay-looking. And the longish slope of her haunches and her buttocks had lost its gleam and its sense of richness. Gone! Only the German boy had loved it, and he was ten years dead, very nearly. How time went by! Ten years dead, and she was only twenty-seven. The healthy boy with his fresh, clumsy sensuality that she had then been so scornful of! Where would she find it now? It was gone out of men. They had their pathetic, two-seconds spasms like Michaelis; but no healthy human sensuality, that warms the blood and freshens the whole being.

Still she thought the most beautiful part of her was the long-sloping fall of the haunches from the socket of the back, and the slumberous, round stillness of the buttocks. Like hillocks of sand, the Arabs say, soft and downward-slipping with a long slope. Here the life still lingered hoping. But here too she was thinner, and going unripe, astringent.

But the front of her body made her miserable. It was already beginning to slacken, with a slack sort of thinness, almost withered, going old before it had ever really lived. She thought of the child she might somehow bear. Was she fit, anyhow?

She slipped into her nightdress, and went to bed, where she sobbed bitterly. And in her bitterness burned a cold indignation against Clifford, and his writings and his talk: against all the men of his sort who defrauded a woman even of her own body.

Unjust! Unjust! The sense of deep physical injustice burned to her very soul.

But in the morning, all the same, she was up at seven, and going downstairs to Clifford. She had to help him in all the intimate things, for he had no man, and refused a woman-servant. The housekeeper's husband, who had known him as a boy, helped him, and did any heavy lifting; but Connie did the personal things, and she did them willingly. It was a demand on her, but she had wanted to do what she could.

So she hardly ever went away from Wragby, and never for more than a day or two; when Mrs Betts, the housekeeper, attended to Clifford. He, as was inevitable in the course of time, took all the service for granted. It was natural he should.

And yet, deep inside herself, a sense of injustice, of being defrauded, had begun to burn in Connie. The physical sense of injustice is a dangerous feeling, once it is awakened. It must have outlet, or it eats away the one in whom it is aroused. Poor Clifford, he was not to blame. His was the greater misfortune. It was all part of the general catastrophe.

And yet was he not in a way to blame? This lack of warmth, this lack of the simple, warm, physical contact, was he not to blame for that? He was never really warm, nor even kind, only thoughtful, considerate, in a well-bred, cold sort of way! But never warm as a man can be warm to a woman, as even Connie's father could be warm to her, with the warmth of a man who did himself well, and intended to, but who still could comfort a woman with a bit of his masculine glow.

But Clifford was not like that. His whole race was not like that. They were all inwardly hard and separate, and warmth to them was just bad taste. You had to get on without it, and hold your own; which was all very well if you were of the same class and race. Then you could keep yourself cold and be very estimable, and hold your own, and enjoy the satisfaction of holding it. But if you were of another class and another race it wouldn't do; there was no fun merely holding your own, and feeling you belonged to the ruling class. What was the point, when even the smartest aristocrats had really nothing positive of their own to hold, and their rule was really a farce, not rule at all? What was the point? It was all cold nonsense.

A sense of rebellion smouldered in Connie. What was the good of it all? What was the good of her sacrifice, her devoting her life to Clifford? What was she serving, after all? A cold spirit of vanity, that had no warm human contacts, and that was as corrupt as any low-born Jew,⁴⁸ in craving for prostitution to the bitch-goddess, Success. Even Clifford's cool and contactless assurance that he belonged to the ruling class didn't prevent his tongue lolling out of his mouth, as he panted after the bitch-goddess. After all, Michaelis was really more dignified in the matter, and far, far more successful. Really, if you looked closely at Clifford, he was a buffoon, and a buffoon is more humiliating than a bounder.

As between the two men, Michaelis really had far more use for her than Clifford had. He had even more need of her. Any good nurse can attend to crippled legs! And as for the heroic effort, Michaelis was a heroic rat, and Clifford was very much of a poodle showing off.

There were people staying in the house, among them Clifford's Aunt Eva, Lady Bennerley. She was a thin woman of sixty, with a red nose, a widow, and still something of a grande dame. She belonged to one of the best families, and had the character to carry it off. Connie liked her, she was so perfectly simple and frank, as far as she intended to be frank, and superficially kind. Inside herself she was a past-mistress in holding her own, and holding other people a little lower. She was not at all a snob: far too sure of herself. She was perfect at the social sport of coolly holding her own, and making other people defer to her.

She was kind to Connie, and tried to worm into her woman's soul with the sharp gimlet of her well-born observations.

⁴⁸ Согласно антисемитскому стереотипу, евреи бессердечны и корыстны. В современном обществе подобные высказывания оскорбительны.

"You're quite wonderful, in my opinion," she said to Connie. "You've done wonders for Clifford. I never saw any budding genius myself, and there he is, all the rage." Aunt Eva was quite complacently proud of Clifford's success. Another feather in the family cap! She didn't care a straw about his books, but why should she?

"Oh, I don't think it's my doing," said Connie.

"It must be! Can't be anybody else's. And it seems to me you don't get enough out of it."

"How?"

"Look at the way you are shut up here. I said to Clifford: If that child rebels one day you'll have yourself to thank!"

"But Clifford never denies me anything," said Connie.

"Look here, my dear child" – and Lady Bennerley laid her thin hand on Connie's arm. "A woman has to live her life, or live to repent not having lived it. Believe me!" And she took another sip of brandy, which maybe was her form of repentance.

"But I do live my life, don't I?"

"Not in my idea! Clifford should bring you to London, and let you go about. His sort of friends are all right for him, but what are they for you? If I were you I should think it wasn't good enough. You'll let your youth slip by, and you'll spend your old age, and your middle age too, repenting it."

Her ladyship lapsed into contemplative silence, soothed by the brandy.

But Connie was not keen on going to London, and being steered into the smart world by Lady Bennerley. She didn't feel really smart, it wasn't interesting. And she did feel the peculiar, withering coldness under it all; like the soil of Labrador, which his gay little flowers on its surface, and a foot down is frozen.

Tommy Dukes was at Wragby, and another man, Harry Winterslow, and Jack Strangeways with his wife Olive. The talk was much more desultory than when only the cronies were there, and everybody was a bit bored, for the weather was bad, and there was only billiards, and the pianola to dance to.

Olive was reading a book about the future, when babies would be bred in bottles, and women would be "immunized".

"Jolly good thing too!" she said. "Then a woman can live her own life." Strangeways wanted children, and she didn't.

"How'd you like to be immunized?" Winterslow asked her, with an ugly smile.

"I hope I am; naturally," she said. "Anyhow the future's going to have more sense, and a woman needn't be dragged down by her functions."

"Perhaps she'll float off into space altogether," said Dukes.

"I do think sufficient civilization ought to eliminate a lot of the physical disabilities," said Clifford. "All the love-business for example, it might just as well go. I suppose it would if we could breed babies in bottles."

"No!" cried Olive. "That might leave all the more room for fun."

"I suppose," said Lady Bennerley, contemplatively, "if the love-business went, something else would take its place. Morphia, perhaps. A little morphia in all the air. It would be wonderfully refreshing for everybody."

"The government releasing ether into the air on Saturdays, for a cheerful weekend!" said Jack. "Sounds all right, but where should we be by Wednesday?"

"So long as you can forget your body you are happy," said Lady Bennerley. "And the moment you begin to be aware of your body, you are wretched. So, if civilization is any good, it has to help us to forget our bodies, and then time passes happily without our knowing it."

"Help us to get rid of our bodies altogether," said Winterslow. "It's quite time man began to improve on his own nature, especially the physical side of it."

"Imagine if we floated like tobacco smoke," said Connie.

"It won't happen," said Dukes. "Our old show will come flop; our civilization is going to fall. It's going down the bottomless pit, down the chasm. And believe me, the only bridge across the chasm will be the phallus!"

"Oh do! Do be impossible, General!" cried Olive.

"I believe our civilization is going to collapse," said Aunt Eva.

"And what will come after it?" asked Clifford.

"I haven't the faintest idea, but something, I suppose," said the elderly lady.

"Connie says people like wisps of smoke, and Olive says immunized women, and babies in bottles, and Dukes says the phallus is the bridge to what comes next. I wonder what it will really be?" said Clifford.

"Oh, don't bother! let's get on with today," said Olive. "Only hurry up with the breeding bottle, and let us poor women off."

"There might even be real men, in the next phase," said Tommy. "Real, intelligent, wholesome men, and wholesome nice women! Wouldn't that be a change, an enormous change from us? we're not men, and the women aren't women. We're only cerebrating make-shifts, mechanical and intellectual experiments. There may even come a civilization of genuine men and women, instead of our little lot of clever-jacks, all at the intelligence-age of seven. It would be even more amazing than men of smoke or babies in bottles."

"Oh, when people begin to talk about real women, I give up," said Olive.

"Certainly nothing but the spirit in us is worth having," said Winterslow.

"Spirits!" said Jack, drinking his whisky and soda.

"Think so? Give me the resurrection of the body!" said Dukes.

"But it'll come, in time, when we've shoved the cerebral stone away a bit, the money and the rest. Then we'll get a democracy of touch, instead of a democracy of pocket."

Something echoed inside Connie: "Give me the democracy of touch, the resurrection of the body!" She didn't at all know what it meant, but it comforted her, as meaningless things may do.

Anyhow everything was terribly silly, and she was exasperatedly bored by it all, by Clifford, by Aunt Eva, by Olive and Jack, and Winterslow, and even by Dukes. Talk, talk, talk! What hell it was, the continual rattle of it!

Then, when all the people went, it was no better. She continued plodding on, but exasperation and irritation had got hold of her lower body, she couldn't escape. The days seemed to grind by, with curious painfulness, yet nothing happened. Only she was getting thinner; even the housekeeper noticed it, and asked her about herself. Even Tommy Dukes insisted she was not well, though she said she was all right. Only she began to be afraid of the ghastly white tombstones, that peculiar loathsome whiteness of Carrara marble, detestable as false teeth, which stuck up on the hillside, under Tevershall church, and which she saw with such grim painfulness from the park. The bristling of the hideous false teeth of tombstones on the hill affected her with a grisly kind of horror. She felt the time not far off when she would be buried there, added to the ghastly host under the tombstones and the monuments, in these filthy Midlands.

She needed help, and she knew it: so she wrote a little *cri du coeur*⁴⁹ to her sister, Hilda. "I'm not well lately, and I don't know what's the matter with me."

Down posted Hilda from Scotland, where she had taken up her abode. She came in March, alone, driving herself in a nimble two-seater. Up the drive she came, tooting up the incline, then sweeping round the oval of grass, where the two great wild beech-trees stood, on the flat in front of the house.

Connie had run out to the steps. Hilda pulled up her car, got out, and kissed her sister.

"But Connie!" she cried. "Whatever is the matter?"

⁴⁹ *Cri du coeur* (фр.) – крик души.

“Nothing!” said Connie, rather shamefacedly; but she knew how she had suffered in contrast to Hilda. Both sisters had the same rather golden, glowing skin, and soft brown hair, and naturally strong, warm physique. But now Connie was thin and earthy-looking, with a scraggy, yellowish neck, that stuck out of her jumper.

“But you’re ill, child!” said Hilda, in the soft, rather breathless voice that both sisters had alike. Hilda was nearly, but not quite, two years older than Connie.

“No, not ill. Perhaps I’m bored,” said Connie a little pathetically.

The light of battle glowed in Hilda’s face; she was a woman, soft and still as she seemed, of the old amazon sort, not made to fit with men.

“This wretched place!” she said softly, looking at poor, old, lumbering Wragby with real hate. She looked soft and warm herself, as a ripe pear, and she was an amazon of the real old breed.

She went quietly in to Clifford. He thought how handsome she looked, but also he shrank from her. His wife’s family did not have his sort of manners, or his sort of etiquette. He considered them rather outsiders, but once they got inside they made him jump through the hoop.

He sat square and well-groomed in his chair, his hair sleek and blond, and his face fresh, his blue eyes pale, and a little prominent, his expression inscrutable, but well-bred. Hilda thought it sulky and stupid, and he waited. He had an air of aplomb, but Hilda didn’t care what he had an air of; she was up in arms, and if he’d been Pope or Emperor it would have been just the same.

“Connie’s looking awfully unwell,” she said in her soft voice, fixing him with her beautiful, glowering grey eyes. She looked so maidenly, so did Connie; but he well knew the tone of Scottish obstinacy underneath.

“She’s a little thinner,” he said.

“Haven’t you done anything about it?”

“Do you think it necessary?” he asked, with his suavest English stiffness, for the two things often go together.

Hilda only glowered at him without replying; repartee was not her forte, nor Connie’s; so she glowered, and he was much more uncomfortable than if she had said things.

“I’ll take her to a doctor,” said Hilda at length. “Can you suggest a good one round here?”

“I’m afraid I can’t.”

“Then I’ll take her to London, where we have a doctor we trust.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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