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Pity and Shame

URSULA K. LE GUIN

Hard lot! encompass'd with a thousand dangers;
Weary, faint, trembling with a thousand terrors;
I'm called, if vanquish'd, to receive a sentence
Worse than Abiram's.

—W. Cowper, "Lines Written During a Period of Insanity"

At first Mr. Cowper just lay there like a heap of bedclothes, laundry for the wash. His face was so blank it was like it was erased off a slate. Doc Mac said he was concussed and he'd probably get over it and probably survive, awful as his injuries looked. Mostly there was nothing to do for him but get him to drink water or beef broth when he'd take it, and use the bedpan.

It had been Pete's idea to take in a lodger, but then he'd complained all week about living in two rooms instead of four. Now that the man was there all the time and she had to be up nights to look after him, Pete was ugly about it, spite of the good pay Doc got her for nursing. He stayed out a lot. When he was home he'd come in and watch what she did like he was suspicious. One night she was giving the bedpan, he kept crowding her till she finally had to say, "I need some room, Petey." He pressed closer. Annoyed with him, she said, "Guess you've seen one of them before."

"Some bigger'n that," he said.

"Come on, honey, I'm on the job."

"Not much of a job."

“More than you got,” she said.

After she said it she realised it had another meaning than the one she’d meant, and felt her face get red. She didn’t know how Pete took it, but either way it was unkind.

“Yeah, what the hell, I’m going,” he said. And he went.

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“I could use a hand with this,” Doc Mac said. “Where’s Pete at?”

“I can do that,” she said. He let her show him she could keep the hold he needed while he adjusted the splint.

“Radius is back in line, we’ll get that scaphoid tucked back where it belongs,” Doc said. “It’ll take a while.”

She liked how he said “we.” He was a tough thin man like a dried-out leather whip, but he always spoke pleasantly. She didn’t know what some of the words he used meant, but she could figure it out, or if she asked, he’d answer. It was not an arrangement she was used to, but she liked it.

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“How did the night go?”

“He was awful restless. Hurting. He hollered some.”

“Coming to, I hope. Feeling what happened to him.”

“I wish I could do more for him.”

“Get some breakfast for yourself. Sounds like you had a long night.”

“I don’t mind,” she said, not knowing why she said it, but it was true.

“God intended you for a nurse, Mrs. Tonely.”

She watched him washing and salving places where the rocks had torn up Mr. Cowper like he’d been dragged by a runaway horse.

“My name isn’t Tonely,” she said. “I’m Rae Brown.”

He nodded, working away. “That don’t change what I said about God’s intentions.”

Embarrassed all round, she tried to explain. “Well, my aunt Bess was sick for a long time after an operation, and I was looking after her. And my stepdad had these carbuncles I had to learn to treat.”

He nodded again. “Just what I said. —Look there. No infection. So far . . . But you get time off to eat, you know.”

“I will,” she said.

He was a kind man. She wished she could tell him about last night. It had disturbed her. Mr. Cowper had been quiet for a while, so she fell asleep in the chair, and then she woke because somebody was calling out. The voice was strange, like it came from a long ways off, out in the woods or in the hills, somewhere else. It was a name he was calling, Cleo, Cleo. His voice wasn’t loud, but pleading, like he was saying, please come, please come, but not really hoping for it. A heartbroken voice in the darkness. The night was silent, getting on towards morning, everything finally quiet at the saloon. She was nearly asleep again when he called out once more in that soft desolate voice, “Cleo!” This time a rooster answered him from across town with a little bugle call broken off short. She got up from the chair and went over to the bed and put her hand on his sweaty hair, whispering, “It’s all right, it’ll be all right,” wanting to comfort that sorrow that came from far

away and maybe long ago while he lay here a stranger among strangers. Things were so hard. And no way to talk about them.

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Pete hadn't earned anything since the Bronco Saloon let him go last March. She'd kept the money from her cleaning for Mr. Bingham and the church, and then the two weeks' advance rent from Mr. Cowper, in a Twinings tea tin. When she needed some cash for groceries she found it had all had gone with Pete. It wasn't a big surprise, but it was a hollow feeling. She told herself Mr. Bingham wouldn't put her out of the house so long as she could pay the rent or work it out, and now she had good pay for boarding Mr. Cowper and nursing him.

That night, though, a bad thought came to her as she drowsed in the old rump-sprung armchair near the bed. Where did Mr. Cowper keep his money?

She couldn't worry about it then, in the middle of the night. But she did. Next day as soon as she'd got him looked after she went into the other room of the two he'd sub-rented from her and Petey two weeks ago and looked around. She felt like a criminal, but she looked into his coat pockets, and at the pocketbook she found there, which had twelve dollars in it. She checked the little chest of drawers where he'd put his shirts and stuff. There was nothing else of his in the room but some books and papers on the worktable, and under the table the little humpback trunk that was all his luggage.

He'd locked it, but there was a trunk key lying out on the table with what had been in his pockets when he went up to the mine. She had to look.

Down at the bottom of the trunk she found a billfold with more than two hundred dollars in it in paper and three fifty-dollar gold pieces. Relieved, she shut it all up quick, shoved it back under the table, and wondered what

to do with the key. She went out and hid it behind the paper-wasp nest in the outhouse. The wasps were long gone, but it didn't seem like a place Pete, if he came back, or anybody would go sticking their hand in. Let alone if they knew about the black widow. She only wished she didn't, but she'd seen it twice.

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She'd said truly that she didn't mind doing this job. She had minded nursing Roy's boils because he was a hateful man, but caring for Aunt Bessie had been a job she loved. The only trouble had been that Bess was a heavy woman and when she first came home from the hospital, Rae at thirteen couldn't even help her to turn over. Rae was a lot stronger now than she'd been then, and Mr. Cowper wasn't a big man. Doc Mac showed her how to change the sheets. And there really wasn't much to do for him. She wasn't lonely or bored. She was grateful for the silence. The house had felt small and cramped when it was full of Pete's big body and deep voice, and his friends that sat around with their hats on, smoking cigars and always talking. Now the quiet spread out in it, and her soul spread out in the quiet.

Some blue jays were yelling cheerfully at each other outside. The window was full of the gold August light. She sat thinking about things.

She thought a good deal about opening Mr. Cowper's trunk. She'd hardly known him in the short time he'd been there; Pete had shown him the rooms. They'd all signed the agreement Mr. Bingham insisted on, and shaken hands. He had a pleasant manner, but good morning and good evening was about it. He had been gone all day at his work with the mine company, and had boarded at Mrs. Metcalf's. It felt bad to go through his things, with him there in the next room knowing nothing about it, and she knowing nothing about him. She had needed to be sure his money was there, but she kept remembering when she looked for it and the memory

troubled her. It was very clear; she could see the tray of the little trunk with papers and letters in it and some socks and handkerchiefs. She had lifted out the tray. Under it were some winter clothes and a dress shirt and coat and shoes, and under them a photograph in a cardboard frame of a dignified lady in 1870s dress, a small unframed blurry photograph of a little girl who looked unhappy, and a couple of books. He'd set his work books out on his worktable. The two in the trunk were Little Dorrit by Charles Dickens, and Poems by William Cowper. His billfold was between the books. She was careful to replace the photographs on the cover of Poems.

That was a puzzle. His name was William Cowper. He said it Cooper, but he wrote it that way, like "cowboy." She wondered why. Had he written that book? It was none of her business. She had had no business looking at his books anyhow. The trunk was locked now and the key was in the outhouse with the black widow.

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Well into the shaft, almost past the daylight, he'd heard the framing creak loudly and thought that would be how a sailing ship would creak in a storm. He remembered that. He had set down his lantern to make another note. Looking up, he saw the weak glimmer on the rough pine beams. And that was it. That was all.

It came and went.

So did the ceiling of a room, slices of daylight, voices, blue jays squawking, the smell of tarweed. They came across his being and were clear but incomprehensible, like the pain. What ceiling, what room, what voices, why. It didn't matter, it was all at a remove from him, none of it concerned him. A man he knew, MacIver, a girl's face he knew but not who she was. They came, they went. It was easy, careless, peaceful.

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There was a black rectangle in front of him. Just black, just there. Light around it, so it was like a hole in the light. It didn't move. At the same time he saw it, a rhythm began to beat in his head like a hammer. It was made of words.

I, fed with judgment

The black rectangle was right in front of him but he couldn't tell how large it was, how close or far. There was a great pressure on him, paralyzing and sickening him, holding him so he couldn't move. He couldn't get away from the black rectangle. It was there in front of him. It was all there was. The words beat at him. He tried to cry out for help. There was nobody to help him.

to receive a sentence

to re CEIVE a SEN tence

WORSE than a BI ram's

Whether he opened his eyes or shut them there was the black space, the bright glare around it, and the words in the terrible rhythm.

The timbers creaked, he saw the glimmer on them overhead. He tried to cling to that because it was before the judgment, before the sentence, but they were gone, there was dirt in his mouth and the words beating, beating him down.

I, fed with JUDG ment

in a FLESH ly TOMB

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He came back. MacIver was talking to the girl. He didn't understand what they said. He couldn't. He was being thrown around on long, sickening waves. He was in a ship tossing, creaking, sinking out from under him. In a train swaying, swaying as it ran, running off the track, falling down into the canyon. He tried to call out for help. The wheels were beating out the rhythm he dreaded. Then MacIver's face. Then it was all gone again.

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He came back. Somebody was holding him, an arm around his shoulders, a comforting presence, but he heard something whimpering like a hurt dog. It made him ashamed.

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"Hey," she said, "you're here. Aren't you?" She was looking at him from close. He saw the grey-green irises of her eyes and the tiny springy hairs of her eyebrows. He understood her.

He tried to say yes or nod. Great pain closed in on him and he shut his eyes. But he had the understanding. It held him, held him here.

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"What," he said to MacIver.

"Tell you about it later."

"What."

MacIver watched him. Judging. Finally he said, "Cave-in." The way he said it made it sound unimportant. Cowper had to think it out.

“Quake?”

MacIver shook his head once. “We have your notes. You wrote, ‘Unsafe at 200 yards.’ You’d gone on some past that.”

“Damn fool,” he wanted to say, meaning himself, but it was too difficult because of his chest. Instead after a while he asked again, “What.”

MacIver kept watching him. He reached a judgment.

“Stove you in some, William. Compound in the right leg, three ribs, maybe four, I’m not sure. Right wrist. Contusions and abrasions from here to Peru. Not to mention concussion. Satisfied?”

“Lucky.”

“Call that luck?”

“Left-handed.”

“God damn,” MacIver said softly, like a man admiring an ore vein.

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Goldorado was just another mean little town, but one thing she liked about it was the water, mountain springwater clear as air. The house had a standpipe in the yard and water piped to a faucet in the kitchen sink. Mornings, after emptying the chamber pots in the outhouse, she could rinse them clean right there at the standpipe. The plentyness of water made housework easy and bathing luxurious. She could clean up and cool down whenever she felt like it, and do the same for her patient. These hot days there wasn’t much cross draft in his room even when she opened the front door, and having to lie in bed with his leg and arm all splinted and bandaged, hardly able to move, he got sweaty and miserable. Doc Mac gave

her a bottle of rubbing alcohol to use where it was important not to get the dressings wet, and she took to sponging him off a couple of times a day. Anything cool was pleasant in the July afternoons, and there was nothing disagreeable about the job itself.

Treating Roy's carbuncles had been disgusting, the sores, and the hair that grew all over his shoulders and back like a mangy old buffalo robe, and Roy always either moaning or cussing dirt at her for hurting him. She hadn't seen a lot of men and it was interesting to learn Mr. Cowper's body and compare it to the few others she'd seen. He didn't have a potbelly like Roy. Pete had a lot of wiry gold hair all over him and was milky white where he wasn't tanned. Where it wasn't all bashed and bruised, Mr. Cowper's skin was an even pale brown, like baked bread instead of dough. He was neat, somehow, like an animal. Doing for him had never been hard as soon as she learned what needed doing.

Having to learn it had come unexpectedly. But when had she ever been able to expect anything?

They'd brought him down from the old mine on a stretcher straight into the house and laid him on the bed that had been her and Pete's bed. A whole crowd came in after them, the little house was jam full of people, men women and children all jabbering with excitement about the accident. A couple of dogs got in with the crowd, putting Tiger into a panic fury, so she had to shut him into the kitchen and then into the cubby room, because people kept coming into the kitchen for something that was needed, water or a bowl, or just to stand and chatter about the cave-in. Most of the people had never spoken to Rae since she came there and didn't speak to her now. Then all of a sudden they were gone. Doc Mac had cleared them out.

She knew him from when she'd had to go to him soon after they got to Goldorado, when she was bleeding, losing the baby. He had been kind then, and he always spoke to her in the street.

He stood in the hall when he'd got the door shut on the crowd, and said, "Will you come in here, Miz Tonely?" looking very serious. She followed him into the bedroom. She took a quick look at the man on the bed, not much of him to be seen for bandages. She was glad of that. People had kept saying how he was all torn up and his bones crushed, and she didn't want to see it.

"I need to know if you can help me. He may not make it. I'll do what I can for him, but I need help at it. I need a nurse. I haven't found one yet. He's completely helpless. Have you cared for anybody sick?"

"Some," she said, scared by his hard, fast way of talking.

"I'll try to get a trained nurse up here from Stockton or Sacramento. I'll tell you exactly what to do. I'll get you nurse's wages from his company." What he said came at her so fast she couldn't keep up with it and didn't answer. "There's no place to put him but here," the doctor said with so much trouble in his voice that she said, "I can try."

His face cleared up. He looked at her keenly. She remembered that direct gaze from when she had gone to him with the bleeding. "All right!" he said. "Now let me show you what you'll be doing." He didn't waste any time.

But in the middle of telling her about what she'd be expected to do he stopped as if he'd run out of steam.

"You're a married woman," he said.

She said nothing.

"If you were a girl. But you've seen a man."

After a minute she said, "Yes."

She might have been angry or embarrassed except that he was embarrassed, scowling and fidgeting, and she almost wanted to laugh.

“He will be as helpless as a baby. With the same needs.” His voice had gone hard again.

She nodded. “That’s all right,” she said.

She appreciated Doc Mac for thinking she might be too delicate minded to be able to look at a naked man and tend to his privacies, and the bedpan and all, but she wasn’t. And this man was so broken, so beaten, he had been treated so rough that for a while you couldn’t see him for his injuries.

She’d never minded having empty time, time by herself. She’d been worrying more than she knew about Pete and money and what next. She could admit to herself now that it was a relief as well as a grief that she’d lost the baby. And Pete.

She didn’t have any tears when he went like that, not a word. But she was sad that the good time they’d had ended that way. She’d gotten to feeling scornful of him for always being disappointed and discontented and giving up on things, and she was sorry about that now. He couldn’t help the way he was. But anyhow, gone was gone, and she could look ahead again.

It was all right being on her own. Enough money was coming in that she could really save some, enough to take her out of Goldorado. She didn’t know where she’d go, her last letter to Aunt Bess had come back stamped No Longer at This Address. But she’d worry about that when the time came.

When there was nothing to do for him and the house was as clean as she cared to bother making it, she would sit in the armchair in his room sometimes with Tiger asleep in her lap and do nothing at all. She’d been worried in this town, and lonely. Now she wasn’t. She sat and thought.

She thought again about bodies. She didn't like the word "body." It was the same word for a living person and a corpse. Her own body, or Pete's, which she knew every inch and mole and hair of, or the unconscious damaged body on the bed, were all alive, were what life was. A live body was absolutely different from a dead one, as different as a person from a photograph. The life was the mystery.

And then, holding and handling the hurt helpless man all the time, she was as close to him as she had ever been to Pete, but in a different way. There was no shame in it. There was no love in it. It was need, and pity.

It didn't sound like much, but when you came to the edge between life and death where he was, and she with him, she saw how strong pity was, how deep it went. She'd loved making love with Petey, back when they ran off together, the wanting and fulfilling. It had made everything else unimportant. But the ache of tenderness she felt for her patient did just the opposite, it made things more important. What she and Pete had had was like a bonfire that went up in a blaze. This was like a lamp that let you see what was there.

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It was a while before the doctor would tell him how he'd been found. He couldn't hide his night horrors from Rae Brown, and she told MacIver about them. Maybe he thought they'd be worse if Cowper knew what had happened to him. Cowper was certain that they couldn't be any worse and maybe might be better. So MacIver finally told him.

Ross, the local company manager, had appointed to meet him up at the old Venturado Mine around noon that day to check out what he'd found.

Knowing that, he remembered the climb up to the mine in the morning sunlight, a steep haul through scrub oak and wild lilac that were growing back across the red, rocky scar of the old access road. It was less than a mile

from town but felt like wilderness, full of birdsongs and strong scents, young sunlight slanting bright through the pines and tangles of mountain mahogany. The sun was already hot on his shoulders when he saw the mine entrance, a black rectangle in all that brightness.

He had no memory of going in. Nothing. All he had was the creaking in the shaft, the lantern light on the roof beam.

Ross had got there a couple of hours after he did and went into the adit to call him. Going farther in, he saw and smelled the air full of sour dust, and saw Cowper's lantern burning on the floor of the drift just in front of a chest-high tumble of rock and timber. "I thought it was a wall somebody built there," he said. He was looking at it trying to understand what it was when he realized that something blue he saw sticking out from under it was Cowper's shirt sleeve. He was facedown. Ross determined he was breathing. He hauled a couple of the bigger rocks off him but couldn't move the beam across his legs, and hurried back down to town for help.

"He was still wheezing when he located me at Metcalf's treating the old man's piles," MacIver said. "Never seen Ross out of breath and no hat before. Don't expect to again. He's asked about you. But he don't come round to see you."

"I owe him my life, I guess."

"Heaviest debt there is," said the doctor. "Just hope he forgives it."

Cowper brooded for a while. "Who's Abiram?"

"A-byerum? Darn if I know."

"In the Bible, I think."

"Oh well then," MacIver said, "damned if I know, and damned if I don't."

“Miz Brown?”

“In here,” she called from the kitchen.

“You got a Bible?”

She came to the doorway of the room wiping her hands down her apron. “Oh, no, Mr. Cowper, I don’t, I’m sorry.” She really was sorry, wanting to amend her fault. She was like that, like a child. “Maybe Mr. Robineau would have a spare one? I’ll go by the church and ask him when I go out.”

“Thank you,” Cowper said.

“But don’t bring old Robineau back with you,” said MacIver. “If this house is going to get filled with righteousness, I’m out of it.”

MacIver made him laugh. When he laughed his chest hurt so sharp the tears came into his eyes.

They had known each other two years ago in Ventura, when Cowper was first with the company. They met at a poker game and liked each other. MacIver had a practice there, but he also had a habit. Cowper had been in a low, lonesome place in his life. He was at a bar most nights. He was always glad to meet up with MacIver. The doctor had a keen wit, never lost his temper, was good company. He was such a gentlemanly drunk it took Cowper a while to realize that he was killing himself.

The company took Cowper on full time and sent him to inspect the Oro Grandy Mine, and he lost track of MacIver.

His first afternoon in Goldorado, he was not feeling encouraged about his stay there. Ross, the company’s local boss, was a buttoned-up, all-business man. The kid they’d found for him to rent rooms from was unfriendly. The town had popped up on the strength of a couple of shallow-lode mines and

was giving out along with them; the four mines he had been sent to inspect were almost certainly played out or barren holes in the ground. A lot of downtown windows were boarded up, bleak even in the blaze of midsummer. A hound dog lay dead asleep in the middle of Main Street. It looked like a few weeks could be a long time there.

The doctor came out of the bank building, saw him, and said, “William Cowper,” half questioning, as if not quite certain he had the name or the man right. When Cowper greeted him he looked relieved. He also looked like he’d been through the mangle. Otherwise he was much as he had been, and they picked up easily and pleasantly where they’d left off. Heading off the inevitable invitation to have one at the Bronco or the Nugget, MacIver made it clear that he wasn’t drinking. “Where do you get a real dinner here?” Cowper asked him instead. They went off to the hotel and dined early, but in style, with a white tablecloth, oysters, and chicken-fried steak. They drank each other’s health in seltzer water.

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She had gone back to sleeping in her bed in the little back room off the kitchen. The walls were thin, and she left the doors open so she could keep an ear out. When he first started having the horrors and screamed out and thrashed trying to get up, she’d been scared of him, afraid she couldn’t keep him from hurting himself or hurting her. But he still couldn’t get up, and didn’t have much strength even in a panic. Once when she was trying to calm him down he flailed out his arm and struck her on the face. It hurt, and she had a bruise next morning. She thought she might have to explain it. Like her mother when Roy hit her, it was just an accident, I was a little tipsy, we both were, he didn’t mean any harm. But Mr. Cowper really hadn’t meant any harm. It wasn’t her he was trying to fight off or get away from. When she could get him to quiet down he was so worn out and confused he didn’t know what he’d been doing or who he was talking to. Sometimes he was in tears like a child, crying, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry!” His tears meant he

was out of the nightmare, coming back to himself. She liked to watch that relief happening, the mind coming back into his eyes, the quietness into his face. He always thanked her.

She didn't know anything about him of course, but she thought he was a lonely man. He didn't complain about the pain he was in, he joked and toughed that out the way a man expected himself to. But there was a grief in him that showed in his face. It went away when he talked with anybody, but it always came back, it was his look when he was by himself. Desolate.

She knew that word, like so many others, from Aunt Bess. "Oh my sakes, this is a desolate place!" Aunt Bess had cried out once, her first look at one of the dusty little east Colorado towns Roy kept moving them to. She had been so upset Rae hadn't asked her what the word meant then, but later on she had, and Aunt Bess said, "It means alone. Sad. Forsaken." And she'd said some of a poem that started, "Desolate, oh desolate!"

It was a lonesome word. "Forsaken" was even lonesomer. She valued words like that and the people who said them, Aunt Bess, old Mr. Koons, some of the schoolteachers she'd had, the boardinghouse lady in Holt. She had treasured her McGuffey Readers with stories and poems in them. They got left behind in one of the moves to a new town. After that she knew she had to keep what she learned in her head. Even if she didn't say them, knowing words for things she felt and knowing there were people who said them used to help some when she was feeling desolate and forsaken, in those places, in those days.

She hadn't had friends her own age, and envied those who did. She'd used to think the girls just didn't like her, but now she could see that her stepfather and his friends had put them on the outside right away in every town he'd moved them to. Just after they'd come to Grand Junction, Aunt Bessie had had to go back to Kansas to nurse Grandmother Brown, who was dying. She wanted to take Rae with her and Rae wanted to go, but Roy

wouldn't have it. Soon after Aunt Bessie left, Roy started bringing his new friend Mr. Van Allen over several nights a week. Rae's mother entertained Mr. Van Allen and the rent got paid.

Girls Rae had begun to know at school stopped speaking to her. It didn't seem to her it was her fault what her mother did. In fact she didn't think it was really her mother's fault. After Daddy died, when Rae was eleven, Mother had done nothing but cry, and before the year was out she married Roy Daid, as if he was the answer to anything. Mother wasn't strong, like Aunt Bessie was. Not everybody was strong. But people wouldn't speak to them now, and the neighbor woman said out loud to somebody in the street, "I'm not used to living next door to a slut."

Rae was so angry at everybody by then she wouldn't let anybody even try to speak to her. There was nobody. Nobody till Pete Tonely showed up with some of Roy's business friends. He was so different. Younger, and really handsome. He didn't hound her and paw her like Roy's friends tried to, but she knew he noticed her a lot. The day after she turned eighteen and found that Sears Roebuck had turned her off from her warehouse job there, Pete had come over. He said something nice to her, and she started crying. She made herself stop crying right away, and they sat out on the back steps talking for a long time. He said, "Rae, I came over to tell you. I'm pulling up stakes. Going to Denver. Tonight." She just sat there, dumb. He took her hand and said, "Listen. I want to take you out of this. If you want to come. I thought about going on to Frisco." She met him down at the train station that night.

The first year had had a lot of excitement in it, and joy. She didn't forget that. But poor Pete was always finding wonderful new friends and new prospects and then they didn't pan out. He got fired, or he quit. As time went on, it seemed like nothing satisfied him anymore. He was never hard on her, but the joy was all gone out of it. A few months after they got anywhere, he was talking about pulling up stakes. When they were in Chico,

he'd met some man from a mining town who told him what a great job bartending was, and good money in the tips. And so she'd ended up in Goldorado. Still on the outside.

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Mr. Cowper's boss came one afternoon. She made sure Mr. Cowper had his shirt on and was sitting up, and then left Mr. Ross with him. She went to the kitchen to start dinner. She couldn't help but hear what they said. She didn't much like Mr. Ross, a pink-faced man with cold eyes. He was a gentleman but it wasn't the same kind of gentleman as Doc Mac and Mr. Cowper.

She heard him tell Mr. Cowper that the company was going to keep on paying him while he was laid up. He said, "They think very highly of you down in Sacramento, Cowper," and you could tell that he tried to say it nicely, although it was a strain on him to do so and it came out sounding superior. That warmed her to Mr. Ross.

He chilled her down right away. As she showed him out he said, "No doubt you know, Mrs. Tonely, that your husband has several creditors here who would appreciate knowing when he might return."

Nobody in their senses would have made Pete a real loan. If he'd borrowed money privately that was none of Mr. Ross's business. Unless it was Ross he owed. But Ross wouldn't have lent Pete money any more than the bank would. He had spoken out of pure meanness.

She let her eyes cross his pink face without looking at it, the way he always did to her, and said, "My name's Rae Brown, Mr. Ross. I don't have a husband."

That shocked him maybe more than she meant it to. His pink cheeks went dark red and his jaw shook up and down. He turned away and strutted off like a turkey gobbler.

Well, she certainly was parading her shame. First to Doc Mac, then Ross. Might as well announce, “I was living in sin!” with a megaphone like they had at the rodeo.

She went in and passed Mr. Cowper’s door without speaking to him to see if he needed anything. In the kitchen she stood there for a while and felt her face burn red hot. Going around announcing her name, as if being Rae Brown was something to be proud of. It didn’t make any difference if she wasn’t ashamed. Other people were. They were ashamed for her, of her, that she lived among them. They blushed for her. Their shame was on her, a weight, a load she couldn’t get out from under.

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“All right, let ’er buck.”

MacIver handled the book like it might go off if he wasn’t careful. He got his finger on the page and line he wanted, grimaced, and began to read in a jerky mumble.

And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up:

Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.

“This making any sense to you?”

“Well, it might if you didn’t read it like you were spitting gravel.”

“I am not a reading man, William,” the doctor said with dignity. “Given time, I have made sense of a medical text. But what’s all this stuff? Which, and thou, and putting out eyes?”

“I don’t know. If I could look at that book I might could figure it out. But it’s not a one-handed book.”

“Never heard it mentioned as such,” MacIver said. “Hey, Rae?”

“She’s hanging out the wash.”

MacIver went to call out from the back door. “Rae! You ever done any Bible reading?”

Cowper heard her cheerful voice call back, “I used to read it to my auntie sometimes.”

“Will you come make sense of this stuff to the divinity student in here?”

MacIver came back and she followed him. The smell of sunlight on newly washed sheets came in with her and she was laughing. “You two are reading the Bible?”

“Not real successfully,” Cowper said. “Maybe you could help us out.”

She took the thick, heavy, black-bound, red-edged book the minister had lent them. She held it with affectionate respect. “I haven’t seen this for a long time. It’s just like the one my aunt had.”

“Don’t lose the place! We had enough trouble finding it! See, there? It’s called Numbers 15. Now just start there, and look out for the whiches.”

She sat down in the straight chair, studied the page for a minute, and began to read. She read slowly, hesitating over a word now and then—wroth, tabernacle—but easily and with understanding. There was a music in it. A couple of times she glanced up to see if they wanted her to go on.

And Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind.

If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me.

But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.

And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them:

And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.

She looked at Cowper, and stopped.

After a minute MacIver said, “Whatever this Dathan and Abiram did, their wives and sons and little children didn’t, did they? That’s awful stuff.”

Cowper was having some trouble breathing. The doctor had his eye on him as he went on. “You read like an angel, Miss Rae. You come of a religious family?”

“Oh my sakes no. Aunt Bessie and I read her Bible because she liked to be read to when she was sick and there wasn’t anything else in the house. Then a neighbor heard she wanted something to read and brought over a whole box full of cowboy adventure stories.”

“Made a change from Moses and Korah and them, anyhow.” He got up and came over to Cowper. “Got trouble, William?”

Cowper nodded.

“I’ll go finish the wash,” Rae said, and slipped out, leaving the Bible on the side table. A black rectangle. Cowper shut his eyes and tried to breathe.

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He went down into the pit, the earth swallowed him. But he was buried above ground.

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Lying there in the long afternoons with nothing but time on his hands he felt what time was. It was his element, like air. It was a gift. His breath had begun to come easily again, the gift restored. He watched the slow unceasing changes of the light on the walls and ceiling and in the sky out

his window. He watched July becoming August. The hours washed over him soft as the mild air.

Angus MacIver came in one morning, told him he'd been lying around like a hog in a wallow long enough, and began teaching him exercises to keep his muscles from wasting and get some strength in the good leg and arm. He did them faithfully, but doing anything at all both exhausted him and made him impatient to be doing more. It made the possibility of getting up off the damn bed, walking, walking back into the world, imaginable. But imagining it now, when it wasn't possible, threatened his gift of ease, made him restless. Doing nothing, he could let peace flow back into him.

And often now the peace lasted through the night. He would wake at what had been his worst hour, just before the turn of night toward day, black dark, the town and the hills dead silent, and watch the stars in his window grow paler and fewer and the chairs and bureau and doorway taking on substance, a long untroubled wakening.

He knew he counted on the doctor visiting most days, sitting down and talking a while, but he hadn't known how much until MacIver went off on one of his rounds, out to people on ranches up in the hills and at the big sawmill down the creek where, as he said, the hands kept practising their sawing on themselves.

MacIver didn't keep a horse, renting a mare and a buckboard from Hugh at the livery stable for his rounds, or a riding horse for an emergency when the patient couldn't get into town. Rae said that he was liked and respected in Goldorado, but Cowper had wondered if his practice there was enough to live on. He was open about things like money that some men wouldn't talk about, so Cowper asked him. MacIver told him that two years ago a friend had given him a half interest in a going lumber business over in the redwood country. "Staked me for life," he said. "I'm in the clover. So long as people keep building houses."

“Man doesn’t get many friends like that,” Cowper said, thinking of Mr. Bendischer.

MacIver nodded, but his face closed down. Some part of Angus MacIver had a fence around it that was posted Keep Out. No barbed wire, but the sign was clear from a distance. It just wasn’t clear to Cowper what was inside it.

Talking about himself to get away from whatever had shut MacIver down, he had said, “I got staked like that. When I was a kid.” He stopped. He didn’t want to tell the story.

But MacIver wanted to hear it. “Ran away from home?”

“My parents died. In a train wreck.” He stopped again, but couldn’t leave it there. He had to make his recitation. “On a switchback. My father worked for the Tomboy Mine up there. Near Ouray. The track had buckled since the last inspection. On a downgrade. Engine went off the rails down into the canyon and took the first car with it. They were in it. Me and my sister had gone back to the last car. The observation platform.”

“How old were you?”

“Cleo was fourteen. I was eleven.”

MacIver waited.

“Well, our next of kin was my mother’s uncle. He took me and my sister with him to Pueblo. Then he fixed it up somehow with the bank and skipped out with everything Father left us.” He heard his voice dull and level, like a rote recitation in school. “There was an old lawyer there in Pueblo, he’d have liked to get our uncle to justice. He tried. Couldn’t do it. But he took an interest in my sister and me. Cleo wanted to work and keep me in school, and he helped her do that. He saved us. Robert Bendischer. I

honor his name. He put me through the mining school in Golden. Mrs. Bendischer never liked us."

"How about your sister?"

"Cleo died of diphtheria. Two years after our parents."

After a while MacIver said, "God moves in a mysterious way." He had asked his questions gently, but spoke now with savage bleakness.

When he left that day he put his arm around Cowper's shoulders. In his helplessness the doctor had handled him all the time, deft and gentle. This was different, awkward, a sudden half embrace that hurt. MacIver left without a word, scowling.

He had been away five days now. It seemed like nothing happened and nothing changed. He did his exercises, but they didn't get easier, and except for the scabs healing over he didn't feel he was getting any better. His leg and wrist were still in heavy bandages, immobile, hot in the long hot afternoons and evenings. His side still hurt and his breath came short when he moved. Even the bruises didn't seem to fade much. He still needed Rae to help him do anything at all.

She was good at thinking of what he might need and asking him about it or just doing it. He knew that and appreciated it. But he was so sick of still having to ask, can you do this, will you do that, that he didn't always treat her the way he ought to. She was patient with his crankiness up to a point. Then she went silent, and when she'd done what was needed she'd leave him silently, going to another room or outside. But always in hearing.

When she had to leave the house, she told him, and made sure there was somebody within earshot, usually the ten-year-old from the only other house on South Fifth Street, a shy boy who wouldn't meet your eyes. Tim always brought with him a game board that had a star design with

indentations for marbles. He sat for hours moving the marbles into patterns. It should by rights have driven Cowper mad to watch the poor kid, but in fact he found that silent absorption soothing. And he wanted soothing. He was losing the sweet, idle flow of uncounted time. Often now he felt irritable, babyish, stupidly emotional, finding himself often in a fit of anger, or a panic, or halfway to tears. He lay there listening to the endless chorus of grasshoppers out on the dry, hot, gold hillsides, sweating, comfortless, desperately pushing despair away. Then Rae would come in and smile. She didn't hold grudges any more than the cat. He was glad to see her, glad she was there. He didn't know how to say so, but she seemed to be glad to see him and be there, so it wasn't necessary.

There was still nothing much to do but think. He found he had a good supply of things to think about. What went on outside the house in this town he scarcely knew, and it didn't concern him, so he thought mostly about the past and about what was there right now, like Rae.

Whoever the handsome sullen kid was who'd been there with her, he'd evidently walked out, but she didn't seem like her heart was broken. She wasn't much more than twenty and had the stunning health and grace and glow of her age, but she didn't have the self-consciousness girls had, that always tied him up in knots. She wasn't hard, but in a way she was sophisticated. Maybe more than he was. He felt that sometimes, although he must be ten years older than she was. Or it was that she was a woman. Like Cleo, she knew what had to be done and went on and did it. A lot of what she had to do for him was embarrassing to him, shameful. It would have been unbearable if she'd felt the same way about it. She didn't. She took necessity for granted. She was grown up.

Cleo. A steady kindness. A buoyancy. A spring rising.

Thinking of her brought them all together into his mind, his sister and father and mother. Their good nature, their good cheer. It was like a firelit

room. His memory of it was a window that showed it to him warm and bright. But there was no door, no way back in. They were alive there. He was the ghost, whimpering outside in the dark.

He hadn't left that room by choice, but men did. Probably he would have. A man went off alone to prove he wasn't soft. Didn't let himself depend on anybody. Didn't let down with anybody, didn't trust them, because that gave them the advantage over him. Cowper had lived in a man's world since before he was one himself. It was all the world that was left to him. The job cut out for him was a man's job: to fight the battle of life, to compete, succeed, win. Mr. Bendischer had talked about that with him, and had given him the weapons and the armor he needed for the battlefield. And so far he'd done all right.

But what a barren life it was. Always farther from the firelit room.

He liked his work. He was satisfied by knowing what he was doing and doing it well. But to most of the people who ran things, the men who kept the battle of life going, that wasn't enough, wasn't what it was all about.

Men dug tunnels after gold, he thought, but they didn't build them right. If they'd take pity on each other and themselves, they'd build right. At least shore up their ratholes with timber you could count on.

His thoughts went winding around that way, following each other's tails, and the afternoon would pass while he let them lead his mind back to paths it used to walk long ago and places it hadn't been before. He must have been needing some time to think, to take stock, because coming out of one of those long reveries he felt peaceful again, and it didn't seem so bad to be stuck helpless and useless in a bed in a hot little room in a half-dead little town in Amador County, California.

Then in the night he woke facedown with dirt in his mouth and eyes, blind, paralyzed, trying to get his breath with no breath, and the beat pounding in his ears. Buried above ground.

He struggled awake, struggled to calm himself. Holding his mind away from the beat of the terrible words, he sat up and watched daylight slowly transform the sky.

He knew he'd be afraid to go to sleep that night. He thought about it all morning. When he slept there was no way to keep it from happening. He'd learned something about keeping off the horrors, but he had to be awake to do it.

Reciting poetry he'd learned by heart in school and singing songs in his head, it didn't matter what, "Red River Valley" or "Praise God, from Whom," could keep him from slipping into the awful rhythm. If he could get "The boy stood on the burning deck" going, even that could keep Abiram away. He wished they'd made him memorize more in school. He lay hunting for bits of poetry and tunes that had been stuck deep in his mind like little gold veins in granite since before he could remember. "The cow's in the meadow, the sheep's in the corn . . ."

He'd ask Angus to find him something to read. He'd manage holding a book and turning the pages somehow. What the hell, he was an engineer, couldn't he figure out something that would hold a book where he needed it?

"Are there any books in the house, Rae?"

"Just yours," she said. "You want some more to drink?"

She refilled his glass from the pitcher on the bureau and set it on the crate they'd rigged up as a table, which he could reach with his left hand. The bed was close to the wall so that now he could sit up he could see more than sky

out the window. His view was an old plum tree in the side yard and a triangle of Sierra foothill forested with white oak, scrub oak, madrone, and a couple of Jeffrey pines. To get to the crate-table Rae had to go between the bedside and the wall. The windowsill stuck out so she had to squeeze past it a little, turning sideways, away from him. Watching her hips and buttocks negotiate that passage in and then back out was an unfailing pleasure.

“I guess you gave that Bible back.”

“Did you want to hear some more?”

“I liked hearing you read it.”

“I like reading. I read a lot to my aunt when she was sick. I can borrow it back from Mr. Robineau.”

“Maybe something that isn’t the Bible,” he said.

“There’s some books in your other room.”

He thought about it. “Materials stress resistance calculation tables are on the dry side.”

She said, not turned toward him as she said it, “There’s some other books in your trunk.”

His trunk, what he’d put in it packing it in San Francisco. Another world. “What are they?” he asked more of himself than her.

“A poetry book and a book by Charles Dickens.”

“Ace in the hole!” He was delighted. “Fetch ’em in here, Rae!” Of course he’d brought the Dickens—he’d bought it in the city to bring here, thinking

there might be some long evenings. And he'd traveled with Cowper's Poems so long he'd forgotten about it.

Rae turned around. He saw with surprise that she had gone red, which with her was no modest-maidenly-pink business. She turned burning red, fire red, face, ears, throat, whatever could be seen of her. Then, more slowly, she turned white and stayed that way for some time. He'd seen her go through this once before, but not so extremely as now. It was distressing, and he felt sorry for her and sorry about causing the distress. But he had no idea what he'd said to cause it. Had he told her to fetch the books like an order?

"Mr. Cowper, I had to unlock your trunk and look in it. A while ago. I had to."

"That's all right with me, Rae." His first thought was that there was nothing of any value in the trunk, then he remembered he'd stuck some bills and coins in under the other stuff. Trying to ease her disproportionate embarrassment, he said, "If you ever get short of cash money, there's some in the bottom, did you find that?"

She burst into tears. The tears ran down her pale face. The sobbing shook her hard. She cried like a child, openly. It had come on her so suddenly she couldn't hide it and didn't try. She just stood there weeping. He tried to reach out to her but of course couldn't get anywhere near her. All he could say was her name, don't cry, it's all right.

She got the sobbing under control and with one of his handkerchiefs from the top bureau drawer wiped her eyes and nose. Doing that allowed her to turn away from him for a while. When she turned back she was still pale, and she'd missed some of the snot on her left cheek. He had never felt pity so sharp, so urgent, pity like a knife stab. It made him reach out to her again, sitting up and turning as much in the bed as he was able to. She saw

his gesture, but did not put out her hand to his, though she came a little closer to the bed and tried to smile.

“I was afraid Pete might have taken your money. It’s all right, it’s there. He didn’t. I hid the key. I wasn’t sure if Pete might come back.” She frowned and her mouth drew back in a grimace repressing another rush of tears.

“Well you did just right,” he said, talking to her as if she were a child, letting his useless right arm drop back to his side, feeling his own tears ache in his throat and behind his eyes. “You did just right, Rae. Thanks.”

Something relaxed between them then. An inner movement, very deep down, definitive, almost imperceptible.

She poured a little water from the white tin pitcher into the washbasin on the bureau and splashed her face and used his handkerchief with better success. She took the basin out to the front door to toss the water onto the scraggly rosebush by the steps. She came back into the room and said resolutely, “See, when he left, he took my money. So I was afraid maybe he’d—I’m sorry, Mr. Cowper.”

Nothing came to him to say to her but, “That’s all right.” Then, “Look, Rae. We could drop the Mr, maybe. My name’s William.”

She stood looking at him. Head cocked, but serious. Judging. “I guess I can do that,” she said. She did not smile. “Thank you.

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When Doc Mac came in, she was sitting close to the lamp so she could go on reading Little Dorrit aloud. William was sitting up in bed. The old cat was asleep on the bed by his legs. “Well this is a pleasant domestic scene,” Doc said with a grin, looking in from the dark of the hallway at them in the glow of yellowish light.

“Hey Angus,” William said, and she could hear how glad he was to see him. “It’s been a while.”

“Bunch of fools out there in the sticks. Everything wrong with ’em from scurvy to bunions to a ten-month pregnancy. They need looking after.”

“Did you get any dinner, Doc? We’ve got some pork and beans left I could quick heat up, and corn bread—”

“Thanks, Rae, they fed me at the Mannhofers’. Klara’s a good cook, I generally try to get there around a mealtime. How’s your sixth costa vera doing, William?”

“It’ll do. You missed a shindy, Saturday night.”

“Heard something about it. The Edersons again, right? I keep hoping someday some of that lot will manage to murder at least a few of each other.”

“Carl Ederson went to shoot his brother Peer but he hit his cousin’s horse. Or he was trying to shoot the horse and hit Peer. Which is it, Rae?”

He made her laugh. “Nobody really knows what happened,” she said. “Just that Erland’s horse got shot, and then Carl left town. And old Mr. Ederson says he’s going to shoot Carl soon as he sees him. And old Mrs. Ederson threw his gun into the creek.” They were all laughing. Coming past her to sit down in the straight chair, Doc touched her shoulder, a little light brush of the hand, the way he did sometimes. It was close in the small room. She and Doc were near the lamp, batting off or slapping at tiny mosquitoes. William was sitting up against the pillows, and his strong profile partly in the yellow light and part in deep shadow looked like an old photograph or a stone carving.

“I came in on a reading,” Doc said. “More of the Scriptures? You trying to figure out what Abiram actually did to bring God down on him and his wife and the babies?”

“No,” William said. “Don’t reckon I ever will. We’re reading the Gospel by Dickens.”

“Pickwick Papers? I saw a play made out of that in KC once.”

“This is Little Dorrit. More on the serious side.”

“Well give me a shot of it. I am tired, to tell you the truth. Sitting here getting read to by a beautiful woman sounds like just what the doctor ordered.” She tried to beg off, but he meant it. “Go on from where you were.” Rae picked up the book and found her place.

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“He’s asleep.”

“I know. Just go on reading.”

“He’s going to fall off the chair.”

Doc started, half stood up, shook his head, sat down, and woke up. “Well, God damn, I went to sleep!” he said, and then, “Rae, I’m sorry. I am truly sorry.”

She thought he was apologizing for going to sleep. She had got so used to Roy and the men he knew and then Pete and the men he knew cursing all the time, language a lot worse than “damn,” which she hadn’t even noticed. When she understood, she was embarrassed and touched, and said at random, “You didn’t know what you were saying. I don’t mind. You must be worn out. I was getting tired reading, anyhow.”

“Foul-mouthed old cuss,” William said. “Can’t have you around the ladies. Go home and go to bed. We’re all pie-eyed. It must be past midnight.”

“It is,” Doc said, looking at his silver watch. “Thank you for the fine entertainment.” He yawned enormously. “Good night!”

He lurched out, waving the back of his hand at them vaguely.

“Never thought it had got so late,” William said.

“I love that man,” Rae said. “He’s just good.”

She felt dreamy, half there, half in the story she had been reading to them. She got Mr. Cowper—she still called him that in her head when “Mr. Cowper” made things easier than “William” did—seen to for the night, blew out the lamp, and bade him good night.

It seemed pitch dark for a moment, but the starlight and an old moon just clearing the mountains made a grey light in the house, enough for him to find his chamber pot if he had to, and for her to get to bed, still in the half dream of the story.

It tickled her that Doc had called her a beautiful woman. She knew that from him it meant nothing except his kindness. But for some reason she was glad he’d said it front of William.

As she undressed the story came back around her. It had been hard going at first when they were all in Marseille, which she had to remember to pronounce Marsay, and the prison there, and the quarantine. She could see the places, but what was going on didn’t begin to make much sense until the third chapter, called “Home,” when Arthur Clennam was with his mother in the old house. And then when the story got to Mr. Dorrit and Amy and her sister in the Marshalsea Prison. She had gone right on tonight to the chapter called “The Lock” because she didn’t want to stop, even though she

knew it was late. Arthur Clennam followed Amy to the prison and met Amy's father, and then she had to stop reading because Doc was tilting over in his chair like a tree about to fall. That room and her bedroom were all mixed up in her head with Mr. Dorrit, and his brother Frederick, and Amy bringing her dinner for her father to eat. Jail cells and old dark places with heavy doors locked on the fragile human souls inside them. And the sweet night air pouring down the mountains through the house. She began going to sleep before she'd gotten all the way into bed.

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It was a Sunday morning. He knew because things had been very loud at the Nugget last night and didn't quiet down till late, after the cricket trilling died away. Anyhow it felt like Sunday. And presently they began hymn-singing away down Main Street in Mr. Robineau's church. He'd been such a short time in Goldorado before the tunnel fell in on him that he didn't have much picture of the town. He remembered or imagined a little clapboard chapel with a kind of halfhearted try at a steeple. The congregation sounded pretty thin on the ground from the way they wailed out a hymn he didn't know, or maybe he couldn't tell what it was because half of them were out of tune and all of them singing it like a dirge. Why did people drag out hymns like that? A good hymn deserved a good tempo. They went caterwauling on and on, it always sounded like the last verse at last, but it never was. Sitting up straight, breathing easy, and feeling good in the bright morning light already warming the air, he sang to show how it should be done—not loud, but moving right along with the beat. He sang his own hymn.

God moves in a mysterious way.

His wonders to perform;

He plants His footsteps in the sea

And rides upon the storm.

Rae was in the doorway, bright-eyed, half laughing. Cowper waved his left hand like a choirmaster and sang on.

Deep in unfathomable mines

Of never failing skill,

He treasures up His bright designs

And works His sov'reign will.

He stopped and looked at her. "Cowper's Hymn," he said.

"Go on!"

"That's the part I like. It's in the book, if you want to read it." He reached for the smaller book that she had fetched from his trunk along with Little Dorrit. She had put them both on his crate-table, and the smaller one had stayed there. He held it out to her. She was shy about taking it from him, so he opened it to the title page. Before that was the flyleaf, with the inscription on it in spidery legal writing, To my dear young friend and namesake of the Poet, William Cowper, on the occasion of his matriculation. May you find Honor and Contentment in your chosen profession. September 1889. R.E. Bendischer. He knew it without reading it. He showed Rae the title page, and then turned to the hymn. It took a while, one-handed, but he knew the page. He knew all the pages.

"He called it 'Light Shining out of Darkness,' but mostly it gets called 'Cowper's Hymn.'"

She took the book from him at last.

“I never heard you sing,” she said.

“I didn’t feel much like it lately.”

“I guess not.” She was still shy, not looking at the book, or at him. He never could figure out her shynesses, her embarrassments. They were mysteries. The more he knew Rae, the more her mysteries. Endless. Unfathomable.

“I like that word,” she said. She was blushing some, but went ahead. She was looking down at the open book now. “It’s a grand word. Unfathomable.”

After a while Cowper said, “It is.”

Ursula K. Le Guin *published twenty-one novels, eleven volumes of short stories, four collections of essays, twelve books for children, six volumes of poetry and four of translation, and has received the Hugo, Nebula, Endeavor, Locus, Tiptree, Sturgeon, PEN/Malamud, and National Book awards and the Pushcart and Janet Heidinger Kafka prizes, among others. In recent years she has received lifetime achievement awards from the World Fantasy Awards, Los Angeles Times, Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association, and Willamette Writers, as well as the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America Grand Master Award, the Library of Congress “Living Legend” award, and the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. Le Guin was the recipient of the Association for Library Service to Children’s May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture Award and the Margaret Edwards Award. She lived in Portland, Oregon, and her website is www.ursulakleguin.com.*

Friday, April 10

Love in the Time of Robots – *Alex Mar*

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