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MRS. DALLOWAY by Virginia Woolf Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning--fresh as if issued to children on a beach. What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of cours
MRS. DALLOWAY by Virginia wood MRS. Dalloway Said sine would buy the new own control in the open air. How come were the coming, and the many of the control into the control int
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ays felt a little skimpy beside Hugh; schoolgirlish; but attached to him, partly from having known him always, but she did think him a go
er for I i king him. She could remember scene after scene at Bourton--Peter furious; Hugh not, of course, his match in any way, but
od sort in his own way, though Richard was nearly driven mad by him, and as for Peter Walsh, he had never to this day forgive
 still not a positive imbecile as Peter made out; not a mere barber's block. When his old mother wanted him to give up sh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    did it, without a word; he was really unselfish, and as for saying, as Peter did, th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ooting or to take her to Bath he
at he had no heart, no brain, nothing but the manners and breeding of an English gentleman, that was only her dear
                                                                                                                                                                                     Peter at his worst; and he c ould be intoler
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                able; he could be impossible; but adorable to walk with on a morning lil
e this. (June had drawn out every leaf on the trees. The mothers of Pimlico gave suck to their young. Messages
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          Fleet to the Admiralty. Arlington Street and Piccadilly seemed to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                    assing from t
chafe the very air in the Park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly, on waves of that divine vitality which Clariss ght be parted for hundreds of years, she and Peter; she never wrote a letter and his were dry sticks; but at would he say?--some days, some sights bringing him back to her calmly, without the old bitterness;
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              a loved. To dance, to ride, she had adored all that.) For they m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 suddenly it would come over her, If he were with me now wh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   which perhaps was the reward of having cared for people
 ney came back in the middle of St. James's Park on a fine morning--indeed they did. But Peter--how
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ever beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, and the little girl in pink-- Peter never saw a thing of
  that. He would put on his spectacles, if she told him to; he would look. It was the state of the wo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      rld that interested him; Wagner, Pope's poetry, people's characters eternally, and the defects of her own soul. How he scol
                                                                                                                                                                                                                        the perfect hostess he called her (she had cried over it in her bedroom), she had the makings of the perfect hostess, he said. So t--and she had too--not to marry him. For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living toget
ded her! How they argued! She would marry a Prime Minister and stand at the top of a staircase;
 she would still find herself arguing in St. Jámes's Park, still making out that she had been righ
her day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him. (Where was he t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                   his morning for instance? Some committee, she never asked what.) But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. A
nd it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she
                                                                                                                                                                                                                 had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced; though she had borne about with her
                                                                                                                                                                                                         e moment when some one told her at a concert that he had married a woman met on the boat going to India! Never should she forget all that ose Indian women did presumably-- silly, pretty, flimsy nincompoops. And she wasted her pity. For he was quite happy, he assured her--perfe
for years like an arrow sticking in her heart the grief, the anguish; and then the horror of th
 Cold, heartless, a prude, he called her. Never could she understand how he cared. But th
ctly happy, though he had never done a thing that they talked of; his whole life had been
                                                                                                                                                                                                        a failure. It made her angry still. She had reached the Park gates. She stood for a moment, looking at the omnibuses in Piccadilly. She would no
t say of any one in the world now that they were this or were that. She felt very young; at
e, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always h
                                                                                                                                                                                                        the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on. She had a perpetual sens
                                                                                                                                                                                                     ad the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day. Not that she thought herself clever, or much out of the ordinary. How she had
got through life on the few twigs of knowledge Fräulein Daniels gave them she could no
                                                                                                                                                                                                    t think. She knew nothing; no language, no history; she scarcely read a book now, except memoirs in bed; and yet to her it was absolutely absorb
                                                                                                                                                                                                  elf, I am this, I am that. Her only gift was knowing people almost by instinct, she thought, walking on. If you put her in a room with some one, up we e china cockatoo, she had seen them all lit up once; and remembered Sylvia, Fred, Sally Seton--such hosts of people; and dancing all night; and the
 g; all this; the cabs passing; and she would not say of Peter, she would not say of hers
nt her back like a cat's; or she purred. Devonshire House, Bath House, the house with th
  waggons plodding past to market; and driving home across the Park. She remembered
                                                                                                                                                                                                  once throwing a shilling into the Serpentine. But every one remembered, what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her; the fat lady in the cab.
Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she
                                                                                                                                                                                                 must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absorbed.
utely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, ther
                                                                                                                                                                                                  e, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bi
ts and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist betwee
                                                                                                                                                                                                  n the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. But wh
at was she dreaming as she looked into Hatchards' shop window? What was she trying to re
                                                                                                                                                                                                   cover? What image of white dawn in the country, as she read in the book spread open: Fear no more the heat o' the sun Nor the furious winter's rag
                                                                                                                                                                                                   f tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing. Think, for example, of the woman she admired most, L
Soapy Sponge and Mrs. Asquith's Memoirs and Big Game Shooting in Nigeria, all spread open. Ever so many books there were; but none that see
es. This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well o
ady Bexborough, opening the bazaar. There were Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities; there were
méd exactly right to take to Evelyn Whitbread in her nursing home. Nothing that would ser
                                                                                                                                                                                                    ve to amuse her and make that indescribably dried-up little woman look, as Clarissa came in, just for a moment cordial; before they settled down f
or the usual interminable talk of women's ailments. How much she wanted it--that people
                                                                                                                                                                                                  should look pleased as she came in, Clarissa thought and turned and walked back towards Bond Street, annoyed, because it was silly to have other
reasons for doing things. Much rather would she have been one of those people like Ric
                                                                                                                                                                                               hard who did things for themselves, whereas, she thought, waiting to cross, half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves; but to make
                                                                                                                                                                                             d) for no one was ever for a second taken in. Oh if she could have had her life over again! she thought, stepping on to the pavement, could have looked
eople think this or that; perfect idiocy she knew (and now the policeman held up his han
                                                                                                                                                                                         ith a skin of crumpled leather and beautiful eyes. She would have been, like Lady Bexborough, slow and stately; rather large; interested in politics like a rrow pea- stick figure; a ridiculous little face, beaked like a bird's. That she held herself well was true; and had nice hands and feet; and dressed well, cor
even differently! She would have been, in the first place, dark like Lady Bexborough, w
man; with a country house; very dignified, very sincere. Instead of which she had a na
sidering that she spent little. But often now this body she wore (she stopped to look a
                                                                                                                                                                                        t a Dutch picture), this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing--nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown
there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonis
                                                                                                                                                                                       hing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dallo
               Street fascinated her; Bond Street early in the morning in the season; its
                                                                                                                                                                                    flags flying; its shops, no splash; no glitter; one roll of tweed in the shop where her father had bought his suits for fifty years; a few pearls; salmon on an icd, pausing for a moment at the window of a glove shop where, before the War, you could buy almost perfect gloves. And her old Uncle William used to say a in the middle of the War. He had said, "I have had enough." Gloves and shoes; she had a passion for gloves; but her own daughter, her Elizabeth, cared not
            'That is all," she said, looking at the fishmonger's. "That is all," she repeate
lady is known by her shoes and her gloves. He had turned on his bed one morning
                                                                                                                                                                                  hop where they kept flowers for her when she gave a party. Elizabeth really cared for her dog most of all. The whole house this morning smelt of tar. Still, bett n sitting mewed in a stuffy bedroom with a prayer book! Better anything, she was inclined to say. But it might be only a phase, as Richard said, such as all gir badly treated of course; one must make allowances for that, and Richard said she was very able, had a really historical mind. Anyhow they were inseparable, with the treated people who came to lunch she did not care a bit, it being her experience that the religious ecstasy made people callous (so did causes); dulled t
  straw for either of them. Not a straw, she thought, going on up Bond Street to a
er poor Grizzle than Miss Kilman; better distemper and tar and all the rest of it that
  go through. It might be falling in love. But why with Miss Kilman? who had been
heir feelings, for Miss Kilman would do anything for the Russians, starved herse
                                                                                                                                                                                   If for the Austrians, but in private inflicted positive torture, so insensitive was she, dressed in a green mackintosh coat. Year in year out she wore that coat; s
e perspired; she was never in the room five minutes without making you feel he
                                                                                                                                                                                   r superiority, your interiority, how poor she was; how rich you were; how she lived in a slum without a cushion or a bed or a rug or whatever it might be, all he
  soul rusted with that grievance sticking in it, her dismissal from school during
                                                                                                                                                                                    the War--poor embittered unfortunate creature! For it was not her one hated but the idea of her, which undoubtedly had gathered in to itself a great deal that
was not Miss Kilman; had become one of those spectres with which one battles
                                                                                                                                                                                    in the night; one of those spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants; for no doubt with another throw of the dice
                                                                                                                                                                                   man! But not in this world. No. It rasped her, though, to have stirring about in her this brutal monster! to hear twigs cracking and feel hooves planted down in r quite secure, for at any moment the brute would be stirring, this hatred, which, especially since her illness, had power to make her feel scraped, hurt in her being well, in being loved and making her home delightful rock, quiver, and bend as if indeed there were a monster grubbing at the roots, as if the whole pan
had the black been uppermost and not the white, she would have loved Miss Kil
the depths of that leaf-encumbered forest, the soul; never to be content quite, o
spine; gave her physical pain, and made all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in
oply of content were nothing but self love! this hatred! Nonsense, no nsense
                                                                                                                                                                                     she cried to herself, pushing through the swing doors of Mulberry's the florists. She advanced, light, tall, very upright, to be greeted at once by button-faced
Miss Pym, whose hands were always bright red, as if they had been st
                                                                                                                                                                                     ood in cold water with the flowers. There were flowers: delphiniums, sweet peas, bunches of lilac; and carnations, masses of carnations. There were roses;
here were irises. Ah yes--so she breathed in the earthy garden sweet sme
                                                                                                                                                                                      as she stood talking to Miss Pym who owed her help, and thought her kind, for kind she had been years ago; very kind, but she looked older, this year, turn
ng her head from side to side among the irises and roses and nodding tufts of
                                                                                                                                                                                       ac with her eyes half closed, snuffing in, after the street uproar, the delicious scent, the exquisite coolness. And then, opening her eyes, how fresh like frille
   inen clean from a laundry laid in wicker trays the roses looked; and dark and
                                                                                                                                                                                      m the red carnations, holding their heads up; and all the sweet peas spreading in their bowls, tinged violet, snow white, pale--as if it were the evening and
irls in muslin frocks came out to pick sweet peas and roses after the superb su
                                                                                                                                                                                          s day, with its almost blue-black sky, its delphiniums, its carnations, its arum lilies was over; and it was the moment between six and seven when every f
ower--roses, carnations, irises, lilac-- glows; white, violet, red, deep orange; e
                                                                                                                                                                                    very flower seems to burn by itself, softly, purely in the misty beds; and how she loved the grey-white moths spinning in and out, over the cherry pie, over the
                                                                                                                                                                                     hoosing, nonsense, nonsense, she said to herself, more and more gently, as if this beauty, this scent, this colour, and Miss Pym liking her, trusting her, werer, surmount it all; and it lifted her up and up when--oh! a pistol shot in the street outside! "Dear, those motor cars," said Miss Pym, going to the window to
 evening primroses! And as she began to go with Miss Pym from jar to jar, c
e a wave which she let flow over her and surmount that hatred, that monst
ook, and coming back and smiling apologetically with her hands full of s
                                                                                                                                                                                    weet peas, as if those motor cars, those tyres of motor cars, were all HER fault. The violent explosion which made Mrs. Dalloway jump and Miss Pym go to the
                                                                                                                                                                                 side of the pavement precisely opposite Mulberry's shop window. Passers-by who, of course, stopped and stared, had just time to see a face of the very greater with blind and there was nothing to be seen except a square of dove grey. Yet rumours were at once in circulation from the middle of Bond Street to Oxfor invisibly, inaudibly, like a cloud, swift, veil-like upon hills, falling indeed with something of a cloud's sudden sobriety and stillness upon faces which a second
e window and apologise came from a motor car which had drawn to the
     importance against the dove-grey upholstery, before a male hand
   Street on one side, to Atkinson's scent shop on the other, passin
                                                                                                                                                                        d them with her wing; they had heard the voice of authority; the spirit of religion was abroad with her eyes bandaged tight and her lips gaping wide. But nobody kee Queen's, the Prime Minister's? Whose face was it? Nobody knew. Edgar J. Watkiss, with his roll of lead piping round his arm, said audibly, humorously of course:
before had been utterly disorderly. But now mystery had brushe
ew whose face had been seen. Was it the Prince of Wales's, th
 he Proime Minister's kyar." Septimus Warren Smith, who fo
                                                                                                                                                                     und himself unable to pass, heard him. Septimus Warren Smith, aged about thirty, pale-faced, beak-nosed, wearing brown shoes and a shabby overcoat, with hazel ey
                                                                                                                                                                   complete strangers apprehensive too. The world has raised its whip; where will it descend? Everything had come to a standstill. The throb of the motor engines sounder
s which had that look of apprehension in them which makes
                                                                                                                                                           he sun became extraordinarily hot because the motor car had stopped outside Mulberry's shop window; old ladies on the tops of omnibuses spread their black parasols; he alloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in enquiry. Every one looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Bo
ike a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body. T
e a green, here a red parasol opened with a little pop. Mrs. D
                                                                                                                                                          motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his ey about to burst into flames, terrified him. The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames. It is I who am blocking the way, he thought. Was he not being loo
ys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated. And there the
es, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was
                                                                                                                                                           vement, for a purpose? But for what purpose? "Let us go on, Septimus," said his wife, a little woman, with large eyes in a sallow pointed face; an Italian girl. But Lucrezia hers blinds. Was it the Queen in there—the Queen going shopping? The chauffeur, who had been opening something, turning something, shutting something, got on to the box. "
ur, five years now, jumped, started, and said, "All right!" angrily, as if she had interrupted him. People must notice; people must see. People, she thought, looking at the cro
heir horses and their clothes, which she admired in a way; but they were "people" now, because Septimus had said, "I will kill myself"; an awful thing to say. Suppose th
y out to butchers' boys and women. Help! Only last autumn she and Septimus had stood on the Embankment wrapped in the same cloak and, Septimus reading a pa
Id man's face who saw them! But failure one conceals. She must take him away into some park. "Now we will cross," she said. She had a right to his arm, though it
ked at and pointed at; was he not weighted there, rooted to the pa
elf could not help looking at the motor car and the tree pattern on the
Come on," said Lucrezia. But her husband, for they had been married fo
wd staring at the motor car; the English people, with their children and t
ey had heard him? She looked at the crowd. Help, help! she wanted to cr
per instead of talking, she had snatched it from him and laughed in the o
was without feeling. He would give her, who was so simple, so impulsi
                                                                                                                                                                            ve, only twenty-four, without friends in England, who had left Italy for his sake, a piece of bone. The motor car with its blinds drawn and an air of inscrutable reserv
e proceeded towards Piccadilly, still gazed at, still ruffling the faces on
                                                                                                                                                                             both sides of the street with the same dark breath of veneration whether for Queen, Prince, or Prime Minister nobody knew. The face itself had been seen only onc
e by three people for a few seconds. Even the sex was now in dispute
                                                                                                                                                                            But there could be no doubt that greatness was seated within; greatness was passing, hidden, down Bond Street, removed only by a hand's- breadth from ordinar
y people who might now, for the first and last time, be within speakin
                                                                                                                                                                         g distance of the majesty of England, of the enduring symbol of the state which will be known to curious antiquaries, sifting the ruins of time, when London is a gras
s- grown path and all those hurrying along the pavement this Wednes
                                                                                                                                                                        day morning are but bones with a few wedding rings mixed up in their dust and the gold stoppings of innumerable decayed teeth. The face in the motor car will then
                                                                                                                                                                          of Mulberry's with her flowers; the Queen. And for a second she wore a look of extreme dignity standing by the flower shop in the sunlight while the car passed at a
be known. It is probably the Queen, thought Mrs. Dalloway, coming out
foot's pace, with its blinds drawn. The Queen going to some hospital; t
                                                                                                                                                                           he Queen opening some bazaar, thought Clarissa. The crush was terrific for the time of day. Lords, Ascot, Hurlingham, what was it? she wondered, for the street w
as blocked. The British middle classes sitting sideways on the tops of
                                                                                                                                                                                  f omnibuses with parcels and umbrelias, yes, even furs on a day like this, were, she thought, more ridiculous, more unlike anything there has ever been than o
                                                                                                                                                                                   f unable to pass. Clarissa was suspended on one side of Brook Street; Sir John Buckhurst, the old Judge on the other, with the car between them (Sir John ha
ne could conceive; and the Queen herself held up; the Queen hersel
d laid down the law for years and liked a well-dressed woman) when
                                                                                                                                                                              the chauffeur, leaning ever so slightly, said or showed something to the policeman, who saluted and raised his arm and jerked his head and moved the omnibus
to the side and the car passed through. Slowly and very silently it too
                                                                                                                                                                           k its way. Clarissa quessed; Clarissa knew of course; she had seen something white, magical, circular, in the footman's hand, a disc inscribed with a name, -- the Qu
                                                                                                                                                                          s own lustre, burnt its way through (Clarissa saw the car diminishing, disappearing), to blaze among candelabras, glittering stars, breasts stiff with oak leaves, Hug in Buckingham Palace. And Clarissa, too, gave a party. She stiffened a little; so she would stand at the top of her stairs. The car had gone, but it had left a slight ri on both sides of Bond Street. For thirty seconds all heads were inclined the same way--to the window. Choosing a pair of gloves--should they be to the elbow or
een's, the Prince of Wales's, the Prime Minister's?--which, by force of it
h Whitbread and all his colleagues, the gentlemen of England, that night
pple which flowed through glove shops and hat shops and tailors' shops
above it, lemon or pale grey?--ladies stopped; when the sentence was fin
                                                                                                                                                                                     ished something had happened. Something so trifling in single instances that no mathematical instrument, though capable of transmitting shocks in China,
could register the vibration; yet in its fulness rather formidable and in its
                                                                                                                                                                                     common appeal emotional; for in all the hat shops and tailors' shops strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead; of the flag; of Empire. In a pub
                                                                                                                                                                                     h led to words, broken beer glasses, and a general shindy, which echoed strangely across the way in the ears of girls buying white underlinen threaded with ssing car as it sunk grazed something very profound. Gliding across Piccadilly, the car turned down St. James's Street. Tall men, men of robust physique, w
lic house in a back street a Colonial insulted the House of Windsor whic
pure white ribbon for their weddings. For the surface agitation of the pa
                                                                                                                                                                                    raked back who, for reasons difficult to discriminate, were standing in the bow window of Brooks's with their hands behind the tails of their coats, looking ou
ell-dressed men with their tail- coats and their white slips and their hair
t, perceived instinctively that greatness was passing, and the pale light
                                                                                                                                                                                    of the immortal presence fell upon them as it had fallen upon Clarissa Dalloway. At once they stood even straighter, and removed their hands, and seemed re
ady to attend their Sovereign, if need be, to the cannon's mouth, as thei
                                                                                                                                                                                    r ancestors had done before them. The white busts and the little tables in the background covered with copies of the Tatler and syphons of soda water seem
ed to approve; seemed to indicate the flowing corn and the manor hous
                                                                                                                                                                                     es of England; and to return the frail hum of the motor wheels as the walls of a whispering gallery return a single voice expanded and made sonorous by the
                                                                                                                                                                                      vement wished the dear boy well (it was the Prince of Wales for certain) and would have tossed the price of a pot of beer-a bunch of roses-into St. James's
might of a whole cathedral. Shawled Moll Pratt with her flowers on the pa
Street out of sheer light-heartedness and contempt of poverty had she n
                                                                                                                                                                                        ot seen the constable's eye upon her, discouraging an old Irishwoman's loyalty. The sentries at St. James's saluted; Queen Alexandra's policeman approv
ed. A small crowd meanwhile had gathered at the gates of Buckingham Pa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     dently, poor people all of them, they waited; looked at the Palace itself with the flag flying; at Victoria,
                                                                                                                                                                                             lace. Listlessly, yet conf
billowing on her mound, admired her shelves of running water, her geranium
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            singled out from the motor cars in the Mall first this one, then that; bestowed emotion, vainly, up
on commoners out for a drive; recalled their tribute to keep it unspent while this
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              car passed and that; and all the time let rumour accumulate in their veins and thrill the nerves
n their thighs at the thought of Royalty looking at them; the Queen bowing; the Prince saluting; at the thought
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               of the heavenly life divinely bestowed upon Kings; of the equerries and deep curtsies; of the Q
ueen's old doll's house; of Princess Mary married to an Englishman, and the Prince--ah! the Prince! who took won
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 derfully, they said, after old King Edward, but was ever so much slimmer. The Prince lived at
St. James's; but he might come along in the morning to visit his mother. So Sarah Bletchley said with her baby in he
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  r arms, tipping her foot up and down as though she were by her own fender in Pimlico, but I
eeping her eyes on the Mall, while Emily Coates ranged over the Palace windows and thought of the housemaids, the i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   nnumerable housemaids, the bedrooms, the innumerable bedrooms. Joined by an elderly g
entleman with an Aberdeen terrier, by men without occupation, the crowd increased. Little Mr. Bowley, who had rooms i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    n the Albany and was sealed with wax over the deeper sources of life but could be unsealed
d suddenly, inappropriately, sentimentally, by this sort of thing--poor women waiting to see the Queen go past-- poor wo
A breeze flaunting ever so warmly down the Mall through the thin trees, past the bronze heroes, lifted some flag flying in t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     men, nice little children, orphans, widows, the War--tut- tut--actually had tears in his eyes.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      he British breast of Mr. Bowley and he raised his hat as the car turned into the Mall and he
ld it high as the car approached; and let the poor mothers of Pimlico press close to him, and stood very upright. The car ca
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      me on. Suddenly Mrs. Coates looked up into the sky. The sound of an aeroplane bored o
minously into the ears of the crowd. There it was coming over the trees, letting out white smoke from behind, which curled a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       nd twisted, actually writing something! making letters in the sky! Every one looked up. D
ropping dead down the aeroplane soared straight up, curved in a loop, raced, sank, rose, and whatever it did, wherever it wen
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        t, out fluttered behind it a thick ruffled bar of white smoke which curled and wreathed up
on the sky in letters. But what letters? A C was it? an E, then an L? Only for a moment did they lie still; then they moved and m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     elted and were rubbed out up in the sky, and the aeroplane shot further away and again, in
a fresh space of sky, began writing a K, an E, a Y perhaps? "Glaxo," said Mrs. Coates in a strained, awe-stricken voice, gazing st
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   ght up, and her baby, lying stiff and white in her arms, gazed straight up. "Kreemo," murmur
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          Mall people were standing and looking up into the sky. As they looked the whole world became p in this pallor, in this purity, bells struck eleven times, the sound fading up there among the gulls.
ed Mrs. Bletchley, like a sleep-walker. With his hat held out perfectly still in his hand, Mr. Bowley gazed straight up. All down the
erfectly silent, and a flight of gulls crossed the sky, first one gull leading, then another, and in this extraordinary silence and peace
The aeroplane turned and raced and swooped exactly where it liked, swiftly, freely, like a skater-- "That's an E," said Mrs. Bletchley-
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      or a dancer-- "It's toffee," murmured Mr. Bowley- (and the car went in at the gates and nobody looke
d at it), and shutting off the smoke, away and away it rushed, and the smoke faded and assembled itself round the broad white shape
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    s of the clouds. It had gone; it was behind the clouds. There was no sound. The clouds to which the le
tters É, G, or L had attached themselves moved fréely, as if destined to cross from West to East on a mission of the greatest importan
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ce which would never be revealed, and yet certainly so it was -- a mission of the greatest importance. The
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               in the Mall, in the Green Park, in Piccadilly, in Regent Street, in Regent's Park, and the bar of smoke cur
th, sitting by her husband's side on a seat in Regent's Park in the Broad Walk, looked up. "Look, look, Sep
en suddenly, as a train comes out of a tunnel, the aeroplane rushed out of the clouds again, the sound boring into the ears of all people
ved behind and it dropped down, and it soared up and wrote one letter after another-- but what word was it writing? Lucrezia Warren Smi
timus!" she cried. For Dr. Holmes had told her to make her husband (who had nothing whatever seriously the matter with him but was a lit
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             tle out of sorts) take an interest in things outside himself. So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signal
ling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beaut
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          y, and lears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowin
g upon him in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness one shape after another of unimaginable beauty and signalling their intenti
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        on to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty! Tears ran down his chee
ks. It was toffee; they were advertising toffee, a nursemaid told Rezia. Together they began to spell t . . . o . . . f . . . "K . . . "Said the nurse
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    maid, and Septimus heard her say "Kay Arr" close to his ear, deeply, softly, like a mellow organ, but with a rough
ness in her voice liké a grasshopper's, which rasped his spine deliciously and sent running up into his brain waves of sound which, concussin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  g, broke. A marvellous discovery indeed-that the human voice in certain atmospheric conditions (for one must be
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          hted down, transfixed, or the excitement of the elm trees rising and falling, rising and falling with all their leaves alight ey rose and fell, so superbly, would have sent him mad. But he would not go mad. He would shut his eyes; he would se
scientific, above all scientific) can quicken trees into life! Happily Rezia put her hand with a tremendous weight on his knee so that he was weig
t and the colour thinning and thickening from blue to the green of a hollow wave, like plumes on horses' heads, feathers on ladies', so proudly th
e no more. But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      n the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising
and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditatio
                                                                                                                                                                                                                               n; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. A child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded. All taken togeth
er meant the birth of a new religion-- "Septimus!" said Rezia. He started violently. People must notice. "I am going to walk to the fountain and back," she said. For she could stand it no longer. Dr. Holmes might say there was nothing the matter. Far rather would she that he were dea d! She could not sit beside him when he stared so and did not see her and made everything terrible; sky and tree, children playing, dragging carts, blowing whistles, falling down; all were terrible. And he would not kill himself; and she could tell no one. "Septimus has been working
too hard"--that was all she could say to her own mother. To love makes one solitary, she thought. She could tell nobody, not even Septimus now, and looking back, she saw him sitting in his shabby overcoat alone, on the seat, hunched up, staring. And it was cowardly for a man to
say he would kill himself, but Septimus had fought; he was brave; he was not Septimus now. She put on her lace collar. She put on her new hat and he never noticed; and he was happy without her. Nothing could make her happy without him! Nothing! He was selfish. So men are. Fo r he was not ill. Dr. Holmes said there was nothing the matter with him. She spread her hand before her. Look! Her wedding ring slipped--she had grown so thin. It was she who suffered--but she had nobody to tell. Far was Italy and the white houses and the room where her sisters s
at making hats, and the streets crowded every evening with people walking, laughing out loud, not half alive like people here, huddled up in Bath chairs, looking at a few ugly flowers stuck in pots! "For you should see the Milan gardens," she said aloud. But to whom? There was no body. Her words faded. So a rocket fades. Its sparks, having grazed their way into the night, surrender to it, dark descends, pours over the outlines of houses and towers; bleak hillsides soften and fall in. But though they are gone, the night is full of them; robbed of colour, blank of
windows, they exist more ponderously, give out what the frank daylight fails to transmit—the trouble and suspense of things conglomerated there in the darkness; reft of the relief which dawn brings when, washing the walls white and grey, spotting
each window-pane, lifting the mist from the fields, showing the red-brown cows peacefully grazing, all is once more decked out to the eye; exists again. I am alone! she cried, by the fountain in Regent's Park (staring at the Indian and his cross), as perhaps at midnight, we hen all boundaries are lost, the country reverts to its ancient shape, as the Romans saw it, lying cloudy, when they landed, and the hills had no names and rivers wound they knew not where-such was her darkness; when suddenly, as if a shelf were shot forth and she stood on it, she said how she was his wife, married years ago in Milan, his wife, and would never, never tell that he was mad! Turning, the shelf fell; down, down she thought-gone, as he threatened, to kill himself--to throw himself under a cart! But no; there he was
s; still sitting alone on the seat, in his shabby overcoat, his legs crossed, staring, talking aloud. Men must not cut down trees. There is a God. (He noted such revelations on the backs of envelopes.) Change the world. No one kills from hatred. Make it known (he wrote it down). He wa
ited. He listened. A sparrow perched on the railing opposite chirped Septimus, four or five times over and went on, drawing its notes out, to sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words how there is no crime and, joined by another sparrow, they sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings! "What are y
ou saying?" said Rezia suddenly, sitting down by him. Interrupted again! She was always interrupted again! S
a length of green stuff with a ceiling cloth of blue and pink smoke high above, and there was a rampart of far irregular houses hazed in smoke, the traffic hummed in a circle, and on the right, dun-coloured animals stretched long necks over the Zoo palings, barking, howling. There is
hey sat down under a tree. "Look," she implored him, pointing at a little troop of boys carrying cricket stumps, and one shuffled, spun round on his heel and s
timus, lately taken from life to death, the Lord who had come to renew society, who lay like a coverlet, a snow blanket smitten only by the sun, for ever unwasted, suffering for ever, the scapegoat, the eternal suffering, that eternal loneliness. "Look," she repeated, for he must not talk aloud to himself out of doors. "Oh look," she implored him. But what was there to look at? A few sheep. That was all. The way to Regent's Park Tube station-could they tell her the way to Regent's Park Tube station-Maisie Johnson wanted to know. She was only up from Edinburgh two days ago. "Not this way--over there!" Rezia exclaimed, waving her aside, lest she should see Septimus. Both seemed queer, Maisie Johnson thought. Everything seemed very que er. In London for the first time, come to take up a post at her uncle's in Leadenhall Street, and now walking through Regent's Park in the morning, this couple on the chairs gave her quite a turn; the young woman seeming foreign, the man looking queer; so that should she be very o
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