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Fard^①by Aldous Huxley^②

They had been quarrelling now for nearly three-quarters of an hour. Muted and inarticulate, the voices floated down the corridor, from the other end of the flat. Stooping over her sewing, Sophie wondered, without much curiosity, what it was all about this time. It was Madame's voice that she heard most often. Shrill with anger and indignant with tears, it burst out in gusts, in gushes. Monsieur was more self-controlled, and his deeper voice was too softly pitched to penetrate easily the closed doors and to carry along the passage^③. To Sophie, in her cold little room, the quarrel sounded, most of the time, like a series of monologues by Madame, interrupted by strange and ominous silences. But every now and then Monsieur seemed to lose his temper outright, and then there was no silence between the gusts, but a harsh, deep, angry shout. Madame kept up her loud shrillness continuously and without flagging^④; her voice had, even in anger, a curious, level monotony.^⑤ But Monsieur spoke now loudly, now softly, with emphases and modulations and sudden outbursts, so that his contributions to the squabble^⑥, when they were audible, sounded like a series of separate explosions. Wow, wow, wow-wow-wow, wow—a dog barking rather slowly.

After a time Sophie paid no more heed to the noise of quarrelling. She was mending one of Madame's camisoles^⑦, and the work required all her attention. She felt very tired; her body ached all over. It had been a hard day; so had yesterday, so had the day before. Every

① fard: *n.* 脂粉

② Aldous Huxley: 奥尔德斯·赫胥黎 (1894-1963), 英国作家, 其最为著名的作品是发表于1932年的 *Brave New World* (《勇敢的新世界》), 描绘了以科学方式组织的理想社会的恐怖情景。

③ 他本来就低沉的嗓音再一压调门就很难透过关着的房门传到走廊这边来。
pitch: *v.* 定音调

④ flag: *v.* 减弱

⑤ 她的声音即使是在发怒时也带有一种奇怪的平板单调。

⑥ his contributions to the squabble: 他在争吵中的声音; squabble: *n.* 争吵

⑦ camisole: *n.* 女式贴身背心

① snap: v. 闪光

② 但有这黄色的虫子在眼前晃动使得看手上的针线活儿很吃力。round: prep. 绕过

③ 法语，意思是：要是你认为我是你的奴隶的话，我的朋友，那你就大错特错了。我做我自己想做的事。

④ 法语，意思是：我也是。

⑤ 这里是指召唤仆人的响铃。

⑥ 你总算出现了，Sophie，我还以为你不过来了呢。

⑦ 法语，意思是：一个鲁本斯式的美人。Rubens: 指 Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640)，佛兰德画家，巴洛克艺术的代表人物之一，其人体肖像画中的女性丰腴肥美。

day was a hard day, and she wasn't so young as she had been. Two years more and she'd be fifty. Every day had been a hard day ever since she could remember. She thought of the sacks of potatoes she used to carry when she was a little girl in the country. Slowly, slowly she was walking along the dusty road with the sack over her shoulder. Ten steps more; she could manage that. Only it never was the end; one always had to begin again.

She looked up from her sewing, moved her head from side to side, blinked. She had begun to see lights and spots of colour dancing before her eyes; it often happened to her now. A sort of yellowish bright worm was wriggling up towards the right-hand corner of her field of vision; and though it was always moving upwards, upwards, it was always there in the same place. And there were stars of red and green that snapped^① and brightened and faded all around the worm. They moved between her and her sewing; they were there when she shut her eyes. After a moment she went on with her work; Madame wanted her camisole most particularly tomorrow morning. But it was difficult to see round the worm.^②

There was suddenly a great increase of noise from the other end of the corridor. A door had opened; words articulated themselves.

"...bien tort, mon ami, si tu crois que je suis ton esclave. Je ferai ce que je voudrai."^③

"Moi aussi."^④ Monsieur uttered a harsh, dangerous laugh. There was the sound of heavy footsteps in the passage, a rattling in the umbrella stand; then the front door banged.

Sophie looked down again at her work. Oh, the worm, the coloured stars, the aching fatigue in all her limbs! If one could only spend a whole day in bed—in a huge bed, feathery, warm, and soft, all the day long...

The ringing of the bell^⑤ startled her. It always made her jump, that furious wasp-like buzzer. She got up, put her work down on the table, smoothed her apron, set straight her cap, and stepped out into the corridor. Once more the bell buzzed furiously. Madame was impatient.

"At last, Sophie. I thought you were never coming."^⑥

Sophie said nothing; there was nothing to say. Madame was standing in front of the open wardrobe. A bundle of dresses hung over her arm, and there were more of them lying in a heap on the bed.

"Une beaute a la Rubens,"^⑦ her husband used to call her when he was in an amorous mood. He liked these massive, splendid,

great women. None of your flexible drain-pipes for him.^① “Helene Fourmont^②” was his pet name for her.

“Some day,” Madame used to tell her friends, “some day I really must go to the Louvre and see my portrait.^③ By Rubens, you know. It’s extraordinary that one should have lived all one’s life in Paris and never have seen the Louvre. Don’t you think so?”

She was superb tonight.^④ Her cheeks were flushed; her blue eyes shone with an unusual brilliance between their long lashes; her short, red-brown hair had broken wildly loose.

“Tomorrow, Sophie,” she said dramatically, “we start for Rome. Tomorrow morning.” She unhooked another dress from the wardrobe as she spoke, and threw it onto the bed. With the movement her dressing-gown flew open,^⑤ and there was a vision of ornate underclothing and white exuberant flesh. “We must pack at once.”

“For how long, Madame?”

“A fortnight, three months—how should I know?”

“It makes a difference, Madame.”

“The important thing is to get away. I shall not return to this house, after what has been said to me tonight, till I am humbly asked to.^⑥”

“We had better take the large trunk, then, Madame; I will go and fetch it.”

The air in the box-room^⑦ was sickly with the smell of dust and leather. The big trunk was jammed in a far corner. She had to bend and strain at it in order to pull it out. The worm and the coloured stars flickered before her eyes; she felt dizzy when she straightened herself up. “I’ll help you to pack, Sophie,” said Madame, when the servant returned, dragging the heavy trunk after her. What a death’s-head^⑧ the old woman looked nowadays! She hated having old, ugly people near her. But Sophie was so efficient; it would be madness to get rid of her.

“Madame need not trouble.” There would be no end to it, Sophie knew, if Madame started opening drawers and throwing things about. “Madame had much better go to bed. It’s late.”

No, no. She wouldn’t be able to sleep. She was to such a degree enervated.^⑨ These men...what an embeastment!^⑩ One was not their slave. One would not be treated in this way.

Sophie was packing. A whole day in bed, in a huge, soft bed, like Madame’s. One would doze, one would wake up for a moment, one would doze again.

① 那种体态窈窕柔韧的细腿女郎可绝不合他的口味。drain-pipes: *n.* 瘦腿裤 (这里指代细腿女人。)

② Helene Fourmont 是画家鲁本斯妻子的名字。

③ 哪天我真得去卢浮宫看看我的画像。(卢浮宫里藏有鲁本斯的画。)

④ 今天晚上她状态好极了。

⑤ 随着她的动作她的睡袍飘了开来。

⑥ 在他今晚对我说过这样的话之后，我是决不会再回到这座房子里来了，除非他低声下气地来求我。

⑦ box-room: *n.* 存放箱子等的储藏间

⑧ death’s-head: *n.* 骷髅

⑨ 她已经被折腾得虚弱不堪了。enervate: *v.* 使衰弱无力

⑩ 简直是不把人当人看！

① game: *n.* 花招

② 他说我不能再买任何衣服了。

③ 太荒唐可笑了。

④ 我倒要问了, 他这当老爹的是干吗的?

⑤ fire: *n.* 激情

⑥ 一想到这老头子, 她就开始做鬼脸, 摇着脑袋, 晃着食指, 还颤抖着两条腿。shake one's finger: 用食指指点 (表示责备等)

⑦ beastly: *a.* (口) 糟透的

⑧ 她感到比任何时候都烦恼。aggrieved: *a.* 感到烦恼的

⑨ gutter: *n.* 路边的阴沟

“His latest game^①,” Madame was saying indignantly, “is to tell me he hasn’t got any money. I’m not to buy any clothes, he says.^② Too grotesque.^③ I can’t go about naked, can I?” She threw out her hands. “And as for saying he can’t afford, that’s simply nonsense. He can, perfectly well. Only he’s mean, mean, horribly mean. And if he’d only do a little honest work, for a change, instead of writing silly verses and publishing them at his own expense, he’d have plenty and to spare.” She walked up and down the room. “Besides,” she went on, “there’s his old father. What’s he for, I should like to know?^④ ‘You must be proud of having a poet for a husband,’ he says.” She made her voice quaver like an old man’s. “It’s all I can do not to laugh in his face. ‘And what beautiful verses Hegesippe writes about you! What passion, what fire^⑤!’” Thinking of the old man, she grimaced, wobbled her head, shook her finger, doddered on her legs.^⑥ “And when one reflects that poor Hegesippe is bald, and dyes the few hairs he has left.” She laughed. “As for the passion he talks so much about in his beastly^⑦ verses,” she laughed—“that’s all pure invention. But, my good Sophie, what are you thinking of? Why are you packing that hideous old green dress?”

Sophie pulled out the dress without saying anything. Why did the woman choose this night to look so terribly ill? She had a yellow face and blue teeth. Madame shuddered; it was too horrible. She ought to send her to bed. But, after all, the work had to be done. What could one do about it? She felt more than ever aggrieved.^⑧

“Life is terrible.” Sighing, she sat down heavily on the edge of the bed. The buoyant springs rocked her gently once or twice before they settled to rest. “To be married to a man like this. I shall soon be getting old and fat. And never once unfaithful. But look how he treats me.” She got up again and began to wander aimlessly about the room. “I won’t stand it, though,” she burst out. She had halted in front of the long mirror, and was admiring her own splendid tragic figure. No one would believe, to look at her, that she was over thirty. Behind the beautiful tragedian she could see in the glass a thin, miserable, old creature, with a yellow face and blue teeth, crouching over the trunk. Really, it was too disagreeable. Sophie looked like one of those beggar women one sees on a cold morning, standing in the gutter^⑨. Does one hurry past, trying not to look at them? Or does one stop, open one’s purse, and give them one’s copper and nickel—even as much as a

two-franc note, if one has no change? But whatever one did, one always felt uncomfortable, one always felt apologetic for one's furs^①. That was what came of walking.^② If one had a car—but that was another of Hegesippe's meannesses—one wouldn't, rolling along behind closed windows, have to be conscious of them at all.^③ She turned away from the glass.

"I won't stand it," she said, trying not to think of the beggar women, of blue teeth in a yellow face; "I won't stand it." She dropped into a chair.

But think of a lover with a yellow face and blue, uneven teeth! She closed her eyes, shuddered at the thought. It would be enough to make one sick. She felt impelled to take another look: Sophie's eyes were the colour of greenish lead, quite without life. What was one to do about it? The woman's face was a reproach, an accusation. And besides, the sight of it was making her feel positively ill. She had never been so profoundly enervated.

Sophie rose slowly and with difficulty from her knees; an expression of pain crossed her face. Slowly she walked to the chest of drawers, slowly counted out six pairs of silk stockings. She turned back towards the trunk. The woman was a walking corpse!

"Life is terrible," Madame repeated with conviction, "terrible, terrible, terrible."

She ought to send the woman to bed. But she would never be able to get her packing done by herself. And it was so important to get off tomorrow morning. She had told Hegesippe she would go, and he had simply laughed; he hadn't believed it. She must give him a lesson this time. In Rome she would see Luigino. Such a charming boy, and a marquis, too. Perhaps... But she could think of nothing but Sophie's face; the leaden eyes, the bluish teeth, the yellow, wrinkled skin.

"Sophie," she said suddenly; it was with difficulty that she prevented herself screaming, "look on my dressing-table. You'll see a box of rouge, the Dorin number twenty-four.^④ Put a little on your cheeks. And there's a stick of lip salve^⑤ in the right-hand drawer."

She kept her eyes resolutely shut while Sophie got up—with what a horrible creaking of the joints^⑥!—walked over to the dressing-table, and stood there, rustling faintly, through what seemed an eternity^⑦. What a life, my God, what a life! Slow footsteps trailed back again. She opened her eyes. Oh, that was far better, far better.

① 你总是要为自己穿了毛皮大衣而感到歉意。

② 这就是走路招来的。come of: 由……引起的

③ 人坐在关着的车窗后面就不必非得注意他们不可了。

④ 你会看到一个胭脂盒，是朵琳 24 号。
rouge: *n.* 胭脂; Dorin 为化妆品名。

⑤ a stick of lip salve: 一管唇膏; salve: *n.* 油膏

⑥ 关节发出可怕的咔咔声。

⑦ 前后似乎花了很长时间。an eternity: (似乎) 无穷无尽的一段时间。

“Thank you, Sophie. You look much less tired now.” She got up briskly. “And now we must hurry.” Full of energy, she ran to the wardrobe. “Goodness me,” she exclaimed, throwing up her hands, “you’ve forgotten to put in my blue evening dress. How could you be so stupid, Sophie?”

Exercises

Questions for comprehension

1. The first few paragraphs describe the quarrel between the husband and wife as well as the hardship of the servant Sophia. Based on those paragraphs, which of the following is true of the quarrel?
 - A. It was not the first time they quarreled.
 - B. They seldom quarreled and therefore both of them lost control.
 - C. The husband spoke softly as he never lost his self-control.
 - D. The wife was forgiven and silent.
2. Which of the following best describes the husband’s character?
 - A. His voice was always low but angry.
 - B. He lost his temper from time to time and spoke loudly.
 - C. He did not interrupt his wife for a while and then responded angrily.
 - D. All of the above.
3. Which of the following is true of the servant Sophie during the quarrel?
 - A. She was carrying some potatoes over her shoulder.
 - B. She was sewing one of Madame’s clothes.
 - C. She was listening carefully to the quarrel.
 - D. She was falling asleep over the work.
4. Which of the following in Paragraphs 2 and 3 is a vivid narration of a Sophie who was feeling exhausted?
 - A. She felt very afraid and listened carefully.
 - B. It had been a hard day; so had yesterday, so had the day before.
 - C. Only it never was the end; one always had to begin again.
 - D. All of the above sentences.
 - E. B and C only.
5. Madame wanted to go to Rome because _____.

A. she wanted to see her portrait there.	B. she wanted to see her relatives there.
C. she wanted to see a handsome young man there.	D. she wanted to chase her husband there.

6. Which of the following best describes Madame as a woman?
 - A. She had a beautiful body but looked terrible that night because she had had a bitter fight with her husband.
 - B. She had a slim, well shaped body.
 - C. She had a full but curved body.
 - D. She was chubby and stout.
7. Which of the following is true of Madame's age?
 - A. She was over 40.
 - B. She was over 30.
 - C. She was over 20.
 - D. None of the above.
8. Which of the following best describes the husband's career?
 - A. He was a novelist.
 - B. He was an art agent.
 - C. He was an artist.
 - D. He was a poet.
9. Why did Madame ask Sophia to put some make-up on her face?
 - A. She didn't want to take an ugly woman servant with her during the trip.
 - B. She wanted to get rid of some of her left-over rouge.
 - C. She needed her to send a message to a friend.
 - D. She couldn't bear to see Sophia's lifeless face that night.
10. As a servant, what was one of Sophia's dreams?
 - A. Looking as attractive as Madame.
 - B. Having a nice, warm dinner.
 - C. Making a few more dollars by working hard.
 - D. Sleeping in a comfortable bed.

Questions for discussion

1. How did the author describe the feeling of self-guilt or even self-hatred of Madame when she ran across the poor on the street?
2. How did the author portray the mean character of Madame through Sophia's feeling, appearance, and hardship?
3. How did the author portray the mean character of Madame through her own emotion and behavior?