

'THE VILLA'

turn for their peace. Only in her do they find it, and ^{that} is why, when she goes away alone, even if only for two days, they are half panic-stricken, it seems, ^{(their feelings will run away with them, that they have no form/whatsoever,} no values to hang on to life by, nothing but their hard, brittle thoughts, about the state of the kitchen, at what hour to sleep, the time of the next train in from Rome, and so on. It is horrible to be with them when she is away, because they become bad-willed and rejected children. They look malevolent and half broken, like all those who feel unloved. And often just before she goes away they are sulky, though she works harder than any of them and bears all the worries of the house hold, and applies her mind almost every hour of the waking day to keeping them all out of debt, and so clearly benefits from a holiday alone. But since she is their peace they cannot treat her with the mercy they would give to other people. Especially Sassa sulks when she goes away. Two or three days ago, when Marcella went to Naples, she refused to say good-morning, and this is usually the case, so that Marcella feels sometimes an unbearable guilt while she is away, aware of the resentful, mute eyes that are waiting for her. Sassa is called the "Inglese" by the family, because she is tall and thin and has never had a man. This is why, they say, she is never gay; after a certain age virgins are never gay. Her sister, Stefanella, is much prettier, with blond hair and a neat little face. Young men often fall in love with her, so her company is less solemn and pessimistic than Sassa's, and she understands her mother better and sulks much less when she goes away and is much less jealous of her enjoyment. Sassa is twenty-nine, and Stefanella one or two years younger, yet neither of them goes out alone with men. Sassa has a long, melancholy face, not at all pretty, yet ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ her body has cool, gentle lines, and there is an elegance about her which she could turn much out of her if she wanted to, if the spirit had somehow not been beaten out of her. But I think she is convinced she is an ugly creature, unwanted by men, and therefore she pays no attention to herself, at all, but is listless and usually can hardly bear to make the effort of opening her mouth to speak; ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ there is an ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ unfathomable, and dark apathy in her which is like the silence of the sky. I think the rest of the family made fun of her looks when she was a child and she seems now to want to cancel herself out as a human creature, and to whom it is possible to talk and smile, so aware is she of Stefanella's prettiness, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ a light which dims her even more, sending her back into herself. But perhaps apart from Marcella she is the only person of quality among them. She holds her own counsel. She feels hate like the others, and the need to be cruel like the others, and the need to hurt some other human being. But at the same time there is a brooding quiet in her, a

in themselves, that

Marcella

she redeems herself

all the time felt

is beauty

sometimes

she is bitterly aware

h.c.

that given ~~the~~ ^{a certain} ~~the~~ ^{delicacy}

resignation, a sure knowledge that no joy will visit her ^{which wise people sometimes have.}
~~When there is hate in the house it comes most from Sassa, Stefanelle and Signora Maria, the grandmother.~~ ^{The} hate ^{is} bitter, sneering and murderous, and it is so strong and sure, so deep a necessity in each of them, that nothing anybody could ~~do~~ abate it. I have seen Signora Maria, a small, fat woman in black, dusty, threadbare clothes down to her feet, sitting in the kitchen screaming with rage, her mouth in a kind of horrible grin, and tears pouring down her face, stamping her feet up and down on the stone floor as she shouted, "I am a Countess!" A great deal of the hate and persecution in the house issues from her, and she tries to influence her son against other people, especially against people whom Marcella likes and offers hospitality to. In this ~~revenge~~ Signora Maria achieves a revenge against her daughter-in-law, who she feels has not been a good and proper wife. The Count listens to only half what she says, but nevertheless he has been sufficiently hurt by his wife during the last twenty years to hear that voice as a balm, as pity for what he has suffered. Some people say that he is too stupid to have suffered, but that is untrue. Stupidity is the gift for insulating oneself against suffering, and he is not at all insulated, but very vulnerable.

in the house
 human
 He marches thru

though

Last year I remember that Signora Maria often attacked Maurizio, the fourteen-year old son who shares Marcella's grace and ease, and her inward peace. He is slim, quite tall for his age, and handsome in a rough way, and his hands are not those of a butcher. I noticed very soon after I saw him for the first time how little of his father he seemed to carry in him, how rebellious he was, how quick to understand, unlike the others, and also there was a tenderness about him of which the others had not the slightest trace in their characters. He is deliberately rude to them, especially to the father, and he is always shouting, trying to cadge money or cigarettes, eating great chunks of bread and marmalade or tomatoes covered with oil, and pepper and salt, and when he walks it is with a comic roguish slouch, usually with the shirt hanging out of the back of his trousers. Signora Maria was always complaining that he was dirty at table and that his manners were nothing compared with those of his little brother, Carlo, though at that time last year, Carlo was much more violent and bad-willed. If Carlo cried Maurizio was always blamed, and the family, with the exception of Marcella and Stefanelle, would bear down on him, calling him villain and ~~scabada~~ ^{scabada} wretch. I noticed that Sassa ~~of~~ ^{often} lectured him, as if for the pleasure of exercising a little humble power over someone else now and then, but the leader of the persecution, if that word is not too strong for it, was probably again Signora Maria. For it was said that Maurizio was not the Count's son, but the offspring from one of Marcella's love affairs with a peasant living nearby.

Last year

The reason for this
 is that
 the reason for this
 is that

This must be one of the scandals which people in Rome speak of in connection with Marcella. It is certainly true that Maurizio seems to have nothing in common with the Count, while the youngest child has the same rather loose face, ~~the same air of helplessness, and the same pride.~~ Both Marcella and Stefanella tend to protect Maurizio, and for this reason he loves them both, with a quiet, absolutely confident tenderness. People say that the peasant wanted to have the child, but that the Count had insisted on keeping him, ~~in the family,~~ after endless arguments ~~with the peasant rudely banging the table and making all sorts of threats.~~ The Count has never been known to lay a finger on a child ~~on a man,~~ and he is either quite blind to humiliation or has a remarkable capacity for bearing it. He waits for things to pass over, he always tries to keep out of quarrels, and when I say to people that there may be ~~in this a very unusual wisdom and patience~~ they say, no, it is simply laziness and moral ineptitude. I cannot ~~can't~~ decide. All I know is that when ~~he gets~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~table~~ ~~because~~ ~~of~~ ~~somebody's~~ ~~rudeness~~ it is he who makes the soothing, tactful remark and helps ~~you~~ back to calm, and I believe he is ~~very sensitive to breaches of etiquette.~~ Despite the fact that lecherous thoughts ~~are~~ in his mind from one ~~end~~ of the day to the other, ~~and~~ despite the fact that he hoards photographs of beautiful women (which he himself has taken) and for all I know pores over them for hours in ~~silence~~ (He is certainly very jealous for them and I have never known him show them to a male), he is horrified by dirty stories at the table and by any laughing about matters of the body.

→ in which) violence) / h.p.

frank
seen to be
his bed room

an insatiable
and
silence,
doctor,

Whenever pretty young women come to the house he invites them either to look at his photographs, which people say really are superb and of the most beautiful women in the city, or else to pose for a photograph themselves. He flirts with them, ~~smiling more than he usually does, and tries~~ ~~trying to appear gentle and solicitous, though gentleness and solicitousness are rather foreign to his character.~~ ~~him~~ He always asks them to sit next to him at table, then constantly pats their arms, and touches their hair lightly, ~~and~~ puts his hand on their shoulders. Usually they suffer this in a bowed, shy way, for after all he is the ~~chief~~ ~~of~~ the house; ~~and~~ ~~decide~~ that on their second visit they will keep away from him. He also asks them to come for a ride with him on his motorcycle, and if they agree, which they do very seldom, (most of them having been warned about it,) he takes them to a long deep-green field a few kilometers to the south and tries to get them to lie down with him. In all the months I have spent in this house I have only known one woman to go with him, and she had known him for some years. He is bald and has white, staring eyes and a rather loose mouth, and he walks with his back very straight, as he used to in the military processions. All over the house

when he was in the King's escort.

the end of the Table

6.

I noticed him this morning sitting in an armchair by the hearth doing his schoolwork, and for a time the house was in utter silence. He was looking out of the French windows, lost, and the room seemed to rest in its silence, sure and easy, and I thought how none of the others could ever be so lost as that, could ever sit easy like that, could ever let a room achieve such peace. In fact, these others seldom sit down for more than a few moments. They walk about quickly and awkwardly, snapping their short, quick, sharp sentences in their ugly voices.

7/2/46
making remarks

~~There were a number of people in to tea, and one of these, a smiling, aunt-like, constantly nodding and surprised woman, was talking to her closely.~~

Stefanella's
with her

Stefanella fetched the tiny, shining, compact radio she bought some months ago to put by her bed with a golden aerial and a green leather case no bigger than a woman's handbag. She plugged it in, pulled out the aerial and then began to show the other woman how many wavelengths there were and what volume it was capable of, turning dials and pressing spring-buttons. And all the time she played with her shining little box and the other woman clapped her hands together and uttered aunt-like cries of astonishment, there was that tender, bemused, shy look on her face, ~~as if this was all her own handiwork, something to do with her personally, with her own prettiness and health even, not just a commodity bought in a shop with no difficulty or effort at all.~~ I do not think I have ever seen her face so shy, like that of a little girl being praised in front of too many relatives; ~~for usually her face is strained about the eyes, hard, seeming to dwell all the time on hard subjects, like how much tea there is left in the cannister for the weekend, whether the dogs have been fed, whether she has time to go to the local town for another electric plug, whether the servants have been stealing. Perhaps that is why, even though she has a pretty face and a tidy figure (though, having been unloved so long, it has grown awkward, her breasts slack and her shoulders bent)~~ young men are never very interested in her for long. ~~She could not give them peace, for she would only work very hard. I should have hated to be married to her because of her strong sense of disgust, and as for J., he told yesterday that he thought she would not bring forth a child as a result of love, but white maggots, for him her body is unwholesome. But they detest each other. She says he is dirty and that the Siamese cat smells whenever it had been in his room for long (implying that he is sexually perverted); while he says that she has a mind as big as his thumb nail.~~

begin

this

don't

I heard it was
I know that

When we had a
visitors' party,
the visitor said
she had

But Stefanella has a certain outwardness which I like. She watches other people, wants to know about them, and is very seldom envious of their pleasures. Perhaps that was

(she)

7
taught her by Marcella, for it is not true of the Count. In fact, she is so content to watch other people that she ~~seems to cancel herself out, taking part in nothing, sitting~~ ^{it} by the wall ~~surving~~ ^{the} party, for instance, and never dancing, wanting to keep herself withdrawn, just as if someone had breathed it into her ears during the childhood-sleep that she could enter into life like other women, having children, taking trains alone, paying her own bills and managing her own house. She is still ~~really~~ a child, at the age of twenty-eight, and ~~always wanting to know~~ I am astonished whenever I suddenly realise that she has never once left this house, and her room in this house, for more than a few nights since she was born. If I had stayed in the part of London where I was born I think I should be mad or dead now. But that was different. There are no horrible dark streets here, but a vinegrove and orchard at the back, a gravelled path leading up to a country road, and far in the distance, when the mist is not too low, the first white shining buildings of the city, very clean and still. But still I cannot bear to think of someone living in her own family beyond the age of fifteen or so, however much she loves her mother and father, and however good the air. I find the idea of family horrifying. For me it perpetuates hatred and disgust, always and everywhere; those who want to show that it is all very enchanting have only learned to deceive and humbug.

Yesterday Marcella and I were talking about the family, how rude they were to J., how they ~~spoke~~ ^{talked} about him in whispers, calling him a wretch, a filthy beast, a parasite, and how, whenever he came to meals they made him feel alone and unwanted, day after day, even, apparently, through the long winter when I was not here. But after lunch yesterday he revolted and swore that he would never come back into the chouse again, that he never again wanted to see such people. For there had been trouble the night before, after Marcella had gone to bed. J. came in and went straight to his room without saying goodnight to anyone. The Count ran up to Marcella's bedroom and told her, first, that J. had refused to eat dinner with them, and secondly that he had failed to say goodnight. She shrugged and said it was simply the result of the way the family had been treating him. But none of the family could understand this. They were simply hurt that he should have gone to bed without saying goodnight. They said it was impolite, having throughout a winter treated him like a dog, or worse than a dog, as a friend of his said, because a dog stands a chance of some kindness between the kicks. So after J. had revolted I said to Marcella, "Tell them he is never coming back. Then they will see what they have done to the fellow. They will realise how cruel they have been. It will teach them a lesson."

But she ~~said~~ shook her head and said, not at all, they will simply say that he has been rude by not saying goodbye after such hospitality and that he has hurt them. And when I asked her if they had no sense of other people's feelings at all she said, "No, none whatsoever. They would

surveying

have

been -
to the visitor,
all the
time down with us
(3 weeks, or more).

10. ^(can you)
room where the Count cannot see and gives them a thrashing with a cane, then promised them another thrashing if they cry or tell anyone about it. They fear both her and ~~Marcella~~ Stefanelle, because they get beatings from both. The possibility of a beating gives ~~taavavavasaacaca~~ a ^{firm hand} tough edge to life that they want, and I have seen the little boy deliberately annoy his mother at the table, putting his bare, dirty feet up on the tablecloth or balancing on his chair, so that she will give him a cuff. Then, after she has done it, he comes and curls up in his chair, at her back, with his hands round her neck, and usually falls asleep like that, and stays there until Stefanelle puts him on her shoulders and takes him up to bed. But the Count is a loving outsider to them, and they tell him all sorts of lies, sometimes in connivance with Marcella, knowing how credulous he can be.

read
Count he

Last night the little boy and I were the only ones at table for dinner, and all the time he played the padrone, talking to me very politely, asking if I was enjoying the spaghetti, calling out to the servants in a loud, commanding voice, his little chin pushed forward, and making them come first to me, to ask if I wanted another helping. And they obeyed him. Towards the end of the dinner he called out for the last time to Elsa, Gino's wife, a small, really animal creature with a man's voice, and when she came to the table she leaned over him and said quietly, "Remember you are nine and a half, nine and a half," but nevertheless she gave him the number of stuffed tomatoes he asked for, with ~~acac~~ some oil and sauce, and she joined in his game, though it was not entirely a game for her because of the way he sat, so authoritatively in his chair, his back quite straight, his eyes clear and black, never looking up at her, but assuming, like all those ~~acacatac~~ used to leadership, that he would be obeyed to the last detail. Then he came into my room, which leads off the dining room, and told me about a visit of his to Ponza, a lovely island three hours boatride from Anzio, how he had seen a great ship, the Cristophò Colombo, on its way to America, and how the driver had throttled the engine of the motorboat as they drew near to the island shore, and how smoothly they swerved towards the land, bobbing up and down slightly, amid a sea utterly blue, the rocks showing a strange red under the water, soft and shimmering, and the great still green and brown island ^{green brown} huge and humped before them. He asked me whether London was also an island in the sea, as he had heard, and I said, No, but it has a river. ~~Andacacacacacacacac~~ and boats go along it. He wanted to know whether these boats had engines, and I said, Yes. He nodded and murmured, staring at the ceiling, lost to the silent and hot room, "Ah, then they are motorboats" - ~~motorschiffe~~ ?) scialuppe? And after that he turned towards the wall and went to sleep, like a child in a drifting, carless ~~acacatac~~ rowboat on the calmest and darkest of rivers, between ~~meadava~~ fields and trees, windless and unpeopled. I leaned back on my pillow, my feet up on the bed, and read

she
lead
moto scialuppe
motoscali

launches

Chander Ital

MADame Bovary, then Sassa came in for her supper, knocked
 ony my door and carried him up to bed. The rest of the
 family were out. The Count was at the sea with friends,
 and would not be back until the last train at midnight,
 and Maurizio was at the cinema, where a musical was showing,
 and Marcella had gone with Giusppina and Stefanella to a
 house at the back, ~~only~~ fifty or so yards away, behind the
 vineyard, where they were invited to dinner and drinks.
 While I was reading, after Carlo had been taken off to bed,
 I heard laughter and music coming from beyond the vines,
 and I thought how this sound no longer made me feel lonely
 and abandoned, as it used to once. There was a marvellous
 silence in the house, something very rare. The house is
 capable of everything, has known everything from sadness to
 brutality. The other day Marcella came into my room at
 sundown, after I had opened my ~~xtatowa~~ shutters to let in
 the cool air, and leaned out of the window, looking at the
 peach trees, with everything in the same uncustomary stillness
 and silence, like the sighing of things which do not speak,
 and said, "I love my house, you know..." It's true, these
 silent pauses make one love the house. I remember last
 night tenderly, how the pillow felt against my back, how
 I and the book and the silence and the slight wind which
 went through the bushes just below my window were all one
 dream. J. was in his room, and I think he had already
 gone to bed. He never comes into meals now. He told
 Marcella yesterday that if she felt like it she could bring
 him hot food into his room, but only if she wanted, but
 he would no longer eat with the other members of the family.
 When Giuseppina heard this, during tea, when there were
 visitors, she sighed and shook her head, "No, no, poor boy,
 he can't do that..." And as they always do she turned to
 Marcella and said, "You mustn't let him do that..." and
 Marcella answered sharply, "It isn't my fault. It's the
 fault of your mother and your brother. I've done my best."
 A friend of John's has given him bisuits, a little burner
 to heat water on, a packet of tea, pears and peaches, a large
 piece of cheese and a can to drink out of. So he can spend
 all day in his room without seeing anyone. He told me
 he would only come out into the main room (drawing and
 dining room in one, where everyone sits and where the
 radio is), if Marcella, ~~and Giuseppina and~~ Giuseppina and
 I were there alone. If he wants to go for a walk he jumps
 out of his window on to the gravel path, leaving the shutters
~~open~~ unfastened but with the
 appearance of being closed, so that he can jump back in.
 Last night Gino, who so far had shown him only conetempt,
 opened his door quietly and with a smile put down a huge
 plate of spaghetti on his table. J. cannot explain this,
 but perhaps ~~because~~ Gino is suddenly sorry for him
 because he knows what poverty means. The other members of
 the family - apart from Marcella and Gisepinna - do not
 seem to realise his absence from the table. He has passed
 out of their minds. He is no longer there to play with,
 to hurt, to vent hatred on, he no longer serves a purpose,

in childhood

infatuation
animate

12. so he is forgotten. Marcella foretold this. In fact, only the grandmother, Signora Maria, made life bad for J. She incited her son against him. Otherwise the Count would have been silent and ~~gone~~ stayed under the influence of his wife. Given time and patience, she can win him round to anything, because she is wiser and more calculating.

The Count

His attitude towards has changed a great deal since last year, and I am quite sure this is due to her alone. He no longer watches me as he did before, and he sometime tells me confidences about other people, especially young women, which would have been impossible before. I think he believed last year that I was making love either to his wife, who is nearly twenty years older than me, or to his daughter, which at least was feasible. I remember how sometimes he used to follow me about the house and how he would always call down to Marcella and me if we stayed on talking when the others had gone to bed. He hated to hear us talking in whispers, ~~endlessly~~ in the silence of the house, and God knows what he imagined in the dark of his bed. Now we stay up talking until the early hours, and he never once calls out to her that she must get some sleep, that she will be fit for nothing in the morning, and that it is not right, it is not right! Somehow she has convinced him of the silliness of his fears, and apart from that he has seen me with young women from the city and hears I am attracted to this one and not that and so forth.

Signora Maria who happens to favour the Count's side the princess

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After

During the day I am always given Stefanella's room to work in, and this was the case last year. It always pained him then, that I should be going into the women's quarters, to speak, with my young manhood, and using the dressing-table as a desk and sleeping on the bed after lunch. I worked hard last year and went out very little, so he had more opportunity to imagine me up to no good. I remember one evening reading aloud from a book, alone in her room, and realising after a time that anyone outside would be able to hear me. Stefanella was late that evening (in from work) and he did not know this. I heard him walk along the corridor and pause outside my door, listening. I stopped reading aloud, and wondered whether he thought that Stefanella was alone in the room with me, for it was thirty minutes or so past her usual time of coming in. So I decided to find out. I got up and went across to the lavatory, which is opposite her door. His bedroom is at the end of the corridor, and as I passed across I glanced to my right and saw him standing there, ~~and~~ buttoning his shirt in the mirror ~~and~~ and at the same time staring down the corridor. I unlocked the lavatory door, then heard walk down to Stefanella's room, enter it, ~~and~~ then leave again and go back to his bedroom. After a time I came out and returned to my desk, and I saw him standing there as before, watching me. I was sure that he had come along the corridor looking for his daughter, to make sure that we were talking alone together. But it did not end there. I heard him walk down to the lavatory, look inside, than he suddenly pushed open the door of my room, imitated a look of surprise when he saw me and began fiddling about uselessly with some cases on the floor.

One was still in

himself

the Count

Yet no sooner have I written these words than I feel again that he is always in a terrible darkness, that he is a kind of monster, and that his suspicions are never right, because, springing from his own darkness, where there is no air or respite, they are never about the real world, never about other people, only symptomatic, like a running nose.

The young woman he spoke about last Sunday, saying she was intelligent, passionate and cunning, is very much alone, I mean very separate from other people in the way she behaves, keeping her own counsel, the kind of person one you would go to with a secret. She is tall, with dark hair in natural rings, and ~~though her face is full of movement, appearing quick and smiling and quick, her eyes are still and seem trapped in the face, as if they were foreign to it, in dreadful suffering, screaming to be let out. And perhaps this is because just now she is unhappy, having suffered in love. But in her face sometimes there is a dreadful weight of suffering, and I know she can hardly bring herself to speak, as if she were dragging herself up from a great black marsh in the dead of some last night of chaos, when the passing of the world is mourned. So she provides this family with an opportunity to hurt her image even more, killing her further with words, because she offers no resistance, and it is as if they smell suffering in other people, like the smell of death and are drawn to the place of catastrophe like beasts, on soft feet, sniffing, their ears pricked, in order to draw play with the corpse a little and draw blood, and then get their teeth into the flesh, to keep themselves in trim, thriving on malice, with sullen, heavy, pouting, dark faces, like people in an unspeakable plot, their pleasure deathly and turned in.~~ From Fiora, a fat, pale woman who lives in a house only a few yards away, on the other side of the vineyard, and who has no love for work, only the hours of every day to spread before herself in endless tedium, so that she, wanting some poor little excitement in the endless day, and having a good brain, clear and shrewd, will make the spark for any malice that has to flame up out of the dark hearts. She usually comes in for tea after five in the afternoon, and she is vitally one of the ~~man~~ family. Her voice is harsh, and when she speaks against people it has a special cutting tone, and seems to issue from the place where is most bitter, where life has refused her everything, just what it has given in bounty to other people. And I heard her say the other day that Maria was not to her mind at all beautiful, but that she had a loose mouth, too large and open, and that her hips were too wide; she said it as though she were killing her, with a kind of swift, hungry revenge. And Nonna says that, while she is a person of distinction, yet also she is a little sweet, perhaps a little too sweet. And other people say, Oh, Maria is too artificial in the way she speaks. It is true, the effort to speak is sometimes so terrible for Maria, stranded on her island, where there is no marvellous boy,

Came last Sunday
She seems very much alone
Crying

She can't seem to speak

They seem to prey (young)

Wants He starts need

seems to have

He young woman whose name is Maria

Signorina Maria

Mania

where she looks for him every day, but the air is empty of any sign of him, that she has to rehearse her words and her gestures, and to make them oversweet, lest some of the pain well up and turn into hatred for them, the ones who are ugly because they are not him, that is, all the other people in the world. I enjoy being with her and talking to her because when we are alone together there is calm all about us, the rooms where we sit are quiet, because we share a certain tiredness, a certain calm knowledge of things, and we can speak to each other with the most extraordinary intimacy, having nothing to lose, without any shame, knowing that the secrets are safely kept, because the other person always moves alone. Sometimes we go to Maria's flat, where she lives with her mother, and we sit behind closed shutters, in the hot half-darkening of the afternoon, with the yellow, slight gleaming lines of the sun showing through between the shutter-slats, her mother padding softly across the stone kitchen floor, bringing cool drinks, reading or going to the refrigerator, and at other times when it is cool and the sun has gone behind the curved, smooth block of flats close by, leaving the space between in shadow, we sit out on the verandah on canvas chairs, at the foot of steps leading down from the kitchen, everything about us of stone and cement, very new, cut off from the rest of the city, a great static island of silence, like a memorial, with occasional lawns, square, excellently cut and small, and here and there young trees. The moment one enters this stone world of flats through a gate, and along a special road, there is a new coolness and quiet, and the noises of the square quite close by fall back. It is so different from this house, where the noise starts not long after dawn, with someone rushing down the stairs, making as hard a sound as possible, with a strange kind of revengeful enjoyment, or with the deafening cries of the child Carlo calling out for something, or arguing, or with the radio turned on suddenly at full strength, or with Elsa, the servant maid shouting for her son to come in, that deep, dry beast-voice of hers, in these are the things which enter one's sleep, and if one has slept well and is feeling on good terms with the world, so much the better, but if one's dreams have been damp and heavy, full of cold eyes, full of grieving, and lonely beyond words, then these noises are only a fresh assault, keeping the wounds open for the day as well as the night.

Mania
 Accidents are a part of life.

She told me a few days ago that she could hardly bear talking to the Count and hated it especially when he touched her or asked her to come out with him for a walk or on his motorcycle. And when I said that he had called her intelligent, passionate and cunning, she said answered that he only spoke like this because he was a stupid man and knew it, that is, he wished to give the impression of intuitive gifts and a shrewd, penetrating intelligence, whereas he had simply heard someone use these words about another woman and had decided to use them

some

Marcella
 Maria

The three
 of us

perhaps all three
 having just been

through the will in
 some way Maria

has been
 a child

had just as
 much

there is

That
 stone world

galia

it's all
 right, even
 pleasure

scotter

11.11.2

11.11.2

11.11.2

11.11.2

11.11.2

16. ~~There was an~~ opportunity. She said he created a complicated world, - where women had daily secret assignments, ~~where words and promises meant nothing, where there was always subterfuge and intrigue, where appearance was always strictly opposite to the hidden reality;~~ - in order ~~to then to be able to~~ penetrate it; after all, there was nothing easier, he first created the mystery where there was in truth none, then he made a show of penetrating it. He does it, like a conjuror's trick, and at first one does not realise that the world he has created is ~~at all~~ false. Having said that ~~Maria used her mother as an excuse and convinced you of that, it was easy for him to show what she was an excuse for.~~

He calls her cunning because he cannot allow himself to believe that - like all "typical Italian women" - she is not the materialisation of his most forbidden love-dreams. He needs her in his imagination, as a loose woman, aching from end of the day to the other as a healthy woman never does for the most elementary and perfunctory contacts. It is the only way open to him of enjoying her, for he knows that he could never succeed in seducing her, so he relegates her to a place in his dark dreams. Always he must find a way of enjoying the women he says, though he very seldom gets near enough to them to touch their bodies, and even more seldom succeeds in making love to them. One woman, like the tall English girl I brought to the house for the first time yesterday, he will look at closely, staring, his eyes screwed up anxiously, as if he is on some painstaking investigation, at her bosom or her arms or her legs, verifying each erotic detail so as to discover the extent of her warmth; now this woman, whom he enjoys on the spot, with his searching eyes, he may never try to seduce, he may never take to his bedroom for the photographs, he may never ask to go out with him. But he does not search Maria's body with his eyes. He places the whole of her life, since he knows a little about her, into the sad laboratory of his desires. But he has in some way to possess every woman who comes before his eyes, unless she is ugly and offensive. What he can never allow himself to do - in the interests of his daily and perhaps only pleasure - is to see any woman simply as another human being, with functions like his own, with quick and transitory desires like his own, with weariness and disgust like his own, and a body no more enchanting than his own in the hours when it was not desired. He thus in a sense murders all the women he sees, robbing them of their humanity, even the women he lives with from day to day, so that he may continue to associate them with pleasure and with pleasure alone. Lechery is always a kind of necrophilia, and I have always noticed that under his searching gaze a young woman seems for a moment to die, to become a mere body laid out for his gaze.

While a lot of people bemuse themselves with an ideal world which is calm and beneficent,

admit he dreamt for himself - in which and the) the dreamt, he seeing through the subject
no dreams daydreams for
he can't see the achieving for sex as no healthy woman ever does.
h/p
Like a man will look at a woman with his eyes riveted up anxiously
for himself unworriedly in some way
before seem to

Roman

Notice

I suppose.

17.

he seems to need one that is ugly, brutal, ^{and} mean, fetid and altogether deathly. For I am sure the word Love means for him above anything else a quick and solitary orgasm, snatched anywhere, on a beach, in a car, between vine-rows, in the dead of the night.

I do not know what can happen to such a man when he is very old, when these hungers are dead, when the platform of his whole life, that is to say, has dropped away. His work, which is a few hours every day as a very minor clerk in the Ministry of Shipping, means nothing to him; he never goes riding; he goes to the sea only very rarely, he never watches sport, and I do not remember seeing him read a newspaper. He only quickens, he only becomes really fluent and at his ease, least disturbing to be with, when he is flirting with a young woman, in however roundabout a way, and when he is discussing the local aristocracy whose most distant connections he knows.

the three is one the reason which redeems him is being talked about

STEP

He comes to the house with a tall, pleasant boy with a

young man, whose name is Franco, he said

Last night I watched talking to Maria on her terrace as it grew darker and the lights in the flat-windows behind us went up one after another and our voices became more muffled in the lovely, stranded dusk. He has asked her to go out to dinner with him several times, or to Ponza (for two days), but each time she says that she is really too busy and that she can never say in advance when she will be free. But last evening he decided on a fresh tactic. He told that while he was attracted by everything in her, by her voice, by the erect way she sat in a chair, by her calm and still eyes, by her long, dreaming walk, yet he realised that he had no chance of ever making love to her, being compared with her, an old man (he is fifty-nine), and perhaps not her kind mentally. Now he will increase the velocity of his invitations, until she will accept a dinner from him out of exhaustion, and then he will hope to carry that exhaustion through to the bed, asking her again and again until she is willing to sell her body for a little peace.

He also spoke to her about the marvellous boy who had left her quite ruthlessly a short time ago, and he did this in order to show her how deep his sympathy for her and his insight into the characters of other people were. But in fact he only showed her how blind, astonishingly blind, he is to the real situation. For instance, he said that the boy was never in love, that this was what chiefly worried him about the boy, that he feared he had no capacity for love.

Both Maria and I know this to be nonsense and that Franco, the boy, has been painfully in love for a long time now. She suggested to the Count that he might simply be blind to Franco's real nature, but he shook his head very tendentiously and said, no, he knew Franco from a child, had seen him in the house every day for three years or more, and that

to this

pleasantly

18. he was in a much better position than most people to judge ~~his~~ ~~Francisco's~~ heart. ~~But~~ The fact remained, ~~that~~ ~~he~~ he said, that the boy got tired of his girls after he had slept with them once or twice, ~~could~~ barely bring himself to speak to them. ~~(this much is true)~~ ~~Francisco~~ ~~said~~ Maria ~~said~~ told him that this meant nothing, only that he did not love most of the girls he went with.

~~But~~ does she know the whole of the story, I wonder? After the Count had left the dark terrace I tried to find out. Perhaps she knows. She knows at least that he is in love. She said that the Count must be even more stupid than she thought to be so blind to someone who had lived in the same house for so long. But I said, No, glancing at her the most intelligent men were often blind in such a situation, while the washerwomen and the milkmen knew the facts. She did not reply to this, so I have no way of telling whether she understands everything. I kept quiet, and then we talked about something else.

It is strange how often the name Franco is heard. He has put a spell, it seems, on so many people with his gaiety: presence. He is so full of the sun, so lively, tall, with fair bleached hair and good teeth, not at all handsome but seeming so, graceful and kindly, joking and then falling into a quiet mood, attending to other people so well, never allowing them to dwindle into sadness or be too much alone. He is twenty-two now, and far away in the north, working on a farm. But Marcella, Giuseppina (his mother) and Beppe all talk about him at great length, and especially to Maria, whose pain they think they are somehow easing, and perhaps they are right. I remember the Count, telling Maria one afternoon, at this house, when most of the others were out of the room, how Franco used sometimes, for apparently no reason, at all, go into his room suddenly, throw himself on his bed and burst into tears. This would hurt and disturb the Count; ~~but~~ there is nothing really cruel in him. But he does not realise that he himself was part of the cause of the boy's tears? It would be a most dreadful shock to him, if he did. Or does he really know everything; and is he trying to tell other people the opposite of the truth in order to protect his own honour, build a wall round himself as a makeshift consolation in a pitiless world. I wonder if he knows everything and suffers, and suffers even more because he has to watch the divining eyes of other people round him, people who know the real situation, and, like Maria and me, are astonished at his blindness. Once or twice last year he gave little indications that he knew all about it. I wonder?

I remember Franco coming down from the north last year, very bright, clean and sweet, and what terrible quarrels that caused between the Count and Marcella. On the evening before he went back Marcella I remember how he was sitting with Marcella on the terrace overlooking the gravel path, looking, perhaps Maria

changed, looking, perhaps Maria

changed, looking, perhaps Maria

changed, looking, perhaps Maria

know a deliberate look at her, to see if it was true

quitty (ital)

Maria

Franco

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Franco

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np

perhaps Maria

She was joking with him, sitting on his bed after everybody else was upstairs, and when she ruffled his hair he pulled her towards him, still her nephew, and then, swiftly and with silent ease, in a kind of sleep of touch where no voices entered from outside, where house and clucking people had slipped away, their love became equal and was like the first primeval love of dreams, ~~and they hugged round with the dark and utterly safe.~~ They left each other ashamed and awed. Next morning she told him he'd been wicked to think of doing such a thing, and ~~but~~ they must simply forget about it as soon as possible. At lunch, before a table of ten or twelve people, she told everyone how Franco seemed to prefer older and women, and she watched him blush painfully; ~~as~~ he thought she'd really ~~had~~ deserted him, ~~and~~ deserted the loveliness of her own act. But that night, when everyone had gone to bed, they went to the same bedroom by the kitchen, and their love was this time wilder, because they were rebelling against their own commands, against a world which could not come up to the their love. ~~And~~ From that time she never ~~tried~~ to scold him, and never ~~tried~~ to stop herself, but thought of him every day and every hour of the day. Being away from him became a pain, and she tended ~~now~~ not to smile or ~~laugh~~ laugh when he was away from the house, though no one noticed ~~this~~.

At this time Franco ^{had} was living in the house; a much ~~lo~~ lo' was a frailer and ~~more~~ sheltered person than he is now. He had no work ~~then~~ and ~~he~~ would sit for hours in the ~~big~~ room overlooking the gravel path and ~~the~~ fruit trees, playing with the wireless, reading, feeling useless, especially as all the other people of his age in the family went out to work, a mother's darling. He really did not fit with the family (Marcella aside), as ~~no~~ one could who was capable of love or tears. So he and Marcella were like two children together, crouched in a corner where it was warm and dry, hugging each other and afraid of what the world might do.

~~One day he came to her and said he could bear it no longer, he was so much in love. He did not say at first who with, and she was perfectly confident as she looked at him and smiled, ~~knowing~~ not realising that sometimes he came to her like a mother.~~

~~One day he came to her and said he could bear it no longer, he was so much in love! He did not say at first who with, and she was perfectly confident as she looked at him and smiled, suspecting nothing. Then he told her it was her daughter he loved, Stefanelle, and that he wanted to marry her. ~~She wanted to scream out, but sat there simply watching him, her mouth a little open, terrified, hardly daring to breath, and it was clear from his eyes that he divined nothing of her pain. Indeed, he came to her like a son, he did not believe that she could feel towards him like a girl and that she was not in charge of everything, ~~just as she had been in charge of their ~~love~~ love, showing him the way to go, teaching him. He did not believe that was fallible.~~~~~~

address
they embraced each other, and it) both) at)

and level) and kept on (keeping) him)

She was quiet, & remained where he was and from the house,

actually been

had it was herself.

and with movie for his position, he told her she was something)

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and that she was not a mother to him, namely without any concerns or pain of her own, only the vessel of his ~~advice~~ and ~~dreams~~ and ~~wants~~. ~~He led her with the one word 'Stefanella' into the tomb. The world was suddenly all dark for her, and her only solace had turned away. She was alone, perhaps as she had never been before. She had not even noticed him and Stefanella together. They had taken walks together, they had been to the cinema, and together, but never once had he thought that he could not turn away from her love. She realised that for him it was not precisely love, as he would feel it for a girl his own age; it was some thing that went on and on, despite other girls, just as the relation between mother and son goes on, does not collapse as soon as the son takes a woman. So in a way he made her feel more terribly her age, the difference of years between them. For weeks she suffered the kind of loneliness - the tears alone in a room, the wakefulness hour by hour through the night, and then through the night again, in a delirium of pain - that people hope will never come again after youth, but which, always does, humbling the proud adult, upsetting the sickness and that calm, indulgent, we-know-all-about-it look of middle age. She became a girl again, who needed like a girl to be petted and put on a special diet and put to bed early and made to see new faces, until the sickness of her heart was over.~~

~~She spent hours on her bed upstairs each night listening for a noise, her door open, knowing that he and Stefanella were down there, talking, perhaps kissing, perhaps more now, in a first abandon, in that meadow of love which virgins make, good smelling and never to be had again. She was there smoking cigarette after cigarette, starting whenever she heard the murmur of his voice, or heard her cough, thinking it was her love cry, or heard the bed creak, the springs clanging quietly together, or beginning to move with regularity, most dreadful noise of all, then ceasing again. And she would only rest, would close her eyes for the first time, when the girl came into the bedroom and lay down at her side, and she heard his door close downstairs. She and her daughter said little to each other during those days. She though Stefanella knew what she was suffering, but she could not be sure. She asked her whether she was in love with him, but Stefanella always shrugged her shoulders, pouting, and said she did not know. And I think she asked Stefanella again and again whether she was in love with him, but the girl only shrugged her shoulders, pouting, and said she did not know. I think she felt the will of her mother steadily drawing her back from him, and could not face the separation from her mother nor the silent disapproval of her mother which she must have felt, and gave way slowly, let it all go, let the possibility~~

h.p.
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 (Stefanella)
 (her daughter)
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which marriage would involve,

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community of touch with pother people, even though the touch is one of pain. Her horseplay was once gaily, but now it is a sickness.

Every day she goes to a huge locomotive factory on the outskirts of the city, and works in the office just behind the long, silver assembly room. The noise is continuous and deafening, from one end of the day to the other, but whenever I ask her about it she says she loves the work and finds the noise comforting; indeed, after three years, could not do without it now. She comes back to the house silent and tired in the evenings, clearly very proud of doing a grown-up job, while being still really an awkward child. She sits down without speaking, sighing like an old woman, not answering Marcella's solicitous questions, but shrugging and yawning, making her face ugly, like a workmen after a long night-shift, just as if she is the born and unforigivning enemy of all delicacy and warmth. If I happen to be talking to Marcella, quietly and easily as we often do, she will cut across the conversation deliberately, with a purposely material question, like "Did you think to order more butter today?" or "Why was Carlo dipping about in the pool, you know he comes in with his feet covered in mud, and then Elsa complains -!" It is as if she is trying to proclaim that the world is dead and there fore not to stir, not to talk with too much warmth because it is folly to do so about dead things, not to love, for there is death, love is the silliest of illusions, not to let one's thoughts go beyond the world, the seen and touchable world where people work, spend money and are tired. She believes in nothing; her world is heaped about her in fragments. Her only confidence comes from her work, from a feeling that she is on the right side of the law, that she is the same as everybody else, that what she gets she deserves because she works for it, that she is essential to something or other in the world. Her work is like a daily genuflection to law, order and respectability. That is why people whose work is dull and empty of any personal meaning can walk through the streets with their heads up, even grown and strong men who work at desks like eunuchs every day, - that is why they can work with their heads up, because they are astonished at their own respectability, and hide within its confines, as like Stefanelia. Each one of us is different from Everyone Else, we are dirtier, we are more untidy, our thoughts cannot be predelected, we fall in love, have wretched desires, are lazy, are cruel, but Everyone Else, that image with which we are confronted and frightened as children, Everyone Else is clean, ordered and has a job, so that when we achieve the staus of Everyone Else, respectable and taken for honest at last (though rather dull, perhaps, and our real hopes wasted) we are astonished at the ease of the victory (because the fight was exaggerated) and really feel superior, as Stefanelia does, to those who sit at home all day or work in fields or gad about in cars.

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we have a sense of being

This morning I was woken at eight o'clock by Elsa's terrible shouting, ~~and it is very seldom that I wake up peacefully, never that I wake up in silence.~~ But silence when it falls over the house is moving and glorious, like the proclamation of something one had forgotten and thought was impossible, again, like love. This morning the trouble was started by Maurizio. He came down the stairs with dirty bare feet just as Elsa was washing the tiled floor, and she asked him not to tread where she had already worked. He ~~had~~ asked her rudely ~~was she not~~ paid for her work, and this infuriated her, coming from a fourteen-year-old boy. So she began shouting at the top of her voice, a few feet from my door, which leads ~~out~~ from the main room, where most of the shouting throughout the day takes place.

Her voice is terrible and even when she is saying kind and amusing things, it is the same, that is to say it sounds as if she is uttering the foulest insults; it is like the voice of an old man, so ugly that one could go through all life without hearing such a sound, because that degree of ugliness in a woman is rare, and when she is shouting, especially when she is screaming at the top of her voice as she was this morning, there is not forgetting her, there is no thrusting her out of the mind, one just has to lie and suffer, rigidly, like a man being punished for a crime he did not know he had committed.

All day there are quarrels, shouting and the slamming of doors, the calling of names and screamed curses. So seldom does silence fall over the house, and at any moment it may be broken with a kind of deliberate/murderous ~~warning~~ attack by someone coming heavily down the wooden stairs or the child Carlo rushing in from the garden and pushing open all the doors with all his strength, or the Count arriving suddenly on his motorbike and asking incessant questions in his that worried, uneasy, broken and nerve-wracking voice, stalking into the big room and peering about, and nothing can be predicted. Elsa may be polite and quiet and amusing now, doing her work willingly, looking after everyone, and then, not an hour later, she may be screaming at the top of her voice and taking her own son by the neck and giving him great smacks across the voice, or decrying the house for being dirty and degenerate, for paying her too little, for having a topsy-turvy life which a beggar would refuse to live! Sometimes the mornings open marvellously, with Marcella bringing a cup of black coffee into my room as the sun comes in through the shutters, onto the light tiled floor, glowing, and the house is silent after the children, the daughters and the Count have all left, and then breakfast is prepared and laid for me at a corner of the table in the big room, and Marcella sits with me smoking and talking while I eat. But there is nothing regular. There is no order. This morning, after Elsa's shouting had ceased, stopped, I found there was no coffee, no tea, no bread. There was filth everywhere in the house, the child Carlo was whimpering and ~~comp~~ as he has been doing for three days, deliberately stirring people's nerves, and Stefanella's room, which is a refuge for me, had not been made ready for the day. Marcella

you'd

awful
they sound like

when she shouts
you feel like

enjoyment
that every day
teaches you
appreciation

it may be
a minute

with
loud voice
and voice

how

they steal, play truant and go about in bare feet. Only in Maurizio is there a little city-delicacy, yet his father was a peasant; perhaps in him Marcella's spirit was allowed ~~sway~~ ~~was not ravished and stripped by the Count.~~

Neither the Count nor Stefanella were at lunch yesterday; that is, ~~to say~~, the two most nerve-wracking elements were ~~absent~~. ~~It is strange that, while one can like the Count, as I do, yet one feels his presence every second, one never or at least very, very seldom, and that for the briefest time, grows easy under his searching and anxious gaze.~~ It has occurred to me very often that he is shy of people and makes a special harsh effort to get across to them, and is always the first to go up to bed in the afternoon, leaving the rest at table, perhaps knowing in his mysterious and stupid-seeming way how much better they can talk and smile when he is away. As for Stefanella, she ~~tends to take command of the practical things at table, smacking Cralo's knees when he won't sit properly in his chair, shouting across at Maurizio in her rough, housewife's voice to eat decently and not to snatch bread, calling out to Elsa to bring the next course, arranging remarking on the taste of this and that, her eyes and mind and heavy hands dwelling on the earth all the time, fixed down to the sandy grubby floor where there is nothing glorious and nothing slight, where nothing lies easy, where there is no slowness of motion or any reminiscence, only quick, jerking movements and sudden, surreptitious glances under the brow, and a snapping out of words like those of an animal deemed and cast out by God, derelict in a lonely world and orphaned by the sky.~~

later

everyone

9

has

But ~~at~~ lunch yesterday it was Marcella's who had charge of the table, governing our spirits, ~~passing~~ her gaze passing ~~like an angel over the table.~~ Only in Carlo did there remain a trace of the ugly, cruel will, and he whined

at the beginning, asking for impossible things. But Giuseppina's daughters were graceful with him, ~~and~~ he found himself amusing them, ~~and~~ he ate quietly, ~~having been granted equality with the adults.~~ The table was an island adrift from the village. The people went away quietly to sleep, and the house fell into an afternoon silence, with the sun at its hottest glowing ~~between the shutters and the curtains across the French Widows stirring and then billowing out with the cool breeze from the sea.~~ When everybody else had gone up Sassa put the radio on quietly, and ~~when~~ after the first notes I came out to listen. It was Cavaradossi's aria on the battlements of Castel Sant' Angelo, from Tosca, and Sassa made it loudrr as I sat down, realising that I had come to listen. But the house could not give so much. Poor, maimed thing, it could only give silence, for a few seconds. That was the chiefest of its

~~gifts~~ then Elsa's terrible voice sounded from the kitchen, ~~as~~ dishes clattered together, and the loose valves of the radio made the voice and the orchestra blur when there was a crescendo or the pitch rose. The earth, the ~~hard~~ grubby floor, came before one's

please
as if he was tall

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the illness

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①

THE VILLA.

When I arrived today I noticed that the house was cleaner than I knew it last year. This is due to the new manservant called Renato whom I saw serving at table---it surprised me---when I came into the room from the garden. He was dressed in a white and blue striped jacket, like the silent manservant of a palazzo that has survived the war. He was the first person I saw when I got to the top of the steps. There is never much light over the dining table, and he was standing just at its edge, small, with a rather prim mouth and crusading eyes.

A great cry went up from the table, from Luciana, from Arturo, Vittoria, Angelina, Maddalena, Silvia, Nina and Michele, and I forgot the manservant at once. The little boy Dino is now eight, and he hid his head in his mother's lap when I came in, then ran halfway up the stairs in the dim light, and crouched there, watching me while I answered all their questions at table. I remember him last year as being more cruel than shy, but now the shyness seems to have grown, and ^{with it} ~~given him~~ a sort of graciousness. That is like all of them. 'Oriental barbarians', I heard someone call them once, but somewhere each of them, even the marchese Arturo himself, whom most people find stupid and slow, has this gift of grace: there is nothing benevolent about it, but it seems civilised---for a moment, like a sudden acknowledgement of civilisation before war breaks out. I've often looked at their hands. They are thick and extraordinarily heavy, very wide at the base, like butchers' hands---or Roman aristocrats'.

Only Luciana, the marchese's wife, is different, and she's the power of the family. Everything starts from her; she can bring light or darkness to them as she wishes. When she goes away the

family relapses into its real ugliness. They mope about the house uneasily, there is a sense of waiting for something, the servants are hostile and rebellious, there are quarrels all the time, and I think only the certainty of Luciana's return keeps them together at all. Under her cool eye, as she sits at the end of the table, they look like violent children who are allowed their say but no more. Luciana has lovely hands, and strangers are always asking how she could have married the marchese and, more than that, how she could have borne living with him all this time. Usually she says quite frankly that he disgusts her, and that sleeping with him, which happens rarely, is a necessary penance for her. The spirit goes out of him when she leaves. And he seems frightened when she suggests a holiday for herself--- just two days, three days. In this he is like his two daughters, Angelina and Maddalena, who share his great hands and nervous, strained watchfulness, and like him never seem to have a moment's inner peace, ~~xxxxxxxx~~ and have no sense of art at all, like people rejected by God, wondering at all the mystery outside them and why they aren't part of it, and often hating it. All three turn to Luciana for their peace. They only find it in her, and this is why, when she goes away, even for a day, they seem panic-stricken, as if their feelings will run away with them and they have no form, nothing to fall back on but hard, brittle thoughts, about the dirty state of the kitchen, or the time of the next train in from Rome, or the fact that the beds haven't been made. They look malevolent, broken, rejected; and you can't address a word to them. They're brooding too deeply,

Luciana works harder than any of them and bears all the worries of the household, and applies her mind nearly every hour of the waking day to keeping them all out of debt. She would

so clearly benefit from a holiday. But it seems they can't treat her with the mercy they would give to other people, they need her so badly. Especially Maddalena sulks when she goes away. ~~Two or three days ago~~ I remember last year, when Luciana went away to Naples for a couple or three days, she wouldn't say good-morning to any of us; and Luciana had her mute, resentful eyes waiting for her when she got back.

Maddalena is called the Inglese by the family, because she is tall and thin and has never had a man. This is why, they all say, she is never gay; after a certain age virgins are never gay. Her sister Angelina is much prettier, with blond hair and a neat little face. ^{Young men often} ~~Many men often~~ fall in love with her, so her company is less solemn and pessimistic than Maddalena's, and she understands her mother better and is less jealous of her enjoyment. Maddalena is twenty-nine, and Angelina one or two years younger, yet neither of them goes out with young men alone. Maddalena has a long, melancholy face, not at all pretty, yet her body has cool, gentle lines, and there's an elegance about her which she could turn to beauty if the spirit hadn't been beaten out of her. There is an unfathomable dark apathy about her like the silence of the sky. I think the family made fun of her looks when she was a child and nothing could convince her that she isn't ugly and unwanted; she seems to try to cancel herself out, saying nothing and slipping up to bed early, and she is bitterly aware of Angelina's prettiness, a light which dims her even more, sending her deeper still into herself, though she doesn't really resent it. Apart perhaps from Luciana she is the only person of quality among them. She holds her own counsel. She feels hate like the others, and the same need to be cruel, but at the same time there is this brooding quiet in her, a resignation, that gives her a

4.

certain delicacy, a sour wisdom.

The hatred in the house is bitter, sneering and murderous, so strong and sure and deep a necessity in them that nothing human could abate it. I've seen Signora Flavia, the grandmother, a small, fat woman in black, dusty, threadbare clothes down to her feet, sitting in the kitchen screaming with rage, her mouth in a kind of grin, with tears pouring down her face, stamping her feet up and down on the stone floor as she shouted, 'I'm a countess, a countess!' A lot of the hate and petty persecution in the house comes from her, and she tries to influence her son against other people, especially those whom Luciana likes and offers hospitality to. This is Signora Flavia's revenge on her daughter-in-law, whom she feels has been a bad wife. The marchese only listens to half what she says, but he has been hurt enough by his wife in the last twenty years not to hear that voice as a balm. Some people say he's too dense to have suffered, but this isn't true. It makes him more vulnerable, if anything.

Last year I remember that Signora Flavia often attacked Michele, the fourteen-year-old son who shares Luciana's grace and ease, and even her peace. He is slim, quite tall for his age, handsome in a rough way, and his hands aren't those of a butcher, or a Roman aristocrat's for that matter. I noticed very soon after I saw him for the first time how little of his father he seemed to have in him, how rebellious he was, how quick to understand, unlike the others; and also there was a tenderness in him which was quite absent in the others. He's deliberately rude to them, especially to his father, and he is always shouting, trying to cadge money or cigarettes, eating great chunks of bread and marmalade or tomatoes covered with oil, and when he walks it is with a comic roguish slouch, usually with his shirt hanging out of his trousers. Signora Flavia

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complained that he was dirty at table and that his manners were nothing compared with those of his little brother Dino, which was untrue. If Dino cried Michele was always blamed, and the whole family with the exception of Luciana and Angelina would bear down on him, calling him villain and wretch. I noticed that Maddalena often lectured him in her sourly delicate way, as if for the pleasure of exercising a bit of power over somebody. But the leader of the persecution---a quite kindly persecution--- was Signora Flavia, the reason being that Michele ~~wasn't~~ ^{isn't} the marchese's son, but the illegitimate child of one of Luciana's love affairs---with a peasant living near by. Both Luciana and Angelina try to protect him, and for this reason he loves them both with a quiet, fierce passion. People say that the peasant wanted to have his child but the marchese insisted on keeping him, after endless arguments in which the peasant rudely banged the table and threatened violence.

The marchese has never been known to lay a finger on Michele, and ~~he~~ either he's blind to humiliation or he conceals it marvellously. He waits for things to pass over, with a natural pragmatism, and always tries to keep out of quarrels. But when I say to people that there may be an unusual wisdom in this, they say, 'No, it's just laziness and moral ineptitude.' All I know is that when I get indignant at table because of somebody's rudeness he's the one to make the first soothing, tactful remark. ^{A strange man:} Although lecherous thoughts seem to be in his head most of the ~~time~~ ^{day}, and although he hoards photographs of beautiful women and pores over them for hours alone in his bedroom, sometimes projecting them on to the wall as slides, he is horrified by dirty stories at table and by any laughing about the body. He likes to take it with deadly seriousness. When Vittoria, his sister, gets a little drunk after dinner and

takes her breast out of her dress to show us what a young and tender body she still has, he turns his head away abruptly and won't join in the laughter.

When a really pretty young woman comes to the house he invites her to look at his photographs, which people say really are superb (he won't show them to men---except to the local monks who invite him over to dinner now and then to see the new ones), and which include some of the loveliest and most aristocratic woman in the city. And he may then ask her to pose herself, which after she has heard the names of ~~the~~ some of the other women comes as an honour. If she agrees he takes a long time fixing the focus of the camera, while he is actually peering at her bosom. At table he flirts with them, sits them down next to him, pats their arms, touches their hair lightly, puts his hand on their shoulders. Usually they suffer this in silence, for after all he's the head of the house; and on their second visit they keep away from his end of the table, under Luciana's protection, which gratifies her. He asks them to come for a ride on his motor-scooter and if they agree he takes them to a long deep-green field a few kilometers south and tries to make love to them, almost always unsuccessfully. He is bald and has white, staring eyes and a rather loose mouth, and he walks with his back very straight, as he used to in the military processions when he was in the king's escort. All over the house there are photographs of him in officer's ~~uniform~~ uniform. Most women seem frightened of him, although perhaps he's the least frightening member of the family; Luciana told me that when he was young he was brutal with her in love, and that his first act disgusted her. I wonder if this is true. Never trust what a woman says about her husband if she doesn't love him---he then becomes the personification of all her disappointments.

He likes to keep on the right side of church dogma even

even in his decheries, and I've heard him explain to a young woman that it would right and good of her to let him make love to her since, having been in the king's escort, when there was a king, he'd been brought close to the Vatican, and to influential monsiegnori, so that in a way contact with him would bring them nearer to God, or at least get them a plenary indulgence. ~~The~~ Last year I heard him tell a pretty girl hardly out of school, running his fingers lightly down her throat, that she shouldn't be offended if he kissed because God, having made her a woman, intended her as an object of love for men, which put an obligation on men not to behave too formally and stiffly with women, especially if they happened to be beautiful ('as you, my dear, are'), and that it was better to risk offence (seizing the girl's head and planting a kiss first on her forehead and then on her lips) than fail to enhance a woman's beauty wherever it was possible.

The family laughs at this and never tries to protect the girl. And Luciana doesn't seem a scrap jealous. Only is she flirted would the family look up, speechlessly, watching their beloved leave them again, and the foothold of their world slip away. When someone asked her once how such ugly, restless people could ever have issued from her she said, 'It's because they were conceived without love.' Only Michele was conceived in love, however momentary. And he has her same peace, as I say, the same slight dreaming beyondness. I noticed him this morning sitting in an armchair by the hearth doing his schoolwork, and for a time the house was in utter silence. He was looking out of the french windows, lost, and the room seemed to rest in its silence, sure and easy, and I thought how none of the others could ever have achieved that. They walk about quickly and awkwardly, making their ~~xxxx~~ short, quick, sharp remarks in ugly voices.

I've seen a look of tenderness in Angelina's face only once,

last year, when there were a number of people in to tea, and one of them, a smiling, aunt-like, constantly nodding and surprised woman, was talking to her closely; and Angelina fetched out a tiny, shining compact radio she'd bought some ~~xxx~~ months before, to show her, with its golden aerial and a green leather case no bigger than a woman's handbag. She plugged it in, pulled out the aerial and began turning the dials and pressing spring-buttons. And all the time she played with her shining little box and the other woman clapped her hands together and uttered aunt-like cries, there was a tender, bemused, shy look on her face as if this was all her own handiwork, something to do with her personally---with her prettiness and health even. I don't think I've ever seen her face so shy, like that of a child being praised before too many relatives; usually her face is strained about the eyes, hard, seeming to dwell on hard subjects, like how much tea there is left in the cannister after I've been at it, whether the dogs outside have been fed, whether she has time to go to the local town for another electric plug, whether the 'servants' have been stealing. Perhaps this is why the young men are seldom in love with her for long. I heard one of them say indignantly, making the rest of us roar with laughter, that she couldn't bring forth a child but white maggots! When we had a visitor last year she said he was dirty in his habits and that he used to piss out of his window (which would have been easy, as the sill was only a foot or so above the ground), and that the Siamese cat used to smell whenever it had been in his room for long (implying he was sexually perverted); to which he said that she had a mind as big as his thumb-nail.

But she has a curiosity about people which I like. She watches them inquisitively, rather like a child, wants to know about them, is rarely envious. Perhaps that was taught her by

Luciana, for it isn't true of the marchese. She is so content to watch other people that she curls herself up in a chair sometimes and seems to cancel herself out, as if someone had breathed in her ear that she'd better give up trying to enter life---she'd never really have children, take trains alone, pay her own bills. And this childishness went with a much more practical nature than Maddalena's.

I ~~am~~ Luciana and I often talked about the family last year, just as if it wasn't hers: how rude they'd been to the visitor, talking about him in whispers, calling him wretch, filthy beast, pervert, parasite; and how when he came to meals they made him feel unwanted and more or less threw food at him. When I asked her once if they had much sense of other people's feelings she said, 'No, none whatsoever. They only feel it if they're hurt.' ~~They can't feel anything else.~~

And she added that perhaps it was best to be like that, aware only of oneself, yet relying on other people's mercy. I said, no, there was nothing lucky about that because they must be unhappy people, being incapable of love. I remember she shrugged and murmured, 'Unhappy no, but neither very happy nor very sad, just on one level of ordinariness all the time.' Then she added as she went away into the kitchen, and this surprised me, 'People may as well be dead as live like that.'

I've often seen Angelina staring at the floor, bent forward a little, smoking an American cigarette, her yellow bleached hair falling down her cheeks (in a fashion that went out years ago), a terrible darkness seeming to surround her. There is something unbearably sad about the silence of these two sisters. They seem to be regretting something---something which perhaps they've never known but which they feel in their mother, in a few dumb intimations, not told them in words.

In the marchese there is no sadness, just as there is little

humour. He has no ideas, even the religious ones he professes. His God was a habit he picked up over the years, as he picked up the habit of flirtation. I've never seen anything even momentarily reflective in his face, no dream, which is why his company tends to be suffocating. I notice that a few seconds after he has left ~~maxshaxr~~ ^{table} to go to bed visitors sit better in their chairs and smile for the first time. He lives in a strange, bare, friendless world, the lackey of his own dark thoughts. Last year I remember Luciana leaning over towards me and saying as he opened the door into the room, 'When he comes in it's like death passing over the table. You can see everyone go stiff and a bit afraid.' I said nothing and looked away.

Every afternoon when he comes in for lunch he calls his youngest^r son over to him and asks what he has been up to; he pats his head and kisses him, looks theatrically surprised when he is supposed to, the whites of his eyes showing and his mouth drawn down; and sometimes he pulls him on to his knee and tells him a story with grand gestures, his chin lifted up, speaking rhetorically, rolling out his r's, depicting great men, so that the child stares into his eyes and dares not make a movement for fear of breaking the legend. When Michele ~~comes~~ ^{comes} in late the marchese always bubbles over with questions, wanting to know exactly where and what why, poring over his answers with rapt, dark, tender curiosity. I remember a feast-day last year in the village, down by the fountain, where there are a few houses, a wooden village-hall and a petrol pump; a crowd collected there after lunch for games and competitions. Michele was wearing his first suit, borrowed from a rich young man, a friend of Angelina's, who happened to be abnormally small. The suit fitted perfectly and made him look debonaire, but his white shirt was frayed at the collar and was too tight round the neck, so he took off the tie, then, since it was hot,

the jacket. He came back after dark, when the fireworks were over, and dropped straight into a chair while the marchese began asking him the usual quiet questions---shouting at him suddenly, 'Michele!', when he didn't reply. Had he been dancing? at whose house? what girls were there? did he enjoy it? had he been drinking, for he looked so tired? how many glasses had he taken? And when they boy told him? 'Two large glasses' he shrugged and said, 'Well, that's half a litre, enough for a small boy not used to it!' Then he glanced across at Luciana, with the very slightest of smiles, and murmured, 'E sbronzo', he's drunk. Michele didn't deny it, only put his head in his hands and yawned. Then, suddenly, he got up and dashed away to his bedroom, where he slept at once.

I like the way the marchese screws up his face when he asks questions, as if piecing together a world he left long ago because of its disappointments, its not having noble families in charge. And I noticed that when the grandmother asked him who had won the greasy-pole competition at the village he shrugged and murmured, 'Oh, some wretch...', then imitated a peasant-accent in the ugliest way possible.

I think it must be from him that Dino, the little boy, gets his wonderful mature gestures, as if he already had a place in the world. The marchese has taught him pride in himself, and I remember how one day last year the child rushed in from the kitchen after Renato the 'servant' had told him to come into lunch, and cried out with tears in his eyes, 'A servant must never speak to me like that!' The marchese forbids Luciana to lay a finger on the children, and they find it easy to confuse and browbeat him. I've often heard them shout at him, and then he grows very mild, trying to calm them down, a little afraid, because this is the defiance he has taught them himself. They have no fear of him, and when they really get beyond themselves and behave like

devils Luciana takes them into another room and closes the door, then gives them a thrashing with a cane, and promises them another one twice as hard if they tell their father about it. They fear both her and Angelina, because they get beatings from both. The possibility of a beating gives just that tough edge to life that the boys seem to need, and I've seen Dino put his bare, dirty feet on the tablecloth so that Luciana will give him a cuff. Then, after she has done it, he comes and curls up in her chair, at her back, with his arms round her neck, and often falls asleep like that, and stays there until Angelina puts him on her shoulders and carries him to bed. The marchese is a loving outside to them all, and they tell him every sort of lie, sometimes in connivance with Luciana, knowing how credulous he is.

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Last night the little boy and I were the only ones at table for dinner, and all the time he played the padrone, talking to me with great politeness, asking if I was enjoying the spaghetti, calling out to the servants in a loud, commanding voice, his little chin pushed forward, and making them come to my side of the table, to ask if I wanted a second helping. And they obeyed him. Towards the end of the dinner he called out to Nella, Renato's wife, a small, really animal creature with a man's voice, and when she came to the table she leaned over him and said quietly, her teeth gritted together, 'Remember you're nine and a half, nine and a half', but nevertheless she gave him exactly the number of stuffed tomatoes he asked for, with some olive oil and sauce. He sat so authoritatively in his chair, his back quite straight, his eyes clear and black, never looking up at her, ~~but taking her~~ but taking her obedience for granted, giving his orders ~~to the air in front of~~ to the air in front of

takes her breast out of her dress to show us what a young and
tender body she still has, he turns his head away abruptly and
won't join in the laughter.
When pretty young women come to the house he invites them
either to look at his photographs, which people say really are
superb (he won't show them to men---except to the local monks who
invite him to dinner now and then to see the new ones), and include
some of the most lovely/womne in the city, or else to pose for a
photograph themselves, which they ~~never refuse~~ rarely refuse after they've
heard the names ~~of the others.~~
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ of the others.

him. Then he came into my room, which leads off the dining room, and told me about the family's visit to Ponza, the island that is three-hours boat-ride from Anzio, how he had seen a great ship, the Cristoforo Colombo, on its way to America, and how the pilot had throttled the engine of the boat as they drew near to the island shore, and how smoothly they had swerved towards the land, bobbing up and down slightly, on a sea utterly blue, the rocks showing a strange red under the water, soft and shimmering, and the island green and brown, huge and humped, before them. He asked me whether London was also an island in the sea, as he'd heard, and I said, 'No, but it has a river ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~, and boats along it.' He wanted to know if these boats had engines and I said, 'Yes.' He nodded and murmured, staring at the ceiling, lost in the silent and hot room, 'Ah, then they're motorboats, launches ~~---~~ motoseafi, scialuppe?' And after that he turned towards the wall and went to sleep, like a child in a drifting, careless rowboat on the calmest and darkest of rivers, windless and unpeopled. I leaned back on my pillow, my feet up on the bed, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ and read a little, then Maddalena came in from work, knocked at my door and carried him upstairs.

The rest of the family were out. The marchese was at the sea with friends from the 'office', and wouldn't be back until the last train at midnight. Michele was at the cinema, where a musical was showing, and Luciana had gone with the marchese's sister Vittoria (who also lives in the ~~xxxxxx~~ house) and Angelina to a house at the back, behind the vineyard, where they were invited to dinner and drinks. While I was reading, after Dino had been taken off to bed, I heard laughter and music coming from beyond the vines, and I thought how this sound no longer made me feel lonely and abandoned as it used to once. There was a marvellous silence in the house, something very rare. The house is capable

of everything, has known everything from brutality to the lightest infatuation.

The other day Luciana came into my room at sundown, after I had opened my shutters to let in the cool air, and leaned out of the window, looking at the peach trees, with the garden lying in an uncustomary stillness, and said, 'I love my house, you know...'. It's true, these silent pauses make one love the house.

I remember last night tenderly, how the pillow felt against my back, how ~~and~~ I and the book in my hand and the silence and the slight wind that went through the bushes just below my window, bringing in gusts of music and laughter, were all one dream.

The marchese's attitude towards me has changed ~~greatly~~ since last year, and I'm sure this is due to Luciana's subtle persuasions. He no longer watches me as he used to, and he even tells me confidences about other people sometimes, especially about young women, which would have been impossible before. I think he believed last year that I was making love either to his wife, who is nearly twenty years older than me, or to Angelina, which at least was feasible. I remember how he used to follow me about the house and how he would always call down to Luciana if she and I stayed up late talking together. He hated to hear us talk in whispers, in the silence of the house, and God knows what went through his head. Now we stay up talking until the early hours and he never once calls down to her that she must get some sleep, that she'll be fit for nothing in the morning, that it isn't right, it isn't right! Somehow she convinced him of the silliness of his fears, and apart from that he has seen me with girls in town, ~~young women~~ and hears that I'm attracted to this one and not that, and so forth.

During the day I am always given Angelina's room to work in, and this was the same last year. It always pained him then,

that I should be going into the women's quarters with my young menhood and using their dressing-table as a desk, and sleeping on their bed after lunch. I worked hard last year and went out very little, which gave him more opportunity to imagine me up to no good. I remember one evening reading something aloud to myself, alone in her room, and realising after a time that I could be heard outside. Angelina was late in from work that evening, and I heard him walk along the corridor and pause outside my door, listening. He apparently didn't know that she was still out of the house. I stopped reading aloud, then decided to find out if he really had been listening. I got up and went across to the lavatory, which is opposite her door. His bedroom is at the end of the corridor, and as I passed across I glanced to my right and saw him standing there, buttoning his shirt in the mirror and at the same time staring down the corridor. I locked the lavatory door, then heard him walk down to Angelina's room, enter it, then leave again and go back to his bedroom. After a time I came out and returned to the room, closing the door, when I heard him walk down the corridor once again and look this time in the lavatory, presumably to see if I and his daughter had gone in there together. By now he was bewildered, and felt himself in the middle of a plot. He suddenly pushed the door of my room open, imitated a look of surprise at finding me there and then began fiddling uselessly with some cases on the floor. I'm sure he wanted to look under the bed but lacked the neck.

Last year I thought him a sort of monster, creating a world in his own image, but now I know this isn't true, and that his belief in lechery going on all round him is a kind of hope. At lunch last Sunday he was talking to me about a young woman they know who lives in Rome with her mother, and said she was 'very Roman indeed', that is to say, 'Intelligent, passionate and

She usually comes in to tea in the afternoon, and is virtually one of the family, providing the sting of wit and shrewd observation. Her voice is ~~xxx~~ harsh, and when she speaks against people it has a special cutting tone; she seems to be taking revenge for everything life has refused her. I heard her say the other day that Maria--the 'intelligent, passionate and cunning' girl--wasn't at all beautiful to her mind: she had a loose mouth, too large and open, and her hips were too wide; she said it as though she was killing her, with a swift, hungry sound. And Signora Flavia says that while Maria is a person of distinction, yet she is perhaps a little too sweet. And other people say, 'Oh, Maria is too artificial in the way she speaks!'

I enjoy being with Luciana and Maria alone, just the three of us; we can speak to each other intimately, each of us having a painful secret, so that we have nothing to lose. Sometimes (u.p.) Luciana and I take the bus to Rome and go to Maria's flat, where she lives with her mother, and we sit behind ~~xxxxx~~ closed shutters in the hot half-darkness in the afternoon, with yellow, slight, gleaming lines showing through the shutter-slats, while Maria's mother pads softly across the stone kitchen floor, bringing cool drinks, going to the refrigerator; and when it's cool and the sun has gone down behind the curved, smooth block of flats close by, leaving the space between in shadow, we sit out on the verandah in canvas chairs, at the foot of the steps leading up to the kitchen, everything about us of stone or cement, new, cut off from the rest of the city, a great static island like a memorial, with occasional square lawns, excellently cut and small, with here and there young trees. The moment you enter this stone world of flats through a gate, along a special road, there is a new coolness and quiet, and the noises of the main street close by fall back.

It is so different from this house where the noise starts

Handwritten note in a circle: Maria has just adopted a child, Luciana told me, and nobody must know.

soon after dawn with someone rushing down the stairs like a ton of coals or with Dino's deafening cries or with the radio turned on suddenly at full strength, as if in vengeful enjoyment. Or esle Nella the maid shouts to her own son to 'Come in, you vagabond!' in that deep, dry beast-voice of hers. If you've slept well it's all right but if your dreams have been heavy and full of the past these noises are like a fresh assault, to keep the wounds open all day.

Maria told me a few days ago that she could hardly bear talking to the marchese, hated it when he touched her. And when I said that he'd called her 'intelligent, passionate and cunning' she replied that he only spoke like this to give the impression of intuitive gifts, which he lacked; he had only heard someone else use those words about her, and decided to use them ^{himself} when an ^{chance} opportunity came. She said he created a complicated world for himself--- a world where there were secret assignations all the time and everything was plot and subterfuge, and the reality was the opposite of appearance, so that having created ~~the~~ ^{the} mystery ~~for himself~~ he had to penetrate it; ^{then he} ~~and~~ congratulated himself on his cleverness. He does it like a conjuror's trick and at first you don't realise that the world he has made is completely false.

He calls her cunning, she says, because he can't allow himself to believe that, being a typical 'Roman woman', she is simply unhappy, and not the materialisation of his ~~becherous~~ ^{becherous} dreams. I notice that he doesn't search her body with his eyes as he does the other women: instead, he puts the whole of her life---which he thinks he knows about---into the laboratory of his desires; he turns her into a daydream.

Sometimes he will look at a woman with his eyes screwed up anxiously, as if on some painstaking investigation; he has to verify every detail. He seems to murder ^d women inwardly---even

his own wife, to keep her as an object of pleasure; they mustn't have quite human lives.

His work, which is a few hours every day at the customs house in Rome, at the 'office' but in fact waving the heavy trucks in and out of the main gate, and examining the drivers' passes, doesn't mean a thing to him. He goes to the cinema sometimes, rides his little scooter into the village to drink a coffee. I've never seen him read a newspaper. He only quickens, and becomes really fluent and at his ease, when women are mentioned; and also when the Roman aristocracy is being talked about---there all his graciousness comes out.

Last night he came with us to Maria's flat and I watched him talking to her on the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ verandah as it grew darker and the lights in the flat-windows behind us went up one after another and our voices became more muffled in the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ warm, twinkling dusk. He told her that he was attracted by everything in her, by her voice, the erect way she sat in a chair, her calm and still eyes, her long, dreamy walk, but he realised that he had no chance of making love to her, being--- compared with her---an old man (he is fifty-nine), and perhaps not her kind 'mentally'. He also talked about the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ boy who thre her over a short time ago, called Franco. That boy, he said, was never in love; this was what chiefly worried him about Franco (they ~~xxxx~~ ^{are} related), that he heemed incapable of love. Maria said to this quietly that he might simply be blind to Franco's real nature, but he shook his head pleasantly and cried, 'No, I've known Franco from a child, he's been in my house---why, every day for three years or so at one time!' He was in a much better position to judge the boy than most people, certainly more than those---with a glittering side-glance at her---who fell in love with him. The fact was, he said, that the boy got tired of his girls after he'd slept with

them once or twice (a deliberate thrust at her, to see if it was true or not), to which Maria said that this meant nothing, only that he didn't love most of the girls he went with.

But does Maria know the whole of the story, I wonder? After the marchese had left the dark terrace I tried to find out. Perhaps she knows. She knows at least that Franco is in love. She said, 'The marchese must be even blinder than I thought!' But I said, 'No'---glancing at her---'the cleverest people are often blind in these things, when it touches themselves---while the washerwomen and the milkmen know the facts.' She didn't reply to this, so I have no way of telling whether she understands everything. I kept quiet, and we talked about something else.

Strange how often the name Franco comes up. He has put quite a spell on people with his gaiety. He is tall and lively, with rather fair hair and good teeth, not at all handsome but graceful and kindly; full of the sun. He jokes about and then falls into a quiet mood, unpredictably, and I notice how attentive he is of other people, never letting them dwindle into sadness if he can help it. Franco is twenty-two now, and at this moment is far away, in the north, working on a farm. Luciana, Vittoria (his mother) and the marchese all talk about him at length, and especially when Maria is with us: they think they're easing her pain, and perhaps they're right. I remember the marchese telling her one afternoon last week, when most of the others were out of the room, how Franco sometimes used, for apparently no reason, to go into his room suddenly, throw himself on the bed and burst into tears. This worried and disturbed the marchese.

But doesn't he realise that he caused the tears, partly? It would be a shock to him if he did. Or does he really know everything; is he trying to protect his own honour by seeming not to know? Yet what honour can he think he has, at this

point? He's a marchese at a time when there are no titles. He has trained people to give him that name by hard persistence day after day; that is some achievement after two world wars, to be called marchese without it seeming ridiculous; you have to admire him for it.

I wonder if he knows everything and suffers, watching the divining eyes of the people close to him---people like me, who know the situation? Once or twice last year he gave little indications that he knew. I wonder?

I remember Franco coming down from the north last year, very bronzed and clean-looking, and what terrible quarrels this caused between the marchese and Luciana. On the evening before, he went back I remember Franco was sitting with her on the terrace overlooking the gravel path, where the trees move softly at night, and I remember how, as it got later, the marchese came downstairs again in his pyjamas and snapped at her---she must come to bed, this kind of life was ridiculous, it was already past midnight! She looked like a young girl in the half-darkness. She simply nodded to him each time, but her heart was quiet, she was unmoved by anything he said, and there was about her that ruthlessness and obstinacy of a wife in love with someone else. Franco simply looked the other way, into the darkness of the garden, while the marchese talked. They had both hoped he would be asleep by now.

Franco had the bedroom near the kitchen, on the ground floor, while all the other bedrooms were upstairs, and if the Count had fallen asleep they would both have gone there and locked the door.

I noticed that whenever Franco was in town with me, drinking at one of the bars, or in a party of people, he was lighter, less thoughtful, as if he'd re-entered the world from a too-terrible happiness, perhaps. The other day Luciana showed me a letter from him in which he said that everywhere he went with her, the

smallest café, a ~~hotel-room~~^{restaurant} in Naples where they'd sat and watched the beach far below, the road they drove along, the hotel bedrooms at night, the stations where they met and said goodbye, became remarkable ~~farxix~~ and lovely for him, under a special light, primevally brilliant, ~~wordless~~, and if he ever saw these places again, without her, they would still be under that light, as if she'd baptised them for him.

And she wrote in reply that she never felt shame in his presence, they could do anything to each other without sensing the forbidden; that she couldn't live an hour without thinking about him and dreaming him back. Only when they talked to each other did they find real rest, and compared with that all the other talk they did was irksome. Their first moment of meeting again was always unbearably ecstatic.

She asked me if he was such a strong, golden presence for me as well, for example when we were all at table? And I said, 'Yes, he has so much light in him, like the sun.' But she pressed the question harder, leaning forward with strained eyes like a young girl, and asked, did this presence cancel out the rest of the world for me as it did for her, did I find the same solace in his talk, did other people, especially other girls, feel exactly what she felt, except that she was happy enough to possess him? This made me smile, and I said, yes, it's true he has light in him, but these are your feelings because you're in love with him.

It began by accident and hadn't meant it to continue. She was joking with him, sitting on his bed after everybody else was upstairs, and when she ruffled his hair he pulled her towards him suddenly, still her nephew, and then, swiftly, in a kind of sleep where the house and its clucking people had slipped away, they embraced each other; and it was like the first primeval love of dreams. They left each other ashamed and awed. Next morn-

ing she told him he'd been wicked to/^{even}think of doing such a thing, and they must both forget about it as soon as possible. At lunch, at a table of ten or twelve people, she told everyone how Franco seemed to prefer older women, and she watched him blush painfully; he thought she'd deserted him, deserted her own act. But that night, when everyone had gone to bed, they went to the same bedroom by the kitchen, and their love was this time wilder, because they were rebelling against their own commands, and against a world which couldn't come up to their dreams. From that time on she never scolded him again, never tried to stop herself. And she began to think of him every hour of the day. Being away from him was now a pain; though apparently no one else noticed this.

At that time Franco had actually been living in the house, with Vittoria his mother; he was a frailor and more sheltered person then than he is now. He had no work and would sit for hours in the room overlooking the gravel path, playing with the radio, reading.

One day he came to her and said he could bear it no longer, he was so much in love. He didn't say at first with whom, and she was confident as she looked up at him and smiled that it was herself. But, without moving ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ from his position, he told her that it was her daughter Angelina, and that he must marry her.

↳ She wanted to scream something, but sat there watching him, her mouth a little open, hardly daring to breathe; and it was clear from his eyes that he had no idea of her pain. Instead, he stood in front of her like a son.

And she hadn't even noticed him and Angelina together. They'd taken walks together, they'd been to the cinema but never once had that thought crossed her mind. She suddenly felt her age, the difference of years between them. For weeks after this she suffered the kind of loneliness---crying alone at night in her room,

, awake the whole night, and the next night again, in a delirium of grief---which we all hope will never come again after youth.

She spent hours on her bed upstairs listening for a noise, her door open, knowing that he and Angelina were below. She lay smoking cigarette after cigarette, starting whenever she heard the murmur of a voice or heard her daughter cough, thinking it was a passionate cry, or when the divan creaked, its springs clanging quietly together. And she would only rest, closing her eyes for the first time, when Angelina came into the bedroom and lay down at her side, and she heard his door close downstairs. For months now Luciana no longer slept with her husband.

She and Angelina said little to each other during those days. She thought her daughter knew what she was suffering, but couldn't be sure. She asked her suddenly once, was she really in love with Franco (as a mother would ask the question), but Angelina shrugged her shoulders, pouting, and said she didn't know. At any rate, Angelina didn't marry Franco. It wasn't mentioned again. I think she felt the will of her mother drawing her back from him, without knowing quite what was happening; she couldn't face the separation from her mother that marriage would involve, and perhaps Luciana worked on this. And she couldn't bear her silent disapproval. Nobody in the family was proof against that. So she slowly gave way, as a bull in the ring, with the sword deep in his neck and the picadors drawing closer, in the heat and deafening cries, turns slowly round, his head lower and lower, and gives in, slips down on the sand and doesn't move again. Luciana had the sword, and plunged it in quickly, her eyes closed---this was the daughter she adored and slept with every night.

A few weeks later Angelina came to her and said that she was no longer interested in Franco, and made a face as if to say that

she was disgusted. This meant for Luciana that he'd tried to make love to her and failed; she was deliriously happy. She took it to be a miracle, and she and Franco made love ~~with~~ again with the same easy wildness as at first. On his side, he seemed to have recovered from Angelina; he no longer described her loveliness at length to Luciana, nor did he say again that he wanted to marry her.

Angelina clearly wants children, and perhaps a husband; but she would have the first without the second. She is always feeling ill, she suffers these peculiar spasms of spite and hatred, which make her shoulders slope more than usual, her eyes dim and mean; her voice becomes a murmur, she seems a fierce beast caught. She is strong physically and when her anger is up she can be cruel with her hands. I've seen her pull Dino's hair with all her strength, and in a moment of bitterness twist the cat's tail; and most of her joking takes the form of horseplay. Last night, at a small party held in Nina's house behind the vineyard, she pulled a chair back just as I was about to sit down after a dance and I landed on the floor; she hit a young man on his back a terrific blow while he was gazing out of the window, watching the moon come up; she was constantly ^{punching} ~~pulling~~ people's ~~arms~~, burning their bare arms ever so slightly with the tip of her cigarette while they talked. When she does this people look away in embarrassment; Luciana asks her why she has to be 'bad' like this. Angelina's ~~gaily~~ horseplay was once gaiety, but it isn't now.

Every day she goes to a huge locomotive factory south of Rome and works in the office just behind the assembly-room. The noise is continuous and deafening, but whenever I ask her about it she says

she finds it comforting; in fact, after three years she couldn't do without it. She comes back to the house silent and tired in the evenings, proud of having a grown-up job: she sits down without speaking, sighing like an old woman, not answering Luciana's solicitous questions, shrugging and yawning, and her face becomes as ugly as a pretty face can be. If I happen to be talking to Luciana, quietly and easily as we do, she will cut across the conversation with 'Did you think to order butter today?' or 'Why was Dino dipping about in the pool, you know he comes in with his feet covered in mud, and then Nella complains---!'

Her work at the locomotive factory is a daily genuflection to law and order and respectability, all the things she feels she misses at home. I suppose this is how people whose work has no personal meaning can walk the streets with their heads up: we have a shamed sense of being different from Everyone Else when we're young, dirtier perhaps, and when we get a job like Everyone Else it seems like a proud new status when it's really nothing at all.

But now and then Angelina talks to me quietly too, reminiscing: about the island of Ponza---she seems as fascinated as her little brother; about how your feet show blue when you put them in the water, how glorious it is to approach the island through a rough sea, with the boat riding out of the waves and then nosing down again, and how, if you stand on the tallest rock, you can see the whole land and the limitless sea all round it, green and blue and touched with foamy white; and how there is one child on the island, a boy who serves at table, with a proud and angelic face, at whom you have to look all the time because he moves so slowly and perfectly, like a chosen creature, with a smile that cancels out the lives we lead. Or she tells me about a journey she made south once, when she saw Ischia and wanted to live there, how she

put her voice right next to my door: even when she is saying kindly and amusing things they sound like the foulest insults, and when she ~~raises~~ shouts you feel like a man being punished for a crime he didn't know he had committed.

All day there are quarrels, shouting, the slamming of doors, the calling of names and screamed curses. So seldom does silence fall---and at any moment it may be broken with deliberate murderous enjoyment---that every day teaches you a better appreciation of it. It may be Dino sliding down the bannister of the stairs, making a precipitous rumbling noise that fills the whole house as he turns the corner into the straight, or Michele pushes open a door with his foot, making it slam against the wall, or the marchese arrives suddenly on his motor-scooter and stalks into the big room, peering about. Nothing can be predicted. Nella may be polite and quiet and even amusing now, doing her work willingly, looking after everyone, and then, not a minute later, she'll be screaming her head off and taking her own son by his neck, in a firm grip, and giving him great smacks across the face, or decrying the house for being dirty and degenerate and a sink of vice, and for paying her too little.

Sometimes the mornings open marvellously, with ~~Luciana~~ ^{Luciana} bringing a cup of steaming black coffee into my room as the sun comes through the shutters on to the light tiled floor, and the house is silent after the children have left for school, and the daughters and the marchese have left for work; then breakfast is prepared and laid for me at a corner of the table in the big room, and ~~she~~ ^{she} ~~Luciana~~ sits with me smoking and talking while I eat.

This morning, after Nella's shouting had stopped, I found there was no coffee, no tea, no bread. There was filth everywhere, the child Dino was whimpering in a corner, and even Angelina's room, which is a refuge for me, was full of Nella's

people's legs or jump on to the table and steal the salami or lick the butter. But ~~yesterday~~ today the only visitors were Rosa and Flora, who are really members of the family, and being Vittoria's children--Franco's sisters--are gentle and easy; and as they live in Rome they have no mark of the hard village on them.

Neither the marchese nor Angelina were there--that is, the two most nerve-wracking elements were missing. It has occurred to me lately that he's really shy of people and makes a special harsh effort to get across to them; he is always the first up to bed in the afternoon, leaving everyone else at table, perhaps knowing in his mysterious and blind-seeming way that they can talk and smile better without him. As for Angelina, she takes command of all the practical things at table, smacking Dino's knees when he won't sit properly in his chair, shouting across at Michele in her rough, housewife's voice to eat decently and not to snatch the bread, calling out to Nella to bring in the next course, remarking on the taste of this and that, with sudden surreptitious glances under her brow. With her at table there is more discipline but less peace.

Today Luciana was in charge, governing our spirits. Only in Dino did there remain a trace of the ugly, cruel will, but Vittoria's daughters were so gentle with him that he started to find himself amusing, a grown-up wit, and after he'd got us all laughing he even ate decently, to keep his position of equality with ~~the adults~~. The table felt quite adrift from the village. Then everyone went away quietly to sleep. The house fell into an afternoon silence, with the sun at its hottest glowing hour, the curtains over the french windows stirring and billowing out with the slow, cool breeze from the sea. When everybody had gone Maddalena put the radio on quietly, and after the first notes

I came out to listen. It was Cavaradossi's aria on the battlements of Sant Angelo, from Tosca, and Maddalena made it louder as I sat down, realising I'd come to listen. There was a snatch of music, like something from another world--- where I might never be again---and then Nella's shouting started with a double vengeful force, like a reminder. The dishes clattered together in the kitchen, the loose valves of the radio made the voice and orchestra a blur whenever there was a crescendo or the pitch rose.

And later that day, as if it had been arranged to coincide with the absence of the marchese and Angelina---or perhaps they'd left the house in a huff, after they'd heard he was coming--- Franco appeared from the north for ten days holiday. The first two or three days were sweltering and sullen, but with a strange ecstatic excitement in the air. The furniture and the garden outside looked mysterious, and Luciana went round the house with glowing eyes. The marchese and Angelina came back, glum and mute, and Angelina hardly greeted Franco. The marchese was gentle and pleasant with him, watching him from under his eye-brows, with a trace of admiration. Slowly the gloom entered Luciana, too, as the time for him to go back drew nearer. Her eyes glowed no longer. She seemed to know something. Suddenly, two or three days before he was due to leave, he was gone.

n.p. Luciana came to me in the afternoon, drooping and weak, with a cold she'd caught from Franco, and asked me, couldn't I find her a job in Rome somewhere, anything to stop her thinking about him? That day was sad and nervous, full of rain and low, thick clouds. In the evening she and Vittoria and I were sitting by the radio, at a little table where we sometimes coffee in the afternoon, with a candle alight in the middle because the electricity was failing, due to the storms outside. The house was

extraordinarily silent, the windows were tight shut against the dead, sultry air. Vittoria had been weeping all day because her son had 'neglected' her all the time he was home---never once asked her to come to the city, never stayed in the house with her: all because Luciana claimed him every minute. She sat in her chair, sewing coloured designs on to canvas squares as always, her head bent forward, a cigarette in the corner of her mouth, a ~~xxx~~ glass of wine at her side, sighing every now and then, 'Oh, Dio, Dio!', a tear rolling down her cheek which she never brushed away so that Luciana would see it. And all the while Luciana and I were talking in English, which she couldn't understand. Luciana asked me if it seemed to me that Franco still loved her, if I thought that such love could ever die, if it looked to me as if it was dying now... Her eyes had a dark, condemned look as she followed my ~~xxxxx~~ answers, ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ bending forward to listen, not wanting to miss my verdict, though I said hardly anything; her face was paler than I'd ever seen it before, thinner, her jaw very pointed, the slimness of her cheeks making her eyes look more pained and wide-open. But whenever I said, 'You're unhappy', she shook her head and said, 'NO!'. The fact is that this was Franco's last visit. Vittoria is to move away, to a place of her own, perhaps with her daughters, and in future Franco will go to them on his holidays. But Luciana couldn't bring herself to tell me yet.

For some reason the index finger of her right hand has swollen up and looks like ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ blood-poisoning. She says that when she is rested and happy she is never ill, that if her body went wrong it was because of the way she felt inside.

Angelina seems to resent her mother's last burst of passion with Franco more than her own loss of him. The marchese is still mute. The passion rang through the house in the few days that Franco was here: the whole house was ecstatic, under its weight.

Nothing else seemed to go on. And everyone seemed powerless against it. They gazed into each other's eyes for hours on end, it seemed. At table they never addressed a word to other people. Its sheer force seemed to bow other people, and remove their power of complaint and criticism. It even seemed to fascinate them. Nobody really wanted to stop it, even Vittoria who sat ~~and~~ in her chair and cried all the time. The marchese was gentle and wan as I've never known him before.

Gradually Dino makes his claims on Luciana again. Michele has a fight in the village, over a girl; the marchese has to go down and settle it. Maria calls and there seems to be a slight glow of triumph in her eyes as she looks at Luciana. There is another little dinner-party, with drinks, at the house behind the vineyard, with Luciana and Angelina as guests. The marchese continues to sleep alone. And Angelina and her mother sleep together as before. It is decided to get rid of Renato and his wife, to economise. Soon the grapes will be gathered, and the wine made in the courtyard at the back. Signora Flevai has been away all this time, staying in Rome with Vittoria's two daughters: she had to be kept out of it, while the passion was loose. She comes back looking dry and remote: she is so old that the passion is one part of the story she can no longer grasp. Maddalena looks a shade more sourly wise. But then the evenings draw in. A fire is lit in the hearth. We all gather round it, drinking the first young wine, that goes straight to your head. And slowly we're captive again in our little dramas, and the house waits for another year, and other victims, to unfold.
