

Movie Dialouge

1958

Short Story

1957

The Fly

James Clavell

George Langlann



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Movie Dialouge.....Short Story
 James Clavell.....George Langlann
 1 Hour 34 Minutes.....12,363 Words
 Produced by Kurt Neumann..... Published by Playboy

 Patricia Owens.....Helene Delambre
 David Hedison.....Andre Delambre
 Vincent Price.....François Delambre
 Herber Marshall.....Inspector Charas
 Charles Herbert.....Phillipe Delambre
 Betty Lou Gerson.....Nurse Andersone



Movie Dialouge.....Short Story

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Part
1

Part
I



Ah, Satan, mon cher. You killed? But...

You are late ce soir. Please help me. Call the police and...

Still looking for your girlfriend, huh? Come quickly! I just can't... H  l  ne! H  l  ne Yes?

Mademoiselle Dandelo has found another. You will never see her again. But don't you worry. There will be others. Monsieur Fran  ois? Gaston. I tried to call you. Something terrible has happened! A man is dead. His head is under the press! And I saw a woman running... running away!

Y en a toujours. Ne t'en fais pas. Yes, Gaston.

Madame? Yes, who is this? It looked... I think it was Madame Delambre!

This is Fran  ois Delambre speaking. You stay there, Gaston.

H  l  ne? How are you, H  l  ne dear? I'll get the police immediately. Atheneum Club? Is Inspector Charas still there?

What can I do for you? Fran  ois... Yes, thank you. Yes, I'll wait. Check.

I've killed Andr  . Sorry to interrupt, sir. There is a call for you.

I need your help. Thank you. Hello. Inspector? This is Fran  ois Delambre. You may remember we met a few times at the club. It's just... I'm sorry to call you so late, but...

Oh, now look, H  l  ne.

It's past midnight. I've had a hard day. I love you both dearly, but this sort of joke... It's true. I've killed Andr  .

TELEPHONES AND telephone bells have always made me uneasy. Years ago, when they were mostly wall fixtures, I disliked them, but nowadays, when they are planted in every nook and corner, they are a downright intrusion. We have a saying in France that a coalman is master in his own house; with the telephone that is no longer true, and I suspect that even the Englishman is no longer king in his own castle.

At the office, the sudden ringing of the telephone annoys me. It means that, no matter what I am doing, in spite of the switchboard operator, in spite of my secretary, in spite of doors and walls, some unknown person is coming into the room and onto my desk to talk right into my very ear, confidentially – whether I like it or not. At home, the feeling is still more disagreeable, but the worst is when the telephone rings in the dead of night. If anyone could see me turn on the light and get up blinking to answer it, I suppose I would look like any other sleepy man annoyed at being disturbed. The truth in such a case, however, is that I am struggling against panic, fighting down a feeling that a stranger has broken into the house and is in my bedroom. By the time I manage to grab the receiver and say:

“Monsieur Delambre. Je vous   coute,” I am outwardly calm, but I only get back to a more normal state when I recognize the voice at the other end and when I know what is wanted of me.

This effort at dominating a purely animal reaction and fear had become so effective that when my sister-in-law called me at two in the morning, asking me to come over, but first to warn the police that she had just killed my brother, I quietly asked her how and why she had killed Andre.

“But, Francois! I can't explain all that over the telephone. Please call the police and come quickly.”

“Maybe I had better see you first, Helene?”

“No, you'd better call the police first; otherwise they will start asking you all sorts of awkward questions. They'll have enough trouble as it is to believe that I did it alone... And, by the way, I suppose you ought to tell them that Andre ... Andre's body, is down at the factory. They may want to go there first.”



Well, I'm in terrible trouble.

Trouble, monsieur? My sister-in-law just phoned.

She killed her husband, my brother, my brother André.

What? At our factory, Delambre Frères. And our night watchman called too.

There is a body.

Where are you, Mr Delambre? I'll pick you up in a few minutes.

Goodbye. You'll have to excuse me.

Hélène lives...

No, we ought to look here first. But I've got to talk to her.

I've sent a man. She'll be all right. It's André

How can we raise the press?

I'll do it for you. Would you like us to get one of your men

I'll be all right. Whenever you're ready, monsieur.

Dead about minutes.

Is the downstroke fast?

No. About the same.

No danger of it coming down again?

No.

It's been set for 4 tons.

Impact zero.

Zero?

Yes. That means level with the bed.

It's never been set that way. Never.

But that would squeeze the metal to nothing.

It's been set for single strokes, too.

She didn't know how to operate the press.

Are you sure this is your brother?

Well, he...There was a long scar on his left leg, a war wound. I'll...

Would you mind?

Doctor.

I can't believe it.

"Did you say that Andre is at the factory?"

"Yes ... under the steam-hammer."

"Under the what!"

"The steam-hammer! But don't ask so many questions. Please come quickly Francois! Please understand that I'm afraid ... that my nerves won't stand it muchlonger!"

Have you ever tried to explain to a sleepy police officer that your sister-in-law has just phoned to say that she has killed your brother with a steam-hammer? I repeated my explanation, but he would not let me.

"Oui, monsieur, oui, I bear ... but who are you? What is your name? Where do you live? I said, where do you live!"

It was then that Commissaire Charas took over the line and the whole business. Heat least seemed to understand everything. Would I wait for him? Yes, he would pickme up and take me over to my brother's house. When? In five or ten minutes.

I had just managed to pull on my trousers, wriggle into a sweater and grab a hat andcoat, when a black Citroen, headlights blazing, pulled up at the door.

"I assume you have a night watchman at your factory, Monsieur Delarnbre. Has he called you?" asked Commissaire Charas, letting in the clutch as I sat down beside him and slammed the door of the car.

"No, he hasn't. Though of course my brother could have entered the factory through his laboratory where he often works late at night ... all night sometimes."

"Is Professor Delambre's work connected with your business?"

"No, my brother is, or was, doing research work for the Ministere de l'Air. As he wanted to be away from Paris and yet within reach of where skilled workmen could fix up or make gadgets big and



Can you think of a reason why she would do this? Yes.

None. Absolutely none. Mais c'est impossible.

They were completely happy together. Did H el ene?

They have a wonderful little boy, Philippe, whom they both adore. H el ene was always so gentle. It just doesn't make sense. Andr e loved two things: His family and his work. Listen, I can't believe it.

It's impossible! How is she?

What is it, monsieur? Quite calm now.

The stroke count. That's the stroke count. Almost in a state of euphoria, of relief, as though she's happy about it.

I don't understand. Is she insane, Doctor?

Whoever did this to Andr e... H el ene could never have killed her husband.

It reads two. They did it twice! It's impossible, unless she is or was insane.

Twice? Did she tell you anything?

Oui, monsieur. Nothing, except she killed him and how.

I heard the press come down two times. No, nothing in her could make her do that.

Evening, Monsieur Fran ois. Nothing.

Fran ois, mon ami. Is it true? Why, Inspector, I've known

small for his experiments, I offered him one of the old workshops of the factory and he came to live in the first house built by our grandfather on the top of the hill at the back of the factory."

"Yes, I see. Did he talk about his work? What sort of research work?"

"He rarely talked about it, you know; I suppose the Air Ministry could tell you. I only know that he was about to carry out a number of experiments he had been preparing for some months, something to do with the disintegration of matter, he told me."

Barely slowing down, the Commissaire swung the car off the road, slid it through the open factory gate and pulled up sharp by a policeman apparently expecting him. I did not need to hear the policeman's confirmation. I knew now that my brother was dead, it seemed that I had been told years ago. Shaking like a leaf, I scrambled out after the Commissaire. Another policeman stepped out of a doorway and led us towards one of the shops where all the lights had been turned on. More policemen were standing by the hammer, watching two men setting up a camera. It was tilted downwards, and I made an effort to look.

It was far less horrid than I had expected. Though I had never seen my brother drunk, he looked just as if he were sleeping off a terrific binge, flat on his stomach across the narrow line on which the white-hot slabs of metal were rolled up to the hammer. I saw at a glance that his head and arm could only be a flattened mess, but that seemed quite impossible; it looked as if he had somehow pushed his head and arms right into the metallic mass of the hammer. Having talked to his colleagues, the Commissaire turned towards me:

"How can we raise the hammer, Monsieur Delambre?"

"I'll raise it for you."

"Would you like us to get one of your men over?"

"No, I'll be all right. Look, here is the switchboard.



her all her life. I even delivered her. She and André were devoted to each other.

Where is Madame Delambre?

In the living room.

François, I'm sorry I called you. As you see, I could have called the police myself.

I'm all right now.

Hélène, if there's anything I can do...

You are the police?

Inspector Charas, madame.

Hélène, what's going on? Why do you say you killed André? Why?

It's all right, François. Everything's all right now.

Madame, would you tell us what happened?

Of course, monsieur.

I killed my husband André Delambre about half an hour ago in the hydraulic press shed.

You understand the gravity of the crime.

You say you killed him.

That means you murdered him.

I killed André, yes.

Why?

I cannot answer that question. How did you kill him?

With the hydraulic press.

How do you operate it?

First you put on the main switch, then you set the stroke to whatever tonnage you want.

You set the stroke to maximum, that is level with the table, or zero.

Then you press the release button.

It's the red one. You mean you put your husband under the press?

No, Inspector. He did that himself.

He put his head and his arm under the press?

Yes. Why?

I cannot answer that question.

Coffee, Inspector?

It was originally a steam-hammer, but everything is worked electrically here now. Look, Commissaire, the hammer has been set at fifty tons and its impact at zero."

"At zero...?"

"Yes, level with the ground if you prefer. It is also set for single strokes, which means that it has to be raised after each blow. I don't know what Helene, my sister-in-law, will have to say about all this, but one thing I am sure of: she certainly did not know how to set and operate the hammer."

"Perhaps it was set that way last night when work stopped?"

"Certainly not. The drop is never set at zero, Monsieur le Commissaire."

"I see. Can it be raised gently?"

"No. The speed of the upstroke cannot be regulated. But in any case it is not very fast when the hammer is set for single strokes."

"Right. Will you show me what to do? It won't be very nice to watch, you know."

"No, no, Monsieur le Commissaire. I'll be all right."

"All set?" asked the Commissaire of the others.

"All right then, Monsieur Delambre. Whenever you like."

Watching my brother's back, I slowly but firmly pushed the upstroke button. The unusual silence of the factory was broken by the sigh of compressed air rushing into the cylinders, a sigh that always makes me think of a giant taking a deep breath before solemnly socking another giant, and the steel mass of the hammer shuddered and then rose swiftly. I also heard the sucking sound as it left the metal base and thought I was going to panic when I saw Andre's body heave forward as a sickly gush of

Yes, please.

Gentlemen, would you wait for me outside?

Yes, of course.

No, thank you.

Now, madame. You were happy with your husband.

There were no mistresses. I had no lovers. We were both very happy. That is the truth.

Then why did you kill him?

I wish to help you all I can, Inspector. But I cannot answer that question.

You pressed the button and it was all over.

Yes.

Why did you press it twice?

Oh, it was only once.

The stroke count read two. A machine cannot lie.

Oh, yes. Yes, it was twice.

I was wrong.
I did it twice.

Why?

Perhaps you will wait, madame.

Of course, Inspector.

What would you advise medically, Doctor?

Rest.

Maybe in a day or two her state of mind will improve.

Very well. You understand the lady is under surveillance.

I'll arrange for one of our nurses to take charge of her.

Thank you very much, Inspector.

blood poured all over the ghastly mess bared by the hammer.
"No danger of it coming down again, Monsieur Delambre?"

"No, none whatever," I mumbled as I threw the safety switch and, turning around, I was violently sick in front of a young green-faced policeman.





Part
2

Part
II

You can rely on me.
What do you think?

Would you show me your brother's laboratory?

Yes, of course. This way.

This is the work of a madman!

There was over \$ 1000 worth of special equipment here.

André was always so careful of everything.

Special equipment? What was all this for?

Well, I don't know.

It could have been anything, any one of a dozen ideas.

Well, when he'd develop something, then he would show it to me. He was working on an idea for the air ministry. Perhaps they'd know.

I imagine electronics is a profitable field these days.

Yes, very. We own the business jointly.

We both have more money than we know what to do with.

They had no outside interests, none, I'm sure of it. That's why it doesn't make sense.

You're very attached to both of them, aren't you?

Yes. Inspector, what does all this mean?

I've no idea. She would tell me nothing except that she'd killed him.

There appears to be no motive, no reason, except insanity. And even that leaves several important questions unanswered.

Perhaps he committed suicide.

If he did, why does she say she killed him?

And why such a clumsy method?

And why involve your wife?

And she was there.

She could hang for this.

Poor Philippe.

What will I tell him?
How does one tell a child?

Well, if I may suggest, you could look after the boy for a while.

FOR WEEKS AFTER, Charas worked on the case, listening, questioning, running all over the place, making out reports, telegraphing and telephoning right and left. Later, we became quite friendly and he owned that he had for a long time considered me as suspect number one, but had finally given up that idea because, not only was there no clue of any sort, but not even a motive.

Helene, my sister-in-law, was so calm throughout the whole business that the doctors finally confirmed what I had long considered the only possible solution: that she was mad. That being the case, there was of course no trial.

My brother's wife never tried to defend herself in any way and even got quite annoyed when she realized that people thought her mad, and this of course was considered proof that she was indeed mad. She owned up to the murder of her husband and proved easily that she knew how to handle the hammer; but she would never say why, exactly how, or under what circumstances she had killed my brother.

The great mystery was how and why had my brother so obligingly stuck his head under the hammer, the only possible explanation for his part in the drama. The night watchman had heard the hammer all right; he had even heard it twice, he claimed. This was very strange, and the stroke-counter which was always set back to naught after a job, seemed to prove him right, since it marked the figure two.

Also, the foreman in charge of the hammer confirmed that after cleaning up the day before the murder, he had as usual turned the stroke-counter back to naught. In spite of this, Helene maintained that she had only used the hammer once, and this seemed just another proof of her insanity.

Commissaire Charas, who had been put in charge of the case, at first wondered if the victim were really my brother. But of that there was no possible doubt, if only because of the great scar running from his knee to his thigh, the result of a shell that had landed within a few feet of him during the retreat in 1940; and there were also the fingerprints of his left hand which corresponded to those found all over his laboratory and his personal belongings up at the house.

A guard had been put on his laboratory and the next day half-a-dozen officials came down from the Air Ministry.



What's going to happen to her?

We'll keep her under observation.

There's plenty of time.

Did your brother ever experiment with animals?

Never.

Or insects?

Insects?

No. Though that would be funny, if...

No. Hélène and André believed in the sacredness of life. They wouldn't harm anything. Not even a fly.

Lunch, madame.

Oh, I'm eating much too much. At this rate I'll gain pounds. Can I get up today?

Ask Dr Ejouste, madame.

Every time I ask him, he says tomorrow. You're coming along nicely. The rest will do you good.

Is Inspector Charas coming today?

He did not say, madame.

I like him. He's been very gentle.

I hope François brings that nice little boy today.

What is his name? Philippe?

Yes, Philippe. A nice boy.

They think I'm mad, don't they? They never tell me what they think about.

Go away. Go away!

Is it bothering you?

No. No, it doesn't bother me.

I'll soon rid you of the pest.

It's all right. Please leave it alone! But, Nurse! Stop it, Nurse. Stop it! Leave it alone! Leave it alone! No! No!

Whatever? Now you get back into bed.

Let me look at the fly!

Back into bed, madame.

Get out of my way! Where is it?

Oh, there. Come on. Come on, madame.

They went through all his papers and took away some of his instruments, but before leaving, they told the Commissaire that the most interesting documents and instruments had been destroyed. The Lyons police laboratory, one of the most famous in the world, reported that André's head had been wrapped up in a piece of velvet when it was crushed by the hammer, and one day Commissaire Charas showed me a tattered drapery which I immediately recognized as the brown velvet cloth I had seen on a table in my brother's laboratory, the one on which his meals were served when he could not leave his work.

After only a very few days in prison, Helene had been transferred to a nearby asylum, one of the three in France where insane criminals are taken care of. My nephew Henri, a boy of six, the very image of his father, was entrusted to me, and eventually all legal arrangements were made for me to become his guardian and tutor. Helene, one of the quietest patients of the asylum, was allowed visitors and I went to see her on Sundays. Once or twice the Commissaire had accompanied me and, later, I learned that he had also visited Helene alone. But we were never able to obtain any information from my sister-in-law, who seemed to have become utterly indifferent.

She rarely answered my questions and hardly ever those of the Commissaire. She spent a lot of her time sewing, but her favorite pastime seemed to be catching flies, which she invariably released unharmed after having examined them carefully. Helene only had one fit of raving – more like a nervous breakdown than a fit, said the doctor who had administered morphia to quieten her – the day she saw a nurse swatting flies. The day after Helene's one and only fit, Commissaire Charas came to see me.

"I have a strange feeling that there lies the key to the whole business, Monsieur

"Delambre," he said.

I did not ask him how it was that he already knew all about Helene's fit.

"I do not follow you, Commissaire. Poor Madame Delambre could have shown an exceptional interest for anything else, really.



It's just a common housefly.

Yes.

Perhaps it symbolises something deep in her subconscious, as the psychiatrist believes.

Mr Delambre, do you think she's mad?

It's obvious, isn't it In spite of what the doctors think,

I believe Mrs Delambre's mind is quite clear.

Even when catching flies.

How can you say that?

She must be mad. What about Philippe?

She acts as if the boy were mine and not hers.

She may be trying to protect him. Perhaps she fears him, or even hates him.

That's impossible. Hélène couldn't hate anyone. You must be out of your mind. You're in love with her, aren't you?

Yes.

Why didn't you marry her? Because she loved my

brother. I don't think she ever noticed me.

I'm glad you're being honest with me.

You see, at first I suspected you.

Me? Why should I do such a thing?

Motive one, for his wife. Motive two, to control Delambre Electronics.

What do I care about motives? Hélène is in trouble and André's dead. It's a nightmare.

I know now you had nothing to do with it, but I had to check, for her sake.

I'm sorry, Inspector. I'm a fool. You've been so patient. Forgive me. It's just...

I understand, monsieur. Perhaps it's I who should apologise. I have to pry into all sorts of personal things.

It's... Well, it's necessary, unfortunately.

Thank you for coming.

If there's anything I can do to help, I will.

Don't you think that flies just happen to be the border-subject of her tendency to raving?"

"Do you believe she is really mad?" he asked.

"My dear Commissaire, I don't see how there can be any doubt. Do you doubt it?"

"I don't know. In spite of all the doctors say, I have the impression that Madame Delambre has a very clear brain ... even when catching flies."

"Supposing you were right, how would you explain her attitude with regard to her little boy? She never seems to consider him as her own child."

"You know, Monsieur Delambre, I have thought about that also. She may be trying to protect him. Perhaps she fears the boy or, for all we know, hates him?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand, my dear Commissaire."

"Have you noticed, for instance, that she never catches flies when the boy is there?"

"No. But come to think of it, you are quite right. Yes, that is strange... Still, I fail to understand."

"So do I, Monsieur Delambre. And I'm very much afraid that we shall never understand, unless perhaps your sister-in-law should get better."

"The doctors seem to think that there is no hope of any sort you know."

"Yes. Do you know if your brother ever experimented with flies?"

"I really don't know, but I shouldn't think so. Have you asked the Air Ministry people? They knew all about the work."



Did you discover what
André was working on?

No. The air ministry sci-
entists
have been through all his
papers.

They didn't mean a thing
to them. We couldn't deci-
pher the ashes.

Nothing there either.

Well, I've delayed all I
can.

We've been quite patient
with the lady.

I'm afraid I shall have to
ask for a warrant tomorrow.
The courts can decide.

Tomorrow?
The charge can only be
murder.
I'm sorry for you and the
boy.
But I cannot conceive of
any verdict except guilty,
or guilty but insane.

Thank you, Yvette.

Uncle?

"Yes, and they laughed at me."

"I can understand that."

"You are very fortunate to understand anything, Monsieur
Delambre. I do not ... but I hope to some day."





Part
3

Part
III

Yes, Philippe?
 When's Daddy coming home?
 Soon.
 Can I see Mummy again tomorrow?
 Yes.
 She's very sick, isn't she?
 Yes, Philippe, she's very sick.
 Do flies live a long time?
 I don't know. Why?
 Because I saw that fly Mummy was looking for again.
 I didn't know she was looking for one.
 Oh, yes, she was.
 It's grown quite a lot.
 But I recognised it all right.
 Mm, this is good.
 How did you recognise it, Philippe?
 Its head is white instead of black and it has a funny sort of leg.
 It was on your desk this morning.

Oh? I didn't notice it. When did you first see that fly, Philippe?
 The day Daddy went away. I had caught it, but Mummy made me let it go. And then later, she wanted me to find it again. She'd changed her mind. You know how women are.
 Excuse me, Philippe. I won't be a moment.
 Inspector Charas.
 Inspector Charas.
 Good evening, Nurse.
 Why, Mr Delambre.
 Inspector Charas told me about her relapse. How is she now?
 Resting quietly, poor lady. But, monsieur...
 The inspector told me that I might speak to her for a few moments alone.
 He knows I'm here. But he didn't say you were coming.
 But he has so much on his mind. I won't be long.
 François, I didn't hear you. You look tired.

"Tell me, Uncle, do flies live a long time?"

We were just finishing our lunch and, following an established tradition between us, I was just pouring some wine into Henri's glass for him to dip a biscuit in. Had Henri not been staring at his glass gradually being filled to the brim, something in my look might have frightened him. This was the first time that he had ever mentioned flies, and I shuddered at the thought that Commissaire Charas might quite easily have been present. I could imagine the glint in his eye as he would have answered my nephew's question with another question. I could almost hear him saying:

"I don't know, Henri. Why do you ask?"

"Because I have again seen the fly that Maman was looking for."

And it was only after drinking off Henri's own glass of wine that I realized that he had answered my spoken thought.

"I did not know that your mother was looking for a fly."

"Yes, she was. It has grown quite a lot, but I recognized it all right."

"Where did you see this fly, Henri, and ... how did you recognize it?"

"This morning on your desk, Uncle Francois. Its head is white instead of black, and it has a funny sort of leg."

Feeling more and more like Commissaire Charas, but trying to look unconcerned, I went on:

"And when did you see this fly for the first time?"

"The day that Papa went away. I had caught it, but Maman made me let it go. And then after, she wanted me to find it again. She'd changed her mind,"



It's just the office. You know.

You shouldn't work so hard.
How are you?

I'm fine. I feel all right.

I'm glad you came. I wanted to ask you something.

Of course, H el ene. Anything at all.

How long do flies live?

I don't know. I think a month, two months.

The fly you were looking for was in my study. Today.

Did you kill it?

No.

Well, you have it with you.

Give it to me. Please, give it to me!

H el ene, I haven't got it here.

You know now.

What is this all about?

You haven't got it or you wouldn't ask.

Yes, I have it.
It's locked in my desk.
Now tell me what happened.

No, never. Andr e wouldn't want me to.

I know you're not mad. I want the truth.

Either you tell me or I'm going to give it to Charas.

You swear you have it?

Yes.

If I tell you, will you promise to destroy it?

I can't do that until I know. Then I can't tell you anything.

For your own sake you've got to tell me. You're all right or you can be all right, perhaps. As soon as they examine it, they'll know. And they'll know that you're not insane.

No!

For Philippe's sake, Fran ois, I beg you.

Don't you see?
I was pretending to be mad, for Philippe's sake. Better I should be declared insane than he be the son of a woman hanged for murder.

and shrugging his shoulders just as my brother used to, he added,

"You know what women are."

"I think that fly must have died long ago, and you must be mistaken, Henri," I said, getting up and walking to the door.

But as soon as I was out of the dining room, I ran up the stairs to my study. There was no fly anywhere to be seen. I was bothered, far more than I cared to even think about. Henri had just proved that Charas was really closer to a clue than it had seemed when he told me about his thoughts concerning Helene's pastime.

For the first time I wondered if Charas did not really know much more than he let on. For the first time also, I wondered about Helene. Was she really insane? A strange, horrid feeling was growing on me, and the more I thought about it, the more I felt that, somehow, Charas was right: Helene was getting away with it!

What could possibly have been the reason for such a monstrous crime? What had led up to it? Just what had happened? I thought of all the hundreds of questions that Charas had put to Helene, sometimes gently like a nurse trying to soothe, sometimes stern and cold, sometimes barking them furiously. Helene had answered very few, always in a calm quiet voice and never seeming to pay any attention to the way in which the question had been put.

Though dazed, she had seemed perfectly sane then. Refined, well-bred and well-read, Charas was more than just an intelligent police official. He was a keen psychologist and had an amazing way of smelling out a fib or an erroneous statement even before it was uttered. I knew that he had accepted as true the few answers she had given him. But then there had been all those questions which she had never answered: the most direct and important ones. From the very beginning, Helene had adopted a very simple system.

"I cannot answer that question," she would say in her low quiet voice. And that was that! The repetition of the same question never seemed to annoy her. In all the hours of questioning that



I want to know. Either you tell me now, or I give the fly to Charas.

If I tell you, will you tell them?

I only want to help you. I can only do that through them.

Yes. I would tell them.

Poor François.

Call Charas then. I can't tell it twice.

So long as you kill the fly.

You promise?

Yes.

This is not a confession. Although I killed my husband, I'm not a murderess. I simply carried out his last wish.

A few Months ago...

she underwent, Helene did not once point out to the Commissaire that he had already asked her this or that. She would simply say,

“I cannot answer that question,” as though it was the very first time that that particular question had been asked and the very first time she had made that answer. This cliché had become the formidable barrier beyond which Commissaire Charas could not even get a glimpse, an idea of what Helene might be thinking. She had very willingly answered all questions about her life with my brother – which seemed a happy and uneventful one – up to the time of his end. About his death, however, all that she would say was that she had killed him with the steam-hammer, but she refused to say why, what had led up to the drama and how she got my brother to put his head under it. She never actually refused outright; she would just go blank and, with no apparent emotion, would switch over to,

“I cannot answer that question for you.” Helene, as I have said, had shown the Commissaire that she knew how to set and operate the steam-hammer.

Charas could only find one single fact which did not coincide with Helene's declarations, the fact that the hammer had been used twice. Charas was no longer willing to attribute this to insanity. That evident flaw in Helene's stonewall defense seemed a crack which the Commissaire might possibly enlarge. But my sister-in-law finally cemented it by acknowledging:

“All right, I lied to you. I did use the hammer twice. But do not ask me why, because I cannot tell you.”

“Is that your only ... misstatement, Madame Delambre?” had asked the Commissaire, trying to follow up what looked at last like an advantage.

“It is ... and you know it, Monsieur le Commissaire.”

And, annoyed, Charas had seen that Helene could read him like an open book. I had thought of calling on the Commissaire, but the knowledge that he would inevitably start questioning Henri



made me hesitate. Another reason also made me hesitate, a vague sort of fear that he would look for and find the fly Henri had talked of. And that annoyed me a good deal because I could find no satisfactory explanation for that particular fear.

Andre was definitely not the absent-minded sort of professor who walks about in pouring rain with a rolled umbrella under his arm. He was human, had a keen sense of humor, loved children and animals and could not bear to see anyone suffer. I had often seen him drop his work to watch a parade of the local fire brigade, or see the Tour de France cyclists go by, or even follow a circus parade all around the village. He liked games of logic and precision, such as billiards and tennis, bridge and chess. How was it then possible to explain his death? What could have made him put his head under that hammer? It could hardly have been the result of some stupid bet or a test of his courage. He hated betting and had no patience with those who indulged in it. Whenever he heard a bet proposed, he would invariably remind all present that, after all, a bet was but a contract between a fool and a swindler, even if it turned out to be a toss-up as to which was which. It seemed there were only two possible explanations to Andre's death. Either he had gone mad, or else he had a reason for letting his wife kill him in such a strange and terrible way. And just what could have been his wife's role in all this? They surely could not have been both insane?

Having finally decided not to tell Charas about my nephew's innocent revelations, I thought I myself would try to question Helene. She seemed to have been expecting my visit for she came into the parlor almost as soon as I had made myself known to the matron and been allowed inside.

"I wanted to show you my garden,"

explained Helene as I looked at the coat slung over her shoulders. As one of the "reasonable" inmates, she was allowed to go into the garden during certain hours of the day. She had asked for and obtained the right to a little patch of ground where she could grow flowers, and I had sent her seeds and some rosebushes out of my garden.

She took me straight to a rustic wooden bench which had been in the men's workshop and only just set up under a tree



close to her little patch of ground. Searching for the right way to broach the subject of Andre's death, I sat for a while tracing vague designs on the ground with the end of my umbrella.

"Francois, I want to ask you something," said Helene after a while.

"Anything I can do for you, Helene?"

"No, just something I want to know. Do flies live very long?"

Staring at her, I was about to say that her boy had asked the very same question a few hours earlier when I suddenly realized that here was the opening I had been searching for and perhaps even the possibility of striking a great blow, a blow perhaps powerful enough to shatter her stonewall defense, be it sane or insane. Watching her carefully, I replied:

"I don't really know, Helene; but the fly you were looking for was in my study this morning."

No doubt about it I had struck a shattering blow. She swung her head round with such force that I heard the bones crack in her neck. She opened her mouth, but said not a word; only her eyes seemed to be screaming with fear. Yes, it was evident that I had crashed through something, but what?

Undoubtedly, the Commissaire would have known what to do with such an advantage; I did not. All I knew was that he would never have given her time to think, to recuperate, but all I could do, and even that was a strain, was to maintain my best poker-face, hoping against hope that Helene's defenses would go on crumbling. She must have been quite a while without breathing, because she suddenly gasped and put both her hands over her still open mouth.

"Francois ... did you kill it?" she whispered, her eyes no longer fixed, but searching every inch of my face.

"No."



“You have it then. You have it on you! Give it to me!” she almost shouted, touching me with both her hands, and I knew that had she felt strong enough, she would have tried to search me.

“No, Helene, I haven’t got it.”

“But you know now. You have guessed, haven’t you?”

“No, Helene. I only know one thing, and that is that you are not insane. But I mean to know all, Helene, and, somehow, I am going to find out. You can choose: either you tell me everything and I’ll see what is to be done, or...”

“Or what? Say it!”

“I was going to say it, Helene ... or I assure you that your friend the Commissaire will have that fly first thing tomorrow morning.”

She remained quite still, looking down at the palms of her hands on her lap and, although it was getting chilly, her forehead and hands were moist. Without even brushing aside a wisp of long brown hair blown across her mouth by the breeze, she murmured:

“If I tell you ... will you promise to destroy that fly before doing anything else?”

“No, Helene. I can make no such promise before knowing.”

“But, Francois, you must understand. I promised Andre that fly would be destroyed. That promise must be kept and I can say nothing until it is.”

I could sense the deadlock ahead. I was not yet losing ground, but I was losing the initiative. I tried a shot in the dark:

“Helene, of course you understand that as soon as the police examine that fly, they will know that you are not insane, and then...”



“Francois, no! For Henri’s sake! Don’t you see? I was expecting that fly; I was hoping it would find me here but it couldn’t know what had become of me. What else could it do but go to others it loves, to Henri, to you ... you who might know and understand what was to be done!”

Was she really mad, or was she simulating again? But mad or not, she was cornered. Wondering how to follow up and how to land the knockout blow without running the risk of seeing her slip away out of reach, I said very quietly:

“Tell me all, Helene. I can then protect your boy.”

“Protect my boy from what? Don’t you understand that if I am here, it is merely so that Henri won’t be the son of a woman who was guillotined for having murdered his father? Don’t you understand that I would by far prefer the guillotine to the living death of this lunatic asylum?”

“I understand, Helene, and I’ll do my best for the boy whether you tell me or not. If you refuse to tell me, I’ll still do the best I can to protect Henri, but you must understand that the game will be out of my hands, because Commissaire Charas will have the fly.”

“But why must you know?” said, rather than asked, my sister-in-law, struggling to control her temper.

“Because I must and will know how and why my brother died, Helene.”

“All right. Take me back to the ... house. I’ll give you what your Commissaire would call my ‘Confession.’”

“Do you mean to say that you have written it!”

“Yes. It was not really meant for you, but more likely for your friend, the Commissaire. I had foreseen that, sooner or later, he would get too close to the truth.”

“You then have no objection to his reading it?”



“You will act as you think fit, Francois. Wait for me a minute.”

Leaving me at the door of the parlor, Helene ran upstairs to her room. In less than a minute she was back with a large brown envelope.

“Listen, Francois; you are not nearly as bright as was your poor brother, but you are not unintelligent. All I ask is that you read this alone. After that, you may do as you wish.”

“That I promise you, Helene,” I said, taking the precious envelope. “I’ll read it tonight and although tomorrow is not a visiting day, I’ll come down to see you.”

“Just as you like,” said my sister-in-law without even saying good-bye as she went back upstairs.





Part
4

Part
IV

Who's a ticklish boy? A completely new line of research.

Why not pick on somebody your own size? Let me guess. The permanent battery.

André! What a pleasant surprise. Not the portable reactor?

Hi, Daddy. Are you gonna play with us? I'll show you.

Later, Philippe. But there must be no mention of this made to anyone.

I've got to borrow your mother for a moment. I won't be long, I promise. I tell you what. Before you go to bed, I'll play with you. Of course.

Promise? It's much too important.

Promise. Hélène, you're the first to see a miracle.

All right, then. I'll play with Dandelo. Remember this?

Good. Of course.

Be gentle with her, Philippe. Our wedding present from my devoted and very rich Aunt Bess.

Come on. I've got to show you something. The family heirloom.

André! We don't see you for days on end... Hurry. Put them on. Now watch the box. You can take your goggles off now, darling. It's gone.

Now don't argue with me. Come on. Come on. It's the same one.

But... Have you turned magician?

I'd no idea you'd made so many changes. In a way. For a split second, an infinitesimal part of a second, this was

IT WAS ONLY on reaching home, as I walked from the garage to the house, that I read the inscription on the envelope:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN
(Probably Commissaire Charas)

Having told the servants that I would have only a light supper to be served immediately in my study and that I was not to be disturbed after, I ran upstairs, threw Helene's envelope on my desk and made another careful search of the room before closing the shutters and drawing the curtains. All I could find was a longsince dead mosquito stuck to the wall near the ceiling.

Having motioned to the servant to put her tray down on a table by the fireplace, I poured myself a glass of wine and locked the door behind her. I then disconnected the telephone – I always did this now at night – and turned out all the lights but the lamp on my desk.

Slitting open Helene's fat envelope, I extracted a thick wad of closely written pages. I read the following lines neatly centered in the middle of the top page:

This is not a confession because, although I killed my husband, I am not a murderess. I simply and very faithfully carried out his last wish by crushing his head and right arm under the steam-hammer of his brother's factory.

Without even touching the glass of wine by my elbow, I turned the page and started reading.

For very nearly a year before his death (the manuscript began), my husband had told me of some of his experiments. He knew full well that his colleagues of the Air Ministry would have forbidden some of them as too dangerous, but he was keen on obtaining positive results before reporting his discovery. Whereas only sound and pictures had been, so far, transmitted through space by radio and television, Andre claimed to have discovered a way of transmitting matter. Matter, any solid object, placed in his "transmitter" was instantly disintegrated and re-integrated in a special receiving set.



disintegrated. For one little moment it no longer existed. Only atoms travelling through space at the speed of light. Then a moment later integrated again into the shape of an ashtray.

Oh, you're joking!

Doesn't sound possible, does it? But it is true.

It is impossible.

You're playing some joke on me.

Take television. What happens? A stream of electrons sound and picture impulses are transmitted through the air. The TV camera is the disintegrator. Your set unscrambles or integrates the electrons back into pictures and sound.

Yes, but this is different.

Why?

Well, because it's impossible. Fifty years ago, if my father were told he could sit in Montreal and watch a World Series in New York as it happened, he'd say it was impossible.

This is the same principle exactly.

But it's not the same.

This is solid.

No, it's not. To your touch maybe it is.

But in reality it's billions of atoms, which we believe are only a series of electrical impulses.

You actually did this? It's no trick?

No. I can transport matter anything - at the speed of light, perfectly. Of course this is only a crude beginning.

But I've stumbled on the most important discovery since man sawed off the end of a tree trunk and found the wheel. The disintegrator-integrator will change life as we know it. Think what it means. Anything, even humans, will go through one of these devices. No need for cars or railways or airplanes, even spaceships. We'll set up matter-receiving stations throughout the world, and later the universe. There'll never be famine.

Andre considered his discovery as perhaps the most important since that of the wheel sawn off the end of a tree trunk. He reckoned that the transmission of matter by instantaneous "disintegration-reintegration" would completely change life as we had known it so far. It would mean the end of all means of transport, not only of goods including food, but also of human beings. Andre, the practical scientist who never allowed theories or day-dreams to get the better of him, already foresaw the time when there would no longer be any airplanes, ships, trains or cars and, therefore, no longer any roads or railway lines, ports, airports or stations. All that would be replaced by matter-transmitting and receiving stations throughout the world. Travelers and goods would be placed in special cabins and, at a given signal, would simply disappear and reappear almost immediately at the chosen receiving station. Andre's receiving set was only a few feet away from his transmitter, in an adjoining room of his laboratory, and he at first ran into all sorts of snags. His first successful experiment was carried out with an ash tray taken from his desk, a souvenir we had brought back from a trip to London. That was the first time he told me about his experiments and I had no idea of what he was talking about the day he came dashing into the house and threw the ash tray in my lap.

"Helene, look! For a fraction of a second, a bare ten-millionth of a second, that ash tray had been completely disintegrated. For one little moment it no longer existed! Gone! Nothing left, absolutely nothing! Only atoms traveling through space at the speed of light! And the moment after, the atoms were once more gathered together in the shape of an ash tray!"

"Andre, please ... please! What on earth are you raving about?"

He started sketching all over a letter I had been writing. He laughed at my wry face, swept all my letters off the table and said:

"You don't understand? Right. Let's start all over again. Helene, do you remember I once read you an article about the mysterious flying stones that seem to come from nowhere in particular, and which are said to occasionally fall in certain



Surpluses can be sent instantaneously at almost no cost, anywhere. Humanity need never want or fear again. I'm a very fortunate man, H  l  ne.

I'm a very fortunate woman.
Don't ever transmit me. I wouldn't want to come out like this.

What do you mean?

Well, it doesn't matter, does it, Andr  ?

Andr  ...

It's perfect. Everything checks. It's perfect.

Perfect.

Dandelo! What's the matter?

Are you hungry?

There we are. That's it.

You won't feel a thing, Dandelo. And tomorrow you'll be the most famous cat in all the world.

Dandelo!

Dandelo...

Hello?

Fran  ois, how nice to hear you.

Important? You're getting married.

No. No, not yet.
No, I think I like it t his way.

No, it's just that...

Well, there's no hurry.

Is Andr   there?

Andr  ?

I've seen him about two hours in the last two weeks.

He eats and sleeps in his lab.

He won't even answer the telephone.

I don't want to eat!

I don't want to hear one more word. You're going to eat your dinner right now!

I don't want to eat!

Philippe's delinquent, Dandelo's disappeared, I've got to go to Professor Augier's alone. You know how he is, H  l  ne. It's just until he solves his problem, whatever it is.

Be patient.

How you men stick together.

Anything I can do?

houses in India? They come flying in as though thrown from outside and that, in spite of closed doors and windows."

"Yes, I remember. I also remember that Professor Augier, your friend of the College de France, who had come down for a few days, remarked that if there was no trickery about it, the only possible explanation was that the stones had been disintegrated after having been thrown from outside, come through the walls, and then been reintegrated before hitting the floor or the opposite walls."

"That's right. And I added that there was, of course, one other possibility, namely the momentary and partial disintegration of the walls as the stone or stones came through."

"Yes, Andre. I remember all that, and I suppose you also remember that I failed to understand, and that you got quite annoyed. Well, I still do not understand why and how, even disintegrated, stones should be able to come through a wall or a closed door."

"But it is possible, Helene, because the atoms that go to make up matter are not close together like the bricks of a wall. They are separated by relative immensities of space."

"Do you mean to say that you have disintegrated that ash tray, and then put it together again after pushing it through something?"

"Precisely, Helene. I projected it through the wall that separates my transmitter from my receiving set."

"And would it be foolish to ask how humanity is to benefit from ash trays that can go through walls?"

Andre seemed quite offended, but he soon saw that I was only teasing, and again waxing enthusiastic, he told me of some of the possibilities of his discovery.

"Isn't it wonderful, Helene?" he finally gasped, out of breath.



OK, François. I'll tell
him if I see him. d'Eiffel.

I've got to run now,
François. Bye. Wonderful!

Well! Where have you been? We'll finish a delightful
evening
Listen, darling. with reintegrated cham-
pagne.

I'm sorry about the last
couple of weeks. Finish?

I had a little setback,
but it's all right now. Well, not quite.

I didn't mind. Oh? What, then?

Well, maybe just a little. Well, what do you suggest?

Call Augier and cancel. You're in an unscientific
mood.

We'll celebrate by our-
selves. You don't approve?

Wonderful! I didn't want
to go anyway. I didn't say that.

Oh, François called about
some equipment. Will the champagne be as
good as ever?

He's sending it over. Exactly the same, bubble
for bubble

Good. Here.

By the time you've
changed, I'll be ready. The label's perfect!
Of course.

Changed? And it's still cold.

I've got tickets for the
ballet. And it'll stay that way,
until I show you something
else.

The ballet? No, André, don't.

And we'll eat at Tour

"Yes, Andre. But I hope you won't ever transmit me; I'd be too
much afraid of coming out at the other end like your ash tray."
"What do you mean?"

"Do you remember what was written under that ash tray?"

"Yes, of course: MADE IN JAPAN. That was the great joke of our
typically British souvenir."

"The words are still there, Andre; but ... look!"

He took the ash tray out of my hands, frowned, and walked
over to the window. Then he went quite pale, and I knew that
he had seen what had proved to me that he had indeed carried
out a strange experiment. The three words were still there, but
reversed and reading: NAPA NI EDAM Without a word, having
completely forgotten me, Andre rushed off to his laboratory. I
only saw him the next morning, tired and unshaven after a whole
night's work.

A few days later, Andre had a new reverse which put him out
of sorts and made him fussy and grumpy for several weeks. I
stood it patiently enough for a while, but being myself bad tem-
pered one evening, we had a silly row over some futile thing, and
I reproached him for his moroseness.

"I'm sorry, chérie. I've been working my way through a maze of
problems and have given you all a very rough time. You see, my
very first experiment with a live animal
proved a complete fiasco."

"Andre! You tried that experiment with Dandelo, didn't you?"

"Yes. How did you know?" he answered sheepishly. "He disinte-
grated perfectly, but he never reappeared in the receiving set."

"Oh, Andre! What became of him then?"

"Nothing ... there is just no more Dandelo; only the
dispersed atoms of a cat wandering, God knows where
in the universe."



It might not work.
I won't allow it!

It'll be all right.

André, please!

Put your goggles on,
darling.

It's astounding! It works!
I test-ran it this morn-
ing.

It's all right.

You've succeeded complete-
ly!

It's unbelievable!

We'll have to wait and
see. I'll know in a few
weeks.

I don't understand
I have to see if it suf-
fers from any ill effects.
If it's alive in, say, a
month, we'll pronounce the
experiment successful.

May I look after him?

It's still a her.

But you can.

For one whole month she's
mine.

Now don't kill her with
overfeeding.

It's a little frightening,

isn't it?

Yes.

The first live experiment
was disastrous.

Dandelo.

Dandelo!

André, how could you!

She disintegrated
perfectly but never
reappeared. I don't know
why, even now. I rede-
signed the projecting
device, and now it's
perfect.

Well, where's she gone?

Into space. A stream of
cat atoms. It would be
funny if life weren't so
sacred.

André, promise me one
thing.

No more experiments with
animals.

I promise you.

No more experiments with
animals.

It's frightening. It's
like
playing God.

God gives us intelligence
to uncover the wonders of

Dandelo was a small white cat the cook had found one morning in the garden and which we had promptly adopted. Now I knew how it had disappeared and was quite angry about the whole thing, but my husband was so miserable over it all that I said nothing.

I saw little of my husband during the next few weeks. He had most of his meals sent down to the laboratory. I would often wake up in the morning and find his bed unslept in. Sometimes, if he had come in very late, I would find that storm-swept appearance which only a man can give a bedroom by getting up very early and fumbling around in the dark.

One evening he came home to dinner all smiles, and I knew that his troubles were over. His face dropped, however, when he saw I was dressed for going out.

"Oh. Were you going out, Helene?"

"Yes, the Drillions invited me for a game of bridge, but I can easily phone them and put it off."

"No, it's all right."

"It isn't all right. Out with it, dear!"

"Well, I've at last got everything perfect and wanted you to be the first to see the miracle."

"Magnifique, Andre! Of course I'll be delighted."

Having telephoned our neighbors to say how sorry I was and so forth, I ran down to the kitchen and told the cook that she had exactly ten minutes in which to prepare a "celebration dinner."

"An excellent idea, Helene," said my husband when the maid appeared with the champagne after our candlelight dinner.

"We'll celebrate with reintegrated champagne!" and taking the tray from the maid's hands, he led the way down to the laboratory.



nature. Without the gift,
nothing is possible.
André, I get so scared
sometimes. The suddenness
of our age. Electronics,
rockets, earth satellites,
supersonic flight, and now
this. It's not so much who
invents them. It's the
fact they exist.

But you're not fright-
ened of TV, or radio, or
X-rays, or electricity, or
that the earth is round.

No, but everything's going
so fast.

I'm just not ready to take
it all in. It's all so
quick.

Just do like Philippe
does.
Accept them as part of our
normal life.
They're facts. Wonderful
facts.

Which brings me back to
the champagne.

I love you so much, André.
It's wonderful being mar-
ried to you.

And to you, my love.

You're the healthiest
guinea pig
in the whole world.

André!

You'll catch cold.

Not today.

What are you doing?

Oh, just looking at the
sky.

Looking at God, perhaps.

You're a strange man,
André.

So precise and practical,
and yet so...I don't quite
know how to put it.

So aware of the infinite?

The more I know, the more
sure I am I know so lit-
tle. The
eternal paradox. You said
you were frightened by
progress.
I'm filled with the wonder
of it.
Spring will soon be here.
I like spring the best.
All life growing, renewing
itself. It's fantastic to
be alive.

How do you mean?

I don't know. It's just...
I'm just so happy to be
alive, that's all.

So am I.

Would you marry me again
if you had your time over?

"Do you think it will be as good as before its disintegration?" I
asked, holding the tray while he opened the door and switched
on the lights.

"Have no fear. You'll see! Just bring it here, will you," he said,
opening the door of a telephone call-box he had bought and
which had been transformed into what he
called a transmitter.

"Put it down on that now," he added, putting a stool inside the
box.

Having carefully closed the door, he took me to the other end
of the room and handed me a pair of very dark sun glasses. He
put on another pair and walked back to a switchboard by
the transmitter.

"Ready, Helene?" said my husband, turning out all
the lights.

"Don't remove your glasses till I give the word."

"I won't budge, Andre, go on," I told him, my eyes fixed on the
tray which I could just see in a greenish shimmering light
through the glass-paneled door of the telephone booth.

"Right," said Andre, throwing a switch.

The whole room was brilliantly illuminated by an orange flash.
Inside the cabin I had seen a crackling ball of fire and felt its
heat on my face, neck and hands. The whole thing lasted but the
fraction of a second, and I found myself blinking at green-edged
black holes like those one sees after having stared at the sun.

"Et voila! You can take off your glasses, Helene."

A little theatrically perhaps, my husband opened the door of
the cabin. Though Andre had told me what to expect, I was
astonished to find that the champagne, glasses, tray and stool
were no longer there.



I think so. Well, I've got a lot to do.
 François is coming to lunch.

Bring him to the lab. We'll show him now.

Shall I call Professor Augier and the air ministry?

No. There's no hurry. I don't even know how or why parts of it work yet.

It's too important. It's too impossible.

Poor François. He'll never believe it.

Don't stay out too long, darling. You look tired.

The last thing I am is tired. And we're finishing with crêpes suzette.

What's all the celebration about?

André wants to show you something.

In the lab?

Well, what is it? Flat screen?

It's better. No more questions. Come on. I've only been into the laboratory three times.

Each time I came out with a potential fortune.

Oh, dear. We won't see him for lunch.

I see what you mean.

His writing gets worse and worse.

Mummy! Mummy!

Where are you?

Coming, Philippe. Yes, darling?

I got something to show you.
 I have something to show you.

I caught such a funny-looking fly. You want to see it?

You know how your father disapproves of you catching insects. But this isn't like any other fly I've ever seen. It has a funny white head and sort of white leg.

Now you let it go at once. Now go along, do as you're told. Go on. Look at all that dirt you've brought in.

Best fly I ever caught.

Andre ceremoniously led me by the hand into the next room, in a corner of which stood a second telephone booth. Opening the door wide, he triumphantly lifted the champagne tray off the stool.

Feeling somewhat like the good-natured kind-member-of-the-audience that has been dragged onto the music hall stage by the magician, I repressed from saying, "All done with mirrors," which I knew would have annoyed my husband.

"Sure it's not dangerous to drink?" I asked as the cork popped.

"Absolutely sure, Helene," he said, handing me a glass.

"But that was nothing. Drink this off and I'll show you something much more astounding."

We went back into the other room.

"Oh, Andre! Remember poor Dandelo!"

"This is only a guinea pig, Helene. But I'm positive it will go through all right."

He set the furry little beast down on the green enameled floor of the booth and quickly closed the door.

I again put on my dark glasses and saw and felt the vivid crackling flash. Without waiting for Andre to open the door, I rushed into the next room where the lights were still on and looked into the receiving booth.

"Oh, Andre! Cheri! He's there all right!" I shouted excitedly, watching the little animal trotting round and round. "It's wonderful, Andre. It works! You've succeeded!"

"I hope so, but I must be patient. I'll know for sure in a few weeks' time."



Anything else, madame?
No, thank you, Emma. Good night.

Shall I leave something for the master?
He didn't touch a bite of his dinner.

I fetched up his tray about an hour ago.

It was still outside the door.

Had his favourite pastry on it too.

He probably didn't hear you knock.

I'll see if he wants anything.

Thank you. Good night, madame.

Good night, Emma.

André? André, I'm going to bed now.

Is there anything you want?

André.

Hélène, I've had some trouble.

Trouble?

André, what's the matter? Answer me.

I'm counting on you not to lose your nerve, for only you can help me. I've had a serious accident but I'm not in danger at the moment, although it's a matter of life or death.

André!

It's no good calling to me or saying anything.

I can't answer. I can't speak.

You've got to do exactly and very carefully what I tell you. Knock three times to show you understand, then fetch me a bowl of milk laced with rum.

Bowl of milk? André!

Anything I can do, madame?

No, I can manage. Go back to bed, Emma.

Good night, madame.

When you knock, I'll open the door. Walk over to my desk and put the milk on it. Then go into the other lab and try to find a fly.

A fly.

You will easily recognise it. Its head is white. Philippe.

"What do you mean? Look! He's as full of life as when you put him in the other cabin."

"Yes, so he seems. But we'll have to see if all his organs are intact, and that will take some time. If that little beast is still full of life in a month's time, we then consider the experiment a success."

I begged Andre to let me take care of the guinea pig.

"All right, but don't kill it by over-feeding," he agreed with a grin for my enthusiasm.

Though not allowed to take Hop-la – the name I had given the guinea pig – out of its box in the laboratory, I had tied a pink ribbon round its neck and was allowed to feed it twice a day.

Hop-la soon got used to its pink ribbon and became quite a tame little pet, but that month of waiting seemed a year. And then one day, Andre put Miquette, our cocker spaniel, into his "transmitter." He had not told me beforehand, knowing full well that I would never have agreed to such an experiment with our dog. But when he did tell me, Miquette had been successfully transmitted half-a-dozen times and seemed to be enjoying the operation thoroughly; no sooner was she let out of the "reintegrator" than she dashed madly into the next room, scratching at the "transmitter" door to have "another go," as Andre called it.

I now expected that my husband would invite some of his colleagues and Air Ministry specialists to come down. He usually did this when he had finished a research job and, before handing them long detailed reports which he always typed himself, he would carry out an experiment or two before them. But this time, he just went on working. One morning I finally asked him when he intended throwing his usual "surprise party," as we called it.

"No, Helene; not for a long while yet. This discovery is much too important. I have an awful lot of work to do on it still. Do you realize that there are some parts of the transmission proper which I do not yet myself fully understand? It works all right, but you see, I can't just say to all these eminent professors that I do this and that and, poof, it works! I must be able to explain how and why it works. And what is even more important, I must be



Oh, André.
 Don't hurt it, just give it to me.
 Before you come in, you must promise to obey me implicitly.
 Do not look at me.
 Talking is useless. I cannot answer. Knock three times to show I have your promise. My life is in your hands.
 You can depend on me, darling.
 It's not in here.
 If you can't talk, knock.
 Knock once for yes and twice for no. Do you understand?
 We'll find the fly tomorrow, I promise. Just as soon as it's light I'll start looking.
 Now why don't you go to bed? I'll help you.
 No one will see you, I promise.
 Philippe caught a fly this morning.
 He said its head was white.
 I didn't see it.
 I made him let it go.
 Come back in morning.
 Will type explanation.

Need you fresh and strong tomorrow. Poor darling.
 Sorry.
 I'm all right now, darling. Don't worry.
 I'll find that fly.
 Do you need anything tonight?
 Darling, please try and get some sleep.
 Good night, darling.
 André?
 Remember the ashtray?
 I've had a similar accident.
 I transmitted myself successfully yesterday.
 But in a second experiment, a fly which I did not notice was in the disintegrator with me.
 When we reintegrated our atoms were mixed.
 Now my only hope is to find the fly, go through the machine once more with it, and pray our atoms untangle. If you can't find it, I'll have to destroy myself.
 Can I come back in?
 Don't worry, André. I'll find that fly. It can't be far away.
 But you mustn't talk about destroying yourself. You mustn't! I'll call

ready and able to refute every destructive argument they will not fail to trot out, as they usually do when faced with anything really good."

I was occasionally invited down to the laboratory to witness some new experiment, but I never went unless Andre invited me, and only talked about his work if he broached the subject first. Of course it never occurred to me that he would, at that stage at least, have tried an experiment with a human being; though, had I thought about it – knowing Andre – it would have been obvious that he would never have allowed anyone into the "transmitter" before he had been through to test it first. It was only after the accident that I discovered he had duplicated all his switches inside the disintegration booth, so that he could try it out by himself. The morning Andre tried this terrible experiment, he did not show up for lunch. I sent the maid down with a tray, but she brought it back with a note she had found pinned outside the laboratory door:

Do not disturb me, I am working.

He did occasionally pin such notes on his door and, though I noticed it, I paid no particular attention to the unusually large handwriting of his note. It was just after that, as I was drinking my coffee, that Henri came bouncing into the room to say that he had caught a funny fly, and would I like to see it. Refusing even to look at his closed fist, I ordered him to release it immediately.

"But, Maman, it has such a funny white head!"

Marching the boy over to the open window, I told him to release the fly immediately, which he did. I knew that Henri had caught the fly merely because he thought it looked curious or different from other flies, but I also knew that his father would never stand for any form of cruelty to animals, and that there would be a fuss should he discover that our son had put a fly in a box or a bottle.

At dinnertime that evening, Andre had still not shown up and, a little worried, I ran down to the laboratory and knocked at the door.



Professor Augier and other scientists. They can help you.

Don't be angry, André. I only thought that...

Promise me that you won't do anything.

Let me see your face. I won't be afraid.

All right.
All right, André. All right.

Flies, madame?

Yes. Close the windows.

Catch flies?

I told you, Emma.

A fly escaped from the lab. We've got to find it. It's got a white head.

Mummy!

I don't know what's gotten into this house.

Mummy!

Look! Caught lots of 'em.

Where is it?
Are you sure you caught it?

Oh, the white one. No, I haven't caught it yet. I told you to find that

fly! I'm sorry, Philippe darling. But you've got to find it. The white one. Only the white one.

Gotcha!

You fool!

I said catch them. Don't kill them.

I'm sorry, Emma.
Please, just catch them.

Madame! There's one in the hall.

Where? Where is it?

Oh, it's no good, Emma.

We'll never find it.

Philippe?

Make some supper, Emma, would you? I'm sorry. It's just that... Come on, Philippe. Go and wash for dinner, there's a good boy.

All right, Mummy.

Oh, Philippe.
I see it!
Don't move.

Go and get some sugar, quick!
Give me the sugar. And close those doors.
Now stay back.

He did not answer my knock, but I heard him moving around and a moment later he slipped a note under the door.

It was typewritten:

HELENE,

I AM HAVING TROUBLE. PUT THE BOY TO BED AND COME BACK IN AN HOUR'S TIME.

A.

Frightened, I knocked and called, but Andre did not seem to pay any attention and, vaguely reassured by the familiar noise of his typewriter, I went back to the house. Having put Henri to bed, I returned to the laboratory, where I found another note slipped under the door. My hand shook as I picked it up because I knew by then that something must be radically wrong. I read:

HELENE,

FIRST OF ALL I COUNT ON YOU NOT TO LOSE YOUR NERVE OR DO ANYTHING RASH BECAUSE YOU ALONE CAN HELP ME. I HAVE HAD A SERIOUS ACCIDENT. I AM NOT IN ANY PARTICULAR DANGER FOR THE TIME BEING THOUGH IT IS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH. IT IS USELESS CALLING TO ME OR SAYING ANYTHING. I CANNOT ANSWER, I CANNOT SPEAK. I WANT YOU TO DO EXACTLY AND VERY CAREFULLY ALL THAT I ASK. AFTER HAVING KNOCKED THREE TIMES TO SHOW THAT YOU UNDERSTAND AND AGREE, FETCH ME A BOWL OF MILK LACED WITH RUM. I HAVE HAD NOTHING ALL DAY AND CANNOT DO WITHOUT IT.

Shaking with fear, not knowing what to think and repressing a furious desire to call Andre and bang away until he opened, I knocked three times as requested and ran all the way home to fetch what he wanted.

In less than five minutes I was back. Another note had been slipped under the door:



Caught him!

Good boy, Philippe!

Careful now.

Oh, no.

It's in back of the curtain!

Don't harm it. Don't hurt it.

Oh, God, don't let it get out.

You try and keep it behind the curtain.

I'll get it from outside.

Oh, no. Oh, God!

Please, God, don't let it...

Don't cry, Mummy. Please don't cry.

We'll catch it tomorrow.

Don't worry. Please don't worry.

André?

We caught the fly today, but it escaped out into the garden.

I'll look for it again tomorrow.

You eat. I'll read this here.

If you had caught the fly, you would not be reading

this. I know you will never catch it now. It's hopeless.

There are things man should never experiment with. Now I must destroy everything, all evidence, even myself. No one must ever know what I discovered. It's too dangerous. I've thought of a way. It's not easy, but I need your help.

André!

You can still reason, André. You've got no right to destroy yourself. You mustn't think about it. You've still got your intelligence. You're still a man with a soul. You've no right to destroy yourself! We'll find that fly tomorrow. I know we will. Think easy. But you've got to give me more time. Why? Why won't you wait? Then see Augier and the other scientists. They'll do anything to help you! I've another idea. Remember the ashtray experiment?

Go through again. It worked before. Why? Please try it. You've got to try it. Please, André. For my sake. Maybe it will work. I beg you! Darling, I love you and I want you so much. Please, please let this come out right.

HELENE,

FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY. WHEN YOU KNOCK I'LL OPEN THE DOOR. YOU ARE TO WALK OVER TO MY DESK AND PUT DOWN THE BOWL OF MILK. YOU WILL THEN GO INTO THE OTHER ROOM WHERE THE RECEIVER IS. LOOK CAREFULLY AND TRY TO FIND A FLY WHICH OUGHT TO BE THERE BUT WHICH I AM UNABLE TO FIND. UNFORTUNATELY I CANNOT SEE SMALL THINGS VERY EASILY. BEFORE YOU COME IN YOU MUST PROMISE TO OBEY ME IMPLICITLY. DO NOT LOOK AT ME AND REMEMBER THAT TALKING IS QUITE USELESS. I CANNOT ANSWER. KNOCK AGAIN THREE TIMES. AND THAT WILL MEAN I HAVE YOUR PROMISE. MY LIFE DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON THE HELP YOU CAN GIVE ME.

I had to wait a while to pull myself together, and then I knocked slowly three times. I heard Andre shuffling behind the door, then his hand fumbling with the lock, and the door opened. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw that he was standing behind the door, but without looking round, I carried the bowl of milk to his desk. He was evidently watching me and I must at all costs appear calm and collected.

"Cheri, you can count on me," I said gently, and putting the bowl down under his desk lamp, the only one alight, I walked into the next room where all the lights were blazing. My first impression was that some sort of hurricane must have blown out of the receiving booth.

Papers were scattered in every direction, a whole row of test tubes lay smashed in a corner, chairs and stools were upset and one of the window curtains hung half torn from its bent rod. In a large enamel basin on the floor a heap of burned documents was still smoldering, I knew that I would not find the fly Andre wanted me to look for. Women know things that men only suppose by reasoning and deduction; it is a form of knowledge very rarely accessible to them and which they disparagingly call intuition. I already knew that the fly Andre wanted was the one which Henri had caught and which I had made him release. I heard Andre shuffling around in the next room, and then a strange gurgling and sucking as though he had trouble in drinking his milk.



Hurry, darling. It will
work.
It has worked, hasn't it?
You'll be all right now.
I know it's worked!

No! No! No!

"Andre, there is no fly here. Can you give me any sort of indication that might help? If you can't speak, rap or something, you know: once for yes, twice for no."

I had tried to control my voice and speak as though perfectly calm, but I had to choke down a sob of desperation when he rapped twice for "no."

"May I come to you, Andre I don't know what can have happened, but whatever it is, I'll be courageous, dear."

After a moment of silent hesitation, he tapped once on his desk. At the door I stopped aghast at the sight of Andre standing with his head and shoulders covered by the brown velvet cloth he had taken from a table by his desk, the table on which he usually ate when he did not want to leave his work. Suppressing a laugh that might easily have turned to sobbing, I said:

"Andre, we'll search thoroughly tomorrow, by daylight. Why don't you go to bed?"

"I'll lead you to the guest room if you like, and won't let anyone else see you." His left hand tapped the desk twice.

"Do you need a doctor, Andre?"

"No," he rapped.

"Would you like me to call up Professor Angier? He might be of more help."

Twice he rapped "no" sharply. I did not know what to do or say. And then I told him:

"Henri caught a fly this morning which he wanted to show me, but I made him release it. Could it have been the one you are looking for? I didn't see it, but the boy said its head was white."

Andre emitted a strange metallic sigh, and I just had time to bite my fingers fiercely in order not to scream. He had let his right



arm drop, and instead of his long-fingered muscular hand, a gray stick with little buds on it like the branch of a tree, hung out of his sleeve almost down to his knee.

“Andre, mon Cheri, tell me what happened. I might be of more help to you if I knew. Andre ... oh, it’s terrible!”

I sobbed, unable to control myself. Having rapped once for yes, he pointed to the door with his left hand. I stepped out and sank down crying as he locked the door behind me. He was typing again and I waited. At last he shuffled to the door and slid a sheet of paper under it.

HELENE,

COME BACK IN THE MORNING. I MUST THINK AND WILL HAVE TYPED OUT AN EXPLANATION FOR YOU. TAKE ONE OF MY SLEEPING TABLETS AND GO STRAIGHT TO BED. I NEED YOU FRESH AND STRONG TOMORROW, MA PAUVRE CHERIE.

A.

“Do you want anything for the night, Andre?” I shouted through the door.

He knocked twice for no, and a little later I heard the typewriter again. The sun full on my face woke me up with a start. I had set the alarm-clock for five but had not heard it, probably because of the sleeping tablets. I had indeed slept like a log, without a dream. Now I was back in my living nightmare and crying like a child I sprang out of bed. It was just on seven! Rushing into the kitchen, without a word for the startled servants, I rapidly prepared a tray load of coffee, bread and butter with which I ran down to the laboratory. Andre opened the door as soon as I knocked and closed it again as I carried the tray to his desk. His head was still covered, but I saw from his crumpled suit and his open camp-bed that he must have at least tried to rest. On his desk lay a typewritten sheet for me which I picked up. Andre opened the other door, and taking this to mean that he wanted to be left alone, I walked into the next room. He pushed the door to and I heard him pouring out the coffee as I read:

DO YOU REMEMBER THE ASH TRAY EXPERIMENT? I HAVE HAD A SIMILAR ACCIDENT. I "TRANSMITTED" MYSELF SUCCESSFULLY THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST. DURING A SECOND EXPERIMENT YESTERDAY A FLY WHICH I DID NOT SEE MUST HAVE GOT INTO THE "DISINTEGRATOR." MY ONLY HOPE IS TO FIND THAT FLY AND GO THROUGH AGAIN WITH IT. PLEASE SEARCH FOR IT CAREFULLY SINCE, IF IT IS NOT FOUND, I SHALL HAVE TO FIND A WAY OF PUTTING AN END TO ALL THIS.

If only Andre had been more explicit! I shuddered at the thought that he must be terribly disfigured and then cried softly as I imagined his face inside-out, or perhaps his eyes in place of his ears, or his mouth at the back of his neck, or worse! Andre must be saved! For that, the fly must be found! Pulling myself together, I said:

"Andre, may I come in?"

He opened the door.

"Andre, don't despair; I am going to find that fly. It is no longer in the laboratory, but it cannot be very far. I suppose you're disfigured, perhaps terribly so, but there can be no question of putting an end to all this, as you say in your note; that I will never stand for. If necessary, if you do not wish to be seen, I'll make you a mask or a cowl so that you can go on with your work until you get well again. If you cannot work, I'll call Professor Augier, and he and all your other friends will save you, Andre."

Again I heard that curious metallic sigh as he rapped violently on his desk.

"Andre, don't be annoyed; please be calm. I won't do anything without first consulting you, but you must rely on me, have faith in me and let me help you as best I can. Are you terribly disfigured, dear? Can't you let me see your face? I won't be afraid, I am your wife, you know."

But my husband again rapped a decisive "no" and pointed to the door.

“All right. I am going to search for the fly now, but promise me you won’t do anything foolish; promise you won’t do anything rash or dangerous without first letting me know all about it!”

He extended his left hand, and I knew I had his promise. I will never forget that ceaseless day-long hunt for a fly.

Back home, I turned the house inside-out and made all the servants join in the search. I told them that a fly had escaped from the Professor’s laboratory and that it must be captured alive, but it was evident they already thought me crazy. They said so to the police later, and that day’s hunt for a fly most probably saved me from the guillotine later. I questioned Henri and as he failed to understand right away what I was talking about, I shook him and slapped him, and made him cry in front of the round-eyed maids. Realizing that I must not let myself go, I kissed and petted the poor boy and at last made him understand what I wanted of him. Yes, he remembered, he had found the fly just by the kitchen window; yes, he had released it immediately as told to.

Even in summer time we had very few flies because our house is on the top of a hill and the slightest breeze coming across the valley blows round it. In spite of that, I managed to catch dozens of flies that day. On all the window sills and all over the garden I had put saucers of milk, sugar, jam, meat – all the things likely to attract flies. Of all those we caught, and many others which we failed to catch but which I saw, none resembled the one Henri had caught the day before. One by one, with a magnifying glass, I examined every unusual fly, but none had anything like a white head.

At lunch time, I ran down to Andre with some milk and mashed potatoes. I also took some of the flies we had caught, but he gave me to understand that they could be of no possible use to him.

“If that fly has not been found tonight, Andre, we’ll have to see what is to be done. And this is what I propose: I’ll sit in the next room. When you can’t answer by the yes-no method of rapping, you’ll type out whatever you want to say and then slip it under the door. Agreed?”

“Yes,” rapped Andre.

By nightfall we had still not found the fly. At dinner time, as I prepared Andre’s tray, I broke down and sobbed in the kitchen in front of the silent servants. My maid thought that I had had a row with my husband, probably about the mislaid fly, but I learned later that the cook was already quite sure that I was out of my mind.

Without a word, I picked up the tray and then put it down again as I stopped by the telephone. That this was really a matter of life and death for Andre, I had no doubt. Neither did I doubt that he fully intended committing suicide, unless I could make him change his mind, or at least put off such a drastic decision. Would I be strong enough? He would never forgive me for not keeping a promise, but under the circumstances, did that really matter? To the devil with promises and honor! At all costs Andre must be saved! And having thus made up my mind, I looked up and dialed Professor Augier’s number.

“The Professor is away and will not be back before the end of the week,” said a polite neutral voice at the other end of the line.

That was that! I would have to fight alone and fight I would. I would save Andre come what may. All my nervousness had disappeared as Andre let me in and, after putting the tray of food down on his desk, I went into the other room, as agreed.

“The first thing I want to know,” I said as he closed the door behind me, “is what happened exactly. Can you please tell me, Andre?”

I waited patiently while he typed an answer which he pushed under the door a little later.

HELENE,

I WOULD RATHER NOT TELL YOU, SINCE GO I MUST, I WOULD RATHER YOU REMEMBER ME AS I WAS BEFORE. I MUST DESTROY MYSELF IN SUCH A WAY THAT NONE CAN POSSIBLY KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME. I HAVE OF COURSE THOUGHT OF SIMPLY DISINTEGRATING MYSELF IN MY TRANSMITTER, BUT I HAD BETTER

NOT BECAUSE, SOONER OR LATER, I MIGHT FIND MYSELF REINTEGRATED. SOME DAY, SOMEWHERE, SOME SCIENTIST IS SURE TO MAKE THE SAME DISCOVERY. I HAVE THEREFORE THOUGHT OF A WAY WHICH IS NEITHER SIMPLE NOR EASY, BUT YOU CAN AND WILL HELP ME.

For several minutes I wondered if Andre had not simply gone stark raving mad.

“Andre,” I said at last, “whatever you may have chosen or thought of, I cannot and will never accept such a cowardly solution. No matter how awful the result of your experiment or accident, you are alive, you are a man, a brain ... and you have a soul. You have no right to destroy yourself! You know that!”

The answer was soon typed and pushed under the door.

I AM ALIVE ALL RIGHT, BUT I AM ALREADY NO LONGER A MAN. AS TO MY BRAIN OR INTELLIGENCE, IT MAY DISAPPEAR AT ANY MOMENT. AS IT IS, IT IS NO LONGER INTACT. AND THERE CAN BE NO SOUL WITHOUT INTELLIGENCE... AND YOU KNOW THAT!

“Then you must tell the other scientists about your discovery. They will help you and save you, Andre!”

I staggered back frightened as he angrily thumped the door twice.

“Andre ... why? Why do you refuse the aid you know they would give you with all their hearts?”

A dozen furious knocks shook the door and made me understand that my husband would never accept such a solution. I had to find other arguments. For hours, it seemed, I talked to him about our boy, about me, about his family, about his duty to us and to the rest of humanity. He made no reply of any sort. At last I cried:

“Andre ... do you hear me?”

“Yes,” he knocked very gently.

“Well, listen then. I have another idea. You remember your first

experiment with the ash tray? . . . Well, do you think that if you had put it through again a second time, it might possibly have come out with the letters turned back the right way?"

Before I had finished speaking, Andre was busily typing and a moment later I read his answer:

I HAVE ALREADY THOUGHT OF THAT. AND THAT WAS WHY I NEEDED THE FLY. IT HAS GOT TO GO THROUGH WITH ME. THERE IS NO HOPE OTHERWISE.

"Try all the same, Andre. You never know!"

I HAVE TRIED SEVEN TIMES ALREADY.

-was the typewritten reply I got to that.

"Andre! Try again, please!"

The answer this time gave me a flutter of hope, because no woman has ever understood, or will ever understand, how a man about to die can possibly consider anything funny.

I DEEPLY ADMIRE YOUR DELICIOUS FEMININE LOGIC. WE COULD GO ON DOING THIS EXPERIMENT UNTIL DOOMSDAY. HOWEVER, JUST TO GIVE YOU THAT PLEASURE, PROBABLY THE VERY LAST I SHALL EVER BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU, I WILL TRY ONCE MORE. IF YOU CANNOT FIND THE DARK GLASSES, TURN YOUR BACK TO THE MACHINE AND PRESS YOUR HANDS OVER YOUR EYES. LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU ARE READY.

"Ready, Andre"

I shouted without even looking for the glasses and following his instructions. I heard him moving around and then open and close the door of his "disintegrator." After what seemed a very long wait, but probably was not more than a minute or so, I heard a violent crackling noise and perceived a bright flash through my eyelids and fingers. I turned around as the cabin door opened.

His head and shoulders still covered with the brown velvet carpet, Andre was gingerly stepping out of it.

“How do you feel, Andre? Any difference?” I asked touching his arm.

He tried to step away from me and caught his foot in one of the stools which I had not troubled to pick up. He made a violent effort to regain his balance, and the velvet carpet slowly slid off his shoulders and head as he fell heavily backwards.

The horror was too much for me, too unexpected. As a matter of fact, I am sure that, even had I known, the horror-impact could hardly have been less powerful. Trying to push both hands into my mouth to stifle my screams and although my fingers were bleeding, I screamed again and again. I could not take my eyes off him, I could not even close them, and yet I knew that if I looked at the horror much longer, I would go on screaming for the rest of my life. Slowly, the monster, the thing that had been my husband, covered its head, got up and groped its way to the door and passed it. Though still screaming, I was able to close my eyes.

I who had ever been a true Catholic, who believed in God and another, better life hereafter, have today but one hope: that when I die, I really die, and that there may be no afterlife of any sort because, if there is, then I shall never forget! Day and night, awake or asleep, I see it, and I know that I am condemned to see it forever, even perhaps into oblivion!

Until I am totally extinct, nothing can, nothing will ever make me forget that dreadful white hairy head with its low flat skull and its two pointed ears. Pink and moist, the nose was also that of a cat, a huge cat. But the eyes! Or rather, where the eyes should have been were two brown bumps the size of saucers. Instead of a mouth, animal or human, was a long hairy vertical slit from which hung a black quivering trunk that widened at the end, trumpet-like, and from which saliva kept dripping. I must have fainted, because I found myself flat on my stomach on the cold cement floor of the laboratory, staring at the closed door behind which I could hear the noise of Andre's typewriter.

Numb, numb and empty, I must have looked as people do immediately after a terrible accident, before they fully understand what has happened. I could only think of a man I had once seen on the platform of a railway station, quite conscious, and looking stupidly at his leg still on the line where the train had just passed. My throat was aching terribly, and that made me wonder if my vocal chords had not perhaps been torn, and whether I would ever be able to speak again. The noise of the typewriter suddenly stopped and I felt I was going to scream again as something touched the door and a sheet of paper slid from under it. Shivering with fear and disgust, I crawled over to where I could read it without touching it:

NOW YOU UNDERSTAND. THAT LAST EXPERIMENT WAS A NEW DISASTER, MY POOR HELENE. I SUPPOSE YOU RECOGNIZED PART OF DANDELO'S HEAD. WHEN I WENT INTO THE DISINTEGRATOR JUST NOW, MY HEAD WAS ONLY THAT OF A FLY. I NOW ONLY HAVE ITS EYES AND MOUTH LEFT. THE REST HAS BEEN REPLACED BY PARTS OF THE CAT'S HEAD. POOR DANDELO WHOSE ATOMS HAD NEVER COME TOGETHER. YOU SEE NOW THAT THERE CAN ONLY BE ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION, DON'T YOU? I MUST DISAPPEAR. KNOCK ON THE DOOR WHEN YOU ARE READY AND I SHALL EXPLAIN WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

A.

Of course he was right, and it had been wrong and cruel of me to insist on a new experiment. And I knew that there was now no possible hope, that any further experiments could only bring about worse results. Getting up dazed, I went to the door and tried to speak, but no sound came out of my throat ... so I knocked once! You can of course guess the rest. He explained his plan in short typewritten notes, and I agreed, I agreed to everything!

My head on fire, but shivering with cold, like an automaton, I followed him into the silent factory. In my hand was a full page of explanations: what I had to know about the steam-hammer.

Without stopping or looking back, he pointed to the switchboard that controlled the steam-hammer as he passed it. I went no further and watched him come to a halt

before the terrible instrument. He knelt down, carefully wrapped the carpet round his head, and then stretched out flat on the ground. It was not difficult. I was not killing my husband. Andre, poor Andre, had gone long ago, years ago it seemed. I was merely carrying out his last wish ... and mine. Without hesitating, my eyes on the long still body, I firmly pushed the "stroke" button right in. The great metallic mass seemed to drop slowly. It was not so much the resounding clang of the hammer that made me jump as the sharp cracking which I had distinctly heard at the same time. My hus ... the thing's body shook a second and then lay still.

It was then I noticed that he had forgotten to put his right arm, his fly-leg, under the hammer. The police would never understand but the scientists would, and they must not! That had been Andre's last wish, also! I had to do it and quickly, too; the night watchman must have heard the hammer and would be round any moment. I pushed the other button and the hammer slowly rose. Seeing but trying not to look, I ran up, leaned down, lifted and moved forward the right arm which seemed terribly light. Back at the switchboard, again I pushed the red button, and down came the hammer a second time. Then I ran all the way home. You know the rest and can now do whatever you think right.

So ended Helene's manuscript



Part
5

Part
V

A strange story, Mrs Delambre.

It's almost impossible to believe, isn't it?

Where are his notes?

He destroyed them.

And the writing on the blackboard?

I rubbed it out.

I see.

Well, I must be going. Thank you for telling me. Inspector, it wasn't wrong to destroy the thing.

A fly-headed human? No.

It wasn't André.

I couldn't have hurt André.

But I'm glad. I'm glad the thing is dead.

I'll see you out, Inspector.

Inspector...

I'll be with you in a moment.

Inspector.

Do you believe the story?

Well, it explains all the facts.

The reason for the press, the fly, everything.

True. But I asked you if you believed it.

Oh, I'm only a policeman, I'm not a science fiction enthusiast. But I do not believe what she said. It can't happen.

But you don't...

Well, I mean, you didn't know André. He was a genius in some ways.

Possibly. But matter cannot be transmitted. The story is impossible!

I'll be back at ten with a warrant for her arrest on the charge of murder. The nurse is under strict instructions not to leave her for any reason.

But, Inspector, it might be the truth.

It is the truth to her. I'm satisfied now she's insane. Don't worry. She won't hang.

Well, I'm not satisfied.

I wish I could help you. The lady's in need of

THE FOLLOWING day I telephoned Commissaire Charas to invite him to dinner.

"With pleasure, Monsieur Delambre. Allow me, however, to ask: is it the Commissaire you are inviting, or just Monsieur Charas?"

"Have you any preference?"

"No, not at the present moment."

"Well then, make it whichever you like. Will eight o'clock suit you?"

Although it was raining, the Commissaire arrived on foot that evening.

"Since you did not come tearing up to the door in your black Citroen, I take it you have opted for Monsieur Charas, off duty?"

"I left the car up a side-street," mumbled the Commissaire with a grin as the maid staggered under the weight of his raincoat.

"Merci," he said a minute later as I handed him a glass of Pernod into which he tipped a few drops of water, watching it turn the golden amber liquid to pale blue milk.

"You heard about my poor sister-in-law?"

"Yes, shortly after you telephoned me this morning. I am sorry, but perhaps it was all for the best. Being already in charge of your brother's case, the inquiry automatically comes to me."

"I suppose it was suicide."

"Without a doubt. Cyanide, the doctors say quite rightly; I found a second tablet in the unstitched hem of her dress."

"Monsieur est servi," announced the maid.

a doctor's care,
permanently.

There's no telling whom
she might attack next.
Perhaps the boy.

But there must be some-
thing
we can do to prove...

There is. Show me the fly.

Good morning, monsieur.

Good morning, Emma.

How's the mistress, sir?

As well as can be expect-
ed.

Such a lovely lady.

Yes.

Emma, when you had that
mad search for a fly, did
you see it?

Oh, yes. I saw it.

What did it look like?

Oh, just a fly. I'd say
it was a bluebottle. You
know, quite a large one.

But did it look any
different?

Not to me it didn't. She
and Philippe were saying
its head was white. But it
was just a fly.

Thank you.

May I fix you breakfast,
sir? A nice cup of tea?
Some coffee?

No, thank you.

Help! Help me! Help me!
Help! Help me!
Please help me!
Help me!

We can manage, thank you,
Mr. Delambre.

Well, I thought I ought to
be here.

You wish to check the war-
rant?

As next of kin you have
the right.

No, I'm sure it must be
all right.

Madame? Time to get up
now.

I slept so well.

Wonderfully. Is it a nice
day?

Yes.

I think I'll have the silk
oneTake this one.

You must be warm.

But I'm not going out.
Come in.

"I would like to show you a very curious document
afterwards, Charas."

"Ah, yes. I heard that Madame Delambre had been writing
a lot, but we could find nothing beyond the short note
informing us that she was committing suicide."

During our tête-à-tête dinner, we talked politics, books and films,
and the local football club of which the Commissaire was a keen
supporter.

After dinner, I took him up to my study, where a bright fire –
a habit I had picked up in England during the war – was burning.
Without even asking him, I handed him his brandy and mixed
myself what he called "crushed-bug juice in soda water" – his
appreciation of whiskey.

"I would like you to read this, Charas; first, because it was partly
intended for you and, secondly, because it will interest you. If
you think Commissaire Charas has no objection, I would like to
burn it after."

Without a word, he took the wad of sheets Helene had
given me the day before and settled down to read them.

"What do you think of it all?"

I asked some twenty minutes later as he carefully folded Helene's
manuscript, slipped it into the brown envelope, and put it into
the fire. Charas watched the flames licking the envelope, from
which wisps of gray smoke were escaping, and it was only when it
burst into flames that he said, slowly raising his eyes to mine:

"I think it proves very definitely that Madame Delambre was quite
insane."

For a long while we watched the fire eating up
Helene's "confession."

"A funny thing happened to me this morning, Charas.
I went to the cemetery, where my brother is buried.



Good morning, Mrs
Delambre.

Inspector. But I don't
understand.

I have a warrant for your
arrest for murder.

And I must caution you,
anything you say can be
taken down and used in
evidence.

But, Inspector, I told you
everything.

It is for the court to
decide.

But you said it was not
wrong
to kill a thing.

You have to come with us,
madame.

François, didn't you show
them?

You didn't destroy it?

Inspector, you saw it.
I'm afraid I did not, Mrs
Delambre.

I lied to you, Hélène. I
never had it. I never had
it.

You never had it?

If you'll just come with
us, madame.

You never saw it?

Leave her alone. She
doesn't have to go with
you. I demand that I have
time to talk to my attor-
ney. Dr Ejoute will care
for her.

I have consulted him. The
patient is ready to leave.

I don't believe it.

I have his diagnosis and
his authority.

No, wait. Wait!

Don't make things more
difficult, monsieur.

Here you go, ma'am. You'll
be all right.

No, François. Don't let
them take me! Don't let
them lock me up! François,
please!

Mummy!

Philippe.

François, do something.

Don't let him see me like
this! Please!

Philippe. You can't see
her, Philippe. Not at the
moment. I'll take you for
a walk. I know. I'll take
you to the movies.

It was quite empty and I was alone."

"Not quite, Monsieur Delambre. I was there, but I did not want to
disturb you."

"Then you saw me."

"Yes. I saw you bury a matchbox."
"Do you know what was in it?"

"A fly, I suppose."

"Yes. I had found it early this morning, caught in a spider's web in
the garden."

"Was it dead?"

"No, not quite. I ... crushed it ... between two stones.
Its head was ... white ... all white."



But they don't open till this afternoon.	You're sure?
Well, then I'll take you this afternoon.	Oh, yes.
Is the ambulance for Mum- my?	Stay here a minute. Inspector, it's in the garden!
Yes.	Please, monsieur.
Is she going to be all right?	Philippe has seen it! It's there.
Yes. All right.	I beg of you, please. Please!
I ran all the way over here. I wanted to see how she was.	All right. Show me where.
I wanted her to play with me.	Here, Uncle François.
She'd like that, Philippe.	Wait in the house.
But she can't, not now.	There's a good boy, Philippe.
When's Daddy coming home then?	Help me! Please help me! Help! Go away! No! Please help me! Please go away!
Soon, Philippe.	Go away! No! No! No! No!
I saw that funny-looking fly again.	No! No! Charas!
Which show will we go to?	I didn't believe it.
Any...	But you saw it. You saw it, didn't you?
You saw the fly? Where?	Yes, I saw it. I thought she was... As God is my witness, I saw the thing. It's unbelievable. I shall never forget that scream as long as I live.
It's in a web. The spider's going to get it. By the bench in the garden.	



You've committed murder
just as much as Hélène
did. You killed a fly with a
human head.

She killed a human with a
fly head.

If she murdered, so did
you.

I know.

But who's going to believe
us?
They'll think we're both
mad.

But he could have started
the press and got under it
in time.

It could have been sui-
cide.
André's mind was deranged.
Hélène just tried to stop
him.

But the stroke count.

I was the one who forgot
to reset it, after it was
used the last time.

Yes. Yes. It could have
been suicide.

A great shot, Philippe.

François.
Hello. You look wonderful.
Thank you.

Hi, Uncle François.

You taking me to the zoo?

Yes, if your mother
doesn't...
You run along.

We'll have dinner together
later.

Oh, good.

Uncle?

Yes?

Mummy told me about Daddy.
Something she said to ask
you.
Why did he die?

Well, Philippe, he died
because of his work. He
was like an explorer in a
wild country
where no one had ever been
before. He was searching
for the truth. He almost
found a great truth. But
for one instant he was
careless.

That's what killed him?

Search for the truth is
the most
important work in the
whole world. And the most
dangerous.

I'd like that. I'd like to
be an explorer like him.
Will you help me, Uncle
François?

Yes, Philippe.



You'd better run and get
a coat.

Yes. Right away.

You're a dear one,
François.
So kind and thoughtful.

Thank you.

Here I am.

Well, come along, you two.
I'll see you off.





Fin

Fin

Citations

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Guest. “The Fly - PDF Free Download.” Epdf.pub, EPDF.PUB, epdf.pub/the-fly.html.

“High Resolution Photos from The Fly (1958).” Daily Dead, 19 Aug. 2013, dailydead.com/high-resolution-photos-from-the-fly-1958/.

Original Fly Artwork by Mollie Harreys



Movie Dialouge

The transcrip^t of the dialouge from the 1958 movie The Fly is featured on the left side of this book, presenting with the font PT Mono. Imagery fromt he 1958 movie is fetured on the section pages that divides the text.

The same story in two different formats

Short Story

The original short story The Fly from 1957 is featured on the right side of this book , presented in the font PT Serif. The short story comes in 5 parts. The dialouge is divided into the same parts based on the events in that section.

The same story in two different formats