

AI-Generated Graded Readers

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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

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Edgar Allan Poe, *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe — Volume 1* (Simplified Edition,
Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

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The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaall

Part 1

In the city of Rotterdam, something very strange happened. News about it spread quickly, and people in many places began to talk with excitement. The event was so unusual that many people did not know what to think. Some said it must be a trick. Others said it must be a great discovery. The people who loved science argued loudly with one another, and many felt that the whole world would soon speak about what had happened in that Dutch city.

On that day a very large crowd had gathered in the great square near the Exchange. No one clearly remembered why the crowd first came together. Some had business. Some were simply walking through the square. Others had come because crowds often attract more crowds. It was a warm day, warmer than people expected for that time of year. The air was still. There was almost no wind. Above the square the sky was blue, but large white clouds moved slowly across it. From time to time a short light shower fell from those clouds and then stopped again almost at once.

The people did not seem to mind these quick little showers. Many of the men stood quietly and smoked their pipes. They spoke to one another in a calm way. Some walked slowly across the square. Others stood in small groups and talked about trade, ships, or politics. The square was full of voices, but the mood was peaceful and ordinary.

Then, close to noon, something changed. A strange feeling moved through the crowd. At first only a few people noticed it. They looked up at the sky with surprise. Soon others followed their gaze. Within seconds thousands of people were staring upward. Many pipes dropped from their mouths at the same time. Voices rose loudly, and the quiet square suddenly filled with noise. It sounded almost like thunder or the roar of a great waterfall.

Everyone was looking at the same place in the sky. From behind a large cloud something strange slowly appeared. At first the object was not clear. It seemed to

be some solid thing floating in the open blue space. No one could understand its shape. The people stared with wide eyes and open mouths.

“Look there!” someone shouted.

“What can it be?” another man cried.

But no one could answer.

Even the important men of the city had no explanation. Among them was the burgomaster, a proud man named Mynheer Superbus Von Underduk. He was a man who usually spoke with great confidence. Yet even he had no idea what the object could be. Like the others, he simply lifted his head, narrowed one eye, and stared upward while he smoked his pipe.

The strange object slowly moved lower in the sky. At first it was far away, but little by little it came closer to the earth. As it descended, the people could see its shape more clearly. Soon they understood that it was a kind of balloon. Yet it was not like any balloon anyone in Rotterdam had ever seen before.

The surface of the balloon looked very odd. It did not appear to be made of silk or cloth like other balloons. Instead it seemed to be made from many old newspapers. The pages were pressed together and formed a rough surface. The idea that a balloon could be made from newspapers seemed foolish to many people. Some shook their heads in disbelief.

“What nonsense is this?” a man said.

“A balloon made from newspapers!” another replied. “Impossible!”

But the object continued to float in the sky, and it was clearly real.

The shape of the balloon was also strange. Instead of being round, it looked more like a large pointed cap turned upside down. At the top there hung a long tassel that moved gently in the air. Around the wide lower edge there was a circle of small metal objects that looked like bells. As the balloon moved, these bells rang softly again and again.

Below the balloon hung something even more surprising. Instead of a basket or car, there was an enormous hat. It was a large brown beaver hat with a very wide brim. The top of the hat was round, and around it was a black band with a silver buckle. Blue ribbons connected the hat to the balloon above it.

When the people saw the hat more clearly, many began to whisper among themselves.

“I have seen that hat before,” one man said slowly.

“Yes,” another agreed. “It looks familiar.”

Then a woman in the crowd suddenly cried out with excitement. Her name was Grettel Pfaall.

“That hat!” she shouted. “That is my husband’s hat! I know it! It belongs to Hans Pfaall!”

Her words caused great surprise among the people nearby. Hans Pfaall had disappeared from Rotterdam about five years earlier. He had vanished together with three companions. No one knew where they had gone. Some believed they had been murdered. In fact, a few bones had once been found outside the city, and some people thought those bones might belong to Pfaall and his friends.

Because of this story, the sight of the hat made the crowd even more curious and excited.

Meanwhile the balloon continued to descend slowly. Soon it came close enough that the people could see the person who was riding inside the hat below it.

The rider was a very strange little man. He was extremely small, no more than about two feet tall. His body was wide and round, which made him look almost like a ball sitting in the hat. Around him there was a circular rim that reached up to his chest so that he would not fall out.

The little man had very large hands. His hair was gray and tied in a long queue behind his head. His nose was long and bent, and his bright eyes looked sharp and lively. His cheeks were full and wrinkled with age. One curious thing was that no one could see any ears on his head at all.

He wore bright and colorful clothes. His coat was made of light blue satin. His breeches were also blue and fastened at the knees with silver buckles. Under the coat he wore a yellow vest. A white cap sat on the side of his head, and a large red silk cloth was tied around his neck in a huge bow.

As the balloon floated about one hundred feet above the square, the little man seemed suddenly nervous. He looked down at the ground with worry. It appeared

that he did not wish to come any closer to the earth.

He lifted a heavy bag filled with sand and threw some of the sand out into the air. At once the balloon stopped its downward movement and remained still in the sky.

Then the little man quickly reached into his coat pocket. He pulled out a large pocketbook made of dark leather. He held it carefully in his hands and looked at it with surprise, as if it were heavier than he expected.

After opening the pocketbook, he removed a very large letter. The letter was sealed with red wax and tied with red tape. Without speaking a word, the little man dropped the letter from the sky.

The letter fell directly at the feet of the burgomaster, Mynheer Superbus Von Underduk.

Part 2

The burgomaster, Mynheer Superbus Von Underduk, bent down slowly and picked up the letter that had fallen from the sky. The crowd watched him closely. Every person in the square wanted to know what message had come from the strange balloon and the little man inside it. For a moment the burgomaster simply held the letter in his hands and stared at it. The red wax seal and the red tape made it look very official.

But before anyone could ask him to open it, something else happened above their heads.

The little man in the balloon appeared to grow even more anxious. He moved quickly inside the hat that served as his car. It seemed clear that he had no wish to remain any longer above the city of Rotterdam. Perhaps he feared the crowd. Perhaps he had already finished the purpose of his visit. Whatever the reason, he began to prepare for departure.

To rise again into the sky, he needed to make the balloon lighter. For that reason he began throwing out bags that had been resting beside him. One after another he lifted them and pushed them over the side of the hat.

Unfortunately, he did not first empty the sand from those bags.

The first bag fell straight down through the air and struck the burgomaster on the back with great force. The blow caused him to fall forward onto the ground. Before he could stand again, another bag fell upon him. Then another followed, and another still.

In a very short time six heavy bags had dropped from the sky, each landing upon the poor burgomaster.

The people of Rotterdam watched in shock as their proud leader rolled again and again across the square. In fact, he rolled no fewer than twenty-one times before he finally came to rest. His fine coat was covered with dust, and his hat had fallen far from his head.

Yet even in this unhappy moment the burgomaster did not let go of his pipe. Throughout the entire event he continued to hold it firmly in his mouth. As he rolled across the ground he puffed angrily upon it again and again. Some witnesses later said that during each roll he gave one strong puff of smoke. If this was true, then he puffed exactly twenty-one times before he stopped moving.

While this confusion filled the square below, the balloon above had already begun to rise. Once the heavy bags had been thrown away, the machine quickly became lighter. It moved upward like a bird climbing into the sky. Soon it floated far above the houses and towers of Rotterdam.

Higher and higher it went until it reached the clouds. Then it passed behind one of the large white clouds and disappeared from sight. The strange balloon, the hat, and the little man were all gone.

For a moment the crowd stood silent. Thousands of people looked up into the sky, hoping to see the object again. But the clouds moved slowly, and nothing more appeared.

At last the people turned their attention back to the letter.

The burgomaster had now struggled to his feet. His coat was dusty, but his pride remained strong. In fact, during all his rolling he had never lost sight of the letter that had fallen from the balloon. When he finally stood upright again, he still held the letter tightly in his hand.

The outside of the letter showed that it was addressed to two important men. One was the burgomaster himself. The other was Professor Rub-a-dub, who served as vice president of the Rotterdam College of Astronomy. Because of this, the letter clearly concerned a scientific matter.

The burgomaster called for Professor Rub-a-dub at once. The professor stepped forward through the crowd, adjusting his glasses and looking very serious. Both men understood that the entire city expected them to read the message immediately.

Standing there in the open square, surrounded by thousands of curious citizens, the burgomaster carefully broke the red wax seal. He removed the papers from inside the envelope and unfolded them.

The crowd leaned forward in silence.

Then the burgomaster began to read.

The letter started with a formal greeting:

“To their Excellencies Von Underduk and Rub-a-dub, President and Vice President of the College of Astronomy in the city of Rotterdam.”

After these polite words, the writer quickly explained who he was.

The name surprised many people.

The writer declared that he was none other than Hans Pfaall.

According to the letter, this Hans Pfaall had once been a simple worker in Rotterdam. His trade had been the repair of bellows, those large tools used to blow air into fires. For many years he had lived in a small brick house at the head of a narrow street called Sauerkraut Alley. His father and grandfather had also lived there before him. All of them had followed the same trade of mending bellows.

For a long time this work had provided a good life. In earlier days the people of Rotterdam always needed bellows. Their fires burned constantly in homes and shops. Because of this, Hans Pfaall never lacked customers. People paid him fairly, and he earned enough money to support his wife and children.

But, as the letter explained, the world had begun to change.

In recent years the people of the city had become greatly interested in politics. They spent their time reading newspapers and talking about new ideas. They

spoke about liberty, about progress, and about the future of society. Because of these new interests, they paid less attention to practical matters.

Fires that once required bellows were now fanned with folded newspapers instead. If a bellows broke, many people simply ignored it. As time passed, fewer and fewer customers came to Hans Pfaall.

Soon his business began to fail.

Money became scarce in his home. His family needed food and clothing, but he had little income. Meanwhile the men to whom he owed money began to visit his house again and again. These creditors demanded payment that he could not provide.

Three men in particular caused him great trouble. They watched his door from morning until night. Whenever he tried to leave his house, they followed him through the streets. They spoke loudly about the law and threatened to take his property.

Their constant pressure drove him nearly mad.

In the letter Hans Pfaall confessed that during this time he often thought about ending his life. His situation seemed hopeless. He felt trapped like an animal in a cage. At times he imagined using a gun to end his suffering.

Yet another thought stopped him.

He dreamed of revenge.

The three men who tormented him filled his mind with anger. He imagined how happy he would feel if he could somehow punish them. This dark hope kept him alive even during the worst moments of despair.

Instead of showing his anger openly, he pretended to be calm. He spoke to the men with friendly words and promised that he would pay his debts soon. Secretly, however, he waited for an opportunity to act against them.

One day, while walking alone through the narrow streets of Rotterdam, Hans Pfaall felt more miserable than ever before. His mind was heavy with worry. Without thinking about where he was going, he wandered through the city until he accidentally struck his shoulder against the corner of a small bookseller's stall.

Near the stall stood a simple chair for customers who wished to read.

Feeling tired and unhappy, he sat down in the chair.

Then he picked up the first small book that lay on the table beside him.

That simple action, as he later explained in his letter, changed the entire course of his life.

Part 3

The small book that Hans Pfaall picked up was not a story and not a work of trade or business. It was a short work about the stars and the sky. The writer of the book spoke about the sun, the moon, and the many lights that shine far above the earth. Hans Pfaall did not know much about such things, yet the words quickly caught his interest.

At first he only turned the pages without care. His mind was still heavy with worry. But after a short time he began to read more slowly. The writer spoke about the great space above the earth and about the bodies that move through it. He wrote about how the moon travels in the sky and how men study its motion.

Hans Pfaall had learned a little about such matters when he was younger. Because of this small knowledge, he found that he could follow some parts of the book. Soon he became so interested that he forgot his troubles for a while. He sat in the chair and read page after page.

In fact, he read the entire little book once. Then he began again and read it a second time.

When he finally looked up, he noticed that the light around him had grown dim. Evening had come while he was reading. The people in the street had changed, and the shopkeeper was preparing to close his stall.

Hans Pfaall rose slowly from the chair and began to walk home.

As he moved through the dark streets, the ideas from the book remained in his mind. He thought again and again about what he had read. The writer had spoken about the great distance between the earth and the moon. He had also spoken about the thin air that exists high above the earth.

These thoughts stirred the imagination of the poor bellows mender.

The more he thought about them, the more excited he became. Strange ideas began to form in his mind. At first they were unclear and confused. But step by step they seemed to grow stronger.

Hans Pfaall later wrote that his lack of education did not stop these ideas from growing. In fact, he believed that his ignorance may even have helped him. Because he did not know many of the accepted rules of science, he felt free to imagine things that learned men might reject.

As he walked through the quiet streets, he wondered whether a man might travel far above the earth. If the moon moved through the sky, perhaps a man could move there as well. The thought seemed wild, yet it did not leave his mind.

When he reached his small brick house in Sauerkraut Alley, he went inside quietly. His family slept in the next room, but Hans Pfaall remained awake for a long time. He sat at his table and continued thinking about the sky, the stars, and the moon.

That night a new idea slowly began to take shape.

The next morning he returned to the bookseller's stall. The little book about astronomy still lay upon the table. He opened it again and studied its pages carefully. Now he read each line with deep attention.

He began to think about the air around the earth. The book explained that the air becomes thinner as one travels higher above the ground. At great heights the air becomes very weak. A person could not breathe there as easily as on the earth.

This problem seemed serious at first. But Hans Pfaall continued thinking. His trade as a bellows mender had taught him something about air and pressure. For many years he had worked with tools that forced air into fires. Because of this work, he knew how air could be moved and controlled.

Slowly he began to wonder whether a person could carry air with him during a journey into the sky.

Day after day these thoughts grew stronger.

Soon the idea of escape also joined them. Hans Pfaall remembered the three men who waited outside his house and demanded money. Their angry faces and harsh voices filled him with fear and rage.

What if he could leave them behind forever?

What if he could rise into the sky where no creditor could follow him?

At first the idea seemed like madness. Yet the more he considered it, the more possible it appeared.

Hans Pfaall knew about balloons. Several had already flown in Europe. They rose high above the earth by using warm air or light gas. If such machines could lift men into the sky, perhaps they could lift him even higher.

He began to study the matter with great care.

During the day he continued his usual work. He repaired bellows and spoke politely to his customers. When the three creditors appeared, he promised them that payment would soon come. His calm manner slowly reduced their suspicion.

But at night he worked in secret.

In a hidden part of his house he began to gather materials. He collected old newspapers from many places in the city. He cut and pasted them together carefully. Layer by layer he formed large sheets of paper.

With patience and skill he shaped these sheets into a large balloon.

The work required many months. Sometimes he feared that his plan would fail. At other times he felt certain that success was near. The thought of revenge and escape drove him forward.

Because he was a maker of bellows, he also understood how to manage air pressure. He designed special tools that could store air and release it when needed. These devices would help him breathe during his journey high above the earth.

The work was slow and difficult, but Hans Pfaall did not give up.

As the balloon slowly took shape, he also prepared a small car that could hang beneath it. Instead of a normal basket, he used a very large hat. The hat was strong and light, and it could hold the tools he needed.

When the balloon was nearly finished, Hans Pfaall began the most dangerous part of his plan.

He invited the three creditors to visit him.

He told them that he had finally found a way to pay his debts. He spoke in a friendly voice and promised them that they would soon receive their money.

Because of this promise, the men agreed to come inside his house.

Hans Pfaall greeted them politely and offered them seats.

For a short time they talked together in a calm manner. The creditors believed that their long wait for payment was finally ending. They did not suspect the strange plan that was forming in the mind of the bellows mender.

Soon Hans Pfaall said that he wished to show them something important in his workshop.

The three men followed him without fear.

What happened next would change their fate forever.

Part 4

Hans Pfaall led the three men into the back room of his small house. This room served as his workshop. Tools lay on the tables, and pieces of leather and metal were scattered about the floor. The men had seen this place before when they came to demand payment, so nothing about it seemed unusual to them.

“Sit here,” Hans Pfaall said in a calm voice.

The three creditors sat down. They expected that he would soon bring them money or show them some plan for payment. Instead, Hans Pfaall stood quietly before them for a moment. His eyes moved slowly from one face to another.

In his letter he later wrote that during this moment he felt both fear and anger. These men had troubled him for months. They had shouted at his door and threatened him with prison. The thought of them filled him with bitterness.

Yet he still kept his voice steady.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “I have something very important to show you.”

The men leaned forward slightly.

Hans Pfaall then walked to the door of the workshop and closed it carefully. He turned the key in the lock. The sound was small, but it echoed in the quiet room.

One of the creditors frowned.

“Why lock the door?” he asked.

Hans Pfaall did not answer at once. Instead he stepped slowly toward a large

object that stood in the center of the room. It was covered with cloth so that its shape could not easily be seen.

With a sudden movement he pulled the cloth away.

Beneath it stood a strange machine made of pipes, bags, and metal parts. The three men stared at it with confusion.

“What is this?” one of them said.

“You will see,” Hans Pfaall replied.

In truth the machine was part of his plan for flight. It was built to store and move air. Using his long experience as a maker of bellows, he had created a device that could hold air under pressure. This air would later help him breathe when he rose high above the earth.

The creditors did not understand any of this. They looked at the machine without interest.

“We did not come here to see toys,” another man said angrily. “We came for our money.”

Hans Pfaall nodded slowly.

“Yes,” he said. “You will soon have what you came for.”

Then, in a moment that he described only briefly in his letter, he acted.

The details were terrible. The three men never left the workshop alive.

Hans Pfaall later wrote that he would not describe the event fully. He said only that anger and desperation drove him to the act. When it was finished, the room was silent again.

The bodies of the creditors remained hidden within the house.

After this dark moment, Hans Pfaall turned his attention once more to his great plan.

The balloon was almost ready. He worked through many nights to complete it. The large shell made from newspapers had already been sealed carefully. Beneath it he attached the strange car made from the enormous hat.

Inside the hat he placed many tools and instruments. Some were simple bags of sand that would serve as ballast. Others were devices connected to the storage of air. He also packed food and water so that he could survive during a long journey.

At last the machine was finished.

Hans Pfaall waited for the right time. He needed a day when the weather would help his flight. The wind must be gentle. The sky must be clear enough for a safe rise.

When such a day finally arrived, he began the final step of his plan.

Before leaving, however, he wished to send a message to the learned men of Rotterdam. He knew that his disappearance would cause great confusion. People would wonder where he had gone and what had happened to the three creditors.

Therefore he decided to write a letter explaining everything.

He addressed the letter to two men who would surely take interest in his story. One was the burgomaster, Mynheer Superbus Von Underduk. The other was Professor Rub-a-dub of the College of Astronomy.

Hans Pfaall wrote many pages. In the letter he explained his troubles, his study of the book on astronomy, and his idea of traveling toward the moon. He also described the machine he had built and the methods he planned to use to survive high above the earth.

When the letter was finished, he sealed it carefully with red wax and tied it with red tape.

The next step required courage.

During the night he carried his balloon and equipment outside the city. The work was difficult, but he managed to move everything to an open field where no one would disturb him.

There he prepared the balloon for flight.

Slowly the great shell filled with gas. The newspapers stretched and tightened as the balloon grew larger. At last it lifted slightly from the ground, pulling against the ropes that held it.

Hans Pfaall climbed into the great hat that served as his car. Around him lay the tools, the air devices, the bags of sand, and the supplies he had packed.

Before cutting the ropes, he looked once more toward the city of Rotterdam. The towers and houses were quiet in the early light.

“Good-bye,” he whispered.

Then he released the balloon.

At once the machine rose into the air.

Higher and higher it climbed above the fields and roofs of the sleeping city. Soon the houses grew small beneath him. The river shone like a thin line of silver.

Hans Pfaall felt both fear and excitement. The earth was already far below him. The air grew cooler as he climbed.

Yet his strange adventure had only begun.

As the sun rose higher in the sky, the balloon drifted slowly toward the city square where the people of Rotterdam would soon gather.

And many years later, when the balloon appeared above the Exchange and dropped the letter at the feet of the burgomaster, the citizens of Rotterdam would finally learn the story of Hans Pfaall's incredible journey.

Part 5

After the balloon rose into the sky and drifted away from the fields outside Rotterdam, Hans Pfaall began the long journey that he had imagined for so many months. The city soon became very small beneath him. The streets, the houses, and even the river slowly faded into the distance. Before long the land itself looked like a wide map spread far below his feet.

At first the movement of the balloon frightened him. The ground was so far away that he felt a strange weakness in his body. He held tightly to the rim of the great hat that served as his car and forced himself to breathe slowly.

But little by little his fear began to fade.

The air was calm, and the balloon moved gently through the sky. There was no loud noise, no shaking of the machine. Everything around him seemed quiet and wide. The world below looked peaceful and distant.

Hans Pfaall then began to examine the instruments and tools that he had prepared for the journey. He checked the bags of sand that served as ballast. He looked carefully at the devices that stored air under pressure. These machines would allow him to breathe when the air outside became too thin.

His knowledge as a maker of bellows had helped him design these tools. For many years he had worked with air and pressure. Because of this experience he believed that he could manage the air around him even at great heights.

As the balloon climbed higher, he noticed that the air indeed began to change. Breathing felt slightly more difficult than before. The wind also became colder. To protect himself he wrapped his coat more tightly around his body.

Still, the balloon continued to rise.

The earth below changed its appearance. At first he could still see fields, rivers, and roads. Later these shapes became faint and unclear. The land looked smooth and flat, almost like a painted surface.

Hans Pfaall felt a strange excitement as he watched this transformation. Never before had he seen the world from such a height. The thought that no other man from Rotterdam had traveled so far above the earth filled him with pride.

Yet he knew that the most difficult part of the journey was still ahead.

As the hours passed, breathing became more difficult. The air grew thin and weak. At this moment Hans Pfaall used one of the machines he had prepared. The device released a supply of stored air into the space around him. This fresh air helped him breathe more easily again.

He worked carefully and slowly. If he wasted the stored air too quickly, he would not survive the long journey upward.

From time to time he also threw out small amounts of sand from the ballast bags. Each time he did this, the balloon rose a little higher. The great shell of newspapers held the gas firmly inside it, and the machine continued to climb.

During the first day of the journey Hans Pfaall spent most of his time watching the sky and the earth. He also wrote notes about what he observed. He wished to record every detail so that the scholars of Rotterdam could study his experience.

When night arrived, the view around him became even more wonderful.

The sky above turned dark and deep. The stars appeared bright and sharp. They seemed closer than he had ever seen them before. Some shone with strong white light. Others had softer colors.

Hans Pfaall stared at them for a long time.

The earth below was now almost invisible. Only a faint darkness marked its position far beneath him. The moon, however, shone clearly in the sky. Its pale light fell across the balloon and the strange car beneath it.

As he watched the moon, Hans Pfaall felt that his goal was slowly coming nearer.

Still, the journey was not easy.

The cold grew stronger as the night continued. The air felt sharp in his lungs. Sometimes he became so tired that he feared he might fall asleep and lose control of the balloon.

To remain awake, he moved about inside the hat and checked his instruments again and again. He also ate small amounts of food from the supplies he had packed.

During the second day the earth below could no longer be seen at all. Clouds covered everything beneath him. The balloon now floated above a wide white sea of cloud.

This sight filled Hans Pfaall with wonder. The clouds looked like mountains and valleys made from soft white stone. Sunlight shone upon them in bright colors.

Yet the beauty of the scene could not hide the danger of his situation.

The air had now become extremely thin. Without the help of his stored air machines, he could not have survived. Even with them, breathing required careful effort.

Sometimes he felt dizzy. At other moments a deep silence filled his ears. The world seemed very far away.

Despite these difficulties, the balloon continued to rise slowly toward the sky.

Hans Pfaall watched the moon again. Each hour it seemed a little larger than before. This gave him hope that his plan might truly succeed.

For many days the journey continued in this way.

He carefully used his air machines. He threw out ballast when necessary. He wrote notes about the sky, the stars, and the strange appearance of the clouds far below.

At times he wondered whether the people of Rotterdam would ever believe his

story. Perhaps they would laugh and call him mad. Perhaps they would refuse to believe that a simple bellows mender could travel so high above the earth.

Yet he continued his work with determination.

The balloon moved silently through the great emptiness of the sky, carrying Hans Pfaall farther and farther away from the world he had once known.

Part 6

As the journey continued, Hans Pfaall found that life inside the strange car required constant attention. Nothing could be left to chance. Every movement of the balloon, every change in the air, and every small shift of weight had to be watched carefully.

The great shell of the balloon still held firm. The many layers of newspaper that he had pasted together had become strong and tight. Even in the cold air high above the earth, the structure did not break. This success pleased Hans Pfaall greatly, for many people would have believed that such a balloon could never survive the journey.

From time to time he examined the seams where the paper had been joined. If even a small tear appeared, the gas might escape and the balloon would fall. For this reason he kept small tools beside him so that he could repair any weak place immediately.

Fortunately, the balloon remained sound.

The greater difficulty came from the air around him.

As the balloon rose higher and higher, the air outside became so thin that it could hardly support life. Hans Pfaall had expected this change because the book he had read had described it. Yet knowing about the problem and living through it were very different things.

At certain moments he felt a deep pressure in his head. His ears rang softly. His breathing became slow and difficult. Whenever this happened, he opened one of the air containers that he had built.

The fresh air from the container filled the space around him. He breathed it

carefully and then closed the device again so that none of it would be wasted.

He had brought several such containers with him. Each held a limited supply of air. If he used them too quickly, the journey would end in disaster. Because of this, he forced himself to breathe slowly and calmly even when he felt fear.

The cold also became stronger as the balloon rose.

The sun still shone in the sky, yet the warmth of the earth no longer reached him. The air felt sharp against his face and hands. At times he wrapped himself in the extra cloth that he had brought for protection.

Even with these difficulties, the view around him remained astonishing.

The sky above looked darker than it had ever appeared from the earth. The stars were still visible even during the day. Some shone faintly in the deep blue sky. At night they seemed brighter than any lights he had ever seen.

The moon slowly grew larger before his eyes.

Each day it appeared slightly greater in size. This sight gave him courage. It meant that the distance between himself and the moon was slowly becoming smaller.

During quiet moments he wrote many notes about these observations. He wanted the scholars of Rotterdam to understand exactly what he had seen and experienced. He described the appearance of the sky, the behavior of the air, and the strange silence that surrounded him.

For silence indeed became one of the most remarkable features of the journey.

High above the earth there was almost no sound. No wind moved through the air. No birds flew nearby. The balloon floated in a vast still space where nothing seemed to disturb the calm.

Sometimes Hans Pfaall felt that he was the only living man in the whole universe.

During these lonely hours he often thought about the city he had left behind. He remembered the narrow streets of Rotterdam and the small brick house in Sauerkraut Alley. He even remembered the faces of the three creditors who had once troubled him so greatly.

Those memories no longer filled him with anger. They now seemed distant and

unreal, as if they belonged to another life.

His entire attention was fixed on the success of his journey.

Yet the voyage was not without danger.

On one occasion a strong current of air suddenly pushed against the balloon. The great shell trembled slightly, and the car beneath it swung from side to side. For a moment Hans Pfaall feared that the balloon might tear apart.

He held tightly to the rim of the hat and waited.

Fortunately the movement soon stopped. The balloon returned to its calm and steady rise. After examining the surface carefully, he found no damage.

Another difficulty came from the weight of the supplies he carried.

As long as the balloon held all the bags of sand and the containers of air, its movement remained slow. When he wished to rise higher, he had to throw away part of this weight.

Each time he released a bag of sand, the balloon lifted slightly upward.

Yet he had to be careful not to throw away too much. If he removed too much weight at once, the balloon might rise too quickly and cause great danger.

Therefore he worked with patience and care.

Day after day the strange voyage continued.

The earth was now so far below that it could no longer be imagined. Hans Pfaall felt that he had left the world entirely behind him. Only the balloon, the dark sky, and the growing moon remained in his sight.

Sometimes he wondered whether he would truly reach the moon.

The distance still appeared vast. The moon, though larger than before, remained far away in the sky. Yet he believed that his plan would succeed if the balloon continued its steady climb.

And so he continued upward, slowly and silently, through the great emptiness above the earth.

Part 7

As Hans Pfaall continued his strange journey through the high regions of the

sky, he began to notice many new effects that he had never imagined before. The farther he traveled from the earth, the more unusual everything around him became.

One of the first changes he observed concerned the light of the sun.

On the earth the sunlight always spreads through the air and fills the sky with brightness. But high above the earth the air had grown very thin. Because of this, the light behaved in a different way. The sun shone with great strength, yet the space around it remained dark.

At times Hans Pfaall could see bright sunlight falling directly upon the balloon while the sky itself appeared almost black. This strange contrast surprised him greatly. It seemed as if he were floating between two worlds: one filled with light and the other with darkness.

The stars also appeared very different.

On the earth many stars can only be seen during the night. But in the high sky they were visible even when the sun was shining. Some of them appeared sharp and clear like tiny bright points fixed in the dark space above him.

Hans Pfaall spent many hours studying them.

He wrote careful notes about their brightness and position. He hoped that the professors of Rotterdam would later examine his observations with interest. Although he was only a simple bellows mender, he felt that his journey had placed him in a position where he could learn things that even great scholars had never seen.

Yet the physical strain of the voyage continued to trouble him.

The thin air still made breathing difficult. Even with the help of his air containers, he often felt weak and tired. His body had never before lived in such conditions.

At times he lay down inside the great hat that served as his car and rested for a short while. During these moments the balloon floated quietly through the empty sky.

But he never allowed himself to sleep for long. Too much sleep could cause him to lose control of the balloon. If the balloon began to descend or rise too

quickly, he had to be ready to act at once.

Therefore he kept constant watch over the instruments around him.

The devices that controlled the air supply required careful handling. Each container held only a certain amount of fresh air. He measured his use of them very precisely. Whenever the outside air became too weak for breathing, he opened one container for a short time and then closed it again.

This careful management allowed him to survive much longer than he had expected.

The cold, however, remained severe.

Although the sun shone brightly, the lack of thick air meant that little warmth reached him. The wind did not blow strongly, yet the air itself felt sharp and icy. His hands often became stiff as he worked with the ropes and instruments.

To protect himself he wrapped his body in extra cloth and moved slowly so that he would not waste energy.

Despite these hardships, the sight of the moon continued to encourage him.

With every passing day the moon grew larger and clearer. Its surface began to show faint shapes and shadows. Areas of light and darkness formed patterns across its face.

Hans Pfaall stared at these patterns with deep fascination.

From the earth the moon often appears smooth and gentle. But from his high position he could see that its surface was far more complex. Dark regions spread across it like wide plains, while bright areas rose like mountains.

He wondered what kind of land might exist there.

Could there be valleys and hills like those of the earth? Could there even be strange forms of life living under the pale light of that distant world? These thoughts filled his mind during many quiet hours of the journey.

Meanwhile the balloon continued to rise steadily.

At certain times he released small amounts of ballast to help the balloon climb higher. Each bag of sand that fell away made the machine lighter and allowed it to move upward through the thin air.

He watched carefully to ensure that the rise remained slow and controlled.

One evening he noticed something remarkable.

The earth, which had long disappeared from view, suddenly appeared again as a faint curved shape far behind him. It looked like a large dark circle with a thin blue edge of light around it.

Hans Pfaall realized that he was now seeing the earth from an entirely new position.

The sight filled him with wonder.

The world that had once seemed so large now looked small and distant. Cities, mountains, and oceans were no longer visible. Only the great shape of the earth itself remained.

For a moment he felt a deep sense of loneliness.

Everything he had ever known lay far away behind him. Ahead of him stood only the silent moon and the endless darkness of space.

Yet this loneliness also brought a strange feeling of triumph.

No other man had ever traveled so far from the earth. The bellows mender from Sauerkraut Alley had achieved something that kings and scholars had never imagined possible.

With renewed determination he turned his eyes toward the growing moon and continued his extraordinary voyage.

Part 8

As Hans Pfaall moved farther from the earth, the appearance of both the earth and the moon changed in remarkable ways. The earth, which had once filled his whole world, now looked like a distant sphere hanging in the dark sky behind him. Around its edge he could see a faint band of pale blue light. This light, he believed, came from the air that surrounds the earth.

The sight made him think deeply.

For many years men had lived upon the earth without truly understanding how small it might appear from a great distance. Now Hans Pfaall could see it clearly with his own eyes. The continents, the seas, the cities, and the mountains that

seemed so large to those living upon them were all hidden by distance.

Only the round shape of the earth remained visible.

Yet the moon ahead of him grew larger every day.

At first it had appeared only as a bright circle. Now it began to show clear markings. Large dark regions spread across its surface like wide plains. Bright areas rose between them and seemed to form long ridges and peaks.

These shapes fascinated Hans Pfaall.

He studied them through the small optical instrument that he had brought with him. Although the device was simple, it helped him see the surface of the moon more clearly than with his eyes alone.

The closer he came, the more he understood that the moon was not smooth and quiet as it often appeared from the earth. Instead it seemed full of mountains, deep pits, and strange wide fields of dark stone.

The idea of landing among such formations filled him with both excitement and fear.

He wondered what the ground might be like. Would the surface support the balloon? Would there be air that a man could breathe? Or would the land be silent and empty forever?

These questions could not yet be answered.

Meanwhile the physical demands of the journey continued.

His supplies of air were slowly decreasing. Although he had planned carefully, the voyage had already lasted longer than he had first expected. The thin air around him forced him to use the containers more often.

Still, he remained hopeful.

The moon now filled a large portion of the sky ahead. Its pale light shone strongly across the balloon and the great hat beneath it. The shadows of the ropes and instruments lay across the paper surface of the balloon like dark lines.

At times the moonlight made the strange machine look almost magical.

Hans Pfaall wrote many notes during these hours. He described the increasing size of the moon and the details he could now see upon its face. He also recorded the effects of the thin air upon his body.

His breathing had become slow and careful. If he moved too quickly, he felt a strong pressure in his chest. Therefore he performed every task slowly.

One day he noticed a new effect.

Objects inside the car seemed lighter than before. When he lifted a bag or moved a tool, it required less effort. Even his own body felt strangely light when he shifted his position.

At first he did not understand this change.

Later he realized that the pull of the earth upon him had become weaker as he traveled farther away from it. The farther he moved from the earth, the less strongly the earth held him.

This discovery amazed him.

He tested the effect by gently pushing a small object into the air. Instead of falling quickly, the object drifted slowly downward. Everything around him seemed to float more easily.

The behavior of the balloon also changed slightly because of this effect.

The machine no longer required as much gas to remain high in the sky. It moved quietly and smoothly through the empty space between the worlds.

The moon now appeared so large that its surface showed great detail.

Hans Pfaall could see enormous circular pits surrounded by high rings of rock. These structures looked like giant bowls pressed into the surface of the moon. Between them lay wide plains that shone faintly in the moonlight.

Some mountains rose high enough to cast long shadows across the land.

The sight filled him with deep wonder.

For many nights he watched the moon carefully. Each hour it seemed closer than before. The thought that he might soon reach its surface filled him with excitement.

Yet he remained cautious.

He understood that the final part of the journey would require great care. If the balloon moved too quickly, it might crash upon the rocky ground. He would need to slow the descent at exactly the right moment.

For this purpose he had kept several bags of sand and other supplies that could

be released when needed.

Now he began to prepare for that final stage.

He examined every rope and every instrument. The paper shell of the balloon still remained strong, although it had carried him an enormous distance.

When everything had been checked, Hans Pfaall turned his eyes once more toward the approaching world before him.

The moon now filled the sky.

Its mountains and plains spread across his vision like a vast silent land waiting beneath the pale light of the sun.

The bellows mender from Rotterdam was about to attempt something that no human being had ever done before.

Part 9

As the balloon moved nearer to the moon, Hans Pfaall began the most careful part of his work. Until now the journey had mostly required patience and endurance. But the final approach demanded skill and precise judgment.

The surface of the moon was now clearly visible beneath him. Vast plains of pale gray stretched across the land. Between them rose great circular walls of stone that surrounded deep pits. Some of these pits were so large that they seemed like enormous bowls carved into the surface of the world.

Long shadows lay across the land where the sunlight struck the high mountains. The light itself appeared very sharp and bright. Without thick air to soften it, the sunlight fell strongly upon the rocks and plains.

Hans Pfaall watched this strange landscape with intense attention.

He knew that if the balloon continued moving too quickly, it might strike the ground with great force. The paper shell and the hat that carried him could not survive such an impact.

Therefore he began to prepare for a slow descent.

First he examined the remaining bags of ballast. These had once helped him rise higher by being thrown away. Now they would serve another purpose. By

carefully adjusting the weight inside the car, he could control how fast the balloon moved downward.

He also studied the motion of the balloon itself.

In the weak pull of the moon's gravity, the machine behaved differently from how it had behaved near the earth. Every movement became slower and gentler. Even a small change in weight produced a noticeable effect.

Hans Pfaall worked with extreme caution.

From time to time he released a little gas from the balloon so that it would gradually descend. Each adjustment caused the great shell to sink a small distance toward the surface.

The moon slowly grew larger beneath him.

Now he could see individual mountains rising from the plains. Some appeared sharp and tall, casting long dark shadows. Others formed wide rings around the deep pits he had noticed earlier.

The silence of the place felt almost overwhelming.

No wind moved across the land. No clouds drifted through the sky. The entire world below him seemed still and ancient.

Hans Pfaall wondered whether any living creature had ever walked upon that silent ground.

As the balloon continued to descend, he noticed another strange effect of the moon's weaker gravity.

His own body felt lighter than ever before.

When he lifted his arm, it moved easily. When he pushed gently against the rim of the hat, his whole body rose slightly from the floor of the car. The sensation was unlike anything he had experienced on earth.

He realized that walking upon the moon might feel very different from walking upon the earth.

These thoughts passed quickly through his mind as he continued to guide the balloon downward.

The ground was now close enough that he could see large stones scattered across the surface. Some areas looked smooth, while others were rough and

broken.

He chose a wide plain where the land appeared relatively level.

Slowly the balloon drifted lower.

Hans Pfaall released another small amount of gas. The balloon sank gently toward the moon's surface. The enormous hat beneath it swayed slightly as the ropes tightened.

At last the moment came.

The bottom of the hat touched the ground.

The contact was so light that for a moment he was not certain it had happened. Then the balloon settled softly upon the surface of the moon.

Hans Pfaall had arrived.

For several minutes he remained still, hardly daring to move. After such a long journey the quiet of the moment seemed almost unreal.

Finally he stood up slowly.

When he stepped out of the hat onto the moon's surface, he felt the strange lightness of his body even more strongly. Each movement carried him farther than he expected. Walking required careful balance.

The land beneath his feet was firm but dusty. Small particles of pale gray dust rose around his boots with every step.

Hans Pfaall looked around him in silence.

The sky above was dark, yet the sun shone brightly across the plain. In the distance he could see the tall walls of a great circular mountain. The shadows within its deep center stretched across the land like black rivers.

Behind him the balloon rested quietly where it had landed.

Far above the horizon he could see a new and wonderful sight.

The earth hung in the sky.

It appeared as a distant blue world shining softly in the darkness. The place where he had once lived now floated far away above the silent land of the moon.

Hans Pfaall stood there for a long time, watching that distant world.

At last he remembered the letter that he had written for the people of Rotterdam.

In that letter he had promised to describe his journey. He had explained how he

built the balloon, how he escaped from his troubles, and how he traveled through the sky toward the moon.

The letter had been delivered to the city many years later when he sent the strange balloon back toward the earth.

It was that letter that the burgomaster and Professor Rub-a-dub had opened in the great square of Rotterdam.

Through that message the citizens of the city finally learned the extraordinary story of the bellows mender who had dared to travel beyond the earth itself.

The Gold-Bug

Part 1

I lived for some time in the city of Charleston in South Carolina. During that period I became close friends with a man named William Legrand. His family had once been rich, but many losses had reduced him to poverty. Because of this change in his life, he left the city and moved to Sullivan's Island.

Sullivan's Island lies near Charleston. It is long and narrow. On one side is the sea, and on the other side there is a wide marsh. The island is mostly sand. Very few people live there. In fact, the place often feels quiet and lonely.

Legrand chose to live there because he wished to avoid society. He built a small hut among the trees not far from the shore. In this lonely place he spent most of his time walking through the woods or along the beach.

He did not live entirely alone. An old servant named Jupiter stayed with him. Jupiter had once belonged to Legrand's family when they were rich. Even after Legrand lost his fortune, Jupiter refused to leave him.

"I stay with young Massa Will," Jupiter would often say. "I not leave him no matter what happen."

Jupiter was old but strong. He cared for Legrand with great loyalty. He cooked, repaired the hut, and followed Legrand during many of his walks.

Legrand also had another interest that filled much of his time.

He loved to collect insects.

The woods and the sandy fields of the island were full of strange insects. Many were rare and beautiful. Legrand often searched for them with great excitement.

Sometimes he would return to his hut holding a small box.

"Look at this," he would say with shining eyes. "Have you ever seen such a creature?"

Inside the box there might be a bright green beetle or a large black insect with shining wings. He would study the insect carefully and describe its shape and color with great attention.

I must admit that I did not share his deep interest in insects. Still, I enjoyed his company. His mind was active and curious, and his conversation was often amusing.

Because Sullivan's Island was not far from Charleston, I sometimes visited him during my free time. When the weather was pleasant, I would cross the water and spend the day with him in his quiet home.

One evening in October I decided to visit him again.

The air had grown cool, and a strong wind was blowing from the sea. When I arrived at the hut, I found the door closed and the place dark. For a moment I feared that Legrand might not be home.

But just as I turned away, the door opened suddenly.

Jupiter stood there holding a candle.

"Ah! You come see Massa Will," he said with a wide smile. "Come in, sir. He inside."

I entered the hut.

A warm fire burned in the small fireplace. The room was simple but comfortable. Books lay on the table, and several boxes containing insects stood along the wall.

Legrand sat near the fire.

When he saw me, he rose quickly.

"My dear friend!" he cried. "I am glad you have come. The night is cold, and your visit is most welcome."

We shook hands warmly.

I sat near the fire while Jupiter placed another chair beside me.

"This wind from the sea is sharp tonight," I said.

"Yes," Legrand replied. "But the day was pleasant earlier. Jupiter and I walked a long distance along the shore this morning."

Jupiter nodded proudly.

"We find something today," he said.

Legrand smiled at this remark.

"Indeed we did," he said. "In fact, we discovered something very interesting."

I noticed that he seemed unusually excited.

“What did you find?” I asked.

Legrand looked toward the table.

“An insect,” he said.

I could not help laughing.

“Another insect?” I said. “You already have enough to fill a museum.”

“Ah, but this one is different,” Legrand replied. “It is unlike any insect I have ever seen.”

Jupiter stepped forward eagerly.

“Yes, sir,” he said. “That bug very strange.”

“Where is it?” I asked.

Legrand searched the table and then frowned slightly.

“I gave it to Lieutenant G— this afternoon,” he said. “He wished to examine it. But I made a drawing of it before he left.”

He reached for a piece of paper.

“Here,” he said. “Look at this.”

I took the paper and moved closer to the fire so that I could see the drawing clearly.

The picture showed a beetle.

The insect had a round body and long legs. But what caught my attention most was its color.

“Why,” I said after a moment, “this beetle looks like gold.”

Legrand’s eyes brightened.

“Exactly!” he said. “It shines like polished gold.”

Jupiter crossed his arms and shook his head slowly.

“That bug heavy too,” he said. “Very heavy for small bug.”

I studied the drawing again.

The insect indeed looked unusual. Its body appeared thick and smooth. On its back were two black marks.

I examined the paper more closely.

“These marks,” I said, “almost look like eyes.”

“Yes,” Legrand replied quietly.

I noticed that his tone had changed.

“In fact,” he continued slowly, “the shape of the insect reminds some people of something else.”

“Of what?” I asked.

He did not answer immediately.

Instead he watched me carefully as I studied the drawing again in the firelight.

Part 2

I continued to examine the drawing in the firelight. The more closely I looked at it, the more unusual the shape appeared. The body of the insect was round and smooth. The two black marks on its back stood out clearly against the bright surface.

After a moment I laughed softly.

“Legrand,” I said, “this does not look much like a beetle.”

He leaned forward.

“What do you mean?” he asked quickly.

I handed the paper back to him.

“To tell the truth,” I said, “it looks very much like a skull.”

Legrand stared at the paper in silence.

“A skull?” he repeated slowly.

Jupiter, who had been standing near the door, suddenly spoke.

“That bug look like skull,” he said with great seriousness. “I say that before.”

Legrand seemed annoyed.

“Nonsense,” he said sharply. “It is only the shape of the marks. The insect itself is clearly a beetle.”

I did not wish to argue.

“Very well,” I said calmly. “If you say it is a beetle, then it is a beetle.”

Yet I could not help noticing that the drawing really did resemble a skull. The two black spots looked like empty eye holes. A small dark line beneath them

suggested the shape of teeth.

Legrand continued to study the paper.

The firelight moved across his face. His expression slowly became thoughtful and strange.

At last he folded the paper carefully and placed it inside his pocket.

“It is a remarkable insect,” he said quietly. “I believe it may be very important.”

His voice carried a tone that surprised me.

“Important?” I asked. “In what way?”

He shook his head.

“I cannot explain yet,” he said. “But I have a strong feeling about it.”

Jupiter laughed softly.

“That bug bring good luck,” he said.

Legrand looked up quickly.

“Yes,” he said. “Perhaps it will.”

The conversation then turned to other subjects. We spoke about the weather and about life in Charleston. Yet I noticed that Legrand seemed distracted. From time to time he touched the pocket where he had placed the drawing.

After a while the wind outside grew stronger. The sound of the sea could be heard clearly through the trees.

I rose from my chair.

“It is getting late,” I said. “I must return to the city.”

Legrand walked with me to the door.

“Come again soon,” he said warmly.

“I will,” I replied.

Jupiter held the candle while I stepped outside. The cold wind struck my face at once. I wrapped my coat around me and began the journey back toward Charleston.

During the next several weeks I was busy with my work in the city. Because of this I did not visit Sullivan’s Island again for some time.

Then one afternoon something unexpected happened.

A servant arrived at my house carrying a message.

The message came from Jupiter.

It was written in rough handwriting.

The letter said:

“Dear Sir, please come see Massa Will as soon as you can. I very worried about him. He act strange since he find that gold bug. Please come quick.”

I read the message twice.

Jupiter rarely wrote letters, and his words seemed full of concern.

I prepared to leave immediately.

Within a short time I was crossing the water toward Sullivan’s Island once again.

The sun was already low when I reached the small hut among the trees.

Jupiter met me outside.

His face looked troubled.

“I very glad you come,” he said.

“What has happened?” I asked.

He lowered his voice.

“Massa Will not himself these days,” Jupiter said. “Ever since he find that bug, he think about it all the time.”

“Think about it in what way?” I asked.

Jupiter shook his head slowly.

“He talk strange,” he said. “He write numbers and marks on paper. He walk around the island looking at trees and rocks.”

I felt uneasy.

“Is he ill?” I asked.

Jupiter looked toward the hut.

“I not know,” he said. “But he act like man who have fever in the head.”

Just then the door of the hut opened.

Legrand stepped outside.

The moment he saw me, his face lit with excitement.

“My friend!” he cried. “You have come at last.”

Yet something about his appearance troubled me.

His eyes shone with unusual intensity. His movements were quick and restless.

He seized my hand eagerly.

“I have been waiting for you,” he said.

“For me?” I asked.

“Yes,” he replied. “You must help me tonight.”

“Help you with what?”

He looked around carefully before answering.

Then he spoke in a low voice.

“With a great discovery,” he said.

Part 3

I looked at Legrand with concern.

His words were excited, and his eyes shone in a strange way. I had never seen him behave quite like this before.

“A great discovery?” I repeated.

“Yes,” he said quickly. “Something very important.”

Jupiter shook his head behind him and muttered softly.

“That gold bug again,” he said.

Legrand turned toward him at once.

“Yes, Jupiter,” he said. “The bug has everything to do with it.”

Jupiter sighed deeply.

“I know it,” he said. “Ever since that bug come here, Massa Will not sleep right.”

I tried to calm the situation.

“Legrand,” I said gently, “perhaps you should explain what you mean.”

He nodded eagerly.

“I will,” he said. “But first we must go out.”

“Out?” I asked.

“Yes,” he replied. “We must go to the hills on the other side of the island. I need your help.”

The request surprised me.

“Tonight?” I said.

“Yes, tonight,” he answered firmly.

I looked at the sky. The sun was already low, and darkness would come soon.

“This seems very sudden,” I said.

Legrand smiled in an excited way.

“Great discoveries often come suddenly,” he replied.

Jupiter groaned softly.

“I not like this,” he said. “That bug bring trouble.”

Legrand turned to him.

“Bring the lantern,” he said. “And bring the shovel.”

“Shovel?” I said.

“Yes,” Legrand answered calmly. “We may need to dig.”

These words increased my concern.

I stepped closer to him.

“Legrand,” I said quietly, “are you certain you are well?”

He looked at me with seriousness.

“Perfectly well,” he said. “In fact, I have never felt more alive.”

His voice was steady, yet his excitement was obvious.

Jupiter returned with a lantern and two shovels. He also carried a small rope and several tools.

“Why all these things?” I asked.

Legrand picked up one of the shovels.

“You will understand soon,” he said.

The three of us then began walking away from the hut.

The evening air was cool and still. The sea could be heard in the distance, but otherwise the island was quiet.

Jupiter carried the lantern. Its yellow light moved across the sand and trees as we walked.

For some time Legrand said very little.

He walked quickly, often looking around as if searching for something.

At last I spoke again.

“Legrand,” I said, “I hope you will soon explain this adventure.”

He nodded.

“I promise that everything will become clear,” he replied.

Jupiter shook his head again.

“That bug make him crazy,” he said quietly to me.

I pretended not to hear.

After nearly an hour of walking, we reached a high hill covered with trees. The ground here was uneven, with rocks and roots everywhere.

Legrand stopped and looked carefully around the area.

“This is the place,” he said.

Jupiter set down the lantern.

The light revealed a tall tree standing alone near the top of the hill.

It was an old tree with wide branches spreading far in every direction.

Legrand pointed toward it.

“That is the tree,” he said.

I looked at it without understanding.

“What about it?” I asked.

Instead of answering directly, he turned to Jupiter.

“You must climb the tree,” he said.

Jupiter stared at him in shock.

“Climb that tree?” he said.

“Yes,” Legrand replied calmly.

Jupiter stepped back.

“No, sir,” he said. “I not climb tree tonight.”

Legrand’s voice became firm.

“You must,” he said. “The discovery depends on it.”

Jupiter looked at me helplessly.

“You hear that?” he said. “All because of that bug.”

Legrand reached into his pocket.

When he pulled out his hand, the golden beetle rested in his fingers.

The lantern light struck its surface, and it shone brightly.

“This insect,” Legrand said slowly, “will lead us to something very valuable.”

Jupiter looked at the bug with fear.

“I not touch that thing,” he said quickly.

Legrand smiled.

“You do not need to touch it,” he said. “But you must carry it.”

Jupiter groaned loudly.

“Oh no,” he said. “I knew that bug bring trouble.”

Meanwhile I stood beside them, watching with growing curiosity.

Whatever Legrand had discovered, it clearly meant a great deal to him.

And it seemed that the strange golden insect stood at the center of the mystery.

Part 4

Jupiter stood near the base of the tall tree, still holding the lantern. The light moved across the ground and over the rough bark of the trunk. The tree was very large, and its branches spread wide above our heads.

Jupiter looked up at it with great reluctance.

“Massa Will,” he said slowly, “that tree very tall.”

“Yes,” Legrand replied calmly. “And you must climb it.”

Jupiter sighed heavily.

“All because of that gold bug,” he said again.

Legrand stepped closer to him and placed the insect carefully into his hand.

“Take this with you,” he said.

Jupiter jumped back slightly.

“No, sir!” he cried. “I not hold that bug!”

“You must,” Legrand said firmly.

Jupiter looked at me with a helpless expression.

“Sir,” he said, “you see what he do to me?”

I tried to speak calmly.

“Jupiter,” I said, “it will not hurt you.”

Jupiter shook his head.

“That bug heavy,” he said. “Very heavy for small bug.”

Legrand spoke again.

“Tie the bug to the end of the string,” he said.

He handed Jupiter a small cord.

Jupiter tied the cord carefully around the body of the insect, keeping his fingers as far away from it as possible.

When he finished, the golden beetle hung at the end of the cord.

Legrand pointed upward into the tree.

“Now climb,” he said.

Jupiter looked once more at the tall trunk.

After a moment he began to climb slowly.

The bark of the tree was rough, and the large branches helped him move upward. The lantern remained on the ground, so his body soon disappeared into the darkness above.

Legrand watched him carefully.

“Climb higher,” he called.

Jupiter’s voice came from above.

“I climbing,” he said.

For several minutes we heard only the sound of his movement among the branches.

At last Legrand called again.

“How high are you now?”

Jupiter answered from the darkness.

“I near big branch,” he said.

“Good,” Legrand replied. “Climb onto that branch and move outward.”

There was a pause.

“Move outward?” Jupiter repeated nervously.

“Yes,” Legrand said. “Go out along the branch.”

I could hear the leaves shaking as Jupiter moved slowly along the branch.

After a moment he spoke again.

“Massa Will,” he called, “I see something strange up here.”

Legrand’s voice became sharp.

“What do you see?”

Jupiter answered slowly.

“I see skull,” he said.

Legrand took a step forward.

“A skull?” he repeated.

“Yes,” Jupiter said. “A white skull nailed to the branch.”

The discovery startled me.

“A human skull?” I asked quietly.

Jupiter replied from above.

“Yes, sir,” he said. “Old skull.”

Legrand’s excitement increased at once.

“Listen carefully,” he called. “Find the left eye of the skull.”

There was another pause.

Jupiter spoke again.

“Left eye?” he said.

“Yes,” Legrand replied. “The left eye.”

Jupiter muttered something that I could not clearly hear.

At last he said, “I find the eye hole.”

“Good,” Legrand said quickly. “Now take the bug and drop it through the eye.”

Jupiter sounded confused.

“Drop bug through skull eye?” he asked.

“Exactly,” Legrand said.

I watched the tree anxiously.

A moment later the cord appeared in the darkness above. The golden beetle hung from its end.

Jupiter lowered it carefully through one of the empty holes of the skull.

The insect then began to descend slowly toward the ground.

Legrand followed the cord with intense attention.

When the beetle reached the ground, he stepped forward and marked the exact spot where it touched the earth.

Then he measured a short distance from the tree.

“Bring the shovel,” he said.

Jupiter climbed down slowly from the tree. When he reached the ground, he looked tired and unhappy.

“That bug make me climb tree and talk to skull,” he said.

Legrand ignored the complaint.

He measured another distance from the tree and placed a stick in the ground.

“This is the place,” he said.

He picked up a shovel and began to dig.

Jupiter and I joined him.

For several minutes we worked in silence.

The lantern cast long shadows across the ground as the three of us dug deeper and deeper into the earth.

Part 5

We continued digging in the soft earth beneath the tree. The lantern stood on the ground nearby, and its light moved across our faces and the dark soil that we lifted from the hole.

Legrand worked with great energy. He seemed full of excitement and hope. Jupiter and I dug beside him, though we did not fully understand what he expected to find.

The hole slowly became deeper.

For nearly half an hour we continued our work. Sweat covered Legrand’s face even though the night air was cool. Jupiter paused several times to wipe his hands and shake his head.

“All this digging because of that bug,” he muttered.

At last Legrand stopped.

He looked down into the hole carefully.

For a moment he said nothing.

Then he stepped back slowly.

“Nothing,” he said.

I leaned forward and examined the hole myself. It was deep enough that we should have found something if anything had been buried there.

But the ground was empty.

Legrand stood very still.

The excitement that had filled him earlier now faded from his face. He looked confused and disappointed.

Jupiter rested his shovel on the ground.

“I tell you,” he said, “that bug bring trouble.”

I placed my hand on Legrand’s shoulder.

“Perhaps there is some mistake,” I said gently.

Legrand did not answer immediately.

He walked slowly around the hole, studying the ground and the tree. His expression became thoughtful.

Suddenly he turned toward Jupiter.

“When you dropped the bug,” he said, “which eye of the skull did you use?”

Jupiter looked surprised.

“Which eye?” he said.

“Yes,” Legrand replied. “The left eye.”

Jupiter frowned and rubbed his head.

“I drop bug through eye,” he said.

“But which one?” Legrand asked again.

Jupiter raised his hand and pointed to one of his own eyes.

“This one,” he said.

Legrand stared at him.

“That is your right eye,” he said slowly.

Jupiter looked confused.

“Right eye?” he said.

“Yes,” Legrand said firmly. “Your right eye.”

Jupiter looked at his hands and then at his face as if trying to understand.

“But I think that my left eye,” he said.

Legrand suddenly laughed.

“That explains everything!” he cried.

His excitement returned at once.

“We dug in the wrong place.”

Jupiter sighed loudly.

“Now we dig again?” he asked.

“Yes,” Legrand replied. “But not here.”

He walked back to the tree and measured another position on the ground. The distance was only a few feet away from the first hole.

He placed the stick in the new position.

“This time we will find it,” he said with confidence.

Jupiter looked unhappy but picked up his shovel again.

“That bug make us dig whole island,” he said.

We began digging once more.

The earth here was similar to the soil in the first hole. The work was not easy, but Legrand’s excitement encouraged us to continue.

As we dug deeper, the hole slowly widened.

After several minutes Jupiter suddenly stopped.

“Massa Will!” he cried.

“What is it?” Legrand asked quickly.

Jupiter pointed into the hole.

“I hit something,” he said.

Legrand jumped forward.

We cleared away the loose soil carefully.

Soon the top of a wooden object appeared beneath the dirt.

Legrand’s voice trembled with excitement.

“A box,” he said.

The wood looked old but strong. Iron bands crossed its surface.

“Keep digging,” Legrand said.

We worked quickly now.

Within a short time the entire object became visible. It was a large chest buried deep in the ground.

The iron bands were thick, and the lid appeared tightly closed.

Legrand knelt beside the chest and brushed the remaining soil away with his hands.

His face shone with excitement.

“We have found it,” he whispered.

Jupiter stared at the chest with wide eyes.

“What inside?” he asked.

Legrand looked up at us.

“Treasure,” he said quietly.

The word seemed almost unreal in the silent night.

For a moment none of us spoke.

Then Legrand grasped the iron handle and tried to lift the lid of the chest.

Part 6

Legrand grasped the iron handle of the chest and pulled with all his strength. The lid did not open at once. The wood had remained buried in the earth for many years, and the iron bands held it tightly shut.

“Bring the lantern closer,” he said.

Jupiter lifted the lantern and held it near the chest. The yellow light fell across the dark wood and the iron bands that crossed its surface.

Legrand examined the lock carefully.

“It is old,” he said. “But we can open it.”

He took a small tool from his pocket and began working at the metal clasp. The sound of iron moving against iron broke the deep silence of the night.

Jupiter leaned forward eagerly.

“I want see inside,” he said.

After a few moments there was a sharp sound.

The clasp broke open.

Legrand placed both hands under the edge of the lid and slowly lifted it.

The lid rose with a heavy creak.

The lantern light fell inside the chest.
For a moment none of us spoke.
The chest was full of gold.
Coins of bright yellow metal filled the box almost to the top. Among them lay rings, chains, and other objects made of gold and precious stones.
The sight was so astonishing that we simply stared in silence.
At last Jupiter let out a loud cry.
“Gold!” he shouted.
He dropped his shovel and fell to his knees beside the chest.
“So much gold!” he said.
Legrand stood motionless.
His face looked pale in the lantern light.
“At last,” he whispered.
I leaned closer to examine the treasure.
The chest contained not only coins but many pieces of jewelry. Some were rings with bright stones. Others were chains and crosses made of heavy gold. There were also several small objects that appeared to be made of silver.
The coins themselves came from many different countries.
Some looked Spanish. Others appeared French or English. The marks on them showed that they were very old.
Jupiter laughed with joy.
“We rich now!” he cried.
He lifted several coins and let them fall through his fingers so that they made a bright ringing sound inside the chest.
Legrand finally moved again.
“Careful,” he said quietly.
His voice sounded calmer now, but his eyes still shone with excitement.
“We must remove the treasure from the ground.”
The chest itself was very heavy.
Even with the three of us lifting together, it barely moved.
“Too heavy,” Jupiter said.

Legrand nodded.

“Then we must take the gold out piece by piece.”

We began removing the coins and jewelry from the chest.

Jupiter spread a cloth on the ground beside us. One by one we placed the treasure onto the cloth.

The pile of gold grew larger and larger.

The lantern light reflected brightly from the coins and jewels.

Some of the stones shone with deep red color. Others were clear and bright like drops of frozen water.

As we worked, Legrand examined several of the objects carefully.

“These are very old,” he said. “This treasure must have been buried here long ago.”

Jupiter continued laughing happily.

“I always know that bug special,” he said.

Legrand smiled slightly.

“Yes,” he said. “The gold bug led us to this discovery.”

At last the chest became light enough to move.

We lifted it out of the hole and placed it on the ground beside the pile of treasure.

Then we filled the hole with soil so that the place would not appear disturbed.

After that we gathered the gold and jewelry carefully into two large cloth bundles.

Even after removing much of the treasure, the bundles were still extremely heavy.

Jupiter looked at them with amazement.

“I never see so much gold in my life,” he said.

Legrand closed the empty chest and looked around the quiet hill.

The trees stood dark against the night sky. The lantern cast long shadows across the ground where we had dug.

“We must return to the hut,” he said.

“And we must move carefully.”

Jupiter lifted one of the bundles with difficulty.

“This heavy,” he said.

I took the other bundle, while Legrand carried the lantern and several tools.

Slowly the three of us began the long walk back through the dark woods of Sullivan’s Island.

Behind us the silent hill and the tall tree remained standing under the quiet night sky.

Part 7

The journey back to the hut was slow and difficult. The bundles of gold and jewels were extremely heavy. Jupiter and I had to stop many times along the path to rest our arms.

Legrand walked ahead with the lantern, lighting the way through the dark woods. The soft yellow light moved across the sand and tree roots as we advanced step by step.

Jupiter continued speaking excitedly as we walked.

“So much gold,” he said again and again. “More gold than whole city.”

Legrand smiled slightly but said very little. His excitement had become quieter now, almost thoughtful.

At last we reached the hut.

Jupiter pushed the door open with his shoulder while still holding the bundle. We carried the treasure inside and placed it carefully on the table and floor.

The room soon filled with the bright shine of gold.

Even in the dim light of the lantern, the coins and jewels reflected light in every direction. The sight was almost unbelievable.

Jupiter stared at the treasure with wide eyes.

“Massa Will,” he said softly, “we rich men now.”

Legrand sat down slowly in a chair.

For several minutes he looked at the treasure without speaking.

Then he turned toward me.

“My friend,” he said calmly, “you must wonder how I knew that the treasure

was buried there.”

I nodded.

“Indeed I do,” I replied. “Your discovery seems almost magical.”

Jupiter also listened closely.

“Yes,” he said. “I want know too.”

Legrand reached into his pocket and removed the piece of paper on which he had drawn the golden insect.

He spread the paper on the table.

“Everything began with this,” he said.

I leaned closer.

The drawing of the insect was still clearly visible. The two black marks on its back gave it the appearance of a skull.

Legrand pointed to the paper.

“You remember that evening when you first looked at this drawing,” he said.

“Yes,” I replied.

“You said that the insect looked like a skull.”

I nodded.

“That remark made me think,” Legrand continued.

“When you left the hut that night, I examined the paper again near the fire. Suddenly I noticed something strange.”

Jupiter leaned forward eagerly.

“What strange?” he asked.

Legrand continued speaking.

“The paper on which I made the drawing was not ordinary paper. It was actually a piece of old parchment that I had picked up earlier on the beach.”

“Parchment?” I repeated.

“Yes,” Legrand said.

“While I was studying the drawing near the fire, the heat caused faint marks to appear on the parchment.”

He tapped the paper with his finger.

“Marks that had been hidden before.”

Jupiter looked puzzled.

“Hidden marks?” he said.

“Yes,” Legrand replied.

“At first I saw only a shape that looked like a skull. Then I noticed other marks beside it.”

I studied the paper again.

“You mean there was writing on it?” I asked.

Legrand nodded.

“Exactly,” he said.

“The heat from the fire revealed a secret message that had been written on the parchment long ago.”

Jupiter gasped.

“Secret message?” he said.

Legrand smiled.

“Yes,” he said quietly.

“A message that told the location of Captain Kidd’s treasure.”

The name surprised me.

Captain Kidd was famous as a pirate who had sailed the seas many years earlier. Many people believed that he had hidden great treasures somewhere along the coast.

“So the parchment contained directions?” I asked.

“Not exactly directions,” Legrand said.

“It contained a code.”

Jupiter looked confused again.

“Code?” he repeated.

Legrand nodded.

“A message written in secret signs and numbers.”

He reached into his pocket once more and removed another paper.

On it were many strange symbols and numbers written in careful lines.

“This,” he said, “is the message I discovered.”

I studied the symbols.

They appeared like a long series of numbers mixed with unusual marks.

Jupiter stared at them with complete confusion.

“I not understand nothing,” he said.

Legrand laughed softly.

“At first I did not understand it either,” he said.

“But after careful study I was able to solve the code.”

His eyes shone again with quiet pride.

“And when I solved it,” he continued, “it led me directly to the treasure we found tonight.”

Part 8

I looked closely at the strange paper that Legrand had placed on the table. The lines of numbers and symbols still seemed completely confusing to me. I could not imagine how anyone could understand such a message.

Jupiter shook his head slowly.

“That look like nonsense,” he said.

Legrand smiled calmly.

“It appears that way,” he said. “But there is a method behind it.”

He sat down beside the table and placed the lantern closer so that we could see the paper clearly.

“This message,” he said, “was written in a simple kind of secret writing.”

I leaned forward with interest.

“Explain it,” I said.

Legrand nodded.

“When people wish to hide a message,” he said, “they sometimes replace letters with numbers or symbols. Each symbol stands for a letter of the alphabet.”

Jupiter frowned.

“You mean number stand for word?” he asked.

“Not exactly,” Legrand replied. “A number stands for a letter.”

He pointed to the paper.

“For example, if one symbol appears more often than any other, it probably stands for the letter that appears most often in English.”

I thought for a moment.

“That letter would be E,” I said.

“Exactly,” Legrand replied.

Jupiter looked impressed.

“You find that out from numbers?” he asked.

Legrand laughed softly.

“Yes,” he said. “After counting the symbols, I saw that one of them appeared more than any other.”

He pointed to a symbol that appeared again and again in the message.

“That symbol must represent the letter E.”

I examined the paper again.

“And after that?” I asked.

“After that,” Legrand continued, “I looked for groups of symbols that appeared often. These groups likely formed common words.”

Jupiter scratched his head.

“Still sound like magic,” he said.

Legrand continued explaining patiently.

“Some short words appear very often in English. Words like ‘the’ and ‘of.’ When I found patterns that matched these words, I began to replace the symbols with letters.”

He pointed to another group of symbols.

“This group appeared many times. It had the pattern of the word ‘the.’”

I nodded slowly.

“So once you discovered a few words, the rest became easier.”

“Exactly,” Legrand said.

“Little by little the entire message became clear.”

Jupiter leaned closer.

“What message say?” he asked eagerly.

Legrand unfolded another piece of paper.

“After solving the code,” he said, “this is what the message said.”

He read slowly from the paper:

“A good glass in the bishop’s hostel in the devil’s seat — forty one degrees and thirteen minutes — northeast and by north — main branch seventh limb east side — shoot from the left eye of the death’s head — a bee line from the tree through the shot fifty feet out.”

When he finished reading, the room was silent.

Jupiter looked completely confused.

“That make no sense,” he said.

I must admit that I felt almost the same.

“It sounds like directions,” I said slowly, “but the meaning is unclear.”

Legrand nodded.

“Yes,” he said. “At first I was also confused. But I studied each part carefully.”

He stood up and began explaining the message step by step.

“The ‘bishop’s hostel’ refers to a large rock formation on the island,” he said.

“The shape of the rock resembles the seat of a bishop.”

Jupiter nodded slowly.

“I know that rock,” he said.

“Exactly,” Legrand continued.

“The message then gives directions using angles and distance. When I followed those directions, they led me to the tall tree that we visited tonight.”

I began to understand.

“And the part about the ‘death’s head’ refers to the skull that was nailed to the branch,” I said.

“Yes,” Legrand replied.

“The message told us to drop something through the left eye of the skull and measure the distance from that point.”

Jupiter suddenly laughed.

“But I drop bug through wrong eye,” he said.

Legrand smiled.

“Yes,” he said. “That is why we first dug in the wrong place.”

Jupiter shook his head.

“That skull trick us,” he said.

Legrand leaned back in his chair.

“In truth,” he said quietly, “the gold bug helped me find the treasure.”

I looked at the bright pile of coins and jewels on the table.

It was still difficult to believe that such a discovery had begun with a simple insect found on the beach.

Yet the shining gold before us proved that Legrand’s strange adventure had been real.

And all of it had begun with the discovery of the golden bug.

Part 9

For a long time the three of us remained in the small hut, studying the treasure that lay spread across the table and floor. The lantern light shone on the coins and jewels so brightly that the room seemed filled with yellow fire.

Jupiter sat beside the pile of gold with an expression of pure happiness.

From time to time he lifted a handful of coins and allowed them to fall again with a clear ringing sound.

“I never see so much gold,” he said again.

Legrand smiled at his excitement.

“Neither have I,” he replied calmly.

Yet even while he spoke, his eyes remained thoughtful. The discovery of the treasure had not made him careless or foolish. Instead he seemed to consider carefully what must be done next.

After a while he stood up and began sorting the treasure into different groups.

“We must examine everything carefully,” he said.

I helped him place the coins in several piles. Some of them were Spanish coins. Others came from England and France. The marks on many of them showed that they were very old.

Jupiter picked up a chain made of heavy gold.

“This belong to king,” he said with admiration.

Legrand laughed softly.

“Perhaps it once belonged to a pirate captain,” he said.

Among the coins we also found many jewels.

Some were red stones that shone deeply in the lantern light. Others were clear stones that reflected light in every direction. There were also green stones that glowed softly.

“These must be worth a great deal,” I said.

Legrand nodded.

“Yes,” he said. “This treasure may be worth many thousands of dollars.”

Jupiter looked amazed.

“Thousands?” he repeated.

Legrand smiled.

“Perhaps even more.”

The discovery felt almost unreal.

Only a few hours earlier we had been digging in the dark earth beneath the tree. Now the room before us glittered with wealth beyond anything we had imagined.

At last Legrand finished examining the treasure.

He sat down again and looked at me.

“My friend,” he said, “without your help tonight I might never have recovered this treasure.”

I shook my head.

“The discovery was yours,” I replied. “You solved the secret message.”

Jupiter nodded eagerly.

“Yes,” he said. “Massa Will very smart man.”

Legrand smiled modestly.

“Perhaps,” he said.

Then he reached toward the table and picked up the golden insect.

The bug lay quietly in his hand. Its body still shone like bright metal in the lantern light.

“And yet,” he said thoughtfully, “none of this would have happened without

this little creature.”

Jupiter looked at the insect with mixed feelings.

“That bug make me climb tree,” he said.

Legrand laughed.

“Yes,” he replied. “But it also led us to Captain Kidd’s treasure.”

Jupiter slowly nodded.

“Maybe that bug good luck after all,” he said.

We spent the rest of the night counting and arranging the treasure. By morning we had a clear idea of its great value.

Later the treasure was safely removed from the island and divided properly.

Legrand’s life changed greatly after that discovery. The wealth he had found freed him from the poverty that had forced him to live in isolation on Sullivan’s Island.

Yet he never forgot the strange events that had led to the treasure.

Whenever he spoke of it, he always began with the same story.

The story of the golden insect that he had found on the beach.

The small shining creature that had led him to one of the greatest treasures ever discovered along the coast.

Four Beasts in One — The Homo-Cameleopard

Part 1

I lived for some time in the ancient city of Antioch. In those days the city was large and busy. Merchants came there from many lands. Soldiers marched through the streets. Priests spoke in the temples, and crowds filled the markets.

Yet for all its life and noise, the city was also a place of fear.

Strange events had begun to trouble the people. Stories spread through the streets about a terrible creature that had appeared at night. Some said it was an animal. Others said it was a monster sent by dark powers.

The people called it the *Homo-Cameleopard*.

No one could describe the creature clearly. Those who claimed to see it spoke in confused and frightened voices. One man said the beast had the body of a camel. Another swore that it had the spotted skin of a leopard. Others said it walked like a man.

These strange stories caused great alarm.

At night many people refused to leave their homes. Guards stood at the city gates. Even the soldiers spoke nervously about the mysterious beast.

I did not believe the stories at first.

Many rumors grow larger each time they are repeated. A small event can become a terrible legend when fear spreads through a city.

Still, the stories continued.

One evening I walked through the public square and heard several men speaking together.

“It was taller than any man,” one said.

“No,” another replied. “It moved on four legs like a great animal.”

A third man shook his head.

“You are both wrong,” he said. “I saw it clearly. It stood upright like a man, but its neck was long like a camel.”

The others looked at him in horror.

“Then it is truly the Homo-Cameleopard,” one whispered.

I could not help smiling at the strange name.

The word seemed to combine two animals. A camel and a leopard. Such a creature could hardly exist.

Yet the fear among the people was real.

As the days passed, the stories became more serious.

Some said that the creature had attacked animals near the city walls. Others claimed that it had appeared suddenly in the streets at night and then vanished into the darkness.

The leaders of the city soon became concerned.

Antioch at that time was ruled by a king named Antiochus Epiphanes. He was a powerful ruler, but many people believed that he was also a cruel and proud man.

When the stories of the strange beast reached him, he became very angry.

“This creature must be found,” he declared.

Soldiers were ordered to search the city and the nearby fields.

For several nights they walked through the streets carrying torches and weapons. Yet they found nothing.

The people continued to whisper about the beast.

Fear spread through every part of the city.

I remember one particular night when the moon was bright and the streets were quiet. I was walking along a narrow road near the outer wall when I heard sudden shouting in the distance.

“The beast!” someone cried.

Several men ran past me in terror.

I turned quickly toward the direction of the noise.

At the far end of the street I thought I saw a tall shadow moving in the moonlight.

The shape was strange.

For a moment it seemed to move like an animal. Then it appeared to stand upright like a man.

The sight lasted only an instant.

The shadow disappeared behind a wall, and silence returned to the street.
I stood still, trying to decide what I had seen.
Perhaps it was only a trick of the moonlight.
Yet the movement had looked real.
When I returned home that night, the image of the strange figure remained in my mind.
I began to wonder whether the people of Antioch might not be entirely mistaken.
Perhaps something truly unusual was moving through the city at night.
Perhaps the mysterious *Homo-Cameleopard* was not merely a rumor after all.

Part 2

The next morning the entire city of Antioch spoke about the strange event that had taken place during the night. Groups of people stood in the streets and argued about what they had seen or heard.

Some claimed that the beast had run through the market. Others said it had leaped over the outer wall like a great animal.

No two stories were exactly the same.

Yet every story increased the fear of the people.

I walked through the crowded streets and listened carefully to the conversations around me.

“It has the neck of a camel,” one man said.

“No,” another replied. “It has the spots of a leopard.”

A third man added nervously, “And it walks like a man.”

These strange descriptions gave the creature its strange name.

The *Homo-Cameleopard*.

The word sounded almost like a joke, yet no one in the city laughed.

The king himself soon heard the reports of the night’s disturbance.

Antiochus Epiphanes was not a patient man. When the officers of the city told him about the growing fear among the people, his face darkened with anger.

“A monster in my city?” he said.

“Impossible.”

The officers bowed their heads.

“Yet the people believe it is true,” one of them said.

The king rose from his seat.

“Then we will end these foolish rumors,” he declared.

He ordered a large group of soldiers to search every part of the city.

Guards were placed at the gates so that no creature could escape. Torches were lit throughout the streets during the night.

The search began at once.

Soldiers walked through narrow streets and dark alleys. They examined empty houses and hidden corners of the city wall.

Yet the strange beast did not appear.

For several nights nothing happened.

Some people began to say that the creature had left the city.

Others believed that the soldiers had frightened it away.

But on the fourth night something even more alarming occurred.

A loud cry suddenly rose from the southern part of the city.

“The beast!” someone shouted again.

The cry spread quickly through the streets.

Within moments many people ran outside to see what was happening. Some carried torches. Others held sticks or knives.

I was among those who followed the noise.

When I reached the southern square, I found a large crowd gathered there. The people stood in a wide circle, staring toward the center of the open space.

At first I could see nothing clearly.

The torches moved wildly as people pushed forward.

Then the crowd suddenly parted.

And there, standing in the middle of the square, I saw the strange creature.

The sight was astonishing.

The body of the creature appeared large and powerful. Its back seemed to carry the shape of several animals at once. Parts of it reminded me of a horse. Other

parts looked more like a camel.

Its skin showed dark marks that resembled the spots of a leopard.

Yet the most disturbing feature was the way it moved.

For a moment it walked on four legs like an animal.

Then it rose partly upright like a man.

The crowd gasped in terror.

“The Homo-Cameleopard!” someone cried.

The creature turned its head slowly as if looking at the people surrounding it.

The torchlight flickered across its strange form.

Some people ran away at once. Others stood frozen with fear.

Just then the soldiers arrived.

Their leader shouted an order, and the men moved forward with their weapons raised.

The creature seemed confused by the noise and movement around it.

It stepped backward.

Then suddenly it began to run.

The soldiers rushed after it.

The chase moved quickly through the narrow streets of the city. Torches flashed in the darkness as the crowd followed behind.

I ran with them, determined to see what would happen.

The strange beast moved in an awkward way, yet it ran faster than many of the soldiers. Several times it turned corners and nearly escaped.

But the streets were full of people now.

At last the creature reached a narrow passage where escape became difficult.

Soldiers closed in from both sides.

The beast stumbled.

In another moment the soldiers seized it and forced it to the ground.

The crowd rushed forward to see the captured monster.

Yet what we saw then surprised us even more than the chase itself.

Part 3

The crowd pushed forward eagerly as the soldiers forced the strange creature to the ground. Torches were lifted high so that everyone could see clearly.

The soldiers held the creature tightly.

For a moment it struggled and twisted beneath their hands. Its strange body moved in a confused way, as if several animals were fighting inside it at once.

Then at last it grew still.

The captain of the soldiers stepped closer.

“Hold the beast,” he ordered.

The men tightened their grip.

The torchlight fell directly upon the creature.

A murmur passed through the crowd.

The sight before us was truly strange.

The creature appeared to have the form of several animals joined together. Its long neck reminded many people of a camel. Dark spots covered parts of its body like the skin of a leopard.

Yet something about the shape seemed unnatural.

I moved closer so that I could see better.

The longer I looked, the more curious the sight became.

Pieces of animal skin seemed to hang loosely across the body. Strange shapes were tied together with cords and straps.

The creature lifted its head slightly.

In that moment the truth began to appear.

Beneath the skins and coverings was not a beast at all.

It was a man.

The crowd gasped loudly.

The soldiers pulled away part of the covering, and the face of the man became visible.

His hair was wild and his expression looked confused and frightened.

For several seconds no one spoke.

Then voices began to rise from every side.

“It is a man!”

“A man dressed like a beast!”

The soldiers lifted him to his feet.

The strange coverings fell partly away from his body.

Now everyone could clearly see what had happened.

Several pieces of animal skin had been tied together around him. Long shapes had been added to make the body appear larger and more unusual.

In the darkness of the streets and under the moving torchlight, these coverings had created the appearance of a strange animal.

The famous Homo-Cameleopard had been nothing more than a man wearing a strange disguise.

Yet the discovery did not calm the crowd.

Instead the people grew angry.

“He frightened the whole city!” someone shouted.

“Punish him!” cried another.

The soldiers held the man firmly as the crowd pressed closer.

Just then a messenger arrived from the palace.

“The king orders that the prisoner be brought to him at once,” the messenger said.

The soldiers nodded.

They tied the man’s hands and began leading him through the streets toward the royal palace.

The crowd followed behind in great excitement.

I walked with them, eager to learn the truth behind the strange events that had troubled the city.

When we reached the palace, the guards opened the gates and allowed the soldiers to enter.

The king sat in a large hall surrounded by officers and servants.

When the prisoner was brought before him, Antiochus Epiphanes looked at him with cold curiosity.

“So,” the king said slowly, “this is the terrible beast that frightened my city.”

The soldiers pushed the prisoner forward.
The animal skins fell completely away from his body.
The man stood trembling before the king.
For a moment Antiochus studied him in silence.
Then a strange smile appeared on the king's face.
The truth behind the mysterious *Homo-Cameleopard* was about to be revealed.

Part 4

The prisoner stood trembling before the king. The strange coverings of animal skin lay scattered on the floor around him. Without them he appeared to be nothing more than an ordinary man.

King Antiochus Epiphanes leaned forward slightly on his seat and studied the prisoner with narrow eyes.

The hall was quiet.

Soldiers stood in a line along the walls. Officers and servants watched in silence. Behind them the people of the city crowded near the entrance, eager to hear what would happen next.

At last the king spoke.

“Who are you?” he asked.

The man hesitated.

His face showed fear and confusion. For a moment he seemed unable to answer.

One of the soldiers pushed him forward.

“Speak,” the soldier said.

The prisoner swallowed nervously.

“I am a poor man, my lord,” he said.

The king's expression did not change.

“Why did you dress yourself like a monster?” he asked.

The man looked down at the floor.

“I meant no harm,” he said quickly.

A murmur passed through the crowd.

“No harm?” someone whispered.

The king raised his hand and the room became silent again.

“Explain yourself,” he said calmly.

The prisoner began speaking slowly.

“I wished only to frighten the people,” he said.

The crowd reacted with anger.

“Frighten us?” one man shouted.

The guards forced the crowd back into silence.

The king continued watching the prisoner.

“And why would you wish to frighten my city?” he asked.

The man hesitated again.

Then he spoke quietly.

“Because the people would run,” he said.

“Run?” the king repeated.

“Yes,” the man answered.

“If they ran from the streets at night, the city would become empty.”

The king’s eyes grew sharper.

“And what would you do in these empty streets?” he asked.

The prisoner looked ashamed.

“I would take what I could find,” he said.

A loud wave of anger moved through the crowd.

“A thief!” someone shouted.

The truth had become clear.

The man had used the strange disguise to frighten the people away from the streets. When they fled in terror, he could move freely through the city and steal whatever he wished.

The king leaned back slowly in his seat.

For several moments he said nothing.

Then he looked again at the pile of skins and strange shapes that had formed the disguise.

“You created quite a remarkable creature,” he said.

The man remained silent.

The king stood up.

“You frightened my city,” he said.

“You caused fear among my people and disorder in my streets.”

The prisoner lowered his head.

“Forgive me, my lord,” he said weakly.

The king’s voice grew cold.

“A lesson must be given,” he said.

The hall became silent again.

Everyone waited to hear the king’s decision.

Antiochus looked once more at the strange skins that had formed the famous *Homo-Cameleopard*.

Then he spoke to the soldiers.

“Take this man away,” he said.

“Let the city see clearly what their terrible monster truly was.”

The soldiers seized the prisoner and led him from the hall.

The crowd followed them into the streets.

Word spread quickly through Antioch that the mysterious beast had been nothing more than a foolish thief wearing animal skins.

Soon the fear that had troubled the city disappeared.

People laughed at the strange story.

The name *Homo-Cameleopard*, which had once filled the streets with terror, became only a curious joke remembered by those who had seen the events themselves.

The Murders in the Rue Morgue

Part 1

During the time that I lived in Paris, I became close friends with a man named C. Auguste Dupin. Our friendship began in a quiet and unusual way.

I had gone to Paris to live for a period of study and reflection. My life there was simple. I spent much of my time reading and walking through the city.

One evening I visited a small library in the Rue Montmartre. While I was searching for a rare book, another man entered the room and asked for the same work.

That man was Dupin.

Our shared interest in the book quickly led to conversation. I soon learned that he possessed a remarkable mind. His ideas were clear and original, and he spoke with a calm intelligence that impressed me greatly.

Before long we discovered that our interests were very similar. Both of us loved books, quiet thought, and long discussions about strange and curious subjects.

Because of this, we decided to live together.

We found a large old house in a quiet part of the city called the Faubourg Saint-Germain. The house was somewhat ruined and had stood empty for many years, but this suited our purpose perfectly.

We wanted privacy and silence.

Our life soon developed a strange routine.

During the day we kept the shutters closed so that very little light entered the house. The rooms remained dark and calm while we read or spoke together.

At night we went out into the streets of Paris.

We walked for hours through the quiet roads and narrow passages of the city. Sometimes we spoke very little. At other times we discussed ideas that seemed strange or amusing.

Dupin possessed a remarkable ability.

He could follow the thoughts of another person with astonishing accuracy.

On several occasions he surprised me by explaining exactly what I had been thinking.

I remember one night in particular.

We were walking along a narrow street when suddenly Dupin spoke.

“You are thinking,” he said calmly, “that the actor Chantilly would make a poor king in a tragedy.”

I stopped walking and stared at him.

“That is true,” I said. “But how could you possibly know what I was thinking?”

Dupin smiled slightly.

He then explained every step of the chain of thought that had led my mind to that conclusion.

His explanation was so exact that I could not deny its truth.

From that moment I understood that Dupin possessed a rare power of analysis.

His mind could observe small details and connect them in ways that other people never noticed.

It was this ability that soon led us into one of the most remarkable events I have ever experienced.

One morning the newspapers of Paris began to report a terrible crime.

The crime had taken place in a street called the Rue Morgue.

The story spread through the city quickly because the details were so strange and frightening.

Two women had been murdered in a house there.

The violence of the crime was shocking. Even the police seemed unable to understand what had happened.

Dupin read the newspaper report carefully.

When he finished, he placed the paper on the table and sat in silence for several minutes.

At last he spoke.

“This case is unusual,” he said.

I looked at him with interest.

“In what way?” I asked.

Dupin picked up the newspaper again.

“The details,” he said slowly. “They contain several points that appear impossible.”

He handed the paper to me.

“Read it,” he said.

I began to read the report of the terrible events that had taken place in the Rue Morgue.

I did not yet realize that this strange crime would soon draw both Dupin and myself into a mystery that would astonish the entire city of Paris.

Part 2

I read the newspaper report carefully.

The story began with a description of the house where the crime had taken place. It stood in a quiet part of the Rue Morgue, a narrow street not far from the center of Paris.

The house belonged to two women who lived there alone.

One of them was an old woman named Madame L’Espanaye. The other was her daughter, a young woman named Mademoiselle Camille L’Espanaye.

According to the newspaper, the two women lived a very private life. They rarely received visitors and spent most of their time inside the house.

The neighbors described them as quiet and respectable.

Nothing about their lives suggested that danger might come to them.

Yet one night the peaceful street was suddenly disturbed by terrible cries.

Several people who lived nearby heard loud screams coming from the house of the L’Espanaye women.

The cries sounded so frightening that the neighbors quickly gathered outside.

One man ran to the door and tried to open it.

But the door was locked from the inside.

More people arrived.

Soon a small crowd stood in front of the house, listening to the terrible sounds

that continued inside.

The voices seemed to belong to more than one person.

One voice sounded like that of a woman in great pain.

The other voice sounded strange and unfamiliar.

Some people thought it spoke French.

Others believed it spoke a different language.

No one could understand the words clearly.

At last the neighbors forced the door open.

Several men rushed into the house.

The cries suddenly stopped.

The men ran up the stairs toward the room where the sounds had come from.

But when they reached the room, they found something horrifying.

The room was in complete disorder.

Chairs lay broken across the floor. Furniture had been thrown aside. The bed had been moved from its place.

Yet the women were not immediately visible.

The men searched the room in confusion.

Suddenly one of them looked toward the fireplace.

There they found the body of the young woman.

The sight was shocking.

Her body had been forced head downward into the chimney of the fireplace.

It had been pushed so far inside that several men were needed to pull it out.

The marks on her throat showed that she had been strangled.

The men in the room stood in silence, unable to understand what had happened.

Then someone cried out from the courtyard behind the house.

The body of the old woman had been discovered there.

Her injuries were even more terrible.

Her throat had been cut so deeply that her head was almost separated from her body.

Many bones in her arms and legs had been broken.

The violence of the attack seemed beyond human strength.

When I finished reading this part of the newspaper report, I placed the paper slowly on the table.

“This is horrible,” I said.

Dupin nodded quietly.

“Yes,” he said.

I looked again at the page.

“Did the neighbors see anyone leaving the house?” I asked.

Dupin pointed to the next part of the report.

“Read further,” he said.

I continued reading.

According to the witnesses, no one had been seen leaving the house.

The doors had been locked from the inside.

The windows were closed and secured.

The police had searched every room carefully.

Yet they found no trace of the murderer.

I looked up from the paper in astonishment.

“That seems impossible,” I said.

Dupin’s eyes shone with interest.

“Yes,” he replied quietly.

“That is exactly what makes the case so interesting.”

Part 3

I continued reading the newspaper report.

The next section described the statements of the people who had gathered outside the house during the terrible event.

Each witness had heard the voices coming from the room where the crime occurred.

Yet their descriptions of those voices did not agree with one another.

One witness said that he heard the voice of a man speaking French.

Another believed that the second voice spoke Spanish.

A third man insisted that the voice belonged to an Italian.

Yet when the police asked each witness whether he understood the words being spoken, every one of them gave the same answer.

No one had understood a single word.

I looked up from the paper in confusion.

“That is very strange,” I said.

Dupin nodded.

“Continue,” he said.

I read further.

One witness claimed that the voice sounded harsh and uneven, almost like the cry of an animal. Another said that the sound rose and fell quickly in a way that seemed unnatural.

None of the witnesses agreed about the language that had been spoken.

Yet all of them agreed that the voice did not sound like the voice of an ordinary person.

The newspaper then described the condition of the room.

Everything inside the chamber had been thrown into great disorder.

A small iron safe stood open in one corner.

Inside it the police found several pieces of gold and other valuable objects.

Yet nothing appeared to have been stolen.

“That is curious,” I said.

“Yes,” Dupin replied. “Very curious.”

I continued reading.

The police had searched the house from top to bottom.

Every door had been locked from the inside.

The windows had also been examined carefully.

At first the officers believed that one of the windows might have been used as a way of escape.

But when they inspected them closely, they discovered that both windows were firmly fastened.

One of them had a strong nail driven through the frame.

This nail appeared impossible to remove without breaking it.

Therefore the police concluded that no one could have escaped through the window.

I placed the paper down once more.

“Then how did the murderer leave the room?” I asked.

Dupin leaned back in his chair.

“That is the question,” he said.

“And the police cannot answer it?”

Dupin smiled faintly.

“The police,” he said, “often look for answers in the wrong places.”

I looked at him with interest.

“Do you believe you understand this mystery?” I asked.

Dupin did not reply immediately.

Instead he stood and began walking slowly across the room.

After a moment he spoke again.

“The events themselves are not difficult,” he said.

“What makes them appear impossible is the way people think about them.”

I was puzzled.

“Explain,” I said.

Dupin stopped beside the table and tapped the newspaper with his finger.

“Look carefully at the facts,” he said.

“Two women were murdered in a locked room. The violence of the attack was extreme. A strange voice was heard, but no one understood its language. The murderer escaped without leaving any trace.”

He paused.

“Now ask yourself a simple question.”

I waited.

Dupin’s eyes shone with quiet excitement.

“What kind of creature could commit such a crime?” he said.

His words sent a strange feeling through my mind.

A creature.

Not a man.

For the first time I began to wonder whether the terrible murders in the Rue Morgue might involve something far more unusual than anyone had imagined.

Part 4

Dupin remained standing beside the table, his finger resting lightly upon the newspaper.

I looked at him with curiosity.

“What do you mean by a creature?” I asked.

Dupin did not answer directly.

Instead he picked up the paper and turned to the part that described the injuries of the two women.

“Read this section again,” he said.

I obeyed.

The report described the terrible violence of the attack upon Madame L’Espanaye. Her bones had been broken in many places, and her body had been thrown from the window into the courtyard below.

The strength required for such an act seemed extraordinary.

I read the passage slowly.

When I finished, Dupin spoke again.

“Consider the force that must have been used,” he said.

“Do you believe that an ordinary man could do this?”

I thought for a moment.

“It seems unlikely,” I said.

Dupin nodded.

“Exactly.”

He then pointed to another part of the report.

“And now consider the voice that the witnesses heard.”

I remembered the descriptions.

Every witness had heard a strange voice, yet none of them had understood its

language.

“Yes,” I said. “That is also unusual.”

Dupin continued calmly.

“If the voice had belonged to a man speaking a foreign language, at least one of the witnesses might have recognized it.”

“That is true,” I admitted.

Dupin leaned closer.

“But every witness said the same thing,” he said.

“They heard sounds that they could not recognize as any human language.”

I began to feel a strange sense of excitement.

“Then you believe the voice was not human?” I asked.

Dupin smiled slightly.

“It may not have been.”

The idea seemed extraordinary.

“But what kind of creature could do such things?” I asked.

Dupin did not answer immediately.

Instead he walked to a small shelf and picked up a book.

He opened it and showed me an illustration.

The picture showed a large animal with long arms and powerful muscles.

“This animal,” Dupin said, “is known as an orangutan.”

I examined the picture with interest.

“A monkey?” I said.

“Yes,” Dupin replied.

“A very large monkey from distant lands.”

I looked again at the illustration.

The creature’s arms were long and strong.

“You believe such an animal could have committed the murders?” I asked.

Dupin closed the book gently.

“It is possible,” he said.

I felt both surprise and disbelief.

“But how would such an animal enter a house in Paris?” I asked.

Dupin returned to the table.

“That,” he said, “is the next question.”

He pointed again to the report about the windows.

“The police believed that the windows could not be opened,” he said.

“But the police often make mistakes.”

He described how one of the windows might appear firmly closed while actually being capable of opening under certain conditions.

The nail that held the window might move slightly when pressure was applied.

When the window was closed again, the nail could fall back into place, giving the appearance that it had never been disturbed.

I listened carefully.

The explanation seemed possible.

Dupin continued.

“A strong animal could easily climb the outside wall of the house,” he said.

“It could enter through the window, commit the terrible acts described in the report, and then escape in the same way.”

I remained silent for a moment.

The idea was astonishing, yet the facts seemed to support it.

Dupin’s eyes shone with quiet satisfaction.

“We will soon learn the truth,” he said.

“How?” I asked.

Dupin reached for a piece of paper and began writing.

“By inviting the owner of the creature to visit us,” he replied calmly.

Part 5

I watched Dupin as he finished writing the message.

His movements were calm and careful. When he completed the note, he folded the paper neatly and sealed it.

“What have you written?” I asked.

Dupin smiled slightly.

“An advertisement,” he said.

“An advertisement?”

“Yes,” he replied. “One that will appear in the newspapers tomorrow morning.”

He handed the paper to me.

I read the message aloud.

“Lost — a large orangutan. Found near the Rue Morgue. The owner may recover the animal by calling at this address and paying the small expense of keeping it.”

I looked up at Dupin.

“But we have not found such an animal,” I said.

Dupin nodded.

“That is true,” he replied.

“Then why publish the notice?”

Dupin leaned back in his chair.

“Because the owner of the animal will read it,” he said.

I began to understand.

“And when he comes here,” I said slowly, “we will learn the truth.”

“Exactly,” Dupin said.

He placed the letter aside.

“If my reasoning is correct, the owner will be eager to recover such a valuable creature.”

“You believe the animal belongs to someone in Paris?” I asked.

Dupin nodded.

“Most likely a sailor,” he said.

“Why a sailor?”

Dupin answered calmly.

“Orangutans come from distant lands. A sailor might easily bring such an animal from a voyage.”

The explanation seemed reasonable.

The next morning Dupin sent the advertisement to the newspaper.

Then we waited.

The day passed slowly.

As evening approached, I began to wonder whether anyone would answer the advertisement.

But shortly after nightfall there was a knock at the door.

Dupin looked at me quietly.

“That will be our visitor,” he said.

I felt a sudden excitement.

Dupin walked to the door and opened it.

A man stood outside.

He was tall and strong, with the appearance of a sailor. His clothing was rough, and his face showed signs of a hard life at sea.

When he entered the room, he looked around with caution.

“I saw the notice in the paper,” he said.

Dupin nodded politely.

“You have lost an orangutan,” he said.

The sailor seemed relieved.

“Yes,” he replied. “A very valuable animal.”

Dupin gestured toward a chair.

“Please sit down,” he said.

The sailor sat, though he still looked uneasy.

Dupin spoke calmly.

“You wish to recover the animal.”

“Of course,” the sailor said quickly.

Dupin nodded.

“Before we return it,” he said quietly, “there is something we must discuss.”

The sailor looked confused.

Dupin’s voice remained calm but firm.

“The murders in the Rue Morgue,” he said.

At once the sailor’s face changed.

Fear appeared in his eyes.

He rose suddenly from his chair.

Dupin spoke again in a steady voice.

“Do not be afraid,” he said.

“We know that you did not commit the murders.”

The sailor stared at him in astonishment.

Dupin continued.

“But your animal did.”

The room became completely silent.

For several moments the sailor said nothing.

Then slowly he sat down again.

His face looked pale.

“Yes,” he whispered.

“It was the orangutan.”

Part 6

The sailor sat quietly for several moments after speaking those words.

His face looked pale, and his hands trembled slightly. It was clear that he had carried a heavy burden in his mind since the terrible night of the murders.

Dupin spoke to him in a calm and reassuring voice.

“You have nothing to fear from us,” he said. “We know that you are not the murderer.”

The sailor looked at him with relief.

“You truly believe that?” he asked.

“Yes,” Dupin replied.

“But the truth must be told.”

The sailor nodded slowly.

After a moment he began to speak.

“I am a sailor,” he said. “My ship has traveled to many distant lands. On one voyage we visited the island of Borneo.”

He paused.

“It was there that I captured the orangutan.”

I listened with great interest.

The sailor continued.

“The animal was very strong and very wild. At first I kept it locked inside a small room so that it could not escape.”

“But one night,” he said, “it broke free.”

Dupin leaned forward slightly.

“What happened then?” he asked.

The sailor took a deep breath.

“When I discovered that the animal had escaped, I began searching for it through the streets,” he said.

“I followed it until I reached the Rue Morgue.”

He lowered his head.

“The animal had climbed up the side of the house,” he continued.

“I saw it enter through an open window.”

My heart beat faster as he spoke.

“Did you follow it?” Dupin asked.

“Yes,” the sailor said.

“I climbed up after it.”

His voice shook slightly.

“When I reached the window, I looked inside the room.”

He paused again.

“What I saw there was terrible.”

The sailor described how the orangutan had entered the room where the two women were present.

The animal had found a razor and began copying the actions it had seen its master perform while shaving.

When the women saw the creature holding the razor, they screamed in terror.

The screams frightened the animal.

In its confusion and wild strength, it attacked them.

The violence that followed was terrible.

The sailor covered his face with his hands.

“I tried to stop it,” he said quietly.

“But I was too late.”

Dupin nodded.

“And after the murders?” he asked.

The sailor continued.

“The animal became even more frightened by the noise and confusion. It tried to hide the body of the young woman by forcing it into the chimney.”

I shuddered at the thought.

“Then it threw the body of the old woman out of the window,” the sailor said.

“I was so terrified that I fled the house immediately.”

The sailor looked up at Dupin.

“After that night I lost the animal,” he said.

“I never saw it again.”

Dupin listened carefully.

When the sailor finished, he nodded slowly.

“Your story agrees perfectly with the facts,” he said.

The sailor looked at him with gratitude.

“Will you tell the police?” he asked.

Dupin smiled slightly.

“The police will discover the truth soon enough,” he said.

He stood and walked to the window.

“But they will never fully understand how the mystery was solved.”

I looked at him with admiration.

The terrible murders in the Rue Morgue had seemed impossible to explain.

Yet Dupin’s careful reasoning had uncovered the truth behind the crime.

A truth more strange than anything the police had imagined.

Part 7

After the sailor finished telling his story, the room remained quiet for several moments. The terrible events he had described still filled my mind.

Dupin, however, appeared calm and thoughtful.

“You have acted wisely in telling us the truth,” he said.

The sailor nodded slowly.

“I did not know what to do,” he replied. “If I spoke, people might believe that I was the murderer.”

Dupin understood this fear.

“Yes,” he said. “The situation placed you in great danger of suspicion.”

The sailor stood up.

“What should I do now?” he asked.

Dupin answered calmly.

“Return to your ship and continue your life,” he said. “The police will soon discover enough evidence to clear you.”

The sailor looked relieved.

“Thank you,” he said.

Dupin walked to the door and opened it.

The sailor paused for a moment before leaving.

“I never wished harm to those women,” he said quietly.

Dupin nodded.

“I believe you,” he replied.

The sailor left the house and disappeared into the dark streets of Paris.

When the door closed, I turned to Dupin.

“Your reasoning was extraordinary,” I said.

Dupin smiled slightly.

“The solution was not as difficult as it appeared,” he replied.

I looked at him with surprise.

“Not difficult?” I said.

Dupin walked slowly across the room.

“The police failed because they looked for complexity,” he explained.

“Yet the truth was simple.”

He continued speaking in his calm and thoughtful manner.

“They examined every small detail with great effort, but they did not consider

the true nature of the problem.”

I listened carefully.

Dupin pointed again to the newspaper report.

“The violence of the crime was beyond the strength of a human being,” he said.

“The strange voice heard by the witnesses did not resemble any human language.”

“And the murderer escaped from a locked room.”

He paused.

“Once these facts are understood clearly, the answer becomes obvious.”

I nodded slowly.

“Yes,” I said. “A powerful animal could explain everything.”

Dupin smiled.

“Exactly.”

The following day the newspapers of Paris reported new developments in the case.

The police had arrested a man named Le Bon, believing him to be connected to the murders.

But soon afterward the truth of the case became known.

The evidence showed clearly that Le Bon had nothing to do with the crime.

He was released from prison.

The mystery that had frightened the city of Paris was finally solved.

Yet the official explanation given by the police did not mention Dupin’s role in the discovery.

The authorities preferred to claim the success as their own.

Dupin seemed amused by this.

“The police,” he said one evening, “are proud of their efforts, even when those efforts fail.”

I laughed softly.

“And you?” I asked.

Dupin leaned back in his chair.

“I prefer the pleasure of solving the problem itself,” he said.

Thus ended the strange case of the murders in the Rue Morgue — a mystery that had seemed impossible until the calm reasoning of C. Auguste Dupin revealed the truth behind it.

The Mystery of Marie Rogêt

Part 1

The story that I am about to tell began not in Paris but in another country far away. Some years earlier a young woman had disappeared from the city of New York. Her name was Mary Rogers.

The event caused great excitement among the people of that city. Newspapers printed many reports about the disappearance. For a long time no one knew what had happened to the young woman.

Later her body was discovered in a quiet place near the river. The mystery of her death troubled the public for many months. Many theories were suggested, yet the truth was never fully known.

When I later lived in Paris with my friend C. Auguste Dupin, a similar event occurred there.

A young woman named Marie Rogêt disappeared.

The case quickly reminded many people of the earlier mystery in New York. Because of this similarity, the newspapers of Paris printed many long reports about the disappearance.

Marie Rogêt was well known in the city.

She worked in a small perfume shop near the Palais Royal. The shop belonged to her mother. Many people visited the shop, and because of her beauty Marie became known to a large number of customers.

Her face often attracted attention in the streets.

Yet she was not known to behave carelessly. Those who knew her described her as quiet and respectable.

For this reason the sudden news of her disappearance shocked the people of Paris.

One Sunday morning Marie left her mother's house as usual.

She told her mother that she planned to visit a relative who lived in another part of the city.

After that moment she was never seen again.

At first her absence did not cause immediate alarm. Sometimes she spent the day visiting friends or walking in the city.

But when night came and she had not returned home, her mother became worried.

The next day the concern grew stronger.

Soon the police were informed that Marie Rogêt had disappeared.

For several days no one discovered any trace of her.

Then, after a short time, terrible news reached the city.

The body of a young woman had been found near the bank of the Seine River.

When the police examined the body, they discovered that it was indeed Marie Rogêt.

The newspapers immediately reported the discovery.

People across Paris began discussing the crime with great excitement.

Many theories appeared in the public conversation.

Some believed that Marie had been attacked by criminals while walking alone. Others suggested that she had been kidnapped and murdered in a secret place.

The police began an investigation.

Yet as the days passed, the mystery became more confusing instead of clearer.

The newspapers printed long articles about every new rumor.

Witnesses came forward with many different stories.

Some of these stories contradicted each other completely.

Because of this confusion, the police found it difficult to reach a clear conclusion.

During this time Dupin read the newspaper reports with deep interest.

He spent many hours studying the details printed in the papers.

One evening he placed the newspaper on the table and looked at me thoughtfully.

“This case,” he said, “contains many errors.”

“Errors?” I asked.

Dupin nodded.

“Not in the facts themselves,” he said.

“But in the way people interpret them.”

He tapped the newspaper gently with his finger.

“The truth of this mystery may be discovered,” he said, “but only if we examine the evidence with calm reasoning.”

I looked at him with curiosity.

After the strange success of the Rue Morgue case, I had learned never to doubt Dupin’s powers of analysis.

“Do you believe you can solve it?” I asked.

Dupin smiled faintly.

“Perhaps,” he said.

And so began our long examination of the strange and troubling mystery of Marie Rogêt.

Part 2

Dupin spent many hours studying the reports that appeared in the newspapers of Paris. Each day new articles were printed, and each article attempted to explain the death of Marie Rogêt.

Yet the more I read these reports, the more confused I became.

Some writers believed that Marie had been attacked by a group of criminals. Others claimed that a single man must have been responsible for the crime. A few suggested that the death had been caused by accident rather than murder.

The opinions changed from day to day.

Dupin read every article carefully.

At last he placed the newspaper on the table and spoke.

“The greatest difficulty in this case,” he said, “comes from the newspapers themselves.”

I looked at him with surprise.

“The newspapers?” I said.

Dupin nodded.

“Yes,” he replied.

“The writers collect many facts, but they mix those facts with guesses and careless reasoning.”

He pointed to one of the articles.

“For example,” he said, “this writer claims that the crime must have been committed by a large group of men.”

I read the passage.

“Why does he believe that?” I asked.

Dupin smiled slightly.

“Because he sees many signs of violence,” he said.

“But signs of violence do not prove that many men were present.”

He continued examining the report.

“In truth,” he said, “the evidence may suggest the opposite.”

I listened carefully.

Dupin’s mind moved through the details of the case with remarkable clarity.

“First we must understand the place where the body was discovered,” he said.

According to the reports, the body of Marie Rogêt had been found near the bank of the Seine River. The place was not far from the city, but it was quiet and partly hidden by trees.

Some witnesses claimed that they had seen suspicious men in the area.

Others believed that the body had been carried there after the crime had occurred somewhere else.

Dupin considered these ideas carefully.

“The newspapers assume that the body must have been carried from another location,” he said.

“But they give no strong proof of this.”

I nodded slowly.

“Then you believe the crime may have taken place near the river?” I asked.

“It is possible,” Dupin replied.

He then turned to another report.

This article described a group of people who claimed to have heard cries near

the river during the night when Marie disappeared.

Dupin studied this information thoughtfully.

“These cries may be important,” he said.

“But we must also consider the character of the witnesses.”

He explained that people often make mistakes when they try to remember events that happened quickly or in darkness.

Fear and excitement can change the way people describe what they heard or saw.

Because of this, Dupin believed that many of the newspaper reports were unreliable.

Yet he did not reject them completely.

Instead he searched for details that appeared repeatedly in several different accounts.

“When several reports agree on the same fact,” he said, “that fact becomes more trustworthy.”

I watched him work through the articles with great care.

His method was slow but precise.

After some time he placed the papers aside.

“One point already seems clear,” he said.

“What is that?” I asked.

Dupin looked at me calmly.

“The crime was most likely committed by a single person,” he said.

The idea surprised me.

“But the newspapers speak of many attackers,” I said.

Dupin shook his head.

“The newspapers often prefer dramatic explanations,” he replied.

“But reason tells us that the simplest explanation is usually closer to the truth.”

His words made me curious about the direction his reasoning would soon take.

Part 3

After speaking about the mistakes made by the newspapers, Dupin returned again to the details of the case. He read the reports slowly, often pausing to consider a single sentence for several minutes.

I watched him with growing curiosity.

“You seem to believe that the truth can be found in these articles,” I said.

Dupin nodded.

“Yes,” he replied. “Even when people reason badly, the facts themselves may still remain.”

He picked up one of the newspapers again.

“We must separate the facts from the guesses,” he said.

He then pointed to the section describing the discovery of the body.

The reports stated that the body of Marie Rogêt had been found floating near the river bank. At first some people believed that she had drowned.

But when the body was examined more closely, signs of violence were discovered.

Her clothing had been disturbed, and there were marks that suggested a struggle had taken place.

Dupin studied these details carefully.

“The newspapers say that the body must have been placed in the river soon after the crime,” he said.

“But they give little explanation for this belief.”

I looked again at the report.

“Do you disagree with that idea?” I asked.

Dupin considered the question.

“Not completely,” he said. “But the reasoning used by the writers is weak.”

He explained that the condition of the body could help determine how long it had been in the water.

If the body had remained in the river for many days, certain changes would appear.

But the reports described a body that seemed to have entered the water more recently.

“This suggests that the crime occurred not long before the body was discovered,” Dupin said.

I listened carefully.

Dupin continued.

“Now we must consider another important point,” he said.

He turned to an article describing Marie’s habits.

Marie Rogêt often walked through the city alone. She was known to visit the perfume shop where she worked and sometimes to meet friends in the nearby streets.

On the Sunday when she disappeared, she told her mother that she planned to visit a relative.

Yet no relative reported seeing her that day.

“This detail is interesting,” Dupin said.

“Why?” I asked.

“Because it suggests that Marie may have planned to meet someone else,” he replied.

The idea surprised me.

“You believe she arranged a secret meeting?” I asked.

Dupin did not answer immediately.

Instead he read another passage from the newspaper.

Some witnesses claimed to have seen Marie walking with a man earlier that day.

The descriptions of the man were unclear, but they suggested that he was young and dressed respectably.

Dupin folded the paper slowly.

“If these reports are true,” he said, “then the mystery becomes less complex.”

“How so?” I asked.

Dupin looked at me with calm confidence.

“Because the crime may not involve strangers at all,” he said.

His words caused a new thought to form in my mind.

Perhaps the death of Marie Rogêt had been caused not by unknown criminals,

but by someone she had trusted.

The possibility gave the entire mystery a darker and more personal meaning.

Part 4

After suggesting that Marie Rogêt might have arranged a meeting with someone she knew, Dupin returned to the newspapers again. He spread several of them across the table and compared the different reports carefully.

I watched him with growing interest.

“The writers of these articles do not agree with one another,” I said.

Dupin nodded.

“Yes,” he replied. “That is often the case when many people attempt to explain a mystery.”

He pointed to one article that described the place where the body had been discovered.

According to this report, the body was found near a quiet stretch of the river bank where trees and bushes grew thickly. The place was not far from the city, yet it was hidden enough that few people passed there during the day.

Some writers believed that criminals had chosen the place because it was secret and distant.

Dupin did not accept this explanation.

“People often imagine that criminals carefully plan every detail,” he said. “But many crimes occur suddenly and without careful thought.”

He then examined another report.

This one described marks found in the ground near the river bank. The marks suggested that a struggle had taken place.

Some people believed that several men must have been involved.

Dupin shook his head.

“Such marks may also be made by two people alone,” he said.

“A struggle between one man and one woman could easily produce the same signs.”

I began to see the pattern of his reasoning.

Dupin did not accept dramatic explanations unless they were clearly supported by evidence.

Instead he looked for the simplest interpretation that fit the known facts.

After some time he spoke again.

“Another detail deserves attention,” he said.

He pointed to a passage describing the clothing worn by Marie when her body was found.

Her dress had been torn and disordered.

Many writers used this fact to suggest that a group of criminals had attacked her.

Dupin considered the matter differently.

“The disorder of the clothing may simply show that a violent struggle occurred,” he said.

“It does not prove that several attackers were present.”

I nodded.

“Then your theory still involves only one man,” I said.

“Yes,” Dupin replied.

He then turned to another subject that had appeared in the newspapers.

Several writers claimed that a gang of criminals known to operate near the river might be responsible for the murder.

Dupin dismissed this idea quickly.

“Gangs rarely act in silence,” he said.

“If many men had taken part in the attack, witnesses would likely have heard several voices or seen signs of their presence.”

Yet the reports mentioned no such evidence.

The only suggestion of a struggle came from the marks near the river bank.

Dupin placed the newspapers aside and sat quietly for a moment.

At last he spoke.

“Everything we have seen suggests a meeting between Marie and a single man,” he said.

“Something during that meeting led to violence.”

I thought about the possibility.

“Perhaps the man wished to harm her from the beginning,” I said.

Dupin shook his head.

“That seems less likely,” he replied.

“The meeting may have begun peacefully.”

His calm voice made the situation seem even more tragic.

“Then the violence happened suddenly,” I said.

Dupin nodded slowly.

“Yes,” he said.

“And the man, fearing discovery, placed the body in the river in an attempt to hide the crime.”

The explanation seemed both simple and terrible.

Yet Dupin had not finished his reasoning.

“There are still several details that must be understood,” he said.

“And once we understand them, the mystery of Marie Rogêt will become much clearer.”

Part 5

After explaining his ideas about the meeting between Marie Rogêt and a single man, Dupin continued examining the details printed in the newspapers.

He selected another article and began reading it slowly.

“This report describes an important point,” he said.

I moved closer to the table so that I could see the passage.

The article spoke about a piece of ribbon that had been discovered near the river bank. The ribbon was believed to belong to Marie Rogêt.

Some writers claimed that the ribbon proved she had been dragged through the bushes by several attackers.

Dupin did not accept that conclusion.

“The ribbon shows that a struggle took place,” he said.

“But again it does not prove the presence of many people.”

He explained that in a violent struggle even two individuals could leave many signs behind them.

Broken branches, disturbed soil, and torn clothing might easily appear during such an event.

Dupin then turned to another newspaper.

This report described a small boat that had been seen near the river around the time of Marie’s disappearance.

Some writers believed that criminals had used the boat to carry the body into the water.

Dupin considered this idea carefully.

“It is possible,” he said.

“But we must ask whether such effort would be necessary.”

I looked at him curiously.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

Dupin explained that if the struggle had taken place close to the river bank, the criminal could simply push the body into the water without using a boat.

“The simplest explanation should always be considered first,” he said.

I had come to recognize this principle in Dupin’s reasoning.

He preferred explanations that required the fewest assumptions.

Dupin then returned to another detail mentioned in several reports.

Witnesses had claimed to see a young man speaking with Marie Rogêt a short time before her disappearance.

The descriptions of the man were vague.

Yet the reports agreed that he appeared calm and well dressed.

“This suggests that Marie trusted him,” Dupin said.

“She would not willingly walk with a stranger who frightened her.”

I thought about this carefully.

“Then the man may have been someone she already knew,” I said.

Dupin nodded.

“That is very likely.”

He then explained another important idea.

If Marie had arranged a meeting with such a man, she might not have told her mother the truth about where she was going.

Instead she might have said that she planned to visit a relative.

This explanation seemed reasonable.

Dupin continued examining the articles.

One report described a group of people who claimed to have discovered pieces of clothing near the river.

These pieces were believed to belong to Marie Rogêt.

Dupin considered this detail with great attention.

“If the clothing was found near the place where the body appeared,” he said, “then the struggle most likely occurred in that same area.”

I nodded slowly.

The reasoning seemed clear.

Dupin leaned back in his chair.

“In truth,” he said, “many writers make the mistake of imagining complicated plans.”

“But crimes of passion are rarely planned with great care.”

He paused.

“A sudden argument may lead to violence.”

The thought made the entire event seem even more tragic.

“Then the man may not have intended to kill her,” I said.

Dupin considered this possibility.

“Yes,” he replied quietly.

“It may have been an act of sudden anger or fear.”

I looked again at the newspapers spread across the table.

Slowly the confusing reports began to form a clearer picture.

Marie Rogêt had most likely gone to meet a man she trusted.

During that meeting a struggle occurred.

The struggle ended in her death.

Yet one question still remained.

Who was the man who had met her that day?

Part 6

After asking who the unknown man might be, Dupin returned once more to the newspaper reports. He examined them again with patience, searching for any detail that might help identify the person who had met Marie Rogêt.

The room was quiet while he worked.

At last he spoke again.

“There is one more point that deserves careful attention,” he said.

I looked up.

“What is that?” I asked.

Dupin picked up a newspaper and showed me a passage that described the place where some pieces of clothing had been found.

According to the report, several items believed to belong to Marie had been discovered in a small area near the river bank. These items included parts of her dress and other personal belongings.

The newspapers had treated this discovery as strong proof that the crime occurred in that exact place.

Dupin was not entirely satisfied with that conclusion.

“We must ask how long these objects remained there before they were discovered,” he said.

I read the passage again.

The reports did not clearly answer that question.

“If the clothing had been lying there for many days,” Dupin continued, “it would likely have been noticed earlier.”

That seemed reasonable.

The river bank was not completely hidden. People sometimes walked through the area.

“Therefore the objects were probably placed there not long before they were found,” Dupin said.

“Which means they may not have been left there during the crime itself.”

The idea surprised me.

“You believe someone placed them there later?” I asked.

Dupin nodded.

“Yes,” he said.

“Possibly the same man who was responsible for Marie’s death.”

I thought about this explanation.

“Why would he return to the place later?” I asked.

Dupin answered calmly.

“Perhaps he feared that the body would be discovered somewhere else,” he said.

“By placing the clothing near the river bank, he might create confusion about the location of the crime.”

The plan seemed desperate but possible.

Dupin continued studying the reports.

Another article described a group of women who lived near the river. These women claimed that they had seen a young man visiting the area during the days before the body was discovered.

The man had behaved nervously, and his appearance had attracted attention.

Dupin examined this information closely.

“Such behavior may indicate guilt,” he said.

“A person who has committed a crime often returns to the place where it occurred.”

I nodded.

The idea seemed consistent with the other details.

Dupin then folded the newspaper and placed it aside.

“When we combine these facts,” he said, “a clear picture begins to appear.”

I waited for him to continue.

“Marie Rogêt arranged to meet a man she trusted,” he said.

“During their meeting near the river, a struggle took place.”

“The struggle ended in her death.”

Dupin paused briefly.

“The man then placed the body in the water and later returned to the area.”

His calm voice made the explanation sound almost certain.

Yet I still wondered about the identity of the man.

“Do we know who he was?” I asked.

Dupin shook his head slowly.

“The newspapers do not give enough information to prove his name,” he said.

“But they strongly suggest that he was someone close to Marie.”

He leaned back in his chair.

“And that,” he added quietly, “is often the most tragic truth behind such mysteries.”

Part 7

After presenting his final reasoning, Dupin remained silent for some time. The newspapers lay scattered across the table, their pages filled with speculation, rumor, and confused argument.

I thought carefully about everything he had said.

Slowly the complicated reports began to seem clearer.

“So the mystery is not as strange as the newspapers believe,” I said.

Dupin nodded.

“Yes,” he replied.

“The writers of those articles search for dramatic explanations. They imagine large gangs of criminals or secret plots.”

He paused briefly.

“But the truth often lies much closer to ordinary human behavior.”

I considered his words.

“A meeting,” I said slowly.

“A sudden argument.”

Dupin nodded again.

“Exactly.”

He explained that crimes involving passion or personal conflict are often

mistaken for mysterious events. When the public hears about such a crime, imagination quickly fills the gaps in knowledge.

The result is confusion rather than understanding.

“The newspapers then repeat these ideas,” Dupin said.

“Each writer attempts to produce a new explanation.”

I looked again at the reports on the table.

Many of the articles were long and complicated, yet most of them contained little true reasoning.

Dupin smiled faintly.

“The method of analysis requires calm attention,” he said.

“One must examine each fact carefully and remove every unnecessary assumption.”

He explained that when false ideas are removed, the remaining facts often lead naturally toward the correct explanation.

I had seen this method succeed once before during the investigation of the Rue Morgue murders.

Now I understood that the same calm reasoning could also explain the death of Marie Rogêt.

“Do you believe the police will reach the same conclusion?” I asked.

Dupin shrugged slightly.

“Perhaps,” he said.

“But the police often prefer explanations that appear impressive rather than those that are simply true.”

I smiled.

“And the newspapers?”

Dupin laughed quietly.

“The newspapers,” he said, “care more about excitement than about careful reasoning.”

We sat together in silence for a moment.

Outside the windows of our quiet house, the city of Paris continued its ordinary life.

Yet somewhere within that city the truth about Marie Rogêt still remained hidden from public knowledge.

Dupin seemed satisfied with his analysis.

“Whether the true criminal is discovered or not,” he said, “the mystery itself has been explained.”

I looked once more at the newspapers that had caused so much confusion.

Through Dupin’s calm reasoning, the tragic story of Marie Rogêt now appeared far less mysterious than it had seemed at first.

What had once been described as a strange and terrible puzzle was revealed instead as a sad event born from human weakness and sudden violence.

And so our examination of the mystery of Marie Rogêt came quietly to an end.

The Balloon-Hoax

Part 1

Many people now talk about a very strange event. It is said that a balloon has crossed the great ocean between Europe and America. This idea sounds almost impossible. For many years people have dreamed about flying through the air, but few have believed that a long sea could be crossed in this way. Yet a report has come from the coast of South Carolina, and the report gives a clear story of the event. The story says that a group of men left England in a balloon and reached the American shore after a journey of only a few days. The news has surprised everyone who has heard it.

The first full account was sent by an agent in the city of Charleston. He wrote that the voyage began on Saturday morning and ended on Tuesday afternoon. During this short time the travelers moved across the whole Atlantic Ocean. The balloon carried eight people. Among them were well known men who had already worked for many years with balloons and flying machines. Their names were Sir Everard Bringhurst, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Monck Mason, Mr. Robert Holland, Mr. Harrison Ainsworth, and Mr. Henson. Two sailors also joined them so that the group could manage the balloon and its ropes while it was in the air.

The story explains that this great journey was not the first attempt to move through the air. In fact, several recent attempts had failed, and many people had begun to think that air travel would never succeed. One well known inventor, Mr. Henson, had built a flying machine that was supposed to rise from the ground and move forward through the air. His plan used wide wings and moving blades that turned like the arms of a windmill. When people first heard about his idea, many believed that it would work. Scientists and visitors came to see the models that he showed in public halls.

But when the experiments began, the machine did not act as expected. The turning blades did not push the machine forward. Instead they slowed it down. When the blades stopped turning, the machine moved farther than when they were

in motion. This strange result showed that the plan could not succeed. Without a strong force to keep the machine in the air, it would soon fall back to the ground. Because of this failure, the public lost interest in flying machines. People began to think that the dream of air travel would remain only a dream.

Another inventor, Sir George Cayley, tried a different plan. He believed that a machine should first have the power to stay in the air before it tried to move forward. For this reason he turned again to the balloon. A balloon already floats because the gas inside it is lighter than the air around it. If a propeller or some moving blades could push such a balloon forward, then perhaps it could travel long distances across land and sea.

Sir George built a model to test this idea. In his design the balloon carried four wide blades that turned around and around. These blades were supposed to push against the air and move the balloon forward. The machine was shown at the Polytechnic Institution so that visitors could see the experiment. But once again the result was disappointing. The turning blades produced almost no movement at all. They did not help the balloon rise, and they did not push it through the air. After these trials the project was called a complete failure.

Because of these failures, most people believed that long air voyages were impossible. Balloons could rise into the sky, but they simply moved wherever the wind carried them. No one could guide them with real control. A traveler might rise above a city and drift for many miles, but he could not choose his direction. For this reason the idea of crossing the Atlantic Ocean seemed foolish. The wind might carry a balloon anywhere. It might blow it north, south, or back toward Europe again.

Yet a few bold thinkers continued to study the problem. Among these men was Mr. Monck Mason, a man who had already taken part in several balloon voyages. He believed that careful design and strong materials could create a better balloon than any that had been used before. With the help of his friends, he began to plan a new machine that might remain in the air for many days. If a balloon could stay aloft long enough, then even the wide Atlantic might be crossed.

The first step was to design the balloon itself. It had to be large and strong. The

cloth had to hold a great amount of gas without leaking. The net that covered the balloon had to support the weight of the car and the passengers. Every rope had to be tested again and again. Even a small break in the ropes could destroy the entire machine once it rose into the sky.

The travelers also needed a car large enough for many people. In this car they would carry food, water, and instruments. These instruments would help them measure their height and direction while they traveled. They also needed sand and other weight that could be thrown away when they wished to rise higher. By dropping weight, the balloon would become lighter and move upward through the air. By releasing gas, it would slowly descend again.

Day after day the men worked with great care. They studied the winds over the ocean. They read reports from sailors who had crossed the Atlantic many times. They tried to learn how the air moved above the sea. If the wind in the upper sky usually blew toward America, then their balloon might follow that same path. In this way they hoped to travel safely across the ocean without falling into the water.

At last their preparations were complete. The great balloon stood ready for flight. Its wide surface shone in the light of the morning sun. Beneath it hung the car with its ropes and nets carefully arranged. The men looked up at the balloon with mixed feelings. They felt excitement, but also fear. No balloon had ever made such a journey before. Once they rose into the air, they would depend entirely on the strength of their machine and the mercy of the winds.

Early on Saturday morning the travelers climbed into the car. Friends and helpers stood nearby on the ground. Some gave final advice. Others watched in silence, wondering whether the men would ever return. Slowly the ropes were loosened. The balloon began to rise. The ground moved farther and farther away. Houses grew small, and the fields around them became wide patches of color.

The great voyage had begun.

Part 2

The balloon rose slowly and quietly into the morning sky. At first the men could

still see the people on the ground. Friends waved their hands and called out loud words of hope. The travelers looked down and answered with their own voices, but the sound soon grew weak in the wide air. In a short time the houses below seemed small and the people were only dark points on the earth. The men in the car felt the soft motion of the balloon as it moved upward through the calm air.

The machine behaved well during the first stage of the flight. The great bag of the balloon held its gas firmly. The ropes and net did not move in a dangerous way. Each man watched carefully, ready to act if anything went wrong. Mr. Mason, who had much experience with balloons, stood near the center of the car. His eyes moved again and again from the ropes to the instruments. He wished to be certain that the machine remained safe.

Soon the balloon reached a great height above the land. From this height the travelers could see fields, rivers, and small towns spread out in every direction. The earth looked peaceful and still. The men felt that they had left the ordinary world behind them. Now they were travelers in a new region, a wide and silent space where only the wind and the clouds moved.

After some time the land slowly disappeared behind them. The wide Atlantic Ocean now stretched under the balloon. The water looked dark and endless. Gentle waves moved across its surface, and from time to time a ship could be seen far below. The travelers watched these ships with interest. The sailors on those vessels could not know that a balloon was passing high above them in the sky.

The men soon began the serious work of the voyage. They checked their food and water. They examined the sandbags that were used to control the height of the balloon. Each bag held a certain weight of sand. When the travelers wished to rise higher, they would throw some of this sand away. When they wished to descend, they would release a little gas from the balloon. In this way they could control their height in the air.

Instruments were also placed inside the car. These tools helped the travelers understand their position and movement. One instrument showed their height above the sea. Another helped them judge the direction of the wind. They also carried a telescope so that they could observe the ocean and any ships below them.

During the first day the wind moved steadily from the east. This was the direction the travelers had hoped for. A wind from the east would carry them toward America. The balloon followed this wind smoothly. The men watched the sky with care, looking for signs of storm or sudden change. But the weather remained calm. The air was cool and clear.

As the day passed, the men spoke often with one another. They talked about the bold plan that had brought them here. Some of them felt strong excitement. They believed that they were making history. Others felt moments of quiet fear. They knew that a single mistake might lead to disaster. The ocean below them was vast, and if the balloon failed they would have little chance of rescue.

When evening came, the sky slowly turned dark. The sun sank toward the edge of the ocean. Its red light spread across the clouds and the water. The travelers watched this scene in silence for a time. From their high position the sunset appeared very wide and beautiful. The last light of the day touched the great balloon above them, and the cloth shone softly in the fading glow.

After the sun disappeared, the stars began to appear one by one. The travelers now entered the first night of their journey. They decided that some men should rest while others remained awake to watch the balloon. It was important that someone always check the ropes, the gas, and the instruments.

The night air felt colder than the air of the day. The men wrapped themselves in coats and blankets. From time to time they spoke quietly, but often they simply looked at the sky. The stars seemed very bright at this height. They appeared closer than they ever did on the ground. The men felt that they were floating between the sea below and the endless sky above.

During the night the balloon continued to move westward. The wind remained steady. The machine did not show signs of danger. From time to time the watchers adjusted the sandbags or checked the ropes. They wished to keep the balloon at a safe height where the wind was strongest.

Late in the night one of the travelers used the telescope to look down at the ocean. Far below he saw the lights of a ship moving slowly across the dark water. The ship looked very small from the height of the balloon. The traveler called the

others, and they took turns observing it. The sight reminded them how far they had already come from the world of ordinary travel.

As the hours passed, the men began to feel both wonder and fatigue. They had been in the air for a long time, and the strange movement of the balloon made rest difficult. Yet the voyage continued without serious trouble. The balloon moved quietly through the night sky, guided only by the wind and the careful watch of the travelers.

When the first light of morning appeared, the men felt a sense of hope. They had passed the first night safely. The great ocean still stretched below them, but their machine remained strong. If the wind continued to favor them, the coast of America might appear within a few days.

The second day of the voyage was about to begin.

Part 3

The morning of the second day began with clear light and a steady wind. The men in the balloon looked down at the ocean and saw the wide water shining under the rising sun. The air felt calm, and the balloon moved smoothly through the sky. Everyone in the car felt some relief. The first night had passed without danger, and the machine still worked well.

Mr. Mason checked the ropes and the net that held the balloon. He moved slowly around the edge of the car and looked at every knot. Nothing seemed loose or broken. The cloth of the balloon above them still held its shape. The gas inside it had not escaped in any large amount. This was good news, because the travelers needed the balloon to remain strong for many more hours.

The men also looked at their instruments again. One instrument showed their height above the ocean. Another helped them study the wind. These tools told them that they were moving west across the sea. The direction was exactly what they hoped for. If the wind continued in this way, they would move closer and closer to America.

After these checks were finished, the men took time to eat a small meal. They

had brought simple food that could last several days. Bread, dried meat, and water were enough to keep them strong. They ate slowly and spoke about the progress of the journey. Some of the travelers began to believe that the great crossing might truly succeed.

During the morning they watched the ocean with the telescope. From their height the sea looked calm and wide. Now and then they saw ships moving slowly across the water. These ships were very far below them. The sailors on those vessels could not imagine that a balloon was passing high above their heads.

One traveler suggested that they throw a bottle down to a ship. Inside the bottle they placed a short message. The note explained that a balloon was crossing the Atlantic Ocean and that the travelers were safe. The bottle fell through the air and landed somewhere on the sea. They hoped that a ship might find it and carry the message to land.

As the second day continued, the wind remained steady. The balloon moved with the air as if it were part of the sky itself. Sometimes the travelers could not feel any motion at all. Yet the instruments showed that they were still moving quickly across the ocean. The sea slowly changed under them as the hours passed.

In the afternoon the sun grew warm. The air around the balloon also grew warmer. This change caused the gas inside the balloon to expand slightly. When gas expands, it pushes outward with greater force. Because of this, the balloon rose a little higher in the sky. The travelers watched the instruments and adjusted their weight so that the balloon would not rise too far.

The men were careful not to waste their sand. Every bag of sand was valuable. If they threw away too much too early, they might later be unable to control their height. So they used the sand only when it was necessary. The voyage required patience and constant attention.

During the late afternoon the travelers spoke again about their situation. Some wondered how long the journey would take. Others tried to guess how far they had already traveled. Without land to guide them, it was difficult to measure distance. The balloon simply followed the wind across the empty ocean.

As evening approached for the second time, the sky slowly darkened again. The

travelers prepared for another night in the air. They arranged blankets and coats to protect themselves from the cold. Two men remained awake to watch the balloon while the others tried to rest.

The night air was colder than the night before. The wind still blew from the east, and the balloon continued its westward path. The watchers looked often at the ropes and the net. They listened for any strange sound from the cloth of the balloon. But nothing seemed wrong. The machine still behaved as it should.

From time to time the watchers looked down at the sea through the telescope. Once they saw the faint light of another ship. The ship moved slowly across the dark water, and its small lamps shone like tiny stars. The travelers felt a strange sense of distance from the world below. They were alone in the sky, carried by the wind far above the ocean.

When morning came again, the men woke with renewed hope. They had now spent many hours in the air. If their direction had remained true, they must be much closer to the American coast. Every traveler now watched the horizon with deep attention.

The ocean still filled the view in every direction. Yet the men felt certain that land could not be far away. The wind continued to carry them forward. The balloon remained steady above the sea. The great crossing of the Atlantic was moving closer to its end.

The third day of the voyage had begun.

Part 4

The third day of the voyage began with quiet hope among the travelers. The balloon still moved steadily through the sky, and the wind continued to blow from the east. The men looked again and again toward the western horizon. Each man hoped that land might soon appear. After so many hours above the endless sea, the thought of seeing the coast of America filled them with strong excitement.

During the morning the travelers checked every part of the machine once more. Mr. Mason studied the ropes and the net that supported the balloon. Mr. Holland

examined the cloth of the balloon itself, looking carefully for any small tear or weak place. The men had learned that even a tiny problem could grow dangerous during a long flight. Fortunately, the balloon still appeared strong. The gas remained inside it, and the great bag above them kept its round and steady shape.

The travelers also looked again at their instruments. These tools showed that they were still moving west across the ocean. The speed of the wind seemed good. The balloon was covering a large distance with every passing hour. The men spoke about the progress of the journey, and their voices now carried a tone of growing confidence.

During the middle of the day the air grew warmer again. As before, the heat caused the gas in the balloon to expand slightly. The balloon rose a little higher into the sky. The travelers watched the instrument that measured their height. When the balloon rose too much, they opened a small valve and allowed a little gas to escape. In this way they kept the machine at a safe level.

For many hours nothing changed except the slow movement of the sky and sea. The ocean below still stretched far in every direction. The water shone under the sun, and long waves moved across its surface. From time to time the travelers used the telescope to search the horizon. At first they saw nothing but the empty sea.

But during the afternoon one of the men suddenly cried out. He believed that he could see a faint line far away in the distance. The others hurried to look through the telescope. At first the line seemed uncertain. It might have been a cloud or a trick of light on the water. Yet as the balloon continued forward, the line slowly became clearer.

The travelers now felt strong excitement. The dark shape on the horizon grew wider and more solid. It no longer looked like a cloud. It looked like land. Some of the men spoke loudly with joy. Others stood in silence, staring at the distant coast. After many hours above the sea, the sight of land seemed almost unreal.

As the balloon moved closer, the travelers could see more details. The coast appeared low and long. Sandy beaches stretched beside the ocean. Behind the beach the land rose only slightly. Small shapes could be seen along the shore.

These shapes were buildings and towers near the coast.

The men compared the view with the maps they had studied before the voyage. From the position of the coast and the direction of the wind, they believed that they were approaching the shore of South Carolina. This discovery filled them with deep relief. Their long passage across the Atlantic Ocean was nearly finished.

Now the travelers began to plan their descent. They did not wish to land in the water. They needed a wide and safe place on land where the balloon could touch the ground without damage. One of the sailors studied the shore through the telescope. He noticed a long stretch of beach where the sand looked smooth and firm. Because the tide was low, a large area of hard sand lay open beside the sea.

The men decided that this place would be suitable for landing. The balloon slowly moved toward the shore. As it approached the land, the travelers prepared the ropes and the grapnel. The grapnel was a strong metal hook attached to a rope. When thrown down, it could catch in the sand or earth and hold the balloon in place.

The balloon drifted over the beach. The travelers could now see people moving below. The people on the shore had noticed the strange machine in the sky. Many of them ran toward the place where the balloon seemed ready to descend. Some pointed upward with wonder. Others called out to their friends and neighbors.

At the right moment the grapnel was released. The heavy hook fell through the air and struck the sand. It caught firmly in the ground. The rope grew tight as the balloon slowed its movement. The travelers carefully released more gas so that the machine would descend gently.

Slowly and safely the balloon settled upon the beach. The great journey across the Atlantic Ocean was complete. The entire voyage had lasted about seventy-five hours from the moment of departure until the moment of landing. The travelers stepped out of the car and stood upon the American shore.

The people of the coast gathered around them with amazement. At first many could hardly believe the story of the voyage. Yet the great balloon stood before them, proof that the journey had truly been made. The travelers had crossed the Atlantic through the air.

The bold experiment had succeeded.

Ms. Found in a Bottle

Part 1

I was born in the north of Europe. My family had money, and I received a good education when I was young. I read many books, and I learned much from them. Yet I never felt fully satisfied with the ideas that most people believed. Many things that others accepted as certain seemed doubtful to me. I often questioned what I read, and I did not trust easily in the common opinions of the world.

My mind became restless as I grew older. I wished to see distant lands and learn from travel rather than from books alone. Because of this desire, I decided to leave my home and sail across the sea. I believed that new places and new experiences would give my mind greater understanding.

I went to the island of Java in the East. The land was warm, and the harbor was full of ships from many nations. After staying there for some time, I chose a ship that was preparing to sail through the islands of the East Indies. The vessel was large and strong. It carried cotton, oil, and other goods. The wood of the ship was dark and heavy, and the masts rose high above the deck.

The crew consisted mostly of men from different countries. Some were from Holland, others from the islands of the East, and a few from England. The captain was a careful man who knew the sea well. When I first stepped onto the deck, I felt confident that the voyage would be safe.

For several days the wind was calm and the sea was gentle. The ship moved slowly through the blue water. The sailors worked quietly, and the sails hung wide in the light air. During these peaceful days I often stood alone at the side of the ship and looked out across the sea. The horizon seemed endless.

Yet after some time I began to feel a strange uneasiness. I cannot clearly explain the cause. The sky still appeared calm, and the sailors continued their work as usual. But in my mind there was a quiet sense of danger. The air seemed heavier than before, and the sea appeared darker in color.

One evening I walked alone on the deck as the sun began to set. The sky in the

west glowed with deep red light. At the same time I noticed a long line of clouds rising in the north. These clouds were dark and thick. They moved slowly across the sky like a wall.

I spoke to one of the sailors and pointed toward the clouds. He looked at them for a moment and then shrugged his shoulders. To him they seemed ordinary. But my uneasiness grew stronger. The air felt strangely still. Even the waves of the sea moved with a slow and heavy motion.

Soon the wind died completely. The sails hung without movement. The sea became smooth like a dark mirror. This silence felt unnatural. It was as if the world were holding its breath before something terrible.

The captain ordered the sailors to prepare for a change in weather. The men climbed the masts and adjusted the sails. Others secured the cargo below the deck. Everyone worked quickly but without panic. The sky grew darker, and the line of clouds slowly spread across the horizon.

Night came sooner than usual. The moon rose behind the clouds and gave little light. A strange red glow appeared along the edge of the sky. The sea began to move more strongly. Long waves rolled beneath the ship, lifting it slowly and then letting it fall again.

I remained on deck, unable to sleep. Something in the air filled me with fear. The sailors moved around me with serious faces. The captain stood near the wheel and watched the sky.

At last the storm arrived. The wind struck the ship suddenly with terrible force. The sails snapped loudly, and the masts shook under the pressure of the gale. Waves rose high around us. One wave crashed over the deck and covered everything with cold water.

The sailors shouted to one another as they struggled with the ropes. The ship rolled heavily from side to side. The wind screamed through the rigging like a wild animal. I held tightly to the rail as the storm grew stronger with every moment.

Soon a great wave rose above the ship like a dark wall. Before anyone could move, the wave crashed over the vessel with enormous force. The water swept

across the deck and carried away several sailors. I felt the ship shake under my feet as the storm continued its furious attack.

In that terrible moment I believed that the ship would surely sink.

Part 2

The great wave that struck the ship covered the entire deck with water. For a moment I could see nothing but the dark flood that rushed around me. The force of the sea threw me against the rail. I held the wood with both hands and struggled to keep my place. The wind roared through the night, and the ship shook as if it were alive with fear.

When the water finally rushed away, I looked around the deck in confusion. Many of the sailors had disappeared. The strong wave had carried them into the sea. The ropes were broken in several places, and the sails hung in wild shapes above us. The ship itself leaned heavily to one side as it fought against the power of the storm.

I believed that everyone on board had been lost. Yet when I turned toward the center of the deck, I saw that one other man still lived. It was the old sailor who had stood near the stern earlier in the evening. He was a quiet man with white hair and a thin face. His clothing was soaked with water, and he held tightly to a rope that ran along the side of the ship.

For a moment we looked at each other without speaking. The storm was so loud that our voices would have been useless. The wind and the sea filled the night with terrible sound.

Soon another wave struck the vessel. The ship rose high and then fell again with great violence. Water rushed across the deck once more, but this time we were ready. We held firmly to the ropes and remained in place. When the water passed, the old sailor slowly moved closer to me.

He pointed toward the front of the ship and then toward the sea. From his gesture I understood that the vessel had lost most of its crew and that we two were perhaps the only survivors. The thought filled me with deep fear. The ship was

badly damaged, and we had almost no strength left to control it.

The storm continued without mercy. Hour after hour the wind drove the ship across the dark ocean. The sails, though damaged, still caught the power of the gale. Because of this the vessel moved forward at great speed. Yet we had no idea where the storm carried us.

The old sailor and I remained on the deck through the long night. Sometimes we tried to secure a rope or adjust a sail, but the force of the wind made such work nearly impossible. Most of the time we simply held on and waited for the storm to pass.

Near morning the sky grew slightly lighter. The wind did not weaken, but the darkness of the night slowly faded. In the gray light we could see the sea around us more clearly. Huge waves rolled across the water like mountains of moving stone. The ship climbed one wave after another and then slid down into deep valleys between them.

I looked toward the old sailor. His face appeared calm despite the danger around us. Perhaps he had seen many storms in his long life. Yet even he seemed troubled by the strange power of this gale.

As the day continued, the storm showed no sign of ending. The sky remained dark and heavy with clouds. The wind drove the ship forward without rest. We could not guide the vessel, for the wheel was damaged and many ropes were broken. The ship moved only as the wind commanded.

At times the waves grew so high that they seemed ready to swallow us completely. The vessel rose to their peaks and then fell again into deep water. Each moment I expected the ship to break apart. Yet the strong wood of the hull continued to hold together.

By evening the storm had carried us far from our original course. We saw no land and no other ships. The ocean stretched endlessly in every direction. The old sailor looked toward the horizon with worried eyes. It seemed that we were being driven toward some unknown region of the sea.

When night returned, the wind grew even stronger. The waves shone pale under the faint light of the moon behind the clouds. The ship rushed forward faster than

before, as if drawn by some powerful force.

The old sailor suddenly pointed ahead of us. At first I could see nothing unusual. But after staring into the darkness for some time, I noticed a strange glow far in the distance. The light appeared low on the horizon and moved slowly across the sea.

We watched the glow with deep attention. As the ship rushed forward, the light grew larger. Soon we understood what we were seeing. It was another vessel upon the ocean.

Yet this ship looked very strange. It appeared enormous, far larger than any vessel I had ever seen before. Its tall masts rose into the dark sky, and its sails spread wide in the storm. The waves struck its sides again and again, yet the ship seemed to move through the water with terrible power.

Our own damaged vessel was carried directly toward this mysterious ship by the raging wind.

Part 3

The strange ship grew larger as our vessel rushed toward it through the storm. The wind pushed us forward with terrible speed, and the waves lifted our damaged ship again and again. Each moment the dark shape before us became clearer. Its tall masts rose high into the sky, and its great sails stretched wide in the wind. I had never seen a vessel of such size. It seemed far larger than any ship that sailed the seas of the modern world.

The old sailor stood beside me and stared at the approaching vessel with wide eyes. His face showed deep alarm. The storm roared around us, but his attention remained fixed upon that strange ship. It moved through the water with great strength, yet something about it seemed unnatural.

Our own vessel now rushed forward almost without control. The broken ropes and damaged sails left us powerless to guide its course. The wind carried us directly toward the huge ship ahead. I feared that we would strike its side and be destroyed by the collision.

The waves grew higher as we approached. One enormous wave lifted our vessel high above the water. From this height I could see the strange ship more clearly. Its dark hull rose like a wall above the sea. The wood appeared old and worn. Its sides were black with age, as if the vessel had traveled through storms for many long years.

I also noticed the design of the ship. It did not resemble the vessels that sailed in our own time. Its shape seemed ancient, as if it belonged to a distant past. The masts and sails were arranged in a style that I had only seen in old pictures. The entire vessel appeared to come from another age.

Before I could study it further, another great wave struck our ship. The force of the water lifted us again and drove our vessel violently forward. In the next moment our ship crashed against the side of the strange vessel. The impact threw me from my feet. I felt myself lifted by the rushing water and carried upward.

When I opened my eyes again, I found that I had been thrown onto the deck of the enormous ship. My own vessel had disappeared in the darkness behind me. Perhaps it had sunk beneath the waves. I could no longer see the old sailor who had survived the storm with me. I feared that he had been lost in the sea.

I lay still for a moment, weak and confused. The deck beneath me moved violently as the storm continued. Yet the large ship seemed strong enough to endure the terrible waves. Slowly I rose to my feet and looked around.

The scene before me filled me with deep wonder. The deck was crowded with sailors, yet none of them seemed to notice my presence. They moved back and forth in the storm, adjusting ropes and sails with great effort. Their faces were pale and serious, and their clothing appeared strange and old in style.

I stepped closer to one of the men and spoke to him. But he gave no sign that he had heard my voice. He continued his work without looking toward me. I tried again with another sailor, but the result was the same. It was as if I did not exist in their world.

The strange silence of this discovery filled my heart with fear. I walked across the deck and observed the sailors more closely. Their faces looked worn and aged, as if they had spent many long years upon the sea. Some of them had white hair

and deep lines in their skin. Yet they moved with the strength of younger men.

I also noticed that the ship itself appeared very old. The wood of the deck was dark and rough. The ropes and sails looked worn by countless storms. Yet despite this age, the vessel held together with remarkable strength. It moved through the waves like a creature that belonged to the ocean itself.

The storm still raged around us, but the sailors seemed strangely calm. They worked without panic and spoke little to one another. Their voices, when I heard them, sounded low and distant. The language they used was unfamiliar to my ears. It resembled no speech that I had ever learned.

I felt more and more certain that something unnatural surrounded this ship. The sailors did not see me. The vessel appeared to belong to another time. The storm carried us forward through the dark sea, yet no one seemed afraid of the terrible journey.

I began to walk slowly across the deck, trying to understand where I had come. My mind struggled to accept what my eyes were seeing. At last I reached the rear of the ship, where the great wheel stood. Near it I saw a tall man who appeared to be the captain.

The captain stood silently beside the wheel, looking out into the dark storm. His face showed deep thought and great age. White hair fell around his shoulders, and his eyes stared into the distance as if searching for something far beyond the horizon.

I approached him and tried to speak. Yet once again my voice seemed to have no effect. The captain did not move or turn toward me. He continued to gaze into the storm as if I were not there at all.

In that moment I felt a strange and terrible understanding. I had come aboard a ship whose crew could not see me. I was present upon the vessel, yet invisible to all who sailed it.

Part 4

After I realized that the sailors could not see me, a strange feeling came over

my mind. At first I felt fear, but soon another feeling took its place. It was a quiet curiosity. I wished to understand the nature of this ship and the men who sailed it. If they could not see me, then I could move freely among them and observe everything they did.

I walked slowly across the deck while the storm continued around us. The sailors moved back and forth through the wind and rain. Some climbed the tall masts to adjust the sails. Others pulled on heavy ropes that ran across the deck. Their work was steady and careful. Even though the sea was wild, they seemed accustomed to such danger.

I noticed that their faces looked very old. Many of the men had deep lines on their skin and long gray hair. Yet their bodies still possessed strength. They climbed the ropes and moved across the deck with skill and balance. It was as if they had spent their entire lives upon the ocean.

The ship itself also appeared ancient. The wood of the deck was dark and rough beneath my feet. The boards creaked under the pressure of the storm. The ropes were thick and heavy, worn smooth by many years of use. Every part of the vessel showed signs of great age, yet nothing seemed ready to break.

I began to explore the ship more carefully. Since no one noticed me, I could move wherever I wished. I passed several sailors who were busy with their work. None of them looked toward me. Their eyes remained fixed upon the sails, the ropes, and the dark sea beyond the deck.

Soon I reached the center of the vessel where a small opening led below the deck. I climbed down through this opening and entered the lower part of the ship. The air there felt damp and cold. The space was filled with large wooden boxes and barrels. These must have been part of the ship's cargo.

A faint lantern burned near the wall and gave a weak yellow light. I moved slowly among the boxes and looked at the markings upon them. Some carried strange signs that I did not understand. Others had writing that looked very old. The style of the letters seemed different from any writing used in my own time.

As I walked through this dark space, I heard quiet voices from another part of the ship. Curious, I followed the sound until I reached a small room near the rear

of the vessel. Inside this room several sailors sat around a table. A lantern hung above them and cast shadows on the walls.

The men spoke together in low voices. Their language sounded ancient and unfamiliar. I listened closely, but I could understand only a few words. From their tone I sensed that they were speaking about the strange journey of the ship. Their faces looked serious, and their eyes held a deep and distant expression.

I remained in the room for some time, observing them. Once I moved very close to one of the sailors, hoping that he might feel my presence. Yet he continued speaking without any sign that he noticed me. The discovery still felt strange. I existed among them like a silent shadow.

At last I returned to the deck above. The storm had not weakened. The wind still drove the ship forward with tremendous force. The waves struck the sides of the vessel again and again. Yet the great ship moved through the water as if guided by some powerful destiny.

I looked toward the bow and saw the captain once more. He still stood near the wheel, staring ahead into the darkness. His expression had not changed. The same deep thought remained upon his face.

I watched him carefully. From time to time he moved his hands slightly, adjusting the wheel. His actions were calm and deliberate. It seemed that he understood the course of the ship even within the violent storm.

As the hours passed, I began to notice another strange change. The air grew colder than before. The wind felt sharper against my skin. The sea itself appeared darker and more wild. The waves rose higher, and their tops broke into white foam that shone in the faint light of the storm.

I walked toward the front of the ship and looked out over the water. The sight filled me with deep uneasiness. The waves did not move like ordinary waves of the ocean. Instead they seemed to roll in vast circles, as if the entire sea were slowly turning around a hidden center.

The ship rushed forward faster than ever before. The wind screamed through the masts, and the great sails pulled us onward with unstoppable power. I felt that we were being drawn toward some unknown region of the world.

A terrible thought began to form in my mind. Perhaps this ship had been sailing for many years through distant seas that no ordinary vessel could reach. Perhaps it was moving toward a place where the laws of the natural world no longer held their usual power.

I stood at the front of the ship and stared into the darkness ahead. Something in that black horizon filled my heart with dread.

Part 5

The more I watched the sea ahead of us, the stronger my fear became. The waves no longer moved like the waves of any ordinary ocean. They rose slowly in great dark hills of water and then fell again into deep valleys. The ship rushed forward between these moving walls of water as if it were drawn by a hidden force.

The wind grew colder with every hour. It cut across the deck with a sharp and bitter touch. I wrapped my coat more tightly around my body, yet the cold still reached my skin. The sky above us appeared darker than any night I had known before. Even the moon gave little light through the thick clouds.

The sailors continued their work with strange calm. They moved across the deck, pulling ropes and adjusting the sails. None of them showed fear. Their faces remained serious and distant, as if they had accepted whatever fate awaited the ship.

I walked slowly among them and watched their actions. Once again I tried to speak to one of the men. My voice sounded clear to my own ears, yet the sailor gave no sign that he heard me. He simply continued his work, staring ahead into the darkness.

I now felt certain that I existed on the ship like a spirit among living men. I could see them, yet they could not see me. I could hear their voices, yet my own voice did not reach them. This strange condition filled my mind with deep confusion.

The ship moved faster than ever before. The wind drove us forward with terrible

strength. The waves struck the sides of the vessel again and again, but the great ship continued its course without turning aside. It seemed to be following a path that had been fixed long before I arrived upon its deck.

As the hours passed, the sea grew even more violent. The waves rose to enormous heights. When the ship climbed one of these watery mountains, I could see far across the dark ocean. Yet I saw no other vessels and no sign of land. We appeared to be alone in this wild region of the sea.

At last I noticed something new upon the horizon ahead of us. At first it looked like a dark shadow in the distance. But as the ship rushed closer, I saw that the water there moved in a strange and powerful way. The waves seemed to circle around a single point far ahead.

The sight filled me with terrible understanding. The ocean itself was turning inward toward a vast hollow in the sea. The waves moved in great circles as they rushed toward that center. It was as if the entire ocean were falling into a deep and endless pit.

The ship continued to race toward that dreadful place. The sailors did not attempt to turn away. They pulled their ropes and held the sails as before, yet none of them changed the course of the vessel. Their calm behavior made the scene even more frightening.

I hurried across the deck and approached the captain once again. He still stood near the wheel, his eyes fixed upon the dark horizon. His long white hair moved in the cold wind. His face showed deep thought, yet no fear.

I stood beside him and looked ahead. The sight before us now appeared clearly. The sea rushed downward into a vast whirl of water. Huge waves rolled around it like giant walls that slowly turned inward. At the center of this terrible circle there seemed to be a deep black opening in the ocean itself.

The ship was moving directly toward that place. Each moment the roar of the water grew louder. The waves around us rose higher and moved faster as they rushed toward the center of the whirl. The wind screamed through the sails, driving us forward with unstoppable force.

I felt that the end of the voyage was near. Soon the ship would be drawn into

the center of that terrible whirl. The thought of death did not fill me with panic. Instead a strange calm entered my mind. I felt that I had become part of some great mystery beyond the understanding of ordinary life.

With this feeling I hurried below the deck once more. I found paper and writing tools among the boxes in the lower part of the ship. Sitting beside the dim lantern, I began to write down everything that had happened since the storm destroyed my first vessel.

I wrote quickly, knowing that time was short. The roar of the ocean above me grew louder with every passing moment. The ship shook violently as it rushed toward the great whirl of water.

When I finished writing, I sealed these pages inside a strong bottle. My hope is that the bottle will escape the terrible whirl that now waits for the ship. Perhaps the sea will carry it to some distant shore. Perhaps another person will find it and learn the strange story of this voyage.

Even now the sound of the water grows louder. The ship is descending rapidly into the vast whirl of the ocean. The deck above me shakes as the vessel falls deeper and deeper into that dark center.

The end is near.

The Oval Portrait

Part 1

The night was cold and dark when my servant and I arrived at the old house. We had been traveling for many hours through wild mountain land. My body was weak from injury, and I needed rest. Because of this, my servant decided that we must enter the empty building that stood beside the narrow road. The house appeared large but silent. No light shone from its windows, and no sound came from inside.

My servant helped me down from the horse. My strength was very small, and walking caused pain in my body. We moved slowly toward the door of the house. The wood of the door was old, and the iron handle felt cold in the night air. My servant pushed it open, and we stepped inside.

The rooms of the house were dark and filled with dust. It seemed that no one had lived there for many years. Yet the building itself still stood strong. The walls were high, and many rooms opened along the long hall. My servant carried a small lamp that gave a weak yellow light. With this light we searched for a place where I could rest.

At last we found a small room high in one of the towers of the house. The room was narrow but comfortable enough for the night. There was a bed against the wall and several chairs near the window. My servant helped me lie down upon the bed so that I could recover my strength.

The lamp stood on a small table beside me. Its light spread softly through the room and revealed many objects that hung upon the walls. The walls were covered with pictures. Some were large paintings of people. Others showed scenes of land and sky. The frames around them were rich and heavy, though dust covered many of their surfaces.

My servant placed several candles in tall holders near the bed so that the room would be brighter. After arranging the light, he closed the door and left me alone to rest. I felt very tired, yet I could not sleep. The quiet room and the strange

pictures on the walls kept my mind awake.

I began to study the paintings that surrounded the bed. One picture showed a young man standing beside a river. Another displayed a woman sitting in a garden. Each painting seemed carefully made. The artist who created them must have possessed great skill.

Beside the bed lay a small book that described the pictures in the room. The book explained who the subjects were and how the paintings had been made. Curious, I opened the book and began to read by the light of the candles.

As I read, I moved the lamp so that its light would shine more clearly upon the walls. When I turned the lamp slightly, the light suddenly fell upon a picture that had been hidden in shadow before. The painting hung within a small space of the wall near the head of the bed.

I had not noticed it earlier because the angle of the light had kept it dark. Now that the lamp illuminated it, the picture immediately caught my full attention. It was small compared with the other paintings in the room. The frame was oval in shape and decorated with delicate golden lines.

The painting itself showed the face of a young woman. Her head and shoulders filled the center of the frame. The background behind her was dark, which caused her face to appear bright and alive in the candlelight.

I felt a sudden and powerful interest in the portrait. The face of the woman seemed almost real. Her eyes looked directly outward from the picture with a quiet expression. Her lips were slightly open as if she were about to speak. The soft color of her skin appeared warm in the light of the candles.

For a moment I believed that the figure might move or breathe. The painting possessed a life that I had never seen in any other work of art. I stared at it in deep amazement. The more I looked, the stronger this strange impression became.

At last I felt uneasy under the power of the portrait. I closed my eyes for a short time in order to calm my mind. The image of the woman had affected me in a way that I could not easily explain. When I opened my eyes again, I decided to learn more about the painting from the book beside my bed.

I turned the pages slowly until I found the description of the oval portrait. The

short story written there began to explain the history of the painting and the woman whose face appeared within it.

As I began to read, I realized that the story behind the portrait was far more strange than the painting itself.

Part 2

The book beside my bed contained short accounts of every painting in the room. Each page described the person in the picture and the artist who had created it. I turned the pages slowly until I found the section that spoke about the oval portrait. The writing was brief, yet the story it told was powerful and strange.

According to the book, the woman in the portrait had once been young and very beautiful. Her face was bright with happiness, and her heart was full of love for life. Everyone who met her admired her gentle nature. She enjoyed the sunlight, the flowers, and the warm air of the open world. Her smile came easily, and her laughter filled the rooms of her home.

The book also explained that the woman had married a painter. The man possessed great skill in art. From an early age he had devoted his entire life to painting. His mind was always filled with images, colors, and forms. He believed that art was the highest purpose a person could follow.

Yet the painter loved his art even more deeply than he loved anything else in the world. His devotion to painting was so strong that it often drew his attention away from ordinary life. Many people admired his talent, but few understood the intense passion that ruled his mind.

When the painter married the young woman, many friends felt happy for them both. The woman loved her husband sincerely, and she admired the beauty of his work. She believed that their life together would be full of joy.

At first the marriage seemed peaceful. The painter continued his work, and the woman watched him with pride. She often sat beside him while he worked. The rooms of their house were filled with light and color from the many paintings he created.

Yet slowly the woman began to notice that her husband's devotion to art grew stronger with each passing day. When he painted, he forgot the world around him. Hours passed without his awareness. Even the presence of his wife could not easily draw his attention away from the canvas before him.

The woman still loved him deeply, but she sometimes felt lonely in his presence. She wished that he would look at her with the same attention he gave to his paintings. Yet she did not complain. She understood how important art was to his heart.

One day the painter formed a new idea for a work of art. He wished to create a portrait of his wife. He believed that her beauty would provide the perfect subject for a painting. In his mind he imagined a picture that would capture the softness of her face and the brightness of her spirit.

When he told his wife about this plan, she agreed at once. She loved her husband and wished to please him. If sitting for the portrait would make him happy, she was ready to do so.

The painter chose a small room high in one of the towers of their house. The room received light from a narrow window above. The light entered softly and fell directly upon the place where the woman would sit. The painter believed that this gentle light would allow him to show every delicate line of her face.

Day after day the woman sat quietly while the painter worked. She remained in the same position for many hours at a time. Her husband watched the canvas closely and moved his brush with careful attention. His eyes followed every shadow and color upon her face.

At first the woman endured the long hours with patience. She smiled gently as she sat before the painter. Yet as the days passed, the work continued without rest. The painter became more and more absorbed in the task before him. He rarely spoke and seldom looked away from the canvas.

The woman began to grow tired from the long sitting. The room in the tower was small, and the light that entered from the narrow window was weak. Yet she continued to sit in silence because she loved her husband and wished to support his work.

The painter noticed nothing except the growing beauty of the portrait. With every day the image on the canvas appeared more alive. The colors of the woman's face seemed warm and natural. Her eyes shone with quiet life.

As the work continued, the painter's excitement grew stronger. He believed that he was creating his greatest painting. His entire mind and heart were fixed upon the canvas before him.

Meanwhile the woman who sat before him slowly grew weaker.

Part 3

The woman continued to sit quietly in the small tower room while her husband painted. Each day the work began early and lasted many long hours. The painter studied the canvas with intense attention. His brush moved carefully across the surface, adding small changes to the color and shape of the portrait.

The light that entered the room came only from the narrow window above. This light fell directly upon the woman's face, leaving the rest of the room in shadow. The painter believed that this effect would make the portrait more beautiful. It allowed the features of the woman to shine softly against the darker background.

Yet the same light that pleased the painter caused suffering for the woman who sat before him. The room felt cold and quiet. She remained in the same position for many hours without rest. Her body grew tired, and her strength slowly faded.

Still she did not complain. Her love for the painter remained strong. When he spoke to her, she answered gently. When he asked her to remain still, she obeyed without question. She wished only to help him complete the work that meant so much to his heart.

But the painter himself no longer noticed the change that was taking place. His mind was fixed completely upon the portrait. He watched the canvas with burning attention. Every small detail of color and shadow held his full interest.

Sometimes he stepped back to observe the painting from a distance. At those moments his eyes shone with excitement. The image of the woman on the canvas appeared more and more alive. The softness of her skin, the brightness of her eyes,

and the gentle curve of her lips all seemed to exist within the painting itself.

Meanwhile the real woman sitting before him grew pale and weak. The long hours in the cold room slowly drained the life from her body. Yet the painter saw only the beauty of the portrait. His passion for art blinded him to the suffering of his wife.

The work continued for many days. The painter slept little and rarely left the tower room. His thoughts were filled entirely with the portrait. He believed that the painting would become his greatest creation.

At last the portrait neared completion. Only a few final touches remained. The painter's excitement grew stronger as he prepared to finish the work. His brush moved with quick and careful strokes across the canvas.

The woman still sat quietly in her place. Her face remained turned toward the painter, just as it had been since the beginning of the work. Yet her strength was almost gone. Her breathing had become slow and faint.

The painter did not notice. His eyes remained fixed upon the canvas before him. In his mind there was only the beauty of the portrait and the desire to complete it perfectly.

Finally the last moment arrived. The painter lifted his brush and added the final touch of color to the lips of the painted woman. When this small movement was finished, he stepped back from the canvas and looked at his work with deep excitement.

"It is life itself!" he cried with wonder. His voice filled the small tower room as he stared at the portrait before him. The painted face seemed full of living beauty. The eyes shone with quiet warmth, and the lips appeared ready to speak.

For a moment the painter stood motionless with joy. Then he turned his eyes toward the woman who had sat before him during all those long days of work.

But she no longer moved.

The life that had slowly faded during the creation of the portrait was now gone. The woman who loved him had died quietly in her chair while he finished the painting.