

SAMUEL BECKETT

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NOHOW ON

C O M P A N Y

A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine.

To one on his back in the dark. This he can tell by the pressure on his hind parts and by how the dark changes when he shuts his eyes and again when he opens them again. Only a small part of what is said can be verified. As for example when he hears, You are on your back in the dark. Then he must acknowledge the truth of what is said. But by far the greater part of what is said cannot be verified. As for example when he hears, You first saw the light on such and such a day. Sometimes the two are combined as for example, You first saw the light on such and such a day and now you are on your back in the dark. A device perhaps from the incontrovertibility of the one to win credence for the other. That then is the proposition. To one on his back in the dark a voice tells of a past. With occasional allusion to a present and more rarely to a future as for example, You will end as you now are. And in

another dark or in the same another devising it all for company. Quick leave him.

Use of the second person marks the voice. That of the third that cankerous other. Could he speak to and of whom the voice speaks there would be a first. But he cannot. He shall not. You cannot. You shall not.

Apart from the voice and the faint sound of his breath there is no sound. None at least that he can hear. This he can tell by the faint sound of his breath.

Though now even less than ever given to wonder he cannot but sometimes wonder if it is indeed to and of him the voice is speaking. May not there be another with him in the dark to and of whom the voice is speaking? Is he not perhaps overhearing a communication not intended for him? If he is alone on his back in the dark why does the voice not say so? Why does it never say for example, You saw the light on such and such a day and now you are alone on your back in the dark? Why? Perhaps for no other reason than

to kindle in his mind this faint uncertainty and embarrassment.

Your mind never active at any time is now even less than ever so. This is the type of assertion he does not question. You saw the light on such and such a day and your mind never active at any time is now even less than ever so. Yet a certain activity of mind however slight is a necessary complement of company. That is why the voice does not say, You are on your back in the dark and have no mental activity of any kind. The voice alone is company but not enough. Its effect on the hearer is a necessary complement. Were it only to kindle in his mind the state of faint uncertainty and embarrassment mentioned above. But company apart this effect is clearly necessary. For were he merely to hear the voice and it to have no more effect on him than speech in Bantu or in Erse then might it not as well cease? Unless its object be by mere sound to plague one in need of silence. Or of course unless as above surmised directed at another.

A small boy you come out of Connolly's Stores holding your mother by the hand. You turn right and advance in silence southward along the highway. After some hundred paces you head inland and broach the long steep homeward. You make ground in silence hand in hand through the warm still summer air. It is late afternoon and after some hundred paces the sun appears above the crest of the rise. Looking up at the blue sky and then at your mother's face you break the silence asking her if it is not in reality much more distant than it appears. The sky that is. The blue sky. Receiving no answer you mentally reframe your question and some hundred paces later look up at her face again and ask her if it does not appear much less distant than in reality it is. For some reason you could never fathom this question must have angered her exceedingly. For she shook off your little hand and made you a cutting retort you have never forgotten.

If the voice is not speaking to him it must be speaking to another. So with what reason remains he reasons. To another of that other. Or of him. Or of another still.

To another of that other or of him or of another still. To one on his back in the dark in any case. Of one on his back in the dark whether the same or another. So with what reason remains he reasons and reasons ill. For were the voice speaking not to him but to another then it must be of that other it is speaking and not of him or of another still. Since it speaks in the second person. Were it not of him to whom it is speaking speaking but of another it would not speak in the second person but in the third. For example, He first saw the light on such and such a day and now he is on his back in the dark. It is clear therefore that if it is not to him the voice is speaking but to another it is not of him either but of that other and none other to that other. So with what reason remains he reasons ill. In order to be company he must display a certain mental activity. But it need not be of a high order. Indeed it might be argued the lower the better. Up to a point. The lower the order of mental activity the better the company. Up to a point.

You first saw the light in the room you most likely

were conceived in. The big bow window looked west to the mountains. Mainly west. For being bow it looked also a little south and a little north. Necessarily. A little south to more mountain and a little north to foot-hill and plain. The midwife was none other than a Dr. Hadden or Haddon. Straggling grey moustache and hunted look. It being a public holiday your father left the house soon after his breakfast with a flask and a package of his favourite egg sandwiches for a tramp in the mountains. There was nothing unusual in this. But on that particular morning his love of walking and wild scenery was not the only mover. But he was moved also to take himself off and out of the way by his aversion to the pains and general unpleasantness of labour and delivery. Hence the sandwiches which he relished at noon looking out to sea from the lee of a great rock on the first summit scaled. You may imagine his thoughts before and after as he strode through the gorse and heather. When he returned at nightfall he learned to his dismay from the maid at the back door that labour was still in swing. Despite its having begun before he left the house full ten hours earlier. He at once

hastened to the coachhouse some twenty yards distant where he housed his De Dion Bouton. He shut the doors behind him and climbed into the driver's seat. You may imagine his thoughts as he sat there in the dark not knowing what to think. Though footsore and weary he was on the point of setting out anew across the fields in the young moonlight when the maid came running to tell him it was over at last. Over!

You are an old man plodding along a narrow country road. You have been out since break of day and now it is evening. Sole sound in the silence your footfalls. Rather sole sounds for they vary from one to the next. You listen to each one and add it in your mind to the growing sum of those that went before. You halt with bowed head on the verge of the ditch and convert into yards. On the basis now of two steps per yard. So many since dawn to add to yesterday's. To yesteryear's. To yesteryears'. Days other than today and so akin. The giant tot in miles. In leagues. How often round the earth already. Halted too at your elbow during these

computations your father's shade. In his old tramping rags. Finally on side by side from nought anew.

The voice comes to him now from one quarter and now from another. Now faint from afar and now a murmur in his ear. In the course of a single sentence it may change place and tone. Thus for example clear from above his upturned face, You first saw the light at Easter and now. Then a murmur in his ear, You are on your back in the dark. Or of course vice versa. Another trait its long silences when he dare almost hope it is at an end. Thus to take the same example clear from above his upturned face, You first saw the light of day the day Christ died and now. Then long after on his nascent hope the murmur, You are on your back in the dark. Or of course vice versa.

Another trait its repetitiousness. Repeatedly with only minor variants the same bygone. As if willing him by this dint to make it his. To confess, Yes I remember. Perhaps even to have a voice. To murmur, Yes I remember. What an addition to company that would be!

A voice in the first person singular. Murmuring now and then, Yes I remember.

An old beggar woman is fumbling at a big garden gate. Half blind. You know the place well. Stone deaf and not in her right mind the woman of the house is a crony of your mother. She was sure she could fly once in the air. So one day she launched herself from a first floor window. On the way home from kindergarten on your tiny cycle you see the poor old beggar woman trying to get in. You dismount and open the gate for her. She blesses you. What were her words? God reward you little master. Some such words. God save you little master.

A faint voice at loudest. It slowly ebbs till almost out of hearing. Then slowly back to faint full. At each slow ebb hope slowly dawns that it is dying. He must know it will flow again. And yet at each slow ebb hope slowly dawns that it is dying.

Slowly he entered dark and silence and lay there for

so long that with what judgement remained he judged them to be final. Till one day the voice. One day! Till in the end the voice saying, You are on your back in the dark. Those its first words. Long pause for him to believe his ears and then from another quarter the same. Next the vow not to cease till hearing cease. You are on your back in the dark and not till hearing cease will this voice cease. Or another way. As in shadow he lay and only the odd sound slowly silence fell and darkness gathered. That were perhaps better company. For what odd sound? Whence the shadowy light?

You stand at the tip of the high board. High above the sea. In it your father's upturned face. Upturned to you. You look down to the loved trusted face. He calls to you to jump. He calls, Be a brave boy. The red round face. The thick moustache. The greying hair. The swell sways it under and sways it up again. The far call again, Be a brave boy. Many eyes upon you. From the water and from the bathing place.

The odd sound. What a mercy to have that to turn

to. Now and then. In dark and silence to close as if to light the eyes and hear a sound. Some object moving from its place to its last place. Some soft thing softly stirring soon to stir no more. To darkness visible to close the eyes and hear if only that. Some soft thing softly stirring soon to stir no more.

By the voice a faint light is shed. Dark lightens while it sounds. Deepens when it ebbs. Lightens with flow back to faint full. Is whole again when it ceases. You are on your back in the dark. Had the eyes been open then they would have marked a change.

Whence the shadowy light? What company in the dark! To close the eyes and try to imagine that. Whence once the shadowy light. No source. As if faintly luminous all his little void. What can he have seen then above his upturned face. To close the eyes in the dark and try to imagine that.

Another trait the flat tone. No life. Same flat tone at all times. For its affirmations. For its negations. For

its interrogations. For its exclamations. For its imperations. Same flat tone. You were once. You were never. Were you ever? Oh never to have been! Be again. Same flat tone.

Can he move? Does he move? Should he move? What a help that would be. When the voice fails. Some movement however small. Were it but of a hand closing. Or opening if closed to begin. What a help that would be in the dark! To close the eyes and see that hand. Palm upward filling the whole field. The lines. The fingers slowly down. Or up if down to begin. The lines of that old palm.

There is of course the eye. Filling the whole field. The hood slowly down. Or up if down to begin. The globe. All pupil. Staring up. Hooded. Bared. Hooded again. Bared again.

If he were to utter after all? However feebly. What an addition to company that would be! You are on your back in the dark and one day you will utter again.

One day! In the end. In the end you will utter again.
Yes I remember. That was I. That was I then.

You are alone in the garden. Your mother is in the kitchen making ready for afternoon tea with Mrs. Coote. Making the wafer-thin bread and butter. From behind a bush you watch Mrs. Coote arrive. A small thin sour woman. Your mother answers her saying, He is playing in the garden. You climb to near the top of a great fir. You sit a little listening to all the sounds. Then throw yourself off. The great boughs break your fall. The needles. You lie a little with your face to the ground. Then climb the tree again. Your mother answers Mrs. Coote again saying, He has been a very naughty boy.

What with what feeling remains does he feel about now as compared to then? When with what judgement remained he judged his condition final. As well inquire what he felt then about then as compared to before. When he still moved or tarried in remains of light. As then there was no then so there is none now.

In another dark or in the same another devising it all for company. This at first sight seems clear. But as the eye dwells it grows obscure. Indeed the longer the eye dwells the obscurer it grows. Till the eye closes and freed from pore the mind inquires, What does this mean? What finally does this mean that at first sight seemed clear? Till it the mind too closes as it were. As the window might close of a dark empty room. The single window giving on outer dark. Then nothing more. No. Unhappily no. Pangs of faint light and stirrings still. Unformulable gropings of the mind. Unstillable.

Nowhere in particular on the way from A to Z. Or say for verisimilitude the Ballyogan Road. That dear old back road. Somewhere on the Ballyogan Road in lieu of nowhere in particular. Where no truck any more. Somewhere on the Ballyogan Road on the way from A to Z. Head sunk totting up the tally on the verge of the ditch. Foothills to left. Croker's Acres ahead. Father's shade to right and a little to the rear. So many times already round the earth. Topcoat once

green stiff with age and grime from chin to insteps. Battered once buff block hat and quarter boots still a match. No other garments if any to be seen. Out since break of day and night now falling. Reckoning ended on together from nought anew. As if bound for Stepaside. When suddenly you cut through the hedge and vanish hobbling east across the gallops.

For why or? Why in another dark or in the same? And whose voice asking this? Who asks, Whose voice asking this? And answers, His soever who devises it all. In the same dark as his creature or in another. For company. Who asks in the end, Who asks? And in the end answers as above? And adds long after to himself, Unless another still. Nowhere to be found. Nowhere to be sought. The unthinkable last of all. Unnamable. Last person. I. Quick leave him.

The light there was then. On your back in the dark the light there was then. Sunless cloudless brightness. You slip away at break of day and climb to your hiding place on the hillside. A nook in the gorse. East beyond

the sea the faint shape of high mountain. Seventy miles away according to your Longman. For the third or fourth time in your life. The first time you told them and were derided. All you had seen was cloud. So now you hoard it in your heart with the rest. Back home at nightfall supperless to bed. You lie in the dark and are back in that light. Straining out from your nest in the gorse with your eyes across the water till they ache. You close them while you count a hundred. Then open and strain again. Again and again. Till in the end it is there. Palest blue against the pale sky. You lie in the dark and are back in that light. Fall asleep in that sunless cloudless light. Sleep till morning light.

Deviser of the voice and of its hearer and of himself. Deviser of himself for company. Leave it at that. He speaks of himself as of another. He says speaking of himself, He speaks of himself as of another. Himself he devises too for company. Leave it at that. Confusion too is company up to a point. Better hope deferred than none. Up to a point. Till the heart starts to sicken. Company too up to a point. Better a sick heart than

none. Till it starts to break. So speaking of himself he concludes for the time being, For the time being leave it at that.

In the same dark as his creature or in another not yet imagined. Nor in what position. Whether standing or sitting or lying or in some other position in the dark. These are among the matters yet to be imagined. Matters of which as yet no inkling. The test is company. Which of the two darks is the better company. Which of all imaginable positions has the most to offer in the way of company. And similarly for the other matters yet to be imagined. Such as if such decisions irreversible. Let him for example after due imagination decide in favour of the supine position or prone and this in practice prove less companionable than anticipated. May he then or may he not replace it by another? Such as huddled with his legs drawn up within the semi-circle of his arms and his head on his knees. Or in motion. Crawling on all fours. Another in another dark or in the same crawling on all fours devising it all for company. Or some other form of motion. The pos-

sible encounters. A dead rat. What an addition to company that would be! A rat long dead.

Might not the hearer be improved? Made more companionable if not downright human. Mentally perhaps there is room for enlivenment. An attempt at reflexion at least. At recall. At speech even. Conation of some kind however feeble. A trace of emotion. Signs of distress. A sense of failure. Without loss of character. Delicate ground. But physically? Must he lie inert to the end? Only the eyelids stirring on and off since technically they must. To let in and shut out the dark. Might he not cross his feet? On and off. Now left on right and now a little later the reverse. No. Quite out of keeping. He lie with crossed feet? One glance dispels. Some movement of the hands? A hand. A clenching and unclenching. Difficult to justify. Or raised to brush away a fly. But there are no flies. Then why not let there be? The temptation is great. Let there be a fly. For him to brush away. A live fly mistaking him for dead. Made aware of its error and renewing it incontinent. What an addition to company that would be! A

live fly mistaking him for dead. But no. He would not brush away a fly.

You take pity on a hedgehog out in the cold and put it in an old hatbox with some worms. This box with the hog inside you then place in a disused hutch wedging the door open for the poor creature to come and go at will. To go in search of food and having eaten to regain the warmth and security of its box in the hutch. There then is the hedgehog in its box in the hutch with enough worms to tide it over. A last look to make sure all is as it should be before taking yourself off to look for something else to pass the time heavy already on your hands at that tender age. The glow at your good deed is slower than usual to cool and fade. You glowed readily in those days but seldom for long. Hardly had the glow been kindled by some good deed on your part or by some little triumph over your rivals or by a word of praise from your parents or mentors when it would begin to cool and fade leaving you in a very short time as chill and dim as before. Even in those days. But not this day. It was on an autumn afternoon

you found the hedgehog and took pity on it in the way described and you were still the better for it when your bedtime came. Kneeling at your bedside you included it the hedgehog in your detailed prayer to God to bless all you loved. And tossing in your warm bed waiting for sleep to come you were still faintly glowing at the thought of what a fortunate hedgehog it was to have crossed your path as it did. A narrow clay path edged with sere box edging. As you stood there wondering how best to pass the time till bedtime it parted the edging on the one side and was making straight for the edging on the other when you entered its life. Now the next morning not only was the glow spent but a great uneasiness had taken its place. A suspicion that all was perhaps not as it should be. That rather than do as you did you had perhaps better let good alone and the hedgehog pursue its way. Days if not weeks passed before you could bring yourself to return to the hutch. You have never forgotten what you found then. You are on your back in the dark and have never forgotten what you found then. The mush. The stench.

Impending for some time the following. Need for company not continuous. Moments when his own unrelieved a relief. Intrusion of voice at such. Similarly image of hearer. Similarly his own. Regret then at having brought them about and problem how dispel them. Finally what meant by his own unrelieved? What possible relief? Leave it at that for the moment.

Let the hearer be named H. Aspirate. Haitch. You Haitch are on your back in the dark. And let him know his name. No longer any question of his overhearing. Of his not being meant. Though logically none in any case. Of words murmured in his ear to wonder if to him! So he is. So that faint uneasiness lost. That faint hope. To one with so few occasions to feel. So inapt to feel. Asking nothing better in so far as he can ask anything than to feel nothing. Is it desirable? No. Would he gain thereby in companionability? No. Then let him not be named H. Let him be again as he was. The hearer. Unnamable. You.

Imagine closer the place where he lies. Within rea-

son. To its form and dimensions a clue is given by the voice afar. Receding afar or there with abrupt saltation or resuming there after pause. From above and from all sides and levels with equal remoteness at its most remote. At no time from below. So far. Suggesting one lying on the floor of a hemispherical chamber of generous diameter with ear dead centre. How generous? Given faintness of voice at its least faint some sixty feet should suffice or thirty from ear to any given point of encompassing surface. So much for form and dimensions. And composition? What and where clue to that if any anywhere. Reserve for the moment. Basalt is tempting. Black basalt. But reserve for the moment. So he imagines to himself as voice and hearer pall. But further imagination shows him to have imagined ill. For with what right affirm of a faint sound that it is a less faint made fainter by farness and not a true faint near at hand? Or of a faint fading to fainter that it recedes and not in situ decreases. If with none then no light from the voice on the place where our old hearer lies. In immeasurable dark. Contourless. Leave it at

that for the moment. Adding only, What kind of imagination is this so reason-ridden? A kind of its own.

Another devising it all for company. In the same dark as his creature or in another. Quick imagine. The same.

Might not the voice be improved? Made more companionable. Say changing now for some time past though no tense in the dark in that dim mind. All at once over and in train and to come. But for the other say for some time past some improvement. Same flat tone as initially imagined and same repetitiousness. No improving those. But less mobility. Less variety of faintness. As if seeking optimum position. From which to discharge with greatest effect. The ideal amplitude for effortless audition. Neither offending the ear with loudness nor through converse excess constraining it to strain. How far more companionable such an organ than it initially in haste imagined. How far more likely to achieve its object. To have the hearer have a past and

acknowledge it. You were born on an Easter Friday after long labour. Yes I remember. The sun had not long sunk behind the larches. Yes I remember. As best to erode the drop must strike unwavering. Upon the place beneath.

The last time you went out the snow lay on the ground. You now on your back in the dark stand that morning on the sill having pulled the door gently to behind you. You lean back against the door with bowed head making ready to set out. By the time you open your eyes your feet have disappeared and the skirts of your greatcoat come to rest on the surface of the snow. The dark scene seems lit from below. You see yourself at that last outset leaning against the door with closed eyes waiting for the word from you to go. To be gone. Then the snowlit scene. You lie in the dark with closed eyes and see yourself there as described making ready to strike out and away across the expanse of light. You hear again the click of the door pulled gently to and the silence before the steps can start. Next thing you are on your way across the white pas-

ture afrolic with lambs in spring and strewn with red placentae. You take the course you always take which is a beeline for the gap or ragged point in the quick-set that forms the western fringe. Thither from your entering the pasture you need normally from eighteen hundred to two thousand paces depending on your humour and the state of the ground. But on this last morning many more will be required. Many many more. The beeline is so familiar to your feet that if necessary they could keep to it and you sightless with error on arrival of not more than a few feet north or south. And indeed without any such necessity unless from within this is what they normally do and not only here. For you advance if not with closed eyes though this as often as not at least with them fixed on the momentary ground before your feet. That is all of nature you have seen. Since finally you bowed your head. The fleeting ground before your feet. From time to time. You do not count your steps any more. For the simple reason they number each day the same. Average day in day out the same. The way being always the same. You keep count of the days and every tenth day multi-

ply. And add. Your father's shade is not with you any more. It fell out long ago. You do not hear your foot-falls any more. Unhearing unseeing you go your way. Day after day. The same way. As if there were no other any more. For you there is no other any more. You used never to halt except to make your reckoning. So as to plod on from nought anew. This need removed as we have seen there is none in theory to halt any more. Save perhaps a moment at the outermost point. To gather yourself together for the return. And yet you do. As never before. Not for tiredness. You are no more tired now than you always were. Not because of age. You are no older now than you always were. And yet you halt as never before. So that the same hundred yards you used to cover in a matter of three to four minutes may now take you anything from fifteen to twenty. The foot falls unbidden in midstep or next for lift cleaves to the ground bringing the body to a stand. Then a speechlessness whereof the gist, Can they go on? Or better, Shall they go on? The barest gist. Stilled when finally as always hitherto they do. You lie in the dark with closed eyes and see the scene. As you could

not at the time. The dark cope of sky. The dazzling land. You at a standstill in the midst. The quarter boots sunk to the tops. The skirts of the greatcoat resting on the snow. In the old bowed head in the old block hat speechless misgiving. Halfway across the pasture on your beeline to the gap. The unerring feet fast. You look behind you as you could not then and see their trail. A great swerve. Withershins. Almost as if all at once the heart too heavy. In the end too heavy.

Bloom of adulthood. Imagine a whiff of that. On your back in the dark you remember. Ah you you remember. Cloudless May day. She joins you in the little summerhouse. A rustic hexahedron. Entirely of logs. Both larch and fir. Six feet across. Eight from floor to vertex. Area twenty-four square feet to furthest decimal. Two small multicoloured lights vis-à-vis. Small stained diamond panes. Under each a ledge. There on summer Sundays after his midday meal your father loved to retreat with *Punch* and a cushion. The waist of his trousers unbuttoned he sat on the one ledge turning the pages. You on the other with your feet

dangling. When he chuckled you tried to chuckle too. When his chuckle died yours too. That you should try to imitate his chuckle pleased and tickled him greatly and sometimes he would chuckle for no other reason than to hear you try to chuckle too. Sometimes you turn your head and look out through a rose-red pane. You press your little nose against the pane and all without is rosy. The years have flown and there at the same place as then you sit in the bloom of adulthood bathed in rainbow light gazing before you. She is late. You close your eyes and try to calculate the volume. Simple sums you find a help in times of trouble. A haven. You arrive in the end at seven cubic yards approximately. Even still in the timeless dark you find figures a comfort. You assume a certain heart rate and reckon how many thumps a day. A week. A month. A year. And assuming a certain lifetime a lifetime. Till the last thump. But for the moment with hardly more than seventy American billion behind you you sit in the little summerhouse working out the volume. Seven cubic yards approximately. This strikes you for some reason as improbable and you set about your sum

anew. But you have not made much headway when her light step is heard. Light for a woman of her size. You open with quickening pulse your eyes and a moment later that seems an eternity her face appears at the window. Mainly blue in this position the natural pallor you so admire as indeed from it no doubt wholly blue your own. For natural pallor is a property you have in common. The violet lips do not return your smile. Now this window being flush with your eyes from where you sit and the floor as near as no matter with the outer ground you cannot but wonder if she has not sunk to her knees. Knowing from experience that the height or length you have in common is the sum of equal segments. For when bolt upright or lying at full stretch you cleave face to face then your knees meet and your pubes and the hairs of your heads mingle. Does it follow from this that the loss of height for the body that sits is the same as for it that kneels? At this point assuming height of seat adjustable as in the case of certain piano stools you close your eyes the better with mental measure to measure and compare the first and second segments namely from sole to kneepad

and thence to pelvic girdle. How given you were both moving and at rest to the closed eye in your waking hours! By day and by night. To that perfect dark. That shadowless light. Simply to be gone. Or for affair as now. A single leg appears. Seen from above. You separate the segments and lay them side by side. It is as you half surmised. The upper is the longer and the sitter's loss the greater when seat at knee level. You leave the pieces lying there and open your eyes to find her sitting before you. All dead still. The ruby lips do not return your smile. Your gaze descends to the breasts. You do not remember them so big. To the abdomen. Same impression. Dissolve to your father's straining against the unbuttoned waistband. Can it be she is with child without your having asked for as much as her hand? You go back into your mind. She too did you but know it has closed her eyes. So you sit face to face in the little summer-house. With eyes closed and your hands on your pubes. In that rainbow light. That dead still.

Wearied by such stretch of imagining he ceases and

all ceases. Till feeling the need for company again he tells himself to call the hearer M at least. For readier reference. Himself some other character. W. Devising it all himself included for company. In the same dark as M when last heard of. In what posture and whether fixed or mobile left open. He says further to himself referring to himself, When last he referred to himself it was to say he was in the same dark as his creature. Not in another as once seemed possible. The same. As more companionable. And that his posture there remained to be devised. And to be decided whether fast or mobile. Which of all imaginable postures least liable to pall? Which of motion or of rest the more entertaining in the long run? And in the same breath too soon to say and why after all not say without further ado what can later be unsaid and what if it could not? What then? Could he now if he chose move out of the dark he chose when last heard of and away from his creature into another? Should he now decide to lie and come later to regret it could he then rise to his feet for example and lean against a wall or pace to and fro? Could M be reimagined in an easy chair? With

hands free to go to his assistance? There in the same dark as his creature he leaves himself to these perplexities while wondering as every now and then he wonders in the back of his mind if the woes of the world are all they used to be. In his day.

M so far as follows. On his back in a dark place form and dimensions yet to be devised. Hearing on and off a voice of which uncertain whether addressed to him or to another sharing his situation. There being nothing to show when it describes correctly his situation that the description is not for the benefit of another in the same situation. Vague distress at the vague thought of his perhaps overhearing a confidence when he hears for example, You are on your back in the dark. Doubts gradually dashed as voice from questing far and wide closes in upon him. When it ceases no other sound than his breath. When it ceases long enough vague hope it may have said its last. Mental activity of a low order. Rare flickers of reasoning of no avail. Hope and despair and suchlike barely felt. How current situation arrived at unclear. No that then to compare to this

now. Only eyelids move. When for relief from outer and inner dark they close and open respectively. Other small local movements eventually within moderation not to be despaired of. But no improvement by means of such achieved so far. Or on a higher plane by such addition to company as a movement of sustained sorrow or desire or remorse or curiosity or anger and so on. Or by some successful act of intellection as were he to think to himself referring to himself, Since he cannot think he will give up trying. Is there anything to add to this esquisse? His unnamability. Even M must go. So W reminds himself of his creature as so far created. W? But W too is creature. Figment.

Yet another then. Of whom nothing. Devising figments to temper his nothingness. Quick leave him. Pause and again in panic to himself, Quick leave him.

Devised deviser devising it all for company. In the same figment dark as his figments. In what posture and if or not as hearer in his for good not yet devised. Is not one immovable enough? Why duplicate this par-

ticular solace? Then let him move. Within reason. On all fours. A moderate crawl torso well clear of the ground eyes front alert. If this no better than nothing cancel. If possible. And in the void regained another motion. Or none. Leaving only the most helpful posture to be devised. But to be going on with let him crawl. Crawl and fall. Crawl again and fall again. In the same figment dark as his other figments.

From ranging far and wide as if in quest the voice comes to rest and constant faintness. To rest where? Imagine warily.

Above the upturned face. Falling tangent to the crown. So that in the faint light it sheds were there a mouth to be seen he would not see it. Roll as he might his eyes. Height from the ground?

Arm's length. Force? Low. A mother's stooping over cradle from behind. She moves aside to let the father look. In his turn he murmurs to the newborn. Flat tone unchanged. No trace of love.

You are on your back at the foot of an aspen. In its trembling shade. She at right angles propped on her elbows head between her hands. Your eyes opened and closed have looked in hers looking in yours. In your dark you look in them again. Still. You feel on your face the fringe of her long black hair stirring in the still air. Within the tent of hair your faces are hidden from view. She murmurs, Listen to the leaves. Eyes in each other's eyes you listen to the leaves. In their trembling shade.

Crawling and falling then. Crawling again and falling again. If this finally no improvement on nothing he can always fall for good. Or have never risen to his knees. Contrive how such crawl unlike the voice may serve to chart the area. However roughly. First what is the unit of crawl? Corresponding to the footstep of erect locomotion. He rises to all fours and makes ready to set out. Hands and knees angles of an oblong two foot long width irrelevant. Finally say left knee moves forward six inches thus half halving distance between it and homologous hand. Which then in due course in

its turn moves forward by as much. Oblong now rhomboid. But for no longer than it takes right knee and hand to follow suit. Oblong restored. So on till he drops. Of all modes of crawl this the repent amble possibly the least common. And so possibly of all the most diverting.

So as he crawls the mute count. Grain by grain in the mind. One two three four one. Knee hand knee hand two. One foot. Till say after five he falls. Then sooner or later on from nought anew. One two three four one. Knee hand knee hand two. Six. So on. In what he wills a beeline. Till having encountered no obstacle discouraged he heads back the way he came. From nought anew. Or in some quite different direction. In what he hopes a beeline. Till again with no dead end for his pains he renounces and embarks on yet another course. From nought anew. Well aware or little doubting how darkness may deflect. Withershins on account of the heart. Or conversely to shortest path convert deliberate veer. Be that as it may and crawl as

he will no bourne as yet. As yet imaginable. Hand knee
hand knee as he will. Bourneless dark.

Would it be reasonable to imagine the hearer as mentally quite inert? Except when he hears. That is when the voice sounds. For what if not it and his breath is there for him to hear? Aha! The crawl. Does he hear the crawl? The fall? What an addition to company were he but to hear the crawl. The fall. The rising to all fours again. The crawl resumed. And wonder to himself what in the world such sounds might signify. Reserve for a duller moment. What if not sound could set his mind in motion? Sight? The temptation is strong to decree there is nothing to see. But too late for the moment. For he sees a change of dark when he opens or shuts his eyes. And he may see the faint light the voice imagined to shed. Rashly imagined. Light infinitely faint it is true since now no more than a mere murmur. Here suddenly seen how his eyes close as soon as the voice sounds. Should they happen to be open at the time. So light as let be faintest light no longer perceived than the time it takes the lid to fall.

Taste? The taste in his mouth? Long since dulled. Touch? The thrust of the ground against his bones. All the way from calcaneum to bump of philogenitiveness. Might not a notion to stir ruffle his apathy? To turn on his side. On his face. For a change. Let that much of want be conceded. With attendant relief that the days are no more when he could writhe in vain. Smell? His own? Long since dulled. And a barrier to others if any. Such as might have once emitted a rat long dead. Or some other carrion. Yet to be imagined. Unless the crawler smell. Aha! The crawling creator. Might the crawling creator be reasonably imagined to smell? Even fouler than his creature. Stirring now and then to wonder that mind so lost to wonder. To wonder what in the world can be making that alien smell. Whence in the world those wafts of villainous smell. How much more companionable could his creator but smell. Could he but smell his creator. Some sixth sense? Inexplicable premonition of impending ill? Yes or no? No. Pure reason? Beyond experience. God is love. Yes or no? No.

Can the crawling creator crawling in the same create dark as his creature create while crawling? One of the questions he put to himself as between two crawls he lay. And if the obvious answer were not far to seek the most helpful was another matter. And many crawls were necessary and the like number of prostrations before he could finally make up his imagination on this score. Adding to himself without conviction in the same breath as always that no answer of his was sacred. Come what might the answer he hazarded in the end was no he could not. Crawling in the dark in the way described was too serious a matter and too all-engrossing to permit of any other business were it only the conjuring of something out of nothing. For he had not only as perhaps too hastily imagined to cover the ground in this special way but rectigrade into the bargain to the best of his ability. And furthermore to count as he went adding half foot to half foot and retain in his memory the ever-changing sum of those gone before. And finally to maintain eyes and ears at a high level of alertness for any clue however small to the nature of the place to which imagination perhaps unad-

visedly had consigned him. So while in the same breath deploring a fancy so reason-ridden and observing how revocable its flights he could not but answer finally no he could not. Could not conceivably create while crawling in the same create dark as his creature.

A strand. Evening. Light dying. Soon none left to die. No. No such thing then as no light. Died on to dawn and never died. You stand with your back to the wash. No sound but its. Ever fainter as it slowly ebbs. Till it slowly flows again. You lean on a long staff. Your hands rest on the knob and on them your head. Were your eyes to open they would first see far below in the last rays the skirt of your greatcoat and the uppers of your boots emerging from the sand. Then and it alone till it vanishes the shadow of the staff on the sand. Vanishes from your sight. Moonless starless night. Were your eyes to open dark would lighten.

Crawls and falls. Lies. Lies in the dark with closed eyes resting from his crawl. Recovering. Physically and from his disappointment at having crawled again

in vain. Perhaps saying to himself, Why crawl at all? Why not just lie in the dark with closed eyes and give up? Give up all. Have done with all. With bootless crawl and figments comfortless. But if on occasion so disheartened it is seldom for long. For little by little as he lies the craving for company revives. In which to escape from his own. The need to hear that voice again. If only saying again, You are on your back in the dark. Or if only, You first saw the light and cried at the close of the day when in darkness Christ at the ninth hour cried and died. The need eyes closed the better to hear to see that glimmer shed. Or with adjunction of some human weakness to improve the hearer. For example an itch beyond reach of the hand or better still within while the hand immovable. An unscratchable itch. What an addition to company that would be! Or last if not least resort to ask himself what precisely he means when he speaks of himself loosely as lying. Which in other words of all the innumerable ways of lying is likely to prove in the long run the most endearing. If having crawled in the way described he falls it would normally be on his face. Indeed given the degree

of his fatigue and discouragement at this point it is hard to see how he could do otherwise. But once fallen and lying on his face there is no reason why he should not turn over on one or other of his sides or on his only back and so lie should any of these three postures offer better company than any of the other three. The supine though most tempting he must finally disallow as being already supplied by the hearer. With regard to the sidelong one glance is enough to dispel them both. Leaving him with no other choice than the prone. But how prone? Prone how? How disposed the legs? The arms? The head? Prone in the dark he strains to see how best he may lie prone. How most companionably.

See hearer clearer. Which of all the ways of lying supine the least likely in the long run to pall? After long straining eyes closed prone in the dark the following. But first naked or covered? If only with a sheet. Naked. Ghostly in the voice's glimmer that bonewhite flesh for company. Head resting mainly on occipital bump aforesaid. Legs joined at attention. Feet splayed ninety degrees. Hands invisibly manacled crossed on

pubis. Other details as need felt. Leave him at that for the moment.

Numb with the woes of your kind you raise none the less your head from off your hands and open your eyes. You turn on without moving from your place the light above you. Your eyes light on the watch lying beneath it. But instead of reading the hour of night they follow round and round the second hand now followed and now preceded by its shadow. Hours later it seems to you as follows. At 60 seconds and 30 seconds shadow hidden by hand. From 60 to 30 shadow precedes hand at a distance increasing from zero at 60 to maximum at 15 and thence decreasing to new zero at 30. From 30 to 60 shadow follows hand at a distance increasing from zero at 30 to maximum at 45 and thence decreasing to new zero at 60. Slant light now to dial by moving either to either side and hand hides shadow at two quite different points as for example 50 and 20. Indeed at any two quite different points whatever depending on degree of slant. But however great or small the slant and more or less remote from initial 60 and 30 the

new points of zero shadow the space between the two remains one of 30 seconds. The shadow emerges from under hand at any point whatever of its circuit to follow or precede it for the space of 30 seconds. Then disappears infinitely briefly before emerging again to precede or follow it for the space of 30 seconds again. And so on and on. This would seem to be the one constant. For the very distance itself between hand and shadow varies as the degree of slant. But however great or small this distance it invariably waxes and wanes from nothing to a maximum 15 seconds later and to nothing again 15 seconds later again respectively. And so on and on. This would seem to be a second constant. More might have been observed on the subject of this second hand and its shadow in their seemingly endless parallel rotation round and round the dial and other variables and constants brought to light and errors if any corrected in what had seemed so far. But unable to continue you bow your head back to where it was and with closed eyes return to the woes of your kind. Dawn finds you still in this position. The low sun

shines on you through the eastern window and flings all along the floor your shadow and that of the lamp left lit above you. And those of other objects also.

What visions in the dark of light! Who exclaims thus? Who asks who exclaims, What visions in the shadeless dark of light and shade! Yet another still? Devising it all for company. What a further addition to company that would be! Yet another still devising it all for company. Quick leave him.

Somehow at any price to make an end when you could go out no more you sat huddled in the dark. Having covered in your day some twenty-five thousand leagues or roughly thrice the girdle. And never once overstepped a radius of one from home. Home! So sat waiting to be purged the old lutist cause of Dante's first quarter-smile and now perhaps singing praises with some section of the blest at last. To whom here in any case farewell. The place is windowless. When as you sometimes do to void the fluid you open

your eyes dark lessens. Thus you now on your back in the dark once sat huddled there your body having shown you it could go out no more. Out no more to walk the little winding back roads and interjacent pastures now alive with flocks and now deserted. With at your elbow for long years your father's shade in his old tramping rags and then for long years alone. Adding step after step to the ever mounting sum of those already accomplished. Halting now and then with bowed head to fix the score. Then on from nought anew. Huddled thus you find yourself imagining you are not alone while knowing full well that nothing has occurred to make this possible. The process continues none the less lapped as it were in its meaninglessness. You do not murmur in so many words, I know this doomed to fail and yet persist. No. For the first personal and a fortiori plural pronoun had never any place in your vocabulary. But without a word you view yourself to this effect as you would a stranger suffering say from Hodgkin's disease or if you prefer Percival Pott's surprised at prayer. From time to time

with unexpected grace you lie. Simultaneously the various parts set out. The arms unclasp the knees. The head lifts. The legs start to straighten. The trunk tilts backward. And together these and countless others continue on their respective ways till they can go no further and together come to rest. Supine now you resume your fable where the act of lying cut it short. And persist till the converse operation cuts it short again. So in the dark now huddled and now supine you toil in vain. And just as from the former position to the latter the shift grows easier in time and more alacrious so from the latter to the former the reverse is true. Till from the occasional relief it was supineness becomes habitual and finally the rule. You now on your back in the dark shall not rise to your arse again to clasp your legs in your arms and bow down your head till it can bow down no further. But with face upturned for good labour in vain at your fable. Till finally you hear how words are coming to an end. With every inane word a little nearer to the last. And how the fable too. The fable of one with you in the dark. The fable of one

fabbling of one with you in the dark. And how better
in the end labour lost and silence. And you as you
always were.

Alone.

ILL SEEN ILL SAID

From where she lies she sees Venus rise. On. From where she lies when the skies are clear she sees Venus rise followed by the sun. Then she rails at the source of all life. On. At evening when the skies are clear she savours its star's revenge. At the other window. Rigid upright on her old chair she watches for the radiant one. Her old deal spindlebacked kitchen chair. It emerges from out the last rays and sinking ever brighter is engulfed in its turn. On. She sits on erect and rigid in the deepening gloom. Such helplessness to move she cannot help. Heading on foot for a particular point often she freezes on the way. Unable till long after to move on not knowing whither or for what purpose. Down on her knees especially she finds it hard not to remain so forever. Hand resting on hand on some convenient support. Such as the foot of her bed. And on then her head. There then she sits as though turned to stone face to the night. Save for the white of her hair and faintly bluish white of face and hands all

is black. For an eye having no need of light to see. All this in the present as had she the misfortune to be still of this world.

The cabin. Its situation. Careful. On. At the inexistent centre of a formless place. Rather more circular than otherwise finally. Flat to be sure. To cross it in a straight line takes her from five to ten minutes. Depending on her speed and radius taken. Here she who loves to—here she who now can only stray never strays. Stones increasingly abound. Ever scatter even the rankest weed. Meagre pastures hem it round on which it slowly gains. With none to gainsay. To have gainsaid. As if doomed to spread. How come a cabin in such a place? How came? Careful. Before replying that in the far past at the time of its building there was clover growing to its very walls. Implying furthermore that it the culprit. And from it as from an evil core that the what is the wrong word the evil spread. And none to urge—none to have urged its demolition. As if doomed to endure. Question answered. Chalkstones of striking effect in the light of the moon. Let it be in

opposition when the skies are clear. Quick then still under the spell of Venus quick to the other window to see the other marvel rise. How whiter and whiter as it climbs it whitens more and more the stones. Rigid with face and hands against the pane she stands and marvels long.

The two zones form a roughly circular whole. As though outlined by a trembling hand. Diameter. Careful. Say one furlong. On an average. Beyond the unknown. Mercifully. The feeling at times of being below sea level. Especially at night when the skies are clear. Invisible nearby sea. Inaudible. The entire surface under grass. Once clear of the zone of stones. Save where it has receded from the chalky soil. Innumerable white scabs all shapes and sizes. Of striking effect in the light of the moon. In the way of animals ovines only. After long hesitation. They are white and make do with little. Whence suddenly come no knowing nor whither as suddenly gone. Unshepherded they stray as they list. Flowers? Careful. Alone the odd crocus still at lambing time. And man? Shut of at last? Alas no.

For will she not be surprised one day to find him gone? Surprised no she is beyond surprise. How many? A figure come what may. Twelve. Wherewith to furnish the horizon's narrow round. She raises her eyes and sees one. Turns away and sees another. So on. Always afar. Still or receding. She never once saw one come toward her. Or she forgets. She forgets. Are they always the same? Do they see her? Enough.

A moor would have better met the case. Were there a case better to meet. There had to be lambs. Rightly or wrongly. A moor would have allowed of them. Lambs for their whiteness. And for other reasons as yet obscure. Another reason. And so that there may be none. At lambing time. That from one moment to the next she may raise her eyes to find them gone. A moor would have allowed of them. In any case too late. And what lambs. No trace of frolic. White splotches in the grass. Aloof from the unheeding ewes. Still. Then a moment straying. Then still again. To think there is still life in this age. Gently gently.

She is drawn to a certain spot. At times. There stands a stone. It it is draws her. Rounded rectangular block three times as high as wide. Four. Her stature now. Her lowly stature. When it draws she must to it. She cannot see it from her door. Blindfold she could find her way. With herself she has no more converse. Never had much. Now none. As had she the misfortune to be still of this world. But when the stone draws then to her feet the prayer, Take her. Especially at night when the skies are clear. With moon or without. They take her and halt her before it. There she too as if of stone. But black. Sometimes in the light of the moon. Mostly of the stars alone. Does she envy it?

To the imaginary stranger the dwelling appears deserted. Under constant watch it betrays no sign of life. The eye glued to one or the other window has nothing but black drapes for its pains. Motionless against the door he listens long. No sound. Knocks. No answer. Watches all night in vain for the least glimmer. Returns at last to his own and avows, No one.

She shows herself only to her own. But she has no own.
Yes yes she has one. And who has her.

There was a time when she did not appear in the zone of stones. A long time. Was not therefore to be seen going out or coming in. When she appeared only in the pastures. Was not therefore to be seen leaving them. Save as though by enchantment. But little by little she began to appear. In the zone of stones. First darkly. Then more and more plain. Till in detail she could be seen crossing the threshold both ways and closing the door behind her. Then a time when within her walls she did not appear. A long time. But little by little she began to appear. Within her walls. Darkly. Time truth to tell still current. Though she within them no more. This long time.

Yes within her walls so far at the window only. At one or the other window. Rapt before the sky. And only half seen so far a pallet and a ghostly chair. Ill half seen. And how in her faint comings and goings she suddenly stops dead. And how hard set to rise up

from off her knees. But there too little by little she begins to appear more plain. Within her walls. As well as other objects. Such as under her pillow—such as deep in some recess this still shadowy album. Perhaps in time be by her when she takes it on her knees. See the old fingers fumble through the pages. And what scenes they can possibly be that draw the head down lower still and hold it in thrall. In the meantime who knows no more than withered flowers. No more!

But quick seize her where she is best to be seized. In the pastures far from shelter. She crosses the zone of stones and is there. Clearer and clearer as she goes. Quick seeing she goes out less and less. And so to say only in winter. Winter in her winter haunts she wanders. Far from shelter. Head bowed she makes her slow wavering way across the snow. It is evening. Yet again. On the snow her long shadow keeps her company. The others are there. All about. The twelve. Afar. Still or receding. She raises her eyes and sees one. Turns away and sees another. Again she stops dead. Now the moment or never. But something forbids. Just time

to begin to glimpse a fringe of black veil. The face must wait. Just time before the eye cast down. Where nothing to be seen in the grazing rays but snow. And how all about little by little her footprints are effaced.

What is it defends her? Even from her own. Averts the intent gaze. Incriminates the dearly won. Forbids divining her. What but life ending. Hers. The other's. But so otherwise. She needs nothing. Nothing utterable. Whereas the other. How need in the end? But how? How need in the end?

Times when she is gone. Long lapses of time. At crocus time it would be making for the distant tomb. To have that on the imagination! On top of the rest. Bearing by the stem or round her arm the cross or wreath. But she can be gone at any time. From one moment of the year to the next suddenly no longer there. No longer anywhere to be seen. Nor by the eye of flesh nor by the other. Then as suddenly there again. Long after. So on. Any other would renounce. Avow, No one. No one more. Any other than this other. In

wait for her to reappear. In order to resume. Resume the—what is the word? What the wrong word?

Riveted to some detail of the desert the eye fills with tears. Imagination at wit's end spreads its sad wings. Gone she hears one night the sea as if afar. Plucks up her long skirt to make better haste and discovers her boots and stockings to the calf. Tears. Last example the flagstone before her door that by dint by dint her little weight has grooved. Tears.

Before left for the stockings the boots have time to be ill buttoned. Weeping over as weeping will see now the buttonhook larger than life. Of tarnished silver pisciform it hangs by its hook from a nail. It trembles faintly without cease. As if here without cease the earth faintly quaked. The oval handle is wrought to a semblance of scales. The shank a little bent leads up to the hook the eye so far still dry. A lifetime of hooking has lessened its curvature. To the point at certain moments of its seeming unfit for service. Child's play with a pliers to restore it. Was there once a time she did?

Careful. Once once in a way. Till she could no more.
No more bring the jaws together. Oh not for weakness.
Since when it hangs useless from the nail. Trembling
imperceptibly without cease. Silver shimmers some
evenings when the skies are clear. Close-up then. In
which in defiance of reason the nail prevails. Long this
image till suddenly it blurs.

She is there. Again. Let the eye from its vigil be
distracted a moment. At break or close of day. Dis-
tracted by the sky. By something in the sky. So that
when it resumes the curtain may be no longer closed.
Opened by her to let her see the sky. But even without
that she is there. Without the curtain's being opened.
Suddenly open. A flash. The suddenness of all! She
still without stopping. On her way without starting.
Gone without going. Back without returning. Sud-
denly it is evening. Or dawn. The eye rivets the bare
window. Nothing in the sky will distract it from it
more. While she from within looks her fill. Pfft oc-
culted. Nothing having stirred.

Already all confusion. Things and imaginings. As of always. Confusion amounting to nothing. Despite precautions. If only she could be pure figment. Unalloyed. This old so dying woman. So dead. In the madhouse of the skull and nowhere else. Where no more precautions to be taken. No precautions possible. Cooped up there with the rest. Hovel and stones. The lot. And the eye. How simple all then. If only all could be pure figment. Neither be nor been nor by any shift to be. Gently gently. On. Careful.

Here to the rescue two lights. Two small skylights. Set in the high-pitched roof on either side. Each shedding dim light. No ceiling therefore. Necessarily. Otherwise with the curtains closed she would be in the dark. Day and night in the dark. And what of it? She is done with raising her eyes. Nearly done. But when she lies with them open she can just make out the rafters. In the dim light the skylights shed. An ever dimmer light. As the panes slowly dimmen. All in black she comes and goes. The hem of her long black skirt brushes the floor. But most often she is still.

Standing or sitting. Lying or on her knees. In the dim light the skylights shed. Otherwise with the curtains closed for preference she would be in the dark. In the dark day and night.

Next to emerge from the shadows an inner wall. Only slowly to dissolve in favour of a single space. East the bed. West the chair. A place divided by her use of it alone. How more desirable in every way an interior of a piece. The eye breathes again but not for long. For slowly it emerges again. Rises from the floor and slowly up to lose itself in the gloom. The semigloom. It is evening. The buttonhook glimmers in the last rays. The pallet scarce to be seen.

Weary of the inanimate the eye in her absence falls back on the twelve. Out of her sight as she of theirs. Alone turn where she may she keeps her eyes fixed on the ground. On the way at her feet where it has come to a stop. Winter evening. Not to be precise. All so by-gone. To the twelve then for want of better the widowed eye. No matter which. In the distance stiff he

stands facing front and the setting sun. Dark greatcoat reaching to the ground. Antiquated block hat. Finally the face caught full in the last rays. Quick enlarge and devour before night falls.

Having no need of light to see the eye makes haste. Before night falls. So it is. So itself belies. Then glutted—then torpid under its lid makes way for unreason. What if not her do they ring around? Careful. She who looks up no more looks up and sees them. Some among them. Still or receding. Receding. Those too closely seen who move to preserve their distance. While at the same time others advance. Those in the wake of her wandering. She never once saw one come toward her. Or she forgets. She forgets. Now some do. Toward but never nearer. Thus they keep her in the centre. More or less. What then if not her do they ring around? In their ring whence she disappears unhindered. Whence they let her disappear. Instead of disappearing in her company. So the unreasoning goes. While the eye digests its pittance. In its private dark. In the general dark.

As hope expires of her ever reappearing she reappears. At first sight little changed. It is evening. It will always be evening. When not night. She emerges at the fringe of the pastures and sets forward across them. Slowly with fluttering step as if wanting mass. Suddenly still and as suddenly on her way again. At this rate it will be black night before she reaches home. Home! But time slows all this while. Suits its speed to hers. Whence from beginning to end of her course no loss or but little of twilight. A matter at most of a candle or two. Bearing south as best she can she casts toward the moon to come her long black shadow. They come at last to the door holding a great key. At the same instant night. When not evening night. Head bowed she stands exposed facing east. All dead still. All save hanging from a finger the old key polished by use. Trembling it faintly shimmers in the light of the moon.

Woody from below the face consents at last. In the dim light reflected by the flag. Calm slab worn and polished by agelong comings and goings. Livid pallor. Not a wrinkle. How serene it seems this ancient mask.

Worthy those worn by certain newly dead. True the light leaves to be desired. The lids occult the longed-for eyes. Time will tell them washen blue. Where tears perhaps not for nothing. Unimaginable tears of old. Lashes jet black remains of the brunette she was. Perhaps once was. When yet a lass. Yet brunette. Skipping the nose at the call of the lips these no sooner broached are withdrawn. The slab having darkened with the darkening sky. Black night henceforward. And at dawn an empty place. With no means' of knowing whether she has gone in or under cover of darkness her ways again.

White stones more plentiful every year. As well say every instant. In a fair way if they persist to bury all. First zone rather more extensive than at first sight ill seen and every year rather more. Of striking effect in the light of the moon these millions of little sepulchres. But in her absence but cold comfort. From it then in the end to the second miscalled pastures. Leprous with white scars where the grass has receded from the chalky soil. In contemplation of this erosion the eye

finds solace. Everywhere stone is gaining. Whiteness. More and more every year. As well say every instant. Everywhere every instant whiteness is gaining.

The eye will return to the scene of its betrayals. On centennial leave from where tears freeze. Free again an instant to shed them scalding. On the blest tears once shed. While exulting at the white heap of stone. Ever heaping for want of better on itself. Which if it persist will gain the skies. The moon. Venus.

From the stones she steps down into the pastures. As from one tier of a circus to the next. A gap time will fill. For faster than the stones invade it the other ground upheaves its own. So far in silence. A silence time will break. This great silence evening and night. Then all along the verge the muffled thud of stone on stone. Of those spilling their excess on those emergent. Only now and then at first. Then at ever briefer intervals. Till one continuous din. With none to hear. Decreasing as the levels draw together to silence once again. Evening and night. In the meantime she is sud-

denly sitting with her feet in the pastures. Were it not for the empty hands on the way who knows to the tomb. Back from it then more likely. On the way back from the tomb. Frozen true to her wont she seems turned to stone. Face to the further confines the eye closes in vain to see. At last they appear an instant. North where she passes them always. Shroud of radiant haze. Where to melt into paradise.

The long white hair stares in a fan. Above and about the impassive face. Stares as if shocked still by some ancient horror. Or by its continuance. Or by another. That leaves the face stone-cold. Silence at the eye of the scream. Which say? Ill say. Both. All three. Question answered.

Seated on the stones she is seen from behind. From the waist up. Trunk black rectangle. Nape under frill of black lace. White half halo of hair. Face to the north. The tomb. Eyes on the horizon perhaps. Or closed to see the headstone. The withered crocuses. Endless evening. She lit aslant by the last rays. They make no

difference. None to the black of the cloth. None to the white hair. It too dead still. In the still air. Voidlike calm as always. Evening and night. Suffice to watch the grass. How motionless it droops. Till under the relentless eye it shivers. With faintest shiver from its innermost. Equally the hair. Rigidly horrent it shivers at last for the eye about to abandon. And the old body itself. When it seems of stone. Is it not in fact ashiver from head to foot? Let her but go and stand still by the other stone. It white from afar in the pastures. And the eye go from one to the other. Back and forth. What calm then. And what storm. Beneath the weeds' mock calm.

Not possible any longer except as figment. Not endurable. Nothing for it but to close the eye for good and see her. Her and the rest. Close it for good and all and see her to death. Unremittent. In the shack. Over the stones. In the pastures. The haze. At the tomb. And back. And the rest. For good and all. To death. Be shut of it all. On to the next. Next figment. Close it for good this filthy eye of flesh. What forbids? Careful.

Such—such fiasco that folly takes a hand. Such bits and scraps. Seen no matter how and said as seen. Dread of black. Of white. Of void. Let her vanish. And the rest. For good. And the sun. Last rays. And the moon. And Venus. Nothing left but black sky. White earth. Or inversely. No more sky or earth. Finished high and low. Nothing but black and white. Everywhere no matter where. But black. Void. Nothing else. Contemplate that. Not another word. Home at last. Gently gently.

Panic past pass on. The hands. Seen from above. They rest on the pubis intertwined. Strident white. Their faintly leaden tinge killed by the black ground. Suspicion of lace at the wrists. To go with the frill. They tighten then loosen their clasp. Slow systole diastole. And the body that scandal. While its sole hands in view. On its sole pubis. Dead still to be sure. On the chair. After the spectacle. Slowly its spell unbinding. On and on they keep. Tightening and loosening their clasp. Rhythm of a labouring heart. Till when almost despaired of gently part. Suddenly gently.

Spreading rise and in midair palms uppermost come to rest. Behold our hollows. Then after a moment as if to hide the lines fall back pronating as they go and light flat on head of thighs. Within an ace of the crotch. It is now the left hand lacks its third finger. A swelling no doubt—a swelling no doubt of the knuckle between first and second phalanges preventing one panic day withdrawal of the ring. The kind called keeper. Still as stones they defy as stones do the eye. Do they as much as feel the clad flesh? Does the clad flesh feel them? Will they then never quiver? This night assuredly not. For before they have—before the eye has time they mist. Who is to blame? Or what? They? The eye? The missing finger? The keeper? The cry? What cry? All five. All six. And the rest. All. All to blame. All.

Winter evening in the pastures. The snow has ceased. Her steps so light they barely leave a trace. Have barely left having ceased. Just enough to be still visible. Adrift the snow. Whither in her head while her feet stray thus? Hither and thither too? Or unswerving

to the mirage? And where when she halts? The eye discerns afar a kind of stain. Finally the steep roof whence part of the fresh fall has slid. Under the low lowering sky the north is lost. Obliterated by the snow the twelve are there. Invisible were she to raise her eyes. She on the contrary immaculately black. Not having received a single flake. Nothing needed now but for them to start falling again which therefore they do. First one by one here and there. Then thicker and thicker plumb through the still air. Slowly she disappears. Together with the trace of her steps and that of the distant roof. How find her way home? Home! Even as the homing bird. Safe as the saying is and sound.

All dark in the cabin while she whitens afar. Silence but for the imaginary murmur of flakes beating on the roof. And every now and then a real creak. Her company. Here without having to close the eye sees her afar. Motionless in the snow under the snow. The buttonhook trembles from its nail as if a night like any other. Facing the black curtain the chair exudes its

solitude. For want of a fellow-table. Far from it in a corner see suddenly an antique coffer. In its therefore no lesser solitude. It perhaps that creaks. And in its depths who knows the key. The key to close. But this night the chair. Its immovable air. Less than the—more than the empty seat the barred back is piteous. Here if she eats here she sits to eat. The eye closes in the dark and sees her in the end. With her right hand as large as life she holds the edge of the bowl resting on her knees. With her left the spoon dipped in the slop. She waits. For it to cool perhaps. But no. Merely frozen again just as about to begin. At last in a twin movement full of grace she slowly raises the bowl toward her lips while at the same time with equal slowness bowing her head to join it. Having set out at the same instant they meet halfway and there come to rest. Fresh rigor before the first spoonful slobbered largely back into the slop. Others no happier till time to part lips and bowl and slowly back with never a slip to their starting points. As smooth and even fro as to. Now again the rigid Memnon pose. With her right hand she holds the edge of the bowl. With her left the spoon

dipped in the slop. So far so good. But before she can proceed she fades and disappears. Nothing now for the staring eye but the chair in its solitude.

One evening she was followed by a lamb. Reared for slaughter like the others it left them to follow her. In the present to conclude. All so bygone. Slaughter apart it is not like the others. Hanging to the ground in matted coils its fleece hides the little shanks. Rather than walk it seems to glide like a toy in tow. It halts at the same instant as she. At the same instant as she strays on. Stockstill as she it waits with head like hers extravagantly bowed. Clash of black and white that far from muting the last rays amplify. It is now her puniness leaps to the eye. Thanks it would seem to the lowly creature next her. Brief paradox. For suddenly together they move on. Hither and thither toward the stones. There she turns and sits. Does she see the white body at her feet? Head haught now she gazes into emptiness. That profusion. Or with closed eyes sees the tomb. The lamb goes no further. Alone night

fallen she makes for home. Home! As straight as were it to be seen.

Was it ever over and done with questions? Dead the whole brood no sooner hatched. Long before. In the egg. Long before. Over and done with answering. With not being able. With not being able not to want to know. With not being able. No. Never. A dream. Question answered.

What remains for the eye exposed to such conditions? To such vicissitude of hardly there and wholly gone. Why none but to open no more. Till all done. She done. Or left undone. Tenement and unreason. No more unless to rest. In the outward and so-called visible. That daub. Quick again to the brim the old nausea and shut again. On her. Till she be whole. Or abort. Question answered.

The coffer. Empty after long nocturnal search. Nothing. Save in the end in a cranny of dust a scrap of paper. Jagged along one edge as if torn from a diary.

On its yellowed face in barely legible ink two letters followed by a number. Tu 17. Or Th. Tu or Th 17. Otherwise blank. Otherwise empty.

She reemerges on her back. Dead still. Evening and night. Dead still on her back evening and night. The bed. Careful. A pallet? Hardly if head as ill seen when on her knees. Praying if she prays. Pah she has only to grovel deeper. Or grovel elsewhere. Before the chair. Or the coffer. Or at the edge of the pastures with her head on the stones. A pallet then flat on the floor. No pillow. Hidden from chin to foot under a black covering she offers her face alone. Alone! Face defenceless evening and night. Quick the eyes. The moment they open. Suddenly they are there. Nothing having stirred. One is enough. One staring eye. Gaping pupil thinly rimmed with washen blue. No trace of humour. None any more. Unseeing. As if dazed by what seen behind the lids. The other plunges its dark. Then opens in its turn. Dazed in its turn.

Incontinent the void. The zenith. Evening again.

When not night it will be evening. Death again of deathless day. On the one hand embers. On the other ashes. Day without end won and lost. Unseen.

On resumption the head is covered. No matter. No matter now. Such the confusion now between real and—how say its contrary? No matter. That old tandem. Such now the confusion between them once so twain. And such the farrago from eye to mind. For it to make what sad sense of it may. No matter now. Such equal liars both. Real and—how ill say its contrary? The counter-poison.

Still fresh the coffer fiasco what now of all things but a trapdoor. So cunningly contrived that even to the lidded eye it scarcely shows. Careful. Raise it at once and risk another rebuff? No question. Simply savour in advance with in mind the grisly cupboard its conceivable contents. For the first time then wooden floor. Its boards in line with the trap's designed to conceal it. Promising this flagrant concern with camouflage. But beware. Question by the way what wood of

all woods? Ebony why not? Ebony boards. Black on black the brushing skirt. Stark the skeleton chair death-paler than life.

While head included she lies hidden time for a turn in the pastures. No shock were she already dead. As of course she is. But in the meantime more convenient not. Still living then she lies hidden. Having for some reason covered her head. Or for no reason. Night. When not evening night. Winter night. No snow. For the sake of variety. To vary the monotony. The limp grass strangely rigid under the weight of the rime. Clawed by the long black skirt how if but heard it must murmur. Moonless star-studded sky reflected in the erosions filmed with ice. The silence merges into music infinitely far and as unbroken as silence. Ceaseless celestial winds in unison. For all all matters now. The stones gleam faintly afar and the cabin walls seen white at last. Said white. The guardians—the twelve are there but not at full muster. Well! Above all not understand. Simply note how those still faithful have moved apart. Such ill seen that night in the pastures. While head

included she lies hidden. Under on closer inspection a long greatcoat. A man's by the buttons. The button-holes. Eyes closed does she see him?

White walls. High time. White as new. No wind. Not a breath. Unbeaten on by all that comes beating down. And mystery the sun has spared them. The sun that once beat down. So east and west sides the required clash. South gable no problem. But the other. That door. Careful. Black too? Black too. And the roof. Slates. More. Small slates black too brought from a ruined mansion. What tales had they tongues to tell. Their long tale told. Such the dwelling ill seen ill said. Outwardly. High time.

Changed the stone that draws her when revisited alone. Or she who changes it when side by side. Now alone it leans. Backward or forward as the case may be. Is it to nature alone it owes its rough-hewn air? Or to some too human hand forced to desist? As Michelangelo's from the regicide's bust. If there may not be no more questions let there at least be no more

answers. Granite of no common variety assuredly. Black as jade the jasper that flecks its whiteness. On its what is the wrong word its uptilted face obscure graffiti. Scrawled by the ages for the eye to solicit in vain. Winter evenings on her doorstep she imagines she can see it glitter afar. When from their source in the west-south-west the last rays rake its averse face. Such ill seen the stone alone where it stands at the far fringe of the pastures. On her way out with the flowers as unerring as best she can she lingers by it. As on her way back with empty hands. Lingers by it a while on her way on. Toward the one or other abode. As unerring as best she can.

See them again side by side. Not quite touching. Lit aslant by the latest last rays they cast to the east-northeast their long parallel shadows. Evening therefore. Winter evening. It will always be evening. Always winter. When not night. Winter night. No more lambs. No more flowers. Empty-handed she shall go to the tomb. Until she go no more. Or no more return. So much for that. Undistinguishable the twin shadows.

Till one at length more dense as if of a body better opaque. At length more still. As faintly at length the other trembles under the staring gaze. Throughout this confrontation the sun stands still. That is to say the earth. Not to recoil on until the parting. Then on its face over the pastures and then the stones the still living shadow slowly glides. Lengthening and fading more and more. But never quite away. Under the hovering eye.

Close-up of a dial. Nothing else. White disc divided in minutes. Unless it be in seconds. Sixty black dots. No figure. One hand only. Finest of fine black darts. It advances by fits and starts. No tick. Leaps from dot to dot with so lightning a leap that but for its new position it had not stirred. Whole nights may pass as may but a fraction of a second or any intermediate lapse of time soever before it flings itself from one degree to the next. None at any moment overleaping in all fairness be it said. Let it when discovered be pointing east. Having thus covered after its fashion assuming the instrument plumb the first quarter of

its latest hour. Unless it be its latest minute. Then doubt certain—then despair certain nights of its ever attaining the last. Ever regaining north.

She reappears at evening at her window. When not night evening. If she will see Venus again she must open it. Well! First draw aside the curtain and then open. Head bowed she waits to be able. Mindful perhaps of evenings when she was able too late. Black night fallen. But no. In her head too pure wait. The curtain. Seen closer thanks to this hiatus it reveals itself at last for what it is. A black greatcoat. Hooked by its tails from the rod it hangs sprawling inside out like a carcass in a butcher's stall. Or better inside in for the pathos of the dangling arms. Same infinitesimal quaver as the buttonhook and passim. Another novelty the chair drawn up to the window. This to raise the line of sight on the fair prey loftier when first sighted than at first sight ill seen. What empty space henceforward. For long pacing to and fro in the gloom. Suddenly in a single gesture she snatches aside the coat and to again on a sky as black as it. And then? Careful. Have her

sit? Lie? Kneel? Go? She too vacillates. Till in the end the back and forth prevails. Sends her wavering north and south from wall to wall. In the kindly dark.

She is vanishing. With the rest. The already ill seen bedimmed and ill seen again annulled. The mind betrays the treacherous eyes and the treacherous word their treacheries. Haze sole certitude. The same that reigns beyond the pastures. It gains them already. It will gain the zone of stones. Then the dwelling through all its chinks. The eye will close in vain. To see but haze. Not even. Be itself but haze. How can it ever be said? Quick how ever ill said before it submerges all. Light. In one treacherous word. Dazzling haze. Light in its might at last. Where no more to be seen. To be said. Gently gently.

The face yet again in the light of the last rays. No loss of pallor. None of cold. Suspended on the verge for this sight the westering sun. That is the eastering earth. The thin lips seem as if never again to part.

Peeping from their join a suspicion of pulp. Unlikely site of olden kisses given and received. Or given only. Or received only. Impressive above all the corners imperceptibly upcurved. A smile? Is it possible? Ghost of an ancient smile smiled finally once and for all. Such ill half seen the mouth in the light of the last rays. Suddenly they leave it. Rather it leaves them. Off again to the dark. There to smile on. If smile is what it is.

Reexamined rid of light the mouth changes. Unexplainably. Lips as before. Same closure. Same hint of extruding pulp. At the corners same imperceptible laxness. In a word the smile still there if smile is what it is. Neither more nor less. Less! And yet no longer the same. True that light distorts. Particularly sunset. That mockery. True too that the eyes then agaze for the viewless planet are now closed. On other viewlessness. Of which more if ever anon. There the explanation at last. This same smile established with eyes open is with them closed no longer the same. Though between the two inspections the mouth unchanged.

Utterly. Good. But in what way no longer the same? What there now that was not there? What there no more that was? Enough. Away.

Back after many winters. Long after in this endless winter. This endless heart of winter. Too soon. She as when fled. Where as when fled. Still or again. Eyes closed in the dark. To the dark. In their own dark. On the lips same minute smile. If smile is what it is. In short alive as she alone knows how neither more nor less. Less! Compared to true stone. Within as sadly as before all as at first sight ill seen. With the happy exception of the lights' enhanced opacity. Dim the light of day from them were day again to dawn. Without on the other hand some progress. Toward unbroken night. Universal stone. Day no sooner risen fallen. Scrapped all the ill seen ill said. The eye has changed. And its drivelling scribe. Absence has changed them. Not enough. Time to go again. Where still more to change. Whence back too soon. Changed but not enough. Strangers but not enough. To all the ill seen ill said. Then back again. Disarmed for to finish with

it all at last. With her and her rags of sky and earth.
And if again too soon go again. Change still more
again. Then back again. Barring impediment. Ah. So
on. Till fit to finish with it all at last. All the trash. In
unbroken night. Universal stone. So first go. But first
see her again. As when fled. And the abode. That under
the changed eye it too may change. Begin. Just one
parting look. Before all meet again. Then go. Barring
impediment. Ah.

But see she suddenly no longer there. Where sud-
denly fled. Quick then the chair before she reappears.
At length. Every angle. With what one word convey
its change? Careful. Less. Ah the sweet one word. Less.
It is less. The same but less. Whencesoever the glare.
True that the light. See now how words too. A few
drops mishaphazard. Then strangury. To say the least.
Less. It will end by being no more. By never having
been. Divine prospect. True that the light.

Suddenly enough and way for remembrance. Closed
again to that end the vile jelly or opened again or left as

it was however that was. Till all recalled. First finally by far hanging from their skirts two black greatcoats. Followed by the first hazy outlines of what possibly a hutch when suddenly enough. Remembrance! When all worse there than when first ill seen. The pallet. The chair. The coffer. The trap. Alone the eye has changed. Alone can cause to change. In the meantime nothing wanting. Wrong. The buttonhook. The nail. Wrong. There they are again. Still. Worse there than ever. Unchanged for the worse. Ope eye and at them to begin. But first the partition. It rid they too would be. It less they by as much.

It of all the properties doubtless the least obdurate. See the instant see it again when unaided it dissolved. So to say of itself. With no help from the eye. Not till long after to reappear. As if reluctantly. For what reason? For one not far to seek. For others then said obscure. One other above all. One other still far to seek. Analogy of the heart? The skull? Hear from here the howls of laughter of the damned.

Enough. Quicker. Quick see how all in keeping with the chair. Minimally less. No more. Well on the way to inexistence. As to zero the infinite. Quick say. And of her? As much. Quick find her again. In that black heart. That mock brain.

The sheet. Between tips of trembling fingers. In two. Four. Eight. Old frantic fingers. Not paper any more. Each eighth apart. In two. Four. Finish with the knife. Hack into shreds. Down the plughole. On to the next. White. Quick blacken.

Alone the face remains. Of the rest beneath its covering no trace. During the inspection a sudden sound. Startling without consequence for the gaze the mind awake. How explain it? And without going so far how say it? Far behind the eye the quest begins. What time the event recedes. When suddenly to the rescue it comes again. Forthwith the uncommon common noun collapsion. Reinforced a little later if not enfeebled by the infrequent slumberous. A slumberous collapsion. Two. Then far from the still agonizing eye a gleam of

hope. By the grace of these modest beginnings. With in second sight the shack in ruins. To scrute together with the inscrutable face. All curiosity spent.

Later while the face still unyielding another sound of fall but this time sharp. Heightening the fond illusion of general havoc in train. Here a great leap into what brief future remains and summary puncture of that puny balloon. Far ahead to the instant when the coats will have gone from their rods and the buttonhook from its nail. And been hove the sigh no more than that. Sigh upon sigh till all sighed quite away. All the fond trash. Destined before being to be no more than that. Last sighs. Of relief.

Quick beforehand again two mysteries. Not even. Mild shocks. Not even. In such abeyance the mind then. And from then on. First the curtains gone without loss of dark. Sweet foretaste of the joy at journey's end. Second after long hesitation no trace of the fallen where they fell. No trace of all the ado. Alone on the one hand the rods alone. A little bent. And alone on

the other most alone the nail. Unimpaired. All set to serve again. Like unto its glorious ancestors. At the place of the skull. One April afternoon. Deposition done.

Full glare now on the face present throughout the recent future. As seen ill seen throughout the past neither more nor less. Less! Collated with its cast it lives beyond a doubt. Were it only by virtue of its imperfect pallor. And imperceptible tremor unworthy of true plaster. Heartening on the other hand the eyes persistently closed. No doubt a record in this position. Unobserved at least till now. Suddenly the look. Nothing having stirred. Look? Too weak a word. Too wrong. Its absence? No better. Unspeakable globe. Unbearable.

Ample time none the less a few seconds for the iris to be lacking. Wholly. As if engulfed by the pupil. And for the sclerotic not to say the white to appear reduced by half. Already that much less at least but at what cost. Soon to be foreseen save unforeseen two black

blanks. Fit ventholes of the soul that jakes. Here re-
appearance of the skylights opaque to no purpose
henceforward. Seeing the black night or better black-
ness pure and simple that limpid they would shed.
Blackness in its might at last. Where no more to be
seen. Perforce to be seen.

Absence supreme good and yet. Illumination then
go again and on return no more trace. On earth's face.
Of what was never. And if by mishap some left then
go again. For good again. So on. Till no more trace.
On earth's face. Instead of always the same place.
Slaving away forever in the same place. At this and
that trace. And what if the eye could not? No more
tear itself away from the remains of trace. Of what was
never. Quick say it suddenly can and farewell say say
farewell. If only to the face. Of her tenacious trace.

Decision no sooner reached or rather long after
than what is the wrong word? For the last time at last
for to end yet again what the wrong word? Than re-
voked. No but slowly dispelled a little very little like

the last wisps of day when the curtain closes. Of itself
by slow millimetres or drawn by a phantom hand.
Farewell to farewell. Then in that perfect dark fore-
knell darling sound pip for end begun. First last mo-
ment. Grant only enough remain to devour all. Mo-
ment by glutton moment. Sky earth the whole kit and
boodle. Not another crumb of carrion left. Lick chops
and basta. No. One moment more. One last. Grace to
breathe that void. Know happiness.

W O R S T W A R D H O

On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on.
Said nohow on.

Say for be said. Missaid. From now say for be mis-
said.

Say a body. Where none. No mind. Where none.
That at least. A place. Where none. For the body. To
be in. Move in. Out of. Back into. No. No out. No back.
Only in. Stay in. On in. Still.

All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed.
No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.

First the body. No. First the place. No. First both.
Now either. Now the other. Sick of the either try the
other. Sick of it back sick of the either. So on. Some-
how on. Till sick of both. Throw up and go. Where
neither. Till sick of there. Throw up and back. The

body again. Where none. The place again. Where none. Try again. Fail again. Better again. Or better worse. Fail worse again. Still worse again. Till sick for good. Throw up for good. Go for good. Where neither for good. Good and all.

It stands. What? Yes. Say it stands. Had to up in the end and stand. Say bones. No bones but say bones. Say ground. No ground but say ground. So as to say pain. No mind and pain? Say yes that the bones may pain till no choice but stand. Somehow up and stand. Or better worse remains. Say remains of mind where none to permit of pain. Pain of bones till no choice but up and stand. Somehow up. Somehow stand. Remains of mind where none for the sake of pain. Here of bones. Other examples if needs must. Of pain. Relief from. Change of.

All of old. Nothing else ever. But never so failed. Worse failed. With care never worse failed.

Dim light source unknown. Know minimum. Know nothing no. Too much to hope. At most mere minimum. Meremost minimum.

No choice but stand. Somehow up and stand. Some how stand. That or groan. The groan so long on its way. No. No groan. Simply pain. Simply up. A time when try how. Try see. Try say. How first it lay. Then somehow knelt. Bit by bit. Then on from there. Bit by bit. Till up at last. Not now. Fail better worse now.

Another. Say another. Head sunk on crippled hands. Vertex vertical. Eyes clenched. Seat of all. Germ of all.

No future in this. Alas yes.

It stands. See in the dim void how at last it stands. In the dim light source unknown. Before the downcast eyes. Clenched eyes. Staring eyes. Clenched staring eyes.

That shade. Once lying. Now standing. That a body?

Yes. Say that a body. Somehow standing. In the dim void.

A place. Where none. A time when try see. Try say. How small. How vast. How if not boundless bounded. Whence the dim. Not now. Know better now. Unknow better now. Know only no out of. No knowing how know only no out of. Into only. Hence another. Another place where none. Whither once whence no return. No. No place but the one. None but the one where none. Whence never once in. Somehow in. Beyondless. Thenceless there. Thitherless there. Thenceless thitherless there.

Where then but there see—

See for be seen. Misseen. From now see for be misseen.

Where then but there see now—

First back turned the shade astand. In the dim void
see first back turned the shade astand. Still.

Where then but there see now another. Bit by bit
an old man and child. In the dim void bit by bit an old
man and child. Any other would do as ill.

Hand in hand with equal plod they go. In the free
hands—no. Free empty hands. Backs turned both
bowed with equal plod they go. The child hand raised
to reach the holding hand. Hold the old holding hand.
Hold and be held. Plod on and never recede. Slowly
with never a pause plod on and never recede. Backs
turned. Both bowed. Joined by held holding hands.
Plod on as one. One shade. Another shade.

Head sunk on crippled hands. Clenched staring
eyes. At in the dim void shades. One astand at rest.
One old man and child. At rest plodding on. Any
others would do as ill. Almost any. Almost as ill.

They fade. Now the one. Now the twain. Now both.

Fade back. Now the one. Now the twain. Now both.
Fade? No. Sudden go. Sudden back. Now the one.
Now the twain. Now both.

Unchanged? Sudden back unchanged? Yes. Say
yes. Each time unchanged. Somehow unchanged. Till
no. Till say no. Sudden back changed. Somehow
changed. Each time somehow changed.

The dim. The void. Gone too? Back too? No. Say no.
Never gone. Never back. Till yes. Till say yes. Gone
too. Back too. The dim. The void. Now the one. Now
the other. Now both. Sudden gone. Sudden back.
Unchanged? Sudden back unchanged? Yes. Say yes.
Each time unchanged. Somehow unchanged. Till no.
Till say no. Sudden back changed. Somehow changed.
Each time somehow changed.

First sudden gone the one. First sudden back. Un-
changed. Say now unchanged. So far unchanged. Back
turned. Head sunk. Vertex vertical in hat. Cocked

back of black brim alone. Back of black greatcoat cut off midthigh. Kneeling. Better kneeling. Better worse kneeling. Say now kneeling. From now kneeling. Could rise but to its knees. Sudden gone sudden back unchanged back turned head sunk dark shade on unseen knees. Still.

Next sudden gone the twain. Next sudden back. Unchanged. Say now unchanged. So far unchanged. Backs turned. Heads sunk. Dim hair. Dim white and hair so fair that in that dim light dim white. Black greatcoats to heels. Dim black. Boothheels. Now the two right. Now the two left. As on with equal plod they go. No ground. Plod as on void. Dim hands. Dim white. Two free and two as one. So sudden gone sudden back unchanged as one dark shade plod unreceding on.

The dim. Far and wide the same. High and low. Unchanging. Say now unchanging. Whence no knowing. No saying. Say only such dim light as never. On

all. Say a grot in that void. A gulf. Then in that grot or gulf such dimmest light as never. Whence no knowing. No saying.

The void. Unchanging. Say now unchanging. Void were not the one. The twain. So far were not the one and twain. So far.

The void. How try say? How try fail? No try no fail. Say only—

First the bones. On back to them. Preying since first said on foresaid remains. The ground. The pain. No bones. No ground. No pain. Why up unknown. At all costs unknown. If ever down. No choice but up if ever down. Or never down. Forever kneeling. Better forever kneeling. Better worse forever kneeling. Say from now forever kneeling. So far from now forever kneeling. So far.

The void. Before the staring eyes. Stare where they may. Far and wide. High and low. That narrow field.

Know no more. See no more. Say no more. That alone.
That little much of void alone.

On back to unsay void can go. Void cannot go. Save
dim go. Then all go. All not already gone. Till dim
back. Then all back. All not still gone. The one can go.
The twain can go. Dim can go. Void cannot go. Save
dim go. Then all go.

On back better worse to fail the head said seat of all.
Germ of all. All? If of all of it too. Where if not there
it too? There in the sunken head the sunken head. The
hands. The eyes. Shade with the other shades. In the
same dim. The same narrow void. Before the staring
eyes. Where it too if not there too? Ask not. No. Ask
in vain. Better worse so.

The head. Ask not if it can go. Say no. Unasking no.
It cannot go. Save dim go. Then all go. Oh dim go. Go
for good. All for good. Good and all.

Whose words? Ask in vain. Or not in vain if say no

knowing. No saying. No words for him whose words.
Him? One. No words for one whose words. One? It.
No words for it whose words. Better worse so.

Something not wrong with one. Meaning—meaning!
—meaning the kneeling one. From now one for the
kneeling one. As from now two for the twain. The as
one plodding twain. As from now three for the head.
The head as first said missaid. So from now. For to gain
time. Time to lose. Gain time to lose. As the soul once.
The world once.

Something not wrong with one. Then with two.
Then with three. So on. Something not wrong with all.
Far from wrong. Far far from wrong.

The words too whosoever. What room for worse!
How almost true they sometimes almost ring! How
wanting in inanity! Say the night is young alas and take
heart. Or better worse say still a watch of night alas to
come. A rest of last watch to come. And take heart.

First one. First try fail better one. Something there badly not wrong. Not that as it is it is not bad. The no face bad. The no hands bad. The no—. Enough. A pox on bad. Mere bad. Way for worse. Pending worse still. First worse. Mere worse. Pending worse still. Add a—. Add? Never. Bow it down. Be it bowed down. Deep down. Head in hat gone. More back gone. Greatcoat cut off higher. Nothing from pelvis down. Nothing but bowed back. Topless baseless hindtrunk. Dim black. On unseen knees. In the dim void. Better worse so. Pending worse still.

Next try fail better two. The twain. Bad as it is as it is. Bad the no—

First back on to three. Not yet to try worsen. Simply be there again. There in that head in that head. Be it again. That head in that head. Clenched eyes clamped to it alone. Alone? No. Too. To it too. The sunken skull. The crippled hands. Clenched staring eyes. Clenched eyes clamped to clenched staring eyes. Be

that shade again. In that shade again. With the other shades. Worsening shades. In the dim void.

Next—

First how all at once. In that stare. The worsened one. The worsening two. And what yet to worsen. To try worsen. Itself. The dim. The void. All at once in that stare. Clenched eyes clamped to all.

Next two. From bad to worsen. Try worsen. From merely bad. Add—. Add? Never. The boots. Better worse bootless. Bare heels. Now the two right. Now the two left. Left right left right on. Barefoot unreceding on. Better worse so. A little better worse than nothing so.

Next the so-said seat and germ of all. Those hands! That head! That near true ring! Away. Full face from now. No hands. No face. Skull and stare alone. Scene and seer of all.

On. Stare on. Say on. Be on. Somehow on. Anyhow on. Till dim gone. At long last gone. All at long last gone. For bad and all. For poor best worse and all.

Dim whence unknown. At all costs unknown. Unchanging. Say now unchanging. Far and wide. High and low. Say a pipe in that void. A tube. Sealed. Then in that pipe or tube that selfsame dim. Old dim. When ever what else? Where all always to be seen. Of the nothing to be seen. Dimly seen. Nothing ever unseen. Of the nothing to be seen. Dimly seen. Worsen that?

Next the so-said void. The so-missaid. That narrow field. Rife with shades. Well so-missaid. Shade-ridden void. How better worse so-missay?

Add others. Add? Never. Till if needs must. Nothing to those so far. Dimly so far. Them only lessen. But with them as they lessen others. As they worsen. If needs must. Others to lessen. To worsen. Till dim go. At long last go. For worst and all.

On. Somehow on. Anyhow on. Say all gone. So on.
In the skull all gone. All? No. All cannot go. Till dim
go. Say then but the two gone. In the skull one and
two gone. From the void. From the stare. In the skull
all save the skull gone. The stare. Alone in the dim
void. Alone to be seen. Dimly seen. In the skull the
skull alone to be seen. The staring eyes. Dimly seen.
By the staring eyes. The others gone. Long sudden
gone. Then sudden back. Unchanged. Say now un-
changed. First one. Then two. Or first two. Then one.
Or together. Then all again together. The bowed back.
The plodding twain. The skull. The stare. All back in
the skull together. Unchanged. Stare clamped to all.
In the dim void.

The eyes. Time to—

First on back to unsay dim can go. Somehow on
back. Dim cannot go. Dim to go must go for good.
True then dim can go. If but for good. One can go not
for good. Two too. Three no if not for good. With dim
gone for good. Void no if not for good. With all gone

for good. Dim can worsen. Somehow worsen. Go no.
If not for good.

The eyes. Time to try worsen. Somehow try worsen.
Unclench. Say staring open. All white and pupil. Dim
white. White? No. All pupil. Dim black holes. Unwav-
ering gaping. Be they so said. With worsening words.
From now so. Better than nothing so bettered for the
worse.

Still dim still on. So long as still dim still somehow
on. Anyhow on. With worsening words. Worsening
stare. For the nothing to be seen. At the nothing to be
seen. Dimly seen. As now by way of somehow on where
in the nowhere all together? All three together. Where
there all three as last worse seen? Bowed back alone.
Bare-foot plodding twain. Skull and lidless stare. Where
in the narrow vast? Say only vasts apart. In that narrow
void vasts of void apart. Worse better later.

What when words gone? None for what then. But
say by way of somehow on somehow with sight to do.

With less of sight. Still dim and yet—. No. Nohow so on. Say better worse words gone when nohow on. Still dim and nohow on. All seen and nohow on. What words for what then? None for what then. No words for what when words gone. For what when nohow on. Somehow nohow on.

Worsening words whose unknown. Whence unknown. At all costs unknown. Now for to say as worst they may only they only they. Dim void shades all they. Nothing save what they say. Somehow say. Nothing save they. What they say. Whosoever whence-soever say. As worst they may fail ever worse to say.

Remains of mind then still. Enough still. Somewhere somewhere somehow enough still. No mind and words? Even such words. So enough still. Just enough still to joy. Joy! Just enough still to joy that only they. Only!

Enough still not to know. Not to know what they say. Not to know what it is the words it says say. Says?

Secretes. Say better worse secretes. What it is the words it secretes say. What the so-said void. The so-said dim. The so-said shades. The so-said seat and germ of all. Enough to know no knowing. No knowing what it is the words it secretes say. No saying. No saying what it all is they somehow say.

That said on back to try worse say the plodding twain. Preying since last worse said on foresaid remains. But what not on them preying? What seen? What said? What of all seen and said not on them preying? True. True! And yet say worst perhaps worst of all the old man and child. That shade as last worse seen. Left right left right barefoot unreceding on. They then the words. Back to them now for want of better on and better fail. Worser fail that perhaps of all the least. Least worse failed of all the worse failed shades. Less worse than the bowed back alone. The skull and lidless stare. Though they too for worse. But what not for worse. True. True! And yet say first the worst perhaps worst of all the old man and child. Worst in need of worse. Worst in—

Blanks for nohow on. How long? Blanks how long till somehow on? Again somehow on. All gone when nohow on. Time gone when nohow on.

Worse less. By no stretch more. Worse for want of better less. Less best. No. Naught best. Best worse. No. Not best worse. Naught not best worse. Less best worse. No. Least. Least best worse. Least never to be naught. Never to naught be brought. Never by naught be nulled. Unnullable least. Say that best worst. With leastening words say least best worse. For want of worser worst. Unlessenable least best worse.

The twain. The hands. Held holding hands. That almost ring! As when first said on crippled hands the head. Crippled hands! They there then the words. Here now held holding. As when first said. Unnsaid when worse said. Away. Held holding hands!

The empty too. Away. No hands in the -. No. Save for worse to say. Somehow worse somehow to say.

Say for now still seen. Dimly seen. Dim white. Two dim white empty hands. In the dim void.

So leastward on. So long as dim still. Dim undimmed. Or dimmed to dimmer still. To dimmest dim. Leastmost in dimmest dim. Utmost dim. Leastmost in utmost dim. Unworsenable worst.

What words for what then? How almost they still ring. As somehow from some soft of mind they ooze. From it in it ooze. How all but unminane. To last unlessenable least how loath to leasten. For then in utmost dim to unutter leastmost all.

So little worse the old man and child. Gone held holding hands they plod apart. Left right barefoot unreceding on. Not worsen yet the rift. Save for some after nohow somehow worser on.

On back to unsay clamped to all the stare. No but from now to now this and now that. As now from

worsened twain to next for worse alone. To skull and stare alone. Of the two worse in want the skull preying since unsunk. Now say the fore alone. No dome. Temple to temple alone. Clamped to it and stare alone the stare. Bowed back alone and twain blurs in the void. So better than nothing worse shade three from now.

Somehow again on back to the bowed back alone. Nothing to show a woman's and yet a woman's. Oozed from softening soft the word woman's. The words old woman's. The words nothing to show bowed back alone a woman's and yet a woman's. So better worse from now that shade a woman's. An old woman's.

Next fail see say how dim undimmed to worsen. How nohow save to dimmer still. But but a shade so as when after nohow somehow on to dimmer still. Till dimmost dim. Best bad worse of all. Save somehow undimmed worser still.

Ooze on back not to unsay but say again the vasts apart. Say seen again. No worse again. The vasts of

void apart. Of all so far missaid the worse missaid. So far. Not till nohow worse missay say worse missaid. Not till for good nohow on poor worst missaid.

Longing the so-said mind long lost to longing. The so-missaid. So far so-missaid. Dint of long longing lost to longing. Long vain longing. And longing still. Faintly longing still. Faintly vainly longing still. For fainter still. For faintest. Faintly vainly longing for the least of longing. Unlessenable least of longing. Unstillable vain least of longing still.

Longing that all go. Dim go. Void go. Longing go. Vain longing that vain longing go.

Said is missaid. Whenever said said said missaid. From now said alone. No more from now now said and now missaid. From now said alone. Said for missaid. For be missaid.

Back is on. Somehow on. From now back alone. No more from now now back and now back on. From

now back alone. Back for back on. Back for somehow on.

Back unsay better worse by no stretch more. If more dim less light then better worse more dim. Unsaid then better worse by no stretch more. Better worse may no less than less be more. Better worse what? The say? The said? Same thing. Same nothing. Same all but nothing.

No once. No once in pastless now. No not none. When before worse the shades? The dim before more? When if not once? Onceless alone the void. By no stretch more. By none less. Onceless till no more.

Ooze back try worsen blanks. Those then when no-how on. Unsay then all gone. All not gone. Only nohow on. All not gone and nohow on. All there as now when somehow on. The dim. The void. The shades. Only words gone. Ooze gone. Till ooze again and on. Somehow ooze on.

Preying since last worse the stare. Something there
still far so far from wrong. So far far far from wrong.
Try better worse another stare when with words than
when not. When somehow than when nohow. While
all seen the same. No not all seen the same. Seen other.
By the same other stare seen other. When with words
than when not. When somehow than when nohow.
How fail say how other seen?

Less. Less seen. Less seeing. Less seen and seeing
when with words than when not. When somehow than
when nohow. Stare by words dimmed. Shades dimmed.
Void dimmed. Dim dimmed. All there as when no
words. As when nohow. Only all dimmed. Till blank
again. No words again. Nohow again. Then all un-
dimmed. Stare undimmed. That words had dimmed.

Back unsay shades can go. Go and come again. No.
Shades cannot go. Much less come again. Nor bowed
old woman's back. Nor old man and child. Nor fore-
skull and stare. Blur yes. Shades can blur. When stare
clamped to one alone. Or somehow words again. Go

no nor come again. Till dim if ever go. Never to come again.

Blanks for when words gone. When nohow on. Then all seen as only then. Undimmed. All undimmed that words dim. All so seen unsaid. No ooze then. No trace on soft when from it ooze again. In it ooze again. Ooze alone for seen as seen with ooze. Dimmed. No ooze for seen undimmed. For when nohow on. No ooze for when ooze gone.

Back try worsen twain preying since last worse. Since atwain. Two once so one. From now rift a vast. Vast of void atween. With equal plod still unreceding on. That little better worse. Till words for worser still. Worse words for worser still.

Preying but what not preying? When not preying? Nohow over words again say what then when not preying. Each better worse for naught. No stilling preying. The shades. The dim. The void. All always faintly preying. Worse for naught. Worser for naught. No

less than when but bad all always faintly preying.
Gnawing.

Gnawing to be gone. Less no good. Worse no good.
Only one good. Gone. Gone for good. Till then gnaw
on. All gnaw on. To be gone.

All save void. No. Void too. Unworsenable void.
Never less. Never more. Never since first said never
unsaid never worse said never not gnawing to be gone.

Say child gone. As good as gone. From the void.
From the stare. Void then not that much more? Say
old man gone. Old woman gone. As good as gone. Void
then not that much more again? No. Void most when
almost. Worst when almost. Less then? All shades as
good as gone. If then not that much more than that
much less then? Less worse then? Enough. A pox on
void. Unmoreable unlesable unworseable evermost
almost void.

Back to once so-said two as one. Preying ever since

not long since last failed worse. Ever since vast atween.
Say better worse now all gone save trunks from now.
Nothing from pelves down. From napes up. Topless
baseless hindtrunks. Legless plodding on. Left right
unreceding on.

Stare clamped to stare. Bowed backs blurs in stare
clamped to stare. Two black holes. Dim black. In
through skull to soft. Out from soft through skull.
Agape in unseen face. That the flaw? The want of flaw?
Try better worse set in skull. Two black holes in fore-
skull. Or one. Try better still worse one. One dim black
hole mid-foreskull. Into the hell of all. Out from the
hell of all. So better than nothing worse say stare from
now.

Stare outstared away to old man hindtrunk unre-
ceding on. Try better worse kneeling. Legs gone say
better worse kneeling. No more if ever on. Say never.
Say never on. Ever kneeling. Legs gone from stare say
better worse ever kneeling. Stare away to child and
worsen same. Vast void apart old man and child dim

shades on unseen knees. One blur. One clear. Dim clear. Now the one. Now the other.

Nothing to show a child and yet a child. A man and yet a man. Old and yet old. Nothing but ooze how nothing and yet. One bowed back yet an old man's. The other yet a child's. A small child's.

Somehow again and all in stare again. All at once as once. Better worse all. The three bowed down. The stare. The whole narrow void. No blurs. All clear. Dim clear. Black hole agape on all. Inletting all. Outletting all.

Nothing and yet a woman. Old and yet old. On unseen knees. Stooped as loving memory some old grave-stones stoop. In that old graveyard. Names gone and when to when. Stoop mute over the graves of none.

Same stoop for all. Same vasts apart. Such last state. Latest state. Till somehow less in vain. Worse in vain. All gnawing to be naught. Never to be naught.

What were skull to go? As good as go. Into what then black hole? From out what then? What why of all? Better worse so? No. Skull better worse. What left of skull. Of soft. Worst why of all of all. So skull not go. What left of skull not go. Into it still the hole. Into what left of soft. From out what little left.

Enough. Sudden enough. Sudden all far. No move and sudden all far. All least. Three pins. One pinhole. In dimmest dim. Vasts apart. At bounds of boundless void. Whence no farther. Best worse no farther. Nohow less. Nohow worse. Nohow naught. Nohow on.

Said nohow on.

