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U T O P I A .

A Film Scenario

by

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TO KEEP" "LAWS OF LIFE", etc.

Part I.

PREFACE.

A present day broadcast by Sir Belgium Hare is heard without a break through the receiving sets of different groups of listeners. Sir Belgium Hare is a tall, well-preserved, clean-shaven, prosperous man of sixty, with a resonant, deliberate, and rather pompous voice. As each group of listeners switch off their wireless, the scene changes to the next group. In all groups the acting is silent, so that the speech is heard without interruption from start to finish. In each scene the scenario is given first in type underlined red, followed by the dialogue or monologue in plain black type. The dumb show acting must synchronise with the speech, because, as soon as the dumb actors switch off their wireless sets, the scene changes instantly, in order that the speech is uninterrupted. Scene XI should be played by the Chelsea Pensioners, and Scene XIII by a genuine working-class family.

SCENE I.

A radio-studio, sound-proof room with three walls lined with imitation shelves and books to represent a library. Door at back stage right.

In the centre square mahogany polished table, on which stands microphone, a shaded electric lamp, and the press-button for signalling "cut."  
Sir Belgium Hare will sit at this table, facing the camera. Alongside the back wall is a sofa on which his secretary will sit during the broadcast. High on the right wall is an electric clock, also a red light which when on shows that the Mike is "alive."  
As the scene opens the Announcer, a young man in evening dress, is in the studio looking at his typescript for announcing Sir Belgium. Next the Receptionist, a pretty sparkling middle-aged woman in black evening dress enters. The clock shows the time as 6.45 p.m.

- RECEPTIONIST. This is the studio for Sir Belgium, isn't it?
- ANNOUNCER. Yes, same as he had last time.
- RECEPTIONIST. I'd better be going down to meet him.
- ANNOUNCER. No hurry. He won't arrive till ten to. It's draughty downstairs.
- RECEPTIONIST. Is he bringing his secretary?
- ANNOUNCER. He usually does. Hope he'll be in a better temper than last time.
- RECEPTIONIST. Well, poor man, that day he'd had his watch stolen in the street.
- ANNOUNCER. Then he should keep his fur coat buttoned, and not look so dashed complacent and prosperous. A gold chain across a hefty middle spread is asking for pick-pockets - besides, its old-fashioned to wear a watch-chain.
- RECEPTIONIST. Old fashioned! After his second perfectly marvellous broadcast on the Pro's and Cons of Companionate Marriage?
- ANNOUNCER. I bet he lives on nuts and sour milk.
- RECEPTIONIST. Anyway, he's got the broadcasting manner, and doesn't read his stuff.
- ANNOUNCER. Of course he reads it, every solid word.

RECEPTIONIST. If he does no one could spot it. There's  
no crackling of turning pages.

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ANNOUNCER. No, he's a cute old bird. All his stuff is typed  
on blotting paper - makes no noise. Wish he  
wouldn't get his mouth into the Mike. Sometimes  
you can hear him wheezing.

RECEPTIONIST. Well, I'd best go down now and bring them up (Exit).

### SCENE II.

The Entrance Hall. Artistes, musicians, and  
speakers coming in through swing doors on left of  
camera. Alongside right wall desk with clerk  
taking names and telephoning upstairs. On back  
wall three lifts working. Commissionaires on  
guard. Sounds of motors in street. Receptionist  
comes out of lift and speaks to clerk at desk.

RECEPTIONIST. Sir Belgium Hare at seven. Coming with secretary.

Clerk looks at a list, nods, and turns to speak to  
a messenger boy; Receptionist stands in centre  
of Hall scanning the people entering. Sir Belgium  
enters, followed by young, small, pretty secretary  
carrying attache case. Receptionist advances  
smiling to greet them and shakes hands.

How do you do, Sir Belgium, and you Miss Williams  
(cordially).

SIR BELGIUM. We're in good time, I think.

RECEPTIONIST. To the minute, Sir Belgium, and now I'll take you  
up. To-night (rather gushing) you've got the same  
studio as last time. (The trio enter a lift and  
ascend).

### SCENE III.

Studio as before. Announcer standing by the  
table. Door opens and Receptionist enters, followed

by Sir Belgium and Secretary. Sir Belgium advances to Announcer. Secretary sits on sofa. Receptionist smiles to her and goes out.

SIR BELGIUM. And how are we being announced to-night?

ANNOUNCER. This is the script, Sir.

SIR BELGIUM. (Puts on horn-rimmed spectacles and reads script) - Excellent. Our last broadcast fluttered the dove-cots, if one may judge from the press-comments. Have you any technical suggestions in regard to one's vocal production?

ANNOUNCER. Well, Sir Belgium, if I might make a suggestion. . .

SIR BELGIUM. Pray do so, by all means.

ANNOUNCER. Don't get too close to the microphone. It picks up noises.

SIR BELGIUM. What noises?

ANNOUNCER. Well, er, such as a cough, or clearing the throat.

SIR BELGIUM. Ah! you refer to the <sup>ancillary</sup> ~~extra~~-respiratory accompaniments of speech. I shall bear that in mind. The farther away I am from the microphone, the better! That's the idea? ?

ANNOUNCER. Well, in one way, yes, Sir Belgium. ~~(Sir Belgium)~~

SIR BELGIUM. (Sits at table, and turns to Secretary) The notes, please. (To Announcer) It is always desirable on these occasions to refresh one's memory. (Secretary opens attache case, and places six flat sheets of typed blotting paper on the table at Sir Belgium's left hand) Thank you. (Begins to read. Clock shows 6.59 p.m.)

ANNOUNCER. Less than a minute to go, Sir. (Watches for the red light. Light appears. Standing beside Sir Belgium, Announcer leans toward microphone, and reads from typescript in his left hand.) In this series of Talks we have sought to give listeners an opportunity of hearing all aspects of modern thought. To-night you will hear Sir Belgium

Hare who is regarded, even by those who differ from his conclusions, as one of the most advanced thinkers of our time. Here is Sir Belgium Hare (Nods to Secretary. Exit.)

SIR BELGIUM.

(With mouth close to Mike reads from blotting paper)  
It is my privilege to-night to address once more this large but invisible audience, an audience so vast that I question whether it be within the capacity of any single Mind to visualise it. (Wheeze) Yet if to-night I am speaking to you impromptu it will make our talk the more intimate and if I may venture to say so, the more friendly. No man (raising right arm as if addressing a public meeting) . . . . .

SCENE IV.

The Aerial at Rugby against a night sky of drifting clouds and moon. As these scenes are silent the aerial should emit silent sparks, like forked lightning along the wires.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

appreciates more than I do the meaning of Progress, and to-night . . . . .

SCENE V.

Crowded Saloon Bar. All stools at the bar occupied by artisans, commercial travellers, clerks, racing men, dog-walker (with large St. Bernard), shop-keepers, shop-walkers. Another row of similar types standing at bar, or fetching drinks from bar to round tables where their lady friends from charwomen to shop girls are seated. Others are playing at pin-tables. Behind bar Landlord, wife, and three barmaids are busy serving drinks. Beer engine in constant use. Washing and drying tankards and glasses. Cash register working. On wall behind bar shelves of glasses and bottles. Near the roof a clock, and a loud-speaker. On bar is a peanut machine, another with crisps, and plates of hors d'oeuvres. Beggar on crutches enters offering matches. "Not this side, please."

Newsboy sells papers with price of the last race.  
Man buys it, and reads in stop press -

"Kempton.

- 4.30 1. Golden Acre.
- 2. Solomon's Feast.
- 3. Sailors Quest.
- 8/1 7/2 10/1 (14 ran)"

No one is paying the least attention to Sir Bel-  
gium Hare, until he shouts - "Time, Ladies and  
Gentlemen, and more than Time." Then two or three  
men draw Landlord's attention to the clock which  
shawk shows time as and Landlord switches  
off radio.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

I appreciate the opportunity of speaking to so many thoughtful people, who, like myself, have had a busy day, but who nevertheless are prepared to devote a little time to a consideration of the Future. I am also conscious of the fact that many profound thinkers, who are now giving me their attention, hold opinions contrary to mine. They are entitled to their opinions, and Time alone will prove which of two oppesing schools of thought is right and which is wrong. Yet I am also of opinion that it is (shouts) Time, Ladies and Gentlemen, and more than Time that these ideas were put into execution. We are spending a great deal of money on . .

SCENE VI.

Studio as before.

SIR BELGIUM. things, which in the light of Progress

SCENE VII.

A Victorian drawing-room, Adam fireplace, marble  
clock on mantleshef, showing time as  
Chinese vases on either side of clock. On wall  
a full-length portrait by Raeburn. Two armchairs,  
one on either side of hearty-rug. In the armchair  
to right of camera, an old lady of 80, with her  
hair in ringlets, and shetland shawl over her thin  
shoulders, sits bolt upright knitting. Her elderly  
paid companion sits in the other chair. She is

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also knitting, and both are listening to the wireless set, which stands on a Louis Quatorze table between the companion's chair and the wall.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

must be regarded as antiquated, old fashioned, non-essentials. If to some of you my opinions appear to be revolutionary, I would remind you that what appears to be revolutionary in one generation becomes old fashioned in the next. (Old lady signals to companion to switch off wireless) In the national interest . . . . .

SCENE VIII.

Studio.

SIR BELGIUM.

is it advisable to keep alive.- I ask the question. Is it advisable to keep alive . . . . .

SCENE IX.

Hospital ward. Pretty girl, aged 17, tuberculous, sitting up in bed listening to ear-phones. On bed-table is a sputum mug. Other patients are not listening. The girl's face registers interest, puzzled, reflection, surprise, dismay, horror, and tears come as she removes the ear-phones.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

so many persons (interest) who are suffering from incurable disease, either of body or mind. I am well aware that diseases which were incurable fifty years ago are now curable, ~~and~~ (reflection). But many diseases are not curable, and until the doctors find a cure, would it not be more humane if those patients were released from their suffering (surprise). If such patients have not the strength of mind to ask for euthanasia, then it should be within the power of some competent authority to give them all the benefits of a painless death (dismay). There is no reason why the most timid patient should suffer the slightest degree of mental distress, because there are many painless poisons (horror. A nurse approaches with a glass of medicine) which competent doctors and nurses could administer without the patient's knowledge (tears). Another great problem is . . . . .

SCENE X.

Studio.

SIR BELGIUM. the large number of old people. And when I say old people, I mean old people.

SCENE XI.

Common room of the Chelsea Pensioners. Wireless set on table to left of camera. Pensioners at tables, playing cards, dominoes, and backgammon. One tall, white-bearded, surly old man refuses to play, and sits alone listening to the radio. Suddenly he springs to his feet, holding stick as a sword, and faces radio like a fencer. On guard, tierce, quatre, slashes at radio cabinet right and left. Great confusion. Old men rise, dropping cards, some chairs are overturned, but before they can reach him the fencer gives a lunge, and runs his stick through the radio.

VOICE OF SIR BELGIUM.

who are a burden to the community. By reason of the falling birth-rate the proportion of old people is increasing day by day. Now the age at which any man or woman ceases to be a useful member of the community varies with the individual. At the age of sixty-five I fail to find the slightest trace of mental deterioration in myself. If and when I show signs of deterioration (wheeze) I shall drink the poisoned chalice and so (wheeze) shuffle off this mortal coil with a clear mind, and, I hope, a good conscience. The people we have to consider are those old people whose days of useful work are over, and who are now living on the charity of their children or of the public. I suggest that it should be within the power of some competent authority to summons any old person before a magistrate to show cause that they are not a burden on the community. (On guard). We must rid our minds of all sickly sentimentality (slashes at right side of radio). We

must emulate the noble savage (slashes at left side of radio) and administer to the unfit of all ages the happy dispatch (Chelsea Pensioner prepares to lunge) (Sir Belgium shouts) what I might call the coup de grace (Radio pierced by stick. Wheeze from Sir Belgium).

SCENE XII.

Studio.

SIR BELGIUM. From a consideration of the aged, and by aged I mean those who are really old . . . . .

SCENE XIII.

Living room in artisan's house. This scene should be played by a genuine working-class family. Gas cooker back wall. Carpenter, wife, and children, boy aged 6, girl aged 8, boy aged 10, girl aged 12, boy aged 14, girl aged 16. All sitting at table at tea. Tea, bread and butter, fish and chips. Carpenters bag of tools on shelf. Kitchen dresser. Baby in cot. Fat in a frying pan on gas ring goes on fire. Radio set in a corner of the room.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

One's mind naturally passes to the children, especially to the large families of the poorer classes. Millions are being spent on those children. They have free education, school medical inspection, and milk at school. (Younger children smile) Where does that money come from? Out of the pockets of the more thoughtful and capable members of Society, who are so heavily taxed that they cannot afford to have large families of their own. This is a burning question (Fat goes on fire). Much as we may regret it Birth Control has proved Dysgenic, that is, against the interests of the nation. The intellectual and cultured classes are using it, the poor are not using it. This must be stopped (Father rises to switch off wireless). If the poor refuse to reduce the size of their families by voluntary measures (children look bewildered)

SCENE XIV.

Studio.

SIR BELGIUM. other means must be employed. By other means I suggest that . . . . .

SCENE XV.

A luxury flat. Radio in the panels beside the mantleshelf. Switch below the loud-speaker, four feet from floor. Electric fire. Fancy telephone. Two modern chairs on either side of fire. Table with cocktails and cigarettes in centre. In chair to right of camera, tall, slim, society wife in evening dress. She is nursing in each arm a peke, almost at her breasts, and trying to drink cocktail and smoke cigarette. In other chair her husband, a weak-faced, well-groomed man in evening dress, reading a sporting paper. Expensive magazines lying on floor. At end of scene woman drops pekes, and with cigarette in one hand, cocktail in the other, lying back in chair, raises her dress, showing good expanse of leg, and cuts off wireless switch with the toe of her shoe.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

Parents in receipt of any form of public assistance should be warned that no further children must appear. (Husband nods approval). If that warning be disregarded, then they should be segregated unless prepared to submit to voluntary sterilization. I insist that sterilization should be voluntary, but if that fails, it must be compulsory (Husband nods approval). By these measures the burden of taxation would be reduced, and many members of the more thoughtful and cultured classes who, as things are, cannot afford to have large families, would look forward (Wife drops pekes) to having families of five or six children (kicks off radio).

SCENE XVI.

Studio.

SIR BELGIUM.

After my first broadcast, to which you listened with so much patience and consideration,

SCENE XVII.

An old priest in cassock sitting by fire in his library, with radio on small table on his right. He has set down a book, and is listening. Switches

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

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a gentleman wrote me a letter suggesting that even voluntary euthanasia is murder. What of it? Am I not entitled for good reasons to kill myself? To that he answers - No, because a man's life belongs to God. There we reach the crux of this question, because I and many thoughtful persons believe that the idea of God is a figment of man's imagination (switches off)

SCENE  
Studio.

SIR BELGIUM.

and that in all probability the Universe created itself

SCENE

The Aerial at Rugby as before. The Ten Commandments are flashed across the sky one by one in letters of fire from left to right. Only Sir Belgium's voice is heard.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM

and the immutable laws by which it is governed.

SCREEN

I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

The Ten Commandments were invented by a man many thousands of years ago for the benefit of a primitive society. Far be it from me to decry the work of Moses, a pioneer in sanitary reform, but to-day we worship different ideals.

SCREEN.

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

What man has created, man can destroy, or perhaps I should say improve, because in the enlightened intelligence of man there is something almost god-like.

SCREEN. [Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.]

VOICE OF SIR BELGIUM. It is impossible for any thoughtful person to deny the benefits conferred by the Ten Commandments on a simple pastoral people, but times have changed and most of those commands are now obsolete.

SCREEN. [Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.]

VOICE OF SIR BELGIUM. We are advancing along the path of progress, with high hopes, although where that path will lead no man can say. All we know is that we must go on, and that any medieval shibboleth which stands in our way must be ruthlessly abandoned (wheeze)

SCREEN. [Honour thy father and thy mother.]

VOICE OF SIR BELGIUM. Let no listener go away with the erroneous impression that it is my wish, or indeed the wish of any thoughtful person, to abolish the entire decalogue. We should only abolish those commandments

SCREEN. [Thou shalt not kill.]

VOICE OF SIR BELGIUM. which prevent society from enjoying all the benefits of modern thought, or which seek to prevent individual men and women

SCREEN. [Thou shalt not commit adultery.]

VOICE OF SIR BELGIUM. from enjoying to the fullest extent the intellectual pleasures of self-expression, of self-realisation, and the unfettered development of their own better natures. One commandment should be retained,

SCREEN. [Thou shalt not steal.]

VOICE OF SIR BELGIUM. and enforced with the utmost rigour of the law. It is impossible for any society to exist unless the right of private property are respected. I would like to think that some of my opponents had as much

regard for the command "Thou shalt not steal," in the widest sense, which includes the unjust taxation of wealth, as they profess to have for those other commandments which interfere with human development

SCREEN.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

I do not suppose I shall ~~have~~ <sup>live</sup> to see the ~~day~~ day when all those reforms which I have had the honour of advocating to-night will become part and parcel of our social system, or when an enlightened generation will have freed itself ~~from~~ from the inhibitions and prejudices and prohibitions of the past.

SCREEN.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbours wife.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

When that day comes the earth will be inhabited by a healthier and happier race of men and women. If they retain any record of our civilization they will smile in amazement when they realise that there once existed human beings who were so tempted to act in an anti-social manner, that such precepts

SCREEN.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbours goods.

VOICE OF  
SIR BELGIUM.

as the Ten Commandments were ever necessary. At our present rate of Progress (wheeze) that Utopia is coming nearer and nearer, and, assuming that our civilization is not destroyed by War, we should reach the Millenium in a thousand years. I wish you all goodnight(wheeze).

A spot of light appears on the horizon of the scene at Rugby, and rushes to the front of the screen, breaking into the letters:-

I N

A

T H O U S A N D

Y E A R S

## Story for Scenario.

Mr. Smith, better known in State records as H.99/Hampstead - this being also the address of the house in which he lived - entered the breakfast-room at 4 a.m., punctual to the second. With its white-painted walls, rounded cornices, tiled floor, and windows wide open to the fresh but cold morning breeze, the room was in perfect taste hygenically. It was furnished with a table and four chairs, fashioned out of angle-iron enamelled white, and the only attempt at mural decorative art was a genuine photogravure of Mr. Sidney Webb. In the wall facing the window is the gauze of a loud speaker.

On the wall beside the door was a Time-Recorder, and as Smith pressed the button bearing his number, a bell rang and a red light, then a white light, appeared for a second. By these signs Smith knew that the time of his arrival was duly recorded at the Bureau of Industry. His comrade, on festive occasions called Mrs. Smith, and their two children, Henry aged 21 and Jane aged 17, were already standing round the table. Without more ado Smith took his place at the end of the table, and in a loud, clear voice read the Act of Parliament for the day.

As it happened to be Chromosome, the 13th day of the month Electron in the year 136 of Utopia, the appropriate Act had reference to the necessity for and value of deep breathing exercises, in which the whole family afterwards engaged. Refreshed by these gymnastics they sat down to eat. No meat was on the glass-topped table, but large there was a liberal supply of congealed carbohydrate and a large flagon of sterile distilled water. The dress of the household was uniform in type, no distinction being made between the sexes, but the married were to be distinguished from the unmarried by means of a yellow patch stamped with the Government Arms, two broad arrows rampant; and this

was worn by Mr. and Mrs. Smith on the left shoulder of their tunics. Glancing round the healthy table Smith inquired with a smile, "All well?" and to this salutation each in turn replied, "All correct."

"I know someone who isn't well," said Henry.

"Indeed?" asked his father.

"Yes, 58 Pancras - old Jones you know - was taken off yesterday: his family haven't had a report yet."

For a moment there was silence. "Come, come," said Smith, hurriedly, "we must keep cheerful"; and he hastened to open a Government envelope. Having read the contents he turned to his son in righteous indignation - "Henry, I am pained to learn from this letter, sent by the Ministry of Eugenics, that you have been holding conversations with a girl in the next street without sanction of the Ministry, and worse than that, there's a statement from the Secret Search Commission that a copy of Shakespeare's Sonnets was found hidden under your bed. You know very well, Sir, that all poetry is on the State Index Expurgatorius, and that possession of any love poetry is a felony."

"Poetry!" exclaimed Mrs. Smith, shuddering.

"The whole thing is a very grave and serious reflection on me," added his father.

"Well, that's got nothing to do with me as a Unit,"

replied Henry.

"It has indeed, Sir, as you'll soon find out. My defence is clear. Only last Rest Day I read aloud the Laws and Appendices of the Ministry of Eugenics, whereby such actions are proscribed."

"I'm very sorry, Smith," said his son, "but I wanted to know how they managed in ancient days when a Unit chose his own comrade - sweethearts I think they called them".

"Great State!" moaned Mrs. Smith.

"Well, well, Mrs. Smith, said Smith wearily, "boys will be boys."

"Cease," shouted Mrs. Smith, "don't Mrs. Smith me. I'm H/99a Hampstead, and boys are not boys, nor are girls. They're undeveloped Units with insane delusions - the vestigeal taint of prehistoric times. My poor dear mother at least taught me the Acts of Parliament," and she sobbed bitterly.

"But," protested Smith, "both our children were at the State Asylum and released cured. Surely this conversation is treason."

"Both these children were let out of the Asylum too soon, and if they follow H/99 they'll end in the Lethal Institute before their time."

"The State forbid," murmured Smith.

At that moment the door opened and a keen hatchet-

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faced man entered - "Act 43, Section XI., Right of Entry at all hours to Inspector of Cheerfulness. All cheerful, I hope?"

"Yes, Sir," said Smith, rising with the others, "all cheerful. Very cheerful indeed, Sir."

As he produced his red notebook the Inspector rapidly scrutinized each member of the family in turn. "No, not all cheerful. You for one are not cheerful H/99 Hampstead, but that's now beyond my Department. And what's the name of this Unit? He's got a curious expression on his face."

"That's Henry, Sir."

"How long has he been looking like that?"

"Looking like what, Sir?"

"Looking like that."

"I don't know, Sir."

"You don't know!" said the Inspector, and he crossed the room to the telephone. "Hullo! I want Mental Emergencies. . . . Is that you, Mental. . . . This is Inspector Weevil. I'm speaking from H/99 Hampstead. There's a case of Suppressed Complex here. . . . No, it's not been notified. . . . Very good, send out a Psycho-Analyst at once. Right you are."

"Now then," said the Inspector, more cheerfully, turning to the family, "what's the name and number of

this girl?"

"Jane, Sir," answered Smith, "born 17 years ago, vaccinated five times, innoculated thrice, hypnotized once, State Asylum . . . all the papers are in order. H/99/a/½ is her number."

"She will be in this house at 23 o'clock, when the Special Woman Inspector for young Female Units will call."

"Very good, Sir," said Smith.

"I won't," exclaimed Jane, looking at her brother.

"Oh," sobbed Mrs. Smith, "this is awful . . . 'won't.'"

"Keep silent," said the Inspector, "that child is introverted."

"No, no, she's not, Sir," groaned Smith.

"She is. And instead of contradicting, let's see your dictaphone records. That'll show you how you've been getting along in this happy home."

Smith dragged out a large cabinet from beneath the table, and this the Inspector unlocked with his key.

"What's this here," he exclaimed, "there's been a quarrel in this house. That's what it is. The record shows high voices, and curious expressions, eh? How about it?"

"We all deplore it, Sir, we all deplore it," said Smith, earnestly.

"I daresay you do," replied the Inspector, "and I'll

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tell you what it is, H/99. It's a good thing for you that you didn't live at a time when what they called money was used, because what with fines for one thing and another you'd have had nothing left. That's to say, if we Inspectors were to do our duty. . . . Well, now, I must be getting along."

Amongst his far-off ancestors were some who had followed the calling of a policeman, and as he left the house a small packet of carbohydrate was pressed into his hand by Smith. But so preoccupied was the Inspector, he made no outward acknowledgment of the gift.

The hours passed and various officials called. An Investigator of Chimney-piece Ornaments, and the Agent for the Society of Hygienic Wallpapers (with Powers under the Act) were early arrivals. The Special Woman Inspector insisted on cropping Jane's hair, and Henry had a long and painful interview with the Psycho-Analyst. One Searcher found a blanket that was not all wool, whilst another detected a couple of weeks in the little six-foot garden; but as these were minor offences it was not altogether a bad morning for H/99. Moreover, it was nearing noon, when Smith would be free to go to his four hours' work a day, and during these hours he bred ferrets for the vivisection ~~experiments~~ experiments of

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X 38  
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Professors at the State Pandemonium.

As Smith was about to leave the house a closed motor-car stopped at the gate and a large fat man stepped out. This personage came up the steps, and taking Smith's arm, led him in a friendly fashion into the breakfast-room. The fat man then closed the door and smiled.

"All correct," said Smith, feeling somewhat uneasy; "perhaps you are the Inspector of - of Inspectors?"

"No, no, not so bad as that. I'm a Commissioner. We don't leave everything to the Inspectors, you know. Now Smith, my friend, you're not happy."

"Oh, yes, indeed I am, Sir, very happy."

"Well, well; we can have a chat about that on the way. I'm going to take you for a little drive."

The Commissioner opened the door and led Smith towards the closed car. As they went down the steps Smith's heart was thumping <sup>a</sup>against his ribs. This physical emotion was utterly unreasonable, because the big man had been quite civil, and was neither pulling nor pushing him. Indeed, it seemed to Smith as if the Commissioner was merely pawing him gently; and yet in his cerebral cortex, owing doubtless to some vestigeal taint from primordial times, the molecules were in a state of senseless panic.

Once seated † in the well-cushioned car gliding out

of Hampstead, Smith swallowed a lump that was rising in his throat, and turned to the Commissioner sitting beside him. "I just wish to say, Sir, that I'm <sup>very</sup> sorry indeed if ~~K~~ I've been unhappy."

"No need to apologize, my dear fellow; in any case it wasn't your fault."

"Thank you very much, Sir."

"Not at all. As you know, or ought to know, a Unit is never responsible for any thing, and there's no need for you to blame yourself over this or over anything else. If there's any question of laxity the State alone is responsible. Possibly in the past our inspection has been less efficient than it might have been. At any rate things are now being improved, as the State itself is threatened."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Sir," remarked Smith more cheerfully. "I mean I'm glad we'll be better inspected, but I'm sorry the State's in danger."

"That's just it," said the Commissioner, "the State is in great danger. This is not known to the Units, and the information I give you is secret."

"Thank you, Sir, you may rely on my . . ."

"Of course I can. If there had been the slightest risk of your passing the news on, I wouldn't have told you. The danger is from Ireland. That island ~~remained~~

Christian, and is still inhabited by madmen obsessed with a delusion, in itself a Fable borrowed from Pagan mythology. For a hundred <sup>and thirty-six</sup> years we've forbidden any communication with these people, but from secret sources we know what they're doing. At present there's a <sup>Ruler</sup> ~~king~~ in <sup>that</sup> ~~the~~ island who calls himself King George XX. He and his people have now decided that it's their duty to destroy this great State of which you and I are humble Units."

"But surely it's none of their business, Sir," asked Smith, a trifle eagerly.

"Of course it's not their business, but they threaten a crusade, and that's where you come in, Smith, or rather that's where you go out."

"I beg pardon, Sir, but I'm afraid that I don't quite follow your meaning, Sir."

"Well, my dear fellow, if these madmen make a war, don't you see that it would be dangerous if we had within the State any emotional Units who might sympathize with the enemy. Now you, Smith, are undoubtedly an emotional Unit."

"I'd never sympathize with the enemy, Sir."

"Ah, one never knows, although it passes comprehension why anyone should sympathize with these madmen. If they should conquer us, there will be a terrible upheaval and

relapse. We'll no longer be housed, clothed, and fed by the State. Our hours of work won't be limited to four a day. Make no mistake about that. You wouldn't be told what you must do, but merely what you must not do. A most pernicious philosophy. And worse than that, they'd restore tears and laughter to the world. Do you know, Smith, I often think that whenever a Units feels inclined to belittle the work of our excellent inspectorate he should quietly quietly recollect how fortunate we really are and how very different things might be. We might have been a free people. Just think of it - Free!"

"The State forbid," said Smith, piously raising his hat, "I swear it."

"No need to swear," corrected the Commissioner gently. "In any case there's Nothing to swear by, and no fear of treason on your part. But apart from these polemics, you're not really happy, Smith."

"Indeed I am, Sir, very happy. I'm well inspected, and then I've got my ferrets. They're very fond of me, Sir."

"Nonsense, my friend. In the first place they're not your ferrets because they belong to the State, and secondly, although they enjoy their food, I am quite sure that they are not so lacking in intelligence as to harbour

any emotion towards the Unit whose duty it was to look after them. No, no, Smith, your face betrays you. You're not happy. Too much emotion. And your children prove it. The State permitted you to have two children. Well? Have you bred Samurai? I think not. The fact is you're degenerate, and we cannot encourage this to go on. Your own common sense must tell you that we can't afford to keep you. The Happier Homes idea has been given up. Too expensive and sentimental, almost prehistoric in fact. Efficiency, H/99, efficiency, and all for the State. That's the motto of every loyal Unit."

"Where are we going, Sir?" asked Smith, white in the face.

"To the Lethal Institute, my friend. Steady, steady."

"No, no, I'm not," muttered Smith. "What Act of Parliament lets you do this. I've a right to know that. I'm a free Unit."

"The Act? Oh, my dear Smith, need we go into all that. That was never the difficulty, I assure you. It was lack of time, not of authority, that sometimes hampered us. The State has gone into your case. The Inspectors and the Secret Service have worked conscientiously over you. We have all the documents. Everything is in perfect order."

Smith glanced wildly round the car until his gaze was fixed on a long aluminium ~~ben~~ box placed across the front seats. "What's that thing?" he whispered hoarsely.

"Steady, my friend, you really must pull yourself together. If you had been less squeamish I should have told you all about it before we started. That is . . . ahem . . . well . . . shall we say . . . the hearse portion. Quite new, a labour-saving device."

"So I'm driving with my own coffin?"

"Well, in a sense I suppose you are, if you wish to put it that way. Personally I dislike the use of the word coffin, on account of its ancient associations, and I usually refer to the thing you're looking at as the Container."

"Driving like a criminal to Tyburn!"

"Now there you are quite wrong," replied the Commissioner gently. "There is no parallel. In the old days to which you refer the criminal was chained. There are no criminals now. You're not a criminal and you're not in chains. You are a ~~free~~ Unit who is about to submit to the requirements of the State."

"That's a lie," sobbed Smith. "The criminal was chained because he had a chance of escape, one in a million though it was. I've no chance at all. That's why you don't chain me."   
 My car doesn't treat

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"a new life this!"

"Come, come, H/66 H/99, no temper if you please. Be reasonable. Your own common sense must tell you that you're a greater danger than many criminals. But why all this fuss? There's nothing to hurt you. We have the highest medical opinion that it is quite painless. I can assure you as to that. And what is the whole affair after all? A mere rearrangement of the molecules . . . Ah, these molecules, Smith, if we could only get down to them we should move much more quickly . . . That's all there is to it. And if you fear anything else, that in itself is further proof that you're not fit to live. Now as an old hand at the business, my advice to you, Smith, is this - don't worry. No one is going to hurt you. We shall deal with you gently, kindly, and with discretion. You shall have full custodial care at every step. In a few minutes we shall be at the Institute, afterwards I shall take you on to the Crematorium, and within an hour at most your molecules will be floating in the blue Empyrean - back with the Nitrogen from whence they came. A beautiful thought, my friend. . . What! the man has fainted . . . I must speak to that Inspector. We ought to have taken this Unit away twenty years ago. . . Perhaps the whole family would be better away. I really must press the Board for a decision."

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~~45~~  
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Suddenly Smith groaned. "Ah, that's right," said the Commissioner, "Coming to, I see. Keep your head down between your knees for a minute or two, and you'll be all right."

"I don't want to be all right," moaned Smith.

"Nonsense, man. Nothing will happen to you without your full consent. No physical force is ever used at the Lethal Institute. That would be a confession of failure. Wait until you've seen the Sympathisers, and you'll be glad you recovered from your faint."

The car stopped at the door of the Institute, a long ground floor building with no windows. The Commissioner got out, and Smith followed. As they went up the steps their bodies broke an invisible ray, and two great doors slid open revealing a gilded hall, lit by Fairy lights, and in the centre a splashing fountain in which the falling water was coloured like a rainbow. Behind the open doors stood a flunkey, dressed in cloth of gold and silver. He was a tall powerful man, but he bowed low to Smith and said, "Welcome."

"In you go," said the Commissioner, "I'll see you later."

As in a dream, Smith entered and the great doors closed behind him with a faint click. The flunkey was

smiling, and Smith, who had never before seen anyone except in rational dress, asked nervously, "Are you the Sympathiser, Sir?"

"No, no, Sir," said the flunkey, "I'm only the door-keeper. The Sympathisers are all in the Salon, and you may choose any of the lot, male or female. This way, Sir," and he led Smith to the curtained entrance of the Salon, which opened out of the Hall. <sup>^</sup> Drawing aside the

curtain so that Smith might enter, he announced at the top of his voice - "My Lords, Ladies, and Gentlemen, pray silence for the entry of your guest, Mr. Smith of Hampstead." At that the sound of conversation ceased, and Smith entered the Salon.

As he entered all the Sympathisers gave him a friendly smile, and Smith gasped for breath. He would have fainted again, had not a middle-aged man, with large blue eyes that beamed through gold rimmed spectacles, sprung forward and led him to an easy chair. "Sit down, my friend.

I know it must seem rather strange to you. Now have a good look round, take your time, and choose whom you will." His new friend was dressed in a well-cut blue lounge suit. He was a trifle stout, bald on the top of his head, and had the kindest, <sup>^</sup> jolliest face, that Smith had ever seen. "Sympathiser Kind is my name, if

Use the right as you entered

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47  
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you should decide eventually to trust yourself to me, but take your time. Each to his taste," and, with another smile, he returned to the centre of the room.

Smith leant back in the well-upholstered chair, and stared at the Sympathisers in amazement. Never before had he sat in such a comfortable chair, and never before had he seen men and women dressed and undressed in such a variety of fashions. What these fashions were, Smith for the most part did not know, and yet each had its own appeal. Among the men had he only known he could have recognised a footballer, a cricketer, a boxer, a golfer in plus fours, a naval officer, a guardsman, a priest, and a gigolo. One man was naked, as also was one woman, a very beautiful woman with long golden hair hanging down to her waist. Another woman was half-undressed, and at the sight of these last two Smith blushed, for he was wholly degenerate, and did not understand Sex Appeal in its scientific aspects. Other women he might have recognised were the ballet dancer, the principal boy and girl, the belle of the ball, the nurse, the tennis girl with racket complete, the yachting girl, and a nun. Each in turn smiled at Smith, but being of a retiring disposition, he just sat and stared, until by a lull in their conversation he realised they were beginning to be bored by his presence.

So he beckoned to Sympathiser kind, who at once joined him with the remark - "You have chosen well, my friend." The others clapped their hands in a well-bred manner and said - "See you later, Mr. Smith."

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Sympathiser Kind led him across the gaily lighted Hall - "Can't very well have a heart-to heart chat in there, old man," and whenever he spoke he smiled. Across the Hall, they entered another room through a door, which closed behind them with a click, and Smith knew instinctively that they were in a sound-proof room. There were no windows. In the centre of the room was a circular steel table, and two hygienic chairs of glass and chromium, one on either side of the table. The walls were white, devoid of pictures, and against one wall were two steel cupboards painted white. It was a square room measuring twenty feet, and in the right side wall was the gauze of a loud-speaker.

"Makes you feel quite at home?" his new friend said with a smile, as he beckoned Smith to take the chair furthest from the door.

"Yes, Sir," said Smith, with a gulp in his throat.

The Sympathiser smiled - "Of course, it does, but you musn't call me 'Sir.' Call me Kind."

"Yes, Sir - Kind."

"Now," said the Sympathiser, "just you tell me all about it, and we'll see what can be done."

At that Smith poured out all his troubles. The Sympathiser listened attentively, only occasionally asking a question to clear up some point about which he was not quite certain. When Smith's story came to an end, the Sympathiser

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looked grave, and Smith's heart sank.

"This looks very serious," said the Sympathiser.

"Oh, don't say that, Sir," moaned Smith.

"I do say it. I think the Commissioner has made a most serious error in judgment."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Sir. Then you will help me to escape?"

"Of course I'll help you, but we must consider ways and means. Now let me think for a minute or two."

"Yes, Sir, please think."

The Sympathiser bent across the table and covered with his face ~~on~~ his hands for a couple of minutes before he spoke - "Do you realise, Smith, that to save you I must tell you everything about this place?"

"Yes, Sir," said Smith eagerly.

"Well now, do you know that no male or female Unit who enters the front door of this Institute ever leaves by the way they entered?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Good. They all leave by the back doors - dead. Except one or two, of whom you'll be one, who reach the back door at the end of the Lethal-Tunnel - alive.

Naturally you want to know how the one or two escape?"

"Yes, Sir,"

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Well, I'll tell you." and the Sympathiser pulled out open a steel drawer in the table in front of his chair, from which he produced a gas mask. This he patted gently. "That's my own special gas mask. Now when I don't want a Unit to escape I put it on, and tell the Unit that I'm going to give him or her - because curiously enough some female Units select me - ha, ha - a duplicate mask. Then I open that steel cupboard nearest to you and take out a mask, <sup>that looks</sup> the ~~very~~ duplicate of my own. Of course its a dud, and when we reach the gas it doesn't work. Understand?"

"Yes, Sir," said Smith dubiously because the problem was complicated.

"Don't pretend, Smith! You still have doubts. Ha, ha! Well, any mistrust may be set at rest, because I am going to give you my own special gas mask." And with that the Sympathiser placed his gas mask by Smith's right hand on the table.

"Thank you, Sir, but - are you not coming down the - the - tunnel to the back door with me?"

"Of course I am, ~~old man,~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~but~~ of course I'm going to have a gas mask like you. Only I don't take my mask from the first cupboard - no fear - but from the second, where the masks are as genuine as the one I gave you." The Sympathiser opened the cupboard nearest the door,

removed a mask, and placed it on the table near his chair.  
"Now I must tell you about the Tunnel, and what to expect  
at the other -"

A gong sounded, and from <sup>the</sup> a loud-speaker ~~concealed~~  
in the wall came the words - "Sympathiser Kind, if he  
can spare a moment is urgently wanted in Ante-Chamber  
Five."

The Sympathiser frowned the first frown Smith had  
seen on his face. - "Excuse me a moment, Friend Smith,  
I won't be long. I wonder what it is?" He gave a  
low whistle, the door opened, and closed behind him with  
a click.

Left alone in the sound-proof room, Smith smiled.  
What a really decent fellow the Sympathiser was. To  
give his own gas mask to a total stranger, and choose a  
new one for himself. No, he had better change the masks.  
At the Pandemonium Smith had learnt all the dangers of  
respiratory infections. Perhaps Sympathiser Kind liked  
his mask so much that he never troubled to have it-~~the~~  
sterilized. Germs innocuous to Kind might not be so  
innocuous to Smith. That much of bacteriology he had  
learnt at the Pandemonium. He changed the masks, but  
it would never do to tell Sympathiser Kind of his views  
about sterilizing gas masks.

Suddenly the door opened, Sympathiser Kind, looking

a little flushed, entered, glanced anxiously at the table, smiled and said - "Well, here we are again. You'll wonder why I was called away? In the Salon did you notice Sympathiser Eve - the female in the altogether, I mean without any clothes?"

"Yes, Sir," said Smith eagerly.

"Well, I was just called to Ante-Chamber Five Five to explain to a Unit that his attempted love-making was a little premature, although at the end of the Tunnel he may do what he likes with Sympathiser Eve. But, let me see - I was telling you about the Tunnel. Yet why waste time! On with our masks. The sooner we're in, the sooner we're out. Ask me any questions on the way.

Friend  
Ah, Friend Smith?"

"Yes, Sir," said Smith, as each adjusted his gas mask, "but where's the Tunnel?"

"There," answered the Sympathiser, and, as he pressed a button, the whole of the back steel wall of the room rose, revealing a <sup>circular</sup> ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ tunnel with beautiful scenery painted on either side and a skyscape on the top, ~~xxxxx~~ all brilliantly lit ~~up~~ by artificial day-light. On the floor of the ~~xxxxxx~~ tunnel was a low placed trolley, running, as the Sympathiser explained, not on wheels but on ~~long~~ <sup>in corrugated</sup> plates of magnetic steel. Two large Hygenic

*screwed*

Chairs were ~~attached~~ to the trolley.

"Take your pew, Smith, they're both the same," and so Smith sat in one and ~~the~~ Sympathiser <sup>*knid*</sup> in the other.

"Just put your arms along the arms of the chair, and legs against the front legs, and I'll do the same."

Smith followed the Sympathiser's instructions.

"Now," said the Sympathiser, "I'm going to press a button with my left foot." Smith watched, and in a moment he was pinioned to the chair by semi-circular steel clamps *round his arms and legs.*

Smith shrieked.

"Don't be a fool," shouted the Sympathiser, "can't you see I'm clamped as much as you?"

Smith looked, and saw his Sympathiser was also clamped by steel bands. "I'm sorry," said Smith.

"Well, don't make that noise again, or I may regret my decision to give you a real gas mask. As a matter of fact you could have done the clamping as well as I could, because we've got dual controls on the trolley."

"I'm very sorry, Sir."

"That's all right. Now start her off. Under your right foot you'll feel a knot - unless you've got an extra thick sole on your boot, which no ordinary Unit is supposed to have."

"No, Sir, I haven't, and I can feel the knot."

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"Then press it."

"What happens then, Sir?"  
*with is lowered*

"The steel ~~door~~ ~~drops~~ behind us, and off we go."

"No, Sir, I don't like to do it."

"All right, don't. Sit there until the Commissioner comes into the Ante-Chamber, finds we're not off, takes away your gas mask, and sets us going."

"No, no, Sir, not that."

"Then I must push the control myself, but I'm bound to say, Smith, you don't seem to have much confidence in your Sympathiser."

Smith felt the knob beneath his right foot sink. The steel wall was slowly lowered behind them, and the trolley was moving along the tunnel at the rate of three miles an hour.

"I'm sorry I mistrusted you, Sir."

"That's all right, Smith. Perhaps I was a bit rattled by the scene in Ante-Chamber Five. Never mind about that. Look at the scenery you're seeing."

Smith looked on the painted panorama to right and left -  
"Oh, Kind, I've never seen anything so beautiful as that."

"Daresay you haven't. I've never seen the reality, nor am I likely to see it."

"What is it?"

"Its Loch Awe, where Our Totality lives."

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~~27~~ 58  
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"What's *Our* Totality, Sympathiser Kind?"

"No, of course you've never heard of *Our* Totality. Mind you, I've never seen him, but I know what He is. How shall I put it to a Unit like you? You know your Commissioner? Yes. Well, he's got brains more than you or me?"

"Of course, Sympathiser."

"Well, *Our* Totality has exactly one thousand times more brains than any Commissioner. That's why He and He alone lives there *on the Island we're passing now, understand?"* ~~Now do you understand?"~~

"No, not quite, Sympathiser."

"Well, all I can say is that you really ~~make~~ me tired. Anyway, I'm a bit rattled about what happened in Ante-Chamber Five, and I'll put it all on you."

"Please don't, Sympathiser. Whatever happened had nothing to do with me, and you promised to tell me what happens when we both arrive at the end of the Tunnel."

"What are you afraid of?"

"That you're ~~not smiling~~ *cross*, Sympathiser, and what the Commissioner will do when he sees me alive at the end of the Tunnel."

"The Commissioner will never see you alive at the end of the Tunnel - don't shriek, you fool - it's not the time for shrieking. At the end of the Tunnel are only four deaf-mutes ready to put you into your Container -

55  
~~27~~ 56  
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Smith screamed.

"Stop making ~~that~~ noise. You deafen me even in your gas mask, and <sup>you</sup> ought by rights to be admiring the scenery - we're passing through the Kyles of Bute. You don't seem interested in the scenery, Smith? As a matter of fact neither am I. To tell you the truth it bores me. I see it so often. Nearly every day."

"The Container," shouted Smith, "you promised to tell me about the Container."

"So I did, and I will, if you'll only keep calm. Should have told you before, but the disgraceful scene in Ante-Chamber 5 rather ruffled me. Perhaps you'll have a little sympathy for me when I tell you that Sympathiser Eve is my Comrade."

"Oh, yes, I have, Sir, but about the Container?"

"What about it! No one's going to put you in a Container. Didn't I give you my own gas mask? Of course I did. Well - oh, damn Eve - when our trolley hits the buffers in the open-air at the other end, the clamps are automatically released, and you and I walk away. Where do we walk? You've as many questions to ask as a child, and I've had plenty of experience of them. Why, you silly, we just walk out through a little steel gate in the fifty foot wall on our left. It opens from the inside only. There's no handle on the outside. Now

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are you satisfied?"

"What about the deaf mutes, Sir? Won't they be a little surprised?"

"Oh! damn the deaf mutes. No, of course they won't be surprised. They'll just think you're a new Sympathiser, having a trial trip with me. Now we're passing Lake Windermere. Upon my word, Smith, I've never seen anyone less interested in the scenery. Isn't it lovely?"

"Very nice, Sympathiser, but what about the Commissioner?"

"Oh, damn the Commissioner, what about him?"

"Be careful, Sympathiser!"

"That's all right. In the Tunnel no one can overhear what we're saying. It's the only ~~pal~~ place where they can't - but what about the Commissioner?"

"Well, won't he be angry when he finds I'm - I'm - still here?"

"Look here, Smith, you make me really tired with your chatter. Plaguing the man who's saving your life. I'll tell the Commissioner you are a super-man who held his breath for seven minutes in the gaseous zones and escaped. Now are you happy? Look now, we're going up the valley of the Dart! Lovely, isn't it?"

"Yes, Sir, but where am I going after we get out though through the little steel gate in the high wall?"

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~~29 58~~  
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"Hell, you're coming to live with me and Sympathiser Eve, because we both like you. Now are you content?"

"Most content, Sir."

"I thought you would be. Then perhaps you'll let me question you?"

"With pleasure, Sir."

"What would you say should happen to a Unit who chose Sympathiser Eve, and wanted to go down the Tunnel with her in that state? Do you think he should die?"

"Indeed, I do, Sir."

"Smith, I begin to like you. You're a Comrade of your own. You know how the very idea affects one?"

"Ye - es, Sir, but of course they're both clamped in their chairs, and there's deaf mutes at the other end."

"Good thing for you, Smith, that I'm clamped, or I'd bash your face for that insult."

"I didn't mean - "

"Shut up. I'll tell you why Sympathisers are clamped. Sometimes the victims say things that rile their Sympathisers. Once, only the victims were clamped."

"Oh dear, oh dear!"

"Listen you fool. Did you see that priest in the Salon. Don't deny that you know what he was supposed to be. Yes, Smith, there are Units so degraded as to believe in God, and who chose Father Peace as their Sym-

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~~2038~~  
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pathiser. God help them. In the Tunnel they find he's a fake, and when they do these godly Units say things that make him struggle in his clamps. That's why every Sympathiser is now clamped. His predecessor, Father Help, lost his life through lack of clamps. A Unit in the Tunnel insulted him. Father Help struck the Unit in the face and cut his knuckles on the victim's <sup>dad</sup> gas mask. Then when the two were passing through the grey gas - the gas got in through the cuts and poor Sympathiser Help was killed as well as his victim. The deaf-mutes were horrified."

"Oh, don't tell me more, Sir, I can't bear it."

"I shall tell you more. I'll make you scream with terror, because you insulted Eve."

"I did not, Sir I swear I didn't."

"You did, but I'm not really cruel, Smith. It's best to get them shrieking at this stage, because in a minute or so we go uphill into the forest of larches - the Sweet Gas Zone through which we pass for two minutes. Then down hill for three minutes into the valley of grey gas. Some units when they enter the Sweet Gas try to hold their breath. No one can hold his breath for more than two minutes. All the worse if they do, because then they are conscious when they breathe the grey gas, which <sup>eyes,</sup> sears nostrils, mouth, and lungs for about <sup>two</sup> ~~thirty~~ seconds

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~~768~~  
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before it stops the clock. Not scared yet, Smith?"

"Just a little, Sir."

"Why only a little?"

"Because we've both got real gas masks."

"You fool. If ever a Unit deserved the blue Emphyreah,<sup>^</sup> as that accursed Commissioner calls it - you're the man. Why should I risk my life to help a useless Unit like you to escape. The mask I gave you was a dud. Mine's the only real gas protector in this tunnel."

Smith screamed, and then was silent in thought. What had he said to the Commissioner - one chance in a million at Tyburn. It was now an even chance, perhaps, and his heart beat wildly, a certainty. If not, he would be glad to die and to get away from people like Sympathiser Kind."

"Have you fainted, Smith?" asked Kind.

"No I've not," was the unexpected calm reply.

"What do you mean? I begin to admire you. Well, now we're going uphill. Take deep breaths, Smith. Its all ~~right~~ for the - Hell, you fiend, you've changed the masks - oh! I'll hold my breath, I . . . "

Smith sat shivering as the trolley rose ~~thru~~ through a mound of painted larches in the Tunnel. He was breathing quietly, and smelt nothing. Such was his degeneration that he felt pity for Sympathiser Kind.

The trolley began to go downhill into a grey mist. Then came the sound of forced expiration, following<sup>ed</sup> by an inspiratory shriek, and the trolley shook with convulsive movements for a second or so. Smith looked at his companion. Sympathiser Kind was limp, and the engorged veins on his bald head were black.

Slowly, or to be precise, at the rate of three miles ~~per~~ per hour, the trolley ascended out of the Valley of Grey Gas and continued on the level. At the end of a long vista Smith saw a small circle of daylight, and gradually this square of daylight became larger and larger. As the trolley approached the exit Smith's heart was once more thumping. Would the Commissioner be there? The Commissioner was not there. Twenty yards beyond the end of the Tunnel the interrupted plates of magnetic steel stopped at a buffer. Behind the buffer stood four little men, and by their side lay the Container. The trolley met the buffer, the clamps sprang apart, the body of Sympathiser Kind fell sideways on the asphalt, <sup>the impact of the skull making a dull crack,</sup> and Smith stepped out of his Hygenic Chair. Without a glance at Smith the four deaf mutes placed the body of the late Sympathiser Kind in the Container, clamped on the lid, and carried it round a corner of the Institute. To his left Smith saw the <sup>fifty foot</sup> ~~graxx~~ Wall. with the little steel door. He tore off his gas mask, threw it away, ~~and~~, and next moment was walking like

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a free Unit in the street.

Within an hour Smith re-entered the breakfast-room at H.99/Hampstead, where Mrs. Smith was solemnly reading aloud to Jane and Henry the Act of Parliament concerning those who die for the State. As soon as she saw her Comrade Mrs. Smith screamed - "Oh, I thought you were dead! We had the Official News on the Radio an hour ago. The Commissioner himself spoke to all Hampstead - ~~Com-~~rade Smith H.99/Hampstead has left the Lethal Institute, where his last words were - I hail the Blue Empyrian and may less worthy Units follow my lead. It sounded lovely. And now, in spite of everything, you're back."

"So that's what he said, is it? Well, Mrs. Smith, I can tell you it was a lie."

"Oh, you'll be the death of me, and the death of us all."

"Not glad to see me back, that's what it is!"

"No, it isn't," sobbed Mrs. Smith, "but I did think you were dead. My poor Mother, whom you always despised, told me how to respect the Dead. I don't need to know - know - know - Acts of Parliament to do - do - do - that" - and with this final outburst Smith's Comrade wept bitter tears, and became hysterical.

Scenes such as these are not good for children. Henry sat, his elbow on the table, his cheek resting on

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his hand, and a frown on his face. To do the lad justice, he was thinking of his Shakespeare's Sonnets (confiscated under Secret Search Commission. Index Expurgatorius. Article V. Section One. Clause A.) Jane had no such thoughts. She rushed to Smith, threw her arms round his neck, and ~~she~~ shouted - "Daddy, I'm glad you're back, and your ferrets will be glad too."

The sound of a Chinese gong on the Loud Speaker put an end to a scene which was likely to degenerate into sheer Bathos. "Commissioner Speaking to H99/Hampstead. Most Secret and Confidential. Under pain of instant Death no member of Smith family to leave their ~~home~~ <sup>habitation</sup> to-night. No communion with neighbours. Your house now surrounded by members of the Poisoned Darts Deaf-Mute Brigade. Anyone who attempts to leave dies instanter, without benefit of Act of Parliament. Entire family to parade in Breakfast-Room at 4 a.m. tomorrow, ~~wh~~ without carbohydrates or water. At that hour, I, The Commissioner, for All Hampstead, acting by and/or through the authority of Our Totality, will decide whether the sentence on all now present will be Death or Exile. Now each and all to his or her bed. There shall be no talking in bed. Every pillow is overheard. Tomorrow, all depends on Smith speaking the truth. Now, to your beds without a word, or at Your Peril. Amen."

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As the allocution ended, the Smith family went quietly to bed. Even Mrs. Smith did not dare to say what she dearly wanted to say - "Smith, you'll be the Death of us all."

At 4 a.m. next day the family of H.99/Hampstead stood at attention round their breakfast table, having eaten no breakfast. Each, in his or her way, showed signs of a sleepless night. Yet none of them dared to speak. At one minute past ~~five~~ <sup>four</sup>, because even Commissioners may be late, a great car slowed down and stopped outside their gate. Within a minute, the Commissioner was in the Breakfast-room, where they stood waiting.

"Sit down, everyone," he ordered, and all the Smiths sat down.

"Now find a chair for me," said the Commissioner.

Smith sprang to his feet - "Please take mine, Sir. There's not another in the house."

"Sit down, Smith. No other chair! That's to your credit. You obey the Law of No Hospitality. Some don't. Sit down, I will stand. All your lives are in my hand, or rather in the hand of Smith, the head of this bewitched family. He shall answer one question. Stop! is that Radio ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ receiving or emitting?"

"I don't know, Sir. We're not allowed to interfere with it."

"Quite right, my friend. Stand up."

To the consternation of the entire family, the Commissioner seized the empty chair and smashed the Wireless.

"Now, Smith, I can ask, and you can answer, in the presence of your family a simple question on which, because I'm always fair, your life and the lives of those about you depend - the question is - Did Sympathiser Kind make a mistake, or did you change the Gas Masks? You must answer within two seconds - the psychological limit."

"I changed the Masks, Sir."

"Good! You said it within 2 seconds, and therefore it's true. Now, Smith, you and yours are to be Exiled."

"No, Sir, we'd rather not."

"You/ fool, you don't know what you're talking about. When we find that a Unit, his comrade, and offspring are unfit, we destroy them. Yet when, as in your case, unfitness is allied to cunning we deport or exile them to Ireland, in the hope that they and their progeny may flourish in Ireland, and so breed degeneracy among our enemies. So will you and yours - unless the Irish kill you on sight. No, they haven't the intelligence to do that, and I think you are comparatively safe."

"Now all of you get into the charabanc that's to take us to the Aerodrome. . . . ."

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"Now, Smith, as we're on the way to the Aerodrome, you may tell me a thing or two. No physical force used at the Lethal? No. That's good. Any, any - well, shall we say Mental Torture applied in the Tunnel, so far as your experience goes?"

"Yes, Sir, he was a Fiend, although I was sorry for him at the end."

"Never mind about your being sorry for him. The less you say about that sort of thing the better - until you and yours are safe in Ireland. Only a degenerate would waste sympathy - a forbidden emotion - on Sympathiser Kind. He was guilty of grave dereliction of duty. What do you think all that beautiful scenery is for?"

"I don't know, Sir."

"To interest the Units on their way along the Tunnel. For the first and last time in his life the condemned Unit sees Beauty. He thinks he's got a real gas mask, and is interested all the way. In the Larch Forest he breathes the Sweet Gas, goes to sleep, and never wakes up. Could anything be more humane than that?"

"No, Sir."

"Seems to me the Lethal needs a comb out. I'll send some of my best Agents-Provocateurs down this

afternoon."

"They may get killed, Sir."

"Not them. They never get hurt. When they go down the Tunnel with the Sympathisers there will be no gas on. I'll see to that. But I shall await the trolleys at the end of each Tunnel, and if any mental cruelty be reported - what do you think I'll do?"

"I don't know, Sir."

"Why I'll stop the release of the clamps. Take the real Gas Mask off the face of the Sympathiser in question, Stick it on the face of the Agent-Provocateur, switch on the grey gas, and send the trolley backwards through the Tunnel." Well, here we are at the Aerodrome.

It's a fine day, calm, and none of you should be sick. You see I want you all to get there."

At the Aerodrome an airplane was waiting on the centre of the ground, and the car drove alongside. The pilot saluted the Commissioner, who showed him a card which he read carefully and nodded. "Deaf-mute," explained the Commissioner to Smith. "No temptations to lead him away from home." Four groundsmen, also deaf-mutes, strapped parachutes on each of the Smiths and then placed four ladders against the side of the plane. "Up you go," said the Commissioner to Smith, "into Barrel No. 1, your comrade into Barrel 2, and the children into 3 and 4." All obeyed, and Smith found himself

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standing in a large barrel with smooth sides, over the top of which he could not see.

"Now," explained the Commissioner, before the groundmen fitted on the lids, "there's no risk of suffocation. The lids are perforated with small holes, enough to let air in and out, but not large enough for fingers to get through for holding on. At a given destination the pilot will pull a lever, and one by one the bottoms will drop out of the ~~barrels~~ barrels. After that each of you should say 'twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three,' which takes three seconds, before pulling the rip-cord. That means ~~you~~-You you're clear of the machine before the parachute opens. And by the way, Smith, these parachutes work all right. Not like certain dud masks of which you had a little experience yesterday. I seem to have taken quite a fancy to the Smith family. Don't mind telling you I've had my eye on Sympathiser Eve for quite a time. Not a word to your comrade!" and for the first time the Commissioner winked.

The lids were fitted. Smith heard the ladders being removed, the engine splutter, then roar. In his closed barrel he felt the plane jolting, then the steadiness of the air. A great fear possessed him. What did the Commissioner mean by saying the parachutes were not like

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the dud masks. He said the parachutes worked. Did that mean they killed you? Were the parachutes real? On these doubts his mind worked incessantly, until suddenly he and the bottom fell out of the barrel. A gale of wind struck his body, and blew him backwards on his back in the air. He forgot to count until he saw Mrs. Smith drop out of the plane, in front and some distance above him. Then, without counting, he pulled the cord.

In the corner of his left eye something white fluttered, and he closed his eyes. He was falling. Then came a wrench under his armpits, and he was swung vertically in the air. He looked up, and the great parachute was open. So also were three other parachutes. Soon he was steady in the air, for the day was calm. He looked down. The kindly earth was rising slowly to meet him. It was a country of lakes, green fields and hills - and oh, how green was the grass on those hills coming nearer and nearer.

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