



The Traveller, Ray Bradbury

## The Traveller

FATHER looked into Cecy's room just before dawn. She lay upon her bed. He shook his head uncomprehendingly and waved at her.

'Now, if you can tell me what good she does, lying there,' he said, 'I'll eat the crêpe on my mahogany box. Sleeping all night, eating breakfast, and then lying on top her bed all day.'

'Oh, but she's so helpful,' explained Mother, leading him down the hall away from Cecy's slumbering pale figure. 'Why, she's one of the most adjustable members of the Family. What good are your brothers? Most of them sleep all day and do nothing. At least Cecy is active.'

They went downstairs through the scent of black candles; the black crêpe on the banister, left over from the Homecoming some months ago and untouched, whispering as they passed. Father unloosened his tie, exhaustedly. 'Well, we work nights,' he said. 'Can we help it if we're — as you put it — old-fashioned?'

'Of course not. Everyone in the Family can't be modern.' She opened the cellar door; they moved down into darkness arm in arm. She looked over at his round white face, smiling. 'It's really very lucky I don't have to sleep at all. If you were married to a night-sleeper, think what a marriage it would be! Each of us to our own. None of us the same. All wild. That's how the Family goes.'

Sometimes we get one like Cecy, all mind; and then there are those like Uncle Einar, all wing; and then again we have one like Timothy, all even and calm and normal. Then there's you, sleeping days. And me, awake all and all of my life. So Cecy shouldn't be too much for you to understand. She helps me a million ways each day. She sends her mind down to the greengrocers for me, to see what he sells. She puts her mind inside the butcher. That saves me a long trip if he's fresh out of good cuts. She warns me when gossips are coming to visit and talk away the afternoon. And, well, there are six hundred other things — !'

They paused in the cellar near a large empty mahogany box. He settled himself into it, still not convinced. 'But if she'd only contribute more,' he said. 'I'm afraid I'll have to ask her to find some sort of work.'

'Sleep on it,' she said to him. 'Think it over. You may change your mind by sunset.'

She was closing the lid down on him. 'Well,' he said, thoughtfully. The lid closed.

'Good morning, dear,' she said.

'Good morning,' he said, muffled, enclosed, within the box.

The sun rose. She hurried upstairs to make breakfast.

Cecy Elliott was the one who Travelled. She seemed an ordinary eighteen-year-old. But then none of the Family looked like what they were. There was naught of the fang, the foul, the worm or wind-witch to them. They lived in small towns and on farms across the world, simply, closely re-aligning and adapting their talents to the demands and laws of a changing world.

Cecy Elliott awoke.

She glided down through the house, humming. 'Good morning, Mother!' She walked down to the cellar to re-check each of the large mahogany boxes, to dust them, to be certain each was tightly sealed. 'Father,' she said, polishing one box. 'Cousin Esther,' she said, examining another, 'here on a visit.

And — ' she rapped at a third, 'Grandfather Elliott.' There was a rustle inside like a piece of papyrus. 'It's a strange, cross-bred family,' she mused, climbing to the kitchen again. 'Night siphoners and flume-fearers, some awake, like Mother, twenty-five hours out of twenty-four; some asleep, like me, fifty-nine minutes out of sixty. Different species of sleep.'

She ate breakfast. In the middle of her apricot dish she saw her mother's stare. She laid the spoon down. Cecy said, 'Father'll change his

mind. I'll show him how fine I can be to have around. I'm family insurance; he doesn't understand. You wait.'

Mother said, 'You were inside me awhile ago when I argued with Father?'

'Yes.'

'I thought I felt you looking out my eyes,' the mother nodded.

Cecy finished and went up to bed. She folded down the blankets and clean cool sheets, then laid herself out atop the covers, shut her eyes, rested her thin white fingers on her small bosom, nodded her slight, exquisitely sculptured head back against her thick gathering of chestnut hair.

She started to Travel.

Her mind slipped from the room, over the flowered yard, the fields, the green hills, over the ancient drowsy streets of Mellin Town, into the wind and past the moist depression of the ravine. All day she would fly and meander. Her mind would pop into dogs, sit there, and she would feel the bristly feels of dogs, taste ripe bones, sniff tangy-urined trees.

She'd hear as a dog heard. She forgot human construction completely. She'd have a dog frame. It was more than telepathy, up one flue and down another. This was complete separation from one body environment into another. It was entrance into tree-nozzling dogs, men, old maids, birds, children at hopscotch, lovers on their morning beds, into workers asweat with shovelling, into unborn babies pink, dream-small brains.

Where would she go today? She made her decision, and went!

When her mother tiptoed a moment later to peek into the room, she saw Cecy's body on the bed, the chest not moving, the face quiet. Cecy was gone already. Mother nodded and smiled. The morning passed.

Leonard, Bion and Sam went off to their work, as did Laura and the manicuring sister; and Timothy was dispatched to school. The house quieted. At noon time the only sound was made by Cecy Elliott's three young girl-cousins playing Tisket Tasket Coffin Casket in the back yard. There were always extra cousins or uncles or grand-nephews and night-nieces about the place; they came and went; water out a tap down a drain.

The cousins stopped their play when the tall loud man banged on the front door and marched straight in when Mother answered.

'That was Uncle Jonn!' said the littlest girl, breathless.

'The one we hate?' asked the second.

'What's he want?' cried the third. 'He looked mad!'

'We're mad at him, that's what,' explained the second, proudly. 'For what he did to the Family sixty years ago, and seventy years ago and twenty years ago.'

'Listen!' They listened. 'He's run upstairs!'

'Sounds like he's cryin'.'

'Do grown-ups cry?'

'Sure, silly!'

'He's in Cecy's room! Shoutin'. Laughin'. Prayin'. Cryin'. He sounds mad, and sad, and 'fraidy-cat, all together!'

The littlest one made tears, herself. She ran to the cellar door. 'Wake up! Oh, down there, wake up! You in the boxes! Uncle Jonn's here and he might have a cedar stake with him! I don't want a cedar stake in my chest! Wake up!'

'Shh,' hissed the biggest girl. 'He hasn't a stake! You can't wake the Boxed People, anyhow. Listen!'

Their heads tilted, their eyes glistened upwards, waiting.

'Get off the bed!' commanded Mother, in the doorway.

Uncle Jonn bent over Cecy's slumbering body. His lips were misshaped. There was a wild, fey and maddened focus to his green eyes. 'Am I too late?' he demanded, hoarsely, sobbing. 'Is she gone?'

'Hours ago!' snapped Mother. 'Are you blind? She might not be back for days. Sometimes she lies there a week. I don't have to feed the body, she finds sustenance from whatever or whoever she's in. Get away from her!'

Uncle Jonn stiffened, one knee pressed on the springs. 'Why couldn't she wait?' he wanted to know, frantically, looking at her, his hands feeling her silent pulse again and again.

'You heard me!' Mother moved forward curtly. 'She's not to be touched. She's got to be left as she is. So if she comes home she can get back in her body exactly right.'

Uncle Jonn turned his head. His long hard red face was pocked and senseless, deep black grooves crowded the tired eyes.

'Where'd she go? I'vegotto find her.'

Mother talked like a slap in the face. 'I don't know. She has favourite places. You might find her in a child running along a trail in the ravine. Or swinging on a grape vine. Or you might find her in a crayfish under a rock in the creek, looking up at you. Or she might be playing chess inside an old man in the court-house square. You know as well as I she can be anywhere.'

A wry look came to Mother's mouth. 'She might be vertical inside me now, looking out at you, laughing, and not telling you. This might be her talking and having fun. And you wouldn't know it.'

'Why — ' He swung heavily around, like a huge pivoted boulder. His big hands came up, wanting to grab something. 'If I thought — '

Mother talked on, casual quiet. 'Of course she's not in me, here. And if she was there'd be no way to tell.' Her eyes gleamed with a delicate

malice. She stood tall and graceful looking upon him with no fear. 'Now, suppose you explain what you want with her?'

He seemed to be listening to a distant bell, tolling. He shook his head, angrily, to clear it. Then he growled. 'Something. . . inside me. . .' He broke off. He leaned over the cold, sleeping body. 'Cecy! come back, you hear! You can come back if you want!'

The wind blew softly through the high willows outside the sun-drifted windows. The bed creaked under his shifted weight. The distant bell tolled again and he was listening to it, but Mother could not hear it.

Only he heard the drowsy summerday sounds of it, far far away. His mouth opened obscurely:

'I've a thing for her to do to me.

For the past month I've been kind of going — insane. I get funny thoughts. I was going to take a train to the big city and talk to a psychiatrist but he wouldn't help. I know that Cecy can enter my head and exorcize those fears I have. She can suck them out like a vacuum cleaner, if she wants to help me.

She's the only one who can scrape away the filth and cobwebs and make me new again. That's why I need her, you understand?' he said, in a tight, expectant voice. He licked his lips. 'She'sgotto help me!'

'After all you've done to the Family?' said Mother.

'I did nothing to the Family!'

'The story goes,' said Mother, 'that in bad times, when you needed money, you were paid a hundred dollars for each of the Family you pointed out to the law to be staked through the heart.'

'That's unfair!' he said, wavering like a man hit in the stomach. 'You can't prove that. You lie!'

'Nevertheless, I don't think Cecy'd want to help you. The Family wouldn't want it.'

'Family, Family!' He stomped the floor like a huge, brutal child. 'Damn the Family! I won't go insane on their account! I need help, God damn it, and I'll get it!'

Mother faced him, her face reserved, her hands crossed over her bosom.

He lowered his voice, looking at her with a kind of evil shyness, not meeting her eyes. 'Listen to me, Mrs. Elliott,' he said. 'And you, too, Cecy,' he said to the sleeper. 'If you're there,' he added. 'Listen to this.' He looked at the wall clock ticking on the far, sun-drenched wall.

'If Cecy isn't back here by six o'clock tonight, ready to help clean out my mind and make me sane, I'll — I'll go to the police.' He drew himself up. 'I've got a list of Elliotts who live on farms all around and inside Mellin Town. The police can cut enough new cedar stakes in an hour to drive through a dozen Elliott hearts.' He stopped, wiped the sweat off his face. He stood, listening.

The distant bell began to toll again.

He had heard it for days. There was no bell, but he could hear it ringing. It rang now, near, far, close, away. Nobody else could hear it save himself.

He shook his head. He shouted to cover the sound of those bells, shouted at Mrs. Elliott. 'You heard me?'

He hitched up his trousers, tightened the buckle clasp with a jerk, walked past Mother to the door.

'Yes,' she said. 'I heard. But even I can't call Cecy back if she doesn't want to come. She'll arrive eventually. Be patient. Don't go running off to the police — '

He cut her. 'I can't wait. This thing of mine, this noise in my head's gone on eight weeks now! I can't stand it much longer!' He scowled at the clock. 'I'm going. I'll try to find Cecy in town. If I don't get her by six — well, you know what a cedar stake's like. . . '



His heavy shoes pounded away down the hall, fading down the stairs, out of the house. When the noises were all gone, the mother turned and looked, earnestly, painfully, down upon the sleeper.

'Cecy,' she called, softly, insistently. 'Cecy, come home!'

There was no word from the body. Cecy lay there, not moving, for as long as her mother waited.

Uncle Jonn walked through the fresh open country and into the streets of Mellin Town, looking for Cecy in every child that licked an ice-pop and in every little white dog that padded by on its way to some eagerly anticipated nowhere.

The town spread out like a fancy graveyard. Nothing more than a few monuments, really — edifices to lost arts and pastimes. It was a great meadow of elms and deodars and hackmatack trees, laid out with wooden walks you could haul into your barn at night if the hollow sound of walking people irked you. There were tall old maiden houses, lean and narrow and wisely wan, in which were spectacles of coloured glass, upon which the thinned golden hair of age-old bird nests sprouted.

There was a drug shop full of quaint wire-rung soda fountain stools with plywood bottoms, and the memorious clear sharp odour that used to be in drug stores but never is any more. And there was a barber emporium with a red-ribboned pillar twisting around inside a chrysalis of glass in front of it. And there was a grocery that was all fruity shadow and dusty boxes and the smell of an old Armenian woman, which was like the odour of a rusty penny. The town lay under the deodar and mellow-leaf trees, in no hurry, and somewhere in the town was Cecy, the one who Travelled.

Uncle Jonn stopped, bought himself a bottle of Orange Crush, drank it, wiped his face with his handkerchief, his eyes jumping up and down, like little kids skipping rope. I'm afraid, he thought. I'm afraid.

He saw a code of birds strung dot-dash on the high telephone wires. Was Cecy up there laughing at him out of sharp bird eyes, shuffling her feathers, singing at him? He suspected the cigar store Indian. But there was no animation in that cold, carved, tobacco-brown image.

Distantly, like on a sleepy Sunday morning, he heard the bells ringing in a valley of his head. He was stone blind. He stood in blackness. White, tortured faces drifted through his inturnd vision.

'Cecy!' he cried, to everything, everywhere. 'I know you can help me! Shake me like a tree! Cecy!'  
The blindness passed. He was bathed in a cold sweating that didn't stop, but ran like a syrup.

'I know you can help,' he said. 'I saw you help Cousin Marianne years ago. Ten years ago, wasn't it?' He stood, concentrating.

Marianne had been a girl shy as a mole, her hair twisted like roots on her round ball of head. Marianne had hung in her skirt like a clapper in a bell, never ringing when she walked; just swithering along, one heel after another. She gazed at weeds and the sidewalk under her toes, she looked at your chin if she saw you at all — and never got as far as your eyes. Her mother despaired of Marianne's ever marrying or succeeding.

It was up to Cecy, then. Cecy went into Marianne like fist into glove.

Marianne jumped, ran, yelled, glinted her yellow eyes. Marianne flickered her skirts, unbraided her hair and let it hang in a shimmery veil on her half-nude shoulders. Marianne giggled and rang like a gay clapper in the tolling bell of her dress. Marianne squeezed her face into many attitudes of coyness, merriment, intelligence, maternal bliss, and love.

The boys raced after Marianne. Marianne got married.

Cecy withdrew.

Marianne had hysterics; herspinewas gone!

She lay like a limp corset all one day. But the habit was in her now. Some of Cecy had stayed on like a fossil imprint on soft shale rock; and Marianne began tracing the habits and thinking them over and remembering what it was like to have Cecy inside her, and pretty soon she was running and shouting and giggling all by herself; a corset animated, as it were, by a memory!

Marianne had lived joyously thereafter.

Standing with the cigar store Indian for conversation, Uncle Jonn now shook his head violently. Dozens of bright bubbles floated in his eyeballs, each with tiny, slanted, microscopic eyes staring in, in at his brain.

What if he never found Cecy? What if the plain winds had borne her all the way to Elgin? Wasn't that where she dearly loved to bide her time, in the asylum for the insane, touching their minds, holding and turning their confetti thoughts?

Far-flung in the afternoon distance a great metal whistle sighed and echoed, steam shuffled as a train cut across valley trestles, over cool rivers through ripe cornfields, into tunnels like finger into thimble, under arches of shimmering walnut trees. Jonn stood, afraid.

What if Cecy was in the cabin of the engineer's head, now? She loved riding the monster engines across country far as she could stretch the contact. Yank the whistle rope until it screamed across sleeping night land or drowsy day country.

He walked along a shady street. Out of the corners of his eyes he thought he saw an old woman, wrinkled as a dried fig, naked as a thistle-seed, floating among the branches of a hawthorn tree, a cedar stake driven into her breast.

Somebody screamed!

Something thumped his head. A blackbird, soaring skyward, took a lock of his hair with it!

He shook his fist at the bird, heaved a rock. 'Scare me, will you!' he yelled. Breathing rawly, he saw the bird circle behind him to sit on a limb waiting another chance to dive for hair.

He turned slyly from the bird.

He heard the whirring sound.

He jumped about, grabbed up. 'Cecy!'

He had the bird! It fluttered, squalled in his hands.

'Cecy!' he called, looking into his caged fingers at the wild black creature. The bird drew blood with its bill.

'Cecy, I'll crush you if you don't help me!'

The bird shrieked and cut him.

He closed his fingers tight, tight, tight.

He walked away from where he finally dropped the dead bird and did not look back at it, even once.

He walked down into the ravine that ran through the very centre of Mellin Town. What's happening now, he wondered. Has Cecy's mother phoned people? Are the Elliotts afraid? He swayed drunkenly, great lakes of sweat bursting out under his armpits. Well, letthembe afraid a while. He was tired of being afraid. He'd look just a little longer for Cecy and then go to the police!

On the creek bank, he laughed to think of the Elliotts scurrying madly, trying to find some way around him. There was no way. They'd have to make Cecy help him. They couldn't afford to let good old Uncle Jonn die insane, no, sir.

B-b-shot eyes lay deep in the water, staring roundly up at him.

On blazing hot summer noons, Cecy had often entered into the soft-shelled greyness of the mandibled heads of crayfish. She had often peeked out from the black egg eyes upon their sensitive filamentary stalks and felt the creek sluice by her, steadily, and in fluid veils of coolness and captured light.

Breathing out and in the particles of stuff that floated in water, holding her horny, lichened claws before her like some elegant salad utensils, swollen and scissor-sharp.

She watched the giant strides of boy feet progressing towards her through the creek bottom, heard the faint, water-thickened shout of boys searching for crayfish, jabbing their pale fingers down, tumbling rocks aside, clutching and tossing frantic flipper animals into open metal cans where scores of other crayfish scuttled like a basket of wastepaper come to life.

She watched pale stalks of boy legs poise over her rock, saw the nude loin-shadows of boy thrown on the sandy muck of the creek floor, saw the suspenseful hand hovered, heard the suggestive whisper of a boy who's spied a prize beneath a stone. Then, as the hand plunged, the stone rolled, Cecy flirted the borrowed fan of her inhabited body, kicked back in a little sand explosion and vanished downstream.

On to another rock she went to sit fanning the sand, holding her claws before her, proud of them, her tiny glass-bulb eyes glowing black as creek-water filled her bubbling mouth, cool, cool, cool. . .

The realization that Cecy might be this close at hand, in any live thing, drove Uncle Jonn to a mad fury. In any squirrel or chipmunk, in a disease germ, even, on his aching body, Cecy might be existing. She could even enter amoebas. . .

On some sweltering summer noons, Cecy would live in an amoeba, darting, vacillating, deep in the old tired, philosophical dark waters of a kitchen well. On days when the world high over her, above the unstirred water, was a dreaming nightmare of heat printed on each object of the land, she'd lie somnolent, quivering and cool and distant, settling in the well-throat. Up above, trees were like images burned in green fire. Birds were like bronze stamps you inked and punched on your brain.

Houses steamed like manure sheds. When a door slammed it was like a rifle shot. The only good sound on a simmering day was the asthmatic suction of well water drawn up into a porcelain cup, there to be inhaled through an old skeletonous woman's porcelain teeth.

Overhead, Cecy could hear the brittle clap of the old woman's shoes, the sighing voice of the old woman baked in the August sun. And, lying lowermost and cool, sighting up through the dim echoing tunnel of well, Cecy heard the iron suction of the pump handle pressed energetically by the sweating old lady; and water, amoeba, Cecy and all rose up the throat of the well in sudden cool disgorgement out into the cup, over which waited sun-withered lips. Then, and only then, did Cecy withdraw, just as the lips came down to sip, the cup tilted, and porcelain met porcelain. . .

Jonh stumbled, fell flat into the creek water!  
He didn't rise, but sat dripping stupidly.

Then he began crashing rocks over, shouting, seizing upon and losing crayfish, cursing. The bells rang louder in his ears. And now, one by one, a procession of bodies that couldn't exist, but seemed to be real, floated by on the water. Worm-white bodies, turned on their backs, drifting like loose marionettes. As they passed, the tide bobbed their heads so their faces rolled over, revealing the features of the typical Elliott family member.

He began to weep, sitting there in the water. He had wanted Cecy's help, but now how could he expect to deserve it, acting a fool, cursing her, hating her, threatening her and the Family?  
He stood up, shaking himself. He walked out of the creek and up the hill. There was only one thing to do now. Plead with individual members of the Family. Ask them to intercede for him. Have them ask Cecy to come home, quickly.

In the undertaking parlour on Court Street, the door opened. The undertaker, a short, well-tonsored man with a moustache and sensitively thin hands, looked up. His face fell.

'Oh, it's you, Uncle Jonn,' he said.

'Nephew Bion,' said Jonn, still wet from the creek, 'I need your help. Have you seen Cecy?'

'Seen her?' said Bion Elliott. He leaned against the marble table where he was working on a body. He laughed. 'God, don't ask me that!' he snorted. 'Look at me, close. Do you know me?' Jonn bristled. 'You're Bion Elliott, Cecy's brother of course!'

'Wrong.' The undertaker shook his head. 'I'm Cousin Ralph, the butcher! Yes, the butcher.' He tapped his head. 'Here, inside, where it counts, I'm Ralph. I was working in my refrigerator a moment ago over at the butcher shop when suddenly Cecy was inside me. She borrowed my mind, like a cup of sugar. And brought me over here just now and sifted me down into Bion's body. Poor Bion! What a joke!'

'You're — you're not Bion!'

'No, ah, no, dear Uncle Jonn. Cecy probably put Bion in my body! You see the joke? A meat-cutter exchanged for a meat-cutter! A dealer in cold-cuts traded for another of the same!' He quaked with laughter. 'Ah, that Cecy, what a child!' He wiped happy tears from his face.

'I've stood here for five minutes wondering what to do. You know something? Undertaking isn't hard. Not much harder than fixing pot-roasts. Oh, Bion'll be mad. His professional integrity. Cecy'll probably trade us back, later. Bion never was one to take a joke on himself!'

Jonn looked confused. 'Even you can't control Cecy?'  
'God, no. She does what she does. We're helpless.'

Jonn wandered towards the door. 'Got to find her somehow,' he mumbled. 'If she can do this to you, think how she'd help me if she wanted. . .' The bells rang louder in his ears. From the side of his eyes he saw a movement. He whirled and gasped.

The body on the table had a cedar-stake driven through it.

'So long,' said the undertaker to the slammed door. He listened to the sound of Jonn's running feet, fading.

The man who staggered into the police station at five that afternoon was barely able to stand up. His voice was a whisper and he retched as if he'd taken poison. He didn't look like Uncle Jonn any more. The bells rang all the time, all the time, and he saw people walking behind him, with staked chests, who vanished whenever he turned to look.

The sheriff looked up from reading a magazine, wiped his brown moustache with the back of one claw-like hand, took his feet down off a battered desk and waited for Uncle Jonn to speak.

'I want to report a family that lives here,' whispered Uncle Jonn, his eyes half-shut. 'A wicked family, living under false pretences.'

The sheriff cleared his throat. 'What's the family's name?'

Uncle Jonn stopped. 'What?'

The sheriff repeated it, 'What's the family's name?'

'Your voice,' said Jonn.

'What about my voice?' said the sheriff.

'Sounds familiar,' said Jonn. 'Like — '

'Who?' asked the sheriff.

'Like Cecy's mother! That's who you sound like!'

'Do I?' asked the sheriff.

'That's who you are inside! Cecy changed you, too, like she changed Ralph and Bion! I can't report the Family to you, now, then! It wouldn't do any good!'

'Guess it wouldn't,' remarked the sheriff, implacably.

'The Family's gotten around me!' wailed Uncle Jonn.



'Seems that way,' said the sheriff, wetting a pencil on his tongue, starting on a fresh crossword puzzle. 'Well, good day to you, Jonn Elliott.'

'Unh?'

'I said 'Good day'.'

'Good day.' Jonn stood by the desk, listening. 'Do you — do you hear anything?'

The sheriff listened. 'Crickets?'

'No.'

'Frogs?'

'No,' said Uncle Jonn. 'Bells. Just bells. Holy church bells. The kind of bells a man like me can't stand to hear. Holy church bells.'

The sheriff listened. 'No. Can't say as I hear 'em. Say, be careful of that door there; it slams.'

The door to Cecy's room was knocked open. A moment later, Uncle Jonn was inside, moving across the floor. The silent body of Cecy lay on the bed, not moving. Behind him, as Jonn seized Cecy's hand, her mother appeared.

She ran to him, struck him on head and shoulders till he fell back from Cecy. The world swelled with bell sounds. His vision blacked out. He groped at the mother, biting his lips, releasing them in gasps, eyes streaming.

'Please, please tell her to come back,' he said. 'I'm sorry. I don't want to hurt anyone any more.'

The mother shouted through the clamour of bells. 'Go downstairs and wait for her there!'

'I can't hear you,' he cried, louder. 'My head.' He held his hands to his ears. 'So loud. So loud I can't stand it.' He rocked on his heels. 'If only I knew where Cecy was — '

Quite simply, he drew out a folded pocket knife, unfolded it. 'I can't go on — ' he said. And before the mother moved he fell to the floor, the knife in his heart, blood running from his lips, his shoes looking senseless one atop the other, one eye shut, the other wide and white.

The mother bent down to him. 'Dead,' she whispered, finally. 'So,' she murmured, unbelievably, rising up, stepping away from the blood. 'So he's dead at last.' She glanced around, fearfully, cried aloud.

'Cecy, Cecy, come home, child, I need you!'  
A silence, while sunlight faded from the room.

'Cecy, come home, child!'  
The dead man's lips moved. A high clear voice sprang from them.

'Here! I've been here for days! I'm the fear he had in him; and he never guessed. Tell Father what I've done. Maybe he'll think me worthy now. .  
'

The dead man's lips stopped. A moment later, Cecy's body on the bed stiffened like a stocking with a leg thrust suddenly into it, inhabited again.

'Supper, mother,' said Cecy, rising from bed.

The End