

Everybody spoke of the Man as a crank – some even whispered that he followed a cult, and that is sufficient to damn the reputation of an archangel. Small wonder that he had few friends. He was tall and thin – emaciated even – but in his face shone that divine, never-to-be-mistaken light of Youth.<sup>6</sup>

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The long day pulsed slowly through. Late in the afternoon the Man crept out of bed and over to the window. He pulled it wide open and leaned out. From the street came a muttering confused nightly sound, but he looked over the shining silver roofs of the houses. There was a jagged scarlet wound in the pale sky. The wind blew towards him – he stood motionless, hardly thinking – yet some dark ghost seemed to be confronting his inner self, shrieking why, why and wherefore? Then the night came – the sky was filled with the gold of stars. Lights woke in the houses opposite. He felt curiously remote from it all – the sole spectator at some colossal stupendous drama. He looked down into the street. A girl, slight and very shabbily dressed, was walking up the area steps of the house opposite. She had a blue gingham apron over her dress. In one hand she held a letter. She looked so astonishingly young that he felt glad she was forced to cross the broad. The pillar box stood in the shadow, a few yards away.

Then he noticed a man, standing on the pavement waiting. The girl noticed him too. She put her hand up to her hair, anxiously pulled her apron straight, and almost ran forward. She lifted her hand to drop the letter, and the man waiting on the pavement suddenly caught hold of her and kissed her – twice. The girl slipped her arms round his neck – kissed him on the mouth.

The watcher left the window. He staggered across the room, wrenched the black velvet curtain from the mask – ‘damn you damn you damn you’ she [i.e., he] screamed, and struck her [—]<sup>2</sup> on her smiling mouth. (In the corner the monkey was very much occupied searching for fleas.)

But the mask crashed down upon the floor in a thousand pieces, and the man fell too, silently. He looked like a bundle of worn out rags.

(pp129–132)

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[Toots]<sup>1</sup>

*Toots:* (puts down her tea cup and begins to rock gently) But really, as time goes on I seem to become more and more selfish. I feel I want nothing and nobody except my own home and my own children *within hail*. Nice for the poor children! The extraordinary thing is that when they were children I never realised they’d grow up and marry and