



Seven Stories of Mystery and Horror

Edgar Allan Poe



MACMILLAN READERS

with extra exercises
and
audio CD

MACMILLAN READERS
ELEMENTARY LEVEL

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Seven Stories of Mystery and Horror

Retold by Stephen Colbourn

MACMILLAN

THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM

I opened my eyes. But I could not see anything. It was dark—completely dark. There was no light at all. Everything was black. I closed my eyes and opened them again. But I could see nothing. Where was I?

I was lying on my back. I was lying on something hard and cold. I reached out my hand and felt a stone floor. The stones were cold and damp. I was lying on my back in a stone room. Was I in a tomb? Was I in a place where dead bodies were buried? I had to move. I had to find out. I turned over onto my hands and knees. Then I started to crawl forwards. In a few seconds, I found a wall. It was cold and wet. Maybe I was in a room that was under the ground.

I followed the wall, very slowly. I thought that I was moving in a circle. I was not sure. Then I had an idea. I tore a piece of cloth from my shirt and put it on the floor, near the wall. Then I walked along the wall of the room.

I counted the number of times that I moved my hands forward. Twenty...thirty...forty times. Where was the piece of cloth? Had I gone past it in the dark? Had I gone around the room twice? I counted up to one hundred before I found the piece of cloth. But I did not find a dead body in a coffin. I was not in a tomb.

Where was I? I tried to remember. I remembered that I was in Toledo, in Spain. Then I remembered a courtroom and men in red gowns. They had asked questions—more and more questions. Their voices were soft and their eyes were bright. How many hours had they questioned me? How many *days* had they

questioned me? I could not remember. The questions had gone on and on. But what was my crime? What law had I broken? I did not know. I was very frightened. I thought that the questioners were going to torture me. But no one had cut me with sharp blades. No one had hit me. No one had burnt me with hot iron. Now I must be in a jail. This room was a prison cell. Maybe I would die here, without food, or water, or light.

I closed my eyes again and I must have slept.

When I awoke, I moved my foot and it hit something. I touched a loaf of bread and a pitcher of water. A jailer had come into my prison cell and left food and drink.

I knew that my prison cell was large. But what was in the center? For a few minutes, I sat with my back against the wall. Then I started to crawl straight ahead—across the floor of the cell. I moved very slowly. Suddenly, my hand went down and forward. I had found a hole—a pit in the floor. I could feel and smell damp air. The air was rising up from the pit. I guessed that the pit was very deep. I had almost fallen into it. My body shook with fear. My skin was covered with sweat. The drops of sweat fell from my face and down into the deep hole.

Suddenly, I heard a noise. A small door opened above my head and light shone down on me. For a few seconds, I saw my prison cell. Then the small door shut again and everything was dark and black. I was right! I was in a room with a deep pit in its center.

I understood now. My torturers had been waiting and watching. They wanted me to jump into the deep pit. They wanted me to end my life.

I slowly crawled back to the pitcher of water and the bread. My arms and legs were shaking. I was weak and

tired. I took a piece of bread and started to eat. The bread tasted of salt. I quickly drank the water from the pitcher. Soon after this I felt very, very tired. I slept again.

When I awoke, the cell was not completely dark. I could just see its walls. The room was square. Each wall was about fifteen feet long. And the walls were not made of stone. They were made of metal. High in the center of the ceiling, there was a small door. Strange and terrible pictures were carved into the metal walls. The pictures were of evil spirits and monsters.

I was lying on my back but I could not get up. I was no longer lying on the stone floor. My body was tied to a wooden bed. A rope was tied around my chest, but I could move my arms. I reached out my hands and tried to find the pitcher of water. I was very thirsty.

There was no water, but I found a dish of meat. I put a piece of the meat into my mouth. No! I could not eat the meat! It tasted terrible. It was full of salt and strong spices. My jailers wanted me to be thirsty. This was a new torture.

I looked up at the ceiling. I could see a picture there. It was a picture of Time—an old man with a long beard. Pictures of Time always showed an old, bearded man with an hourglass in his hand. Hourglasses had two containers inside them. The containers were made of glass and they were joined in the center. One of the containers was filled with sand. When all the sand had run from one container to the other, an hour had passed.

Time also held a long, sharp scythe. Every living thing is killed by Time.

But in the picture on the ceiling, the blade of Time's



I could see a picture of Time.

scythe was not part of the painting. This blade was real, and it was sharp. It was made of metal and it hung down from the ceiling. The blade was like the pendulum of an old clock. As I watched, the pendulum started to move. It moved slowly, backward...and forward.

Suddenly I heard a noise beside me. It was the sound of many small animals running on hard ground. Then I heard high, sharp cries. Rats! There were rats here in the cell! They had climbed out of the pit!

Several large black rats ran across the floor toward my wooden bed. I moved my arms and shouted. I tried to frighten them away. The rats looked at me with their red eyes. They opened their mouths, and I saw their sharp, pointed teeth. Were the rats going to be my next torture ?

I looked up at the pendulum again. It was moving more quickly now. As it moved backward and forward, it made a soft whooshing sound. WHOOSH! The pendulum swung back behind my head, and I could not see it. Then it swung forward over my feet. WHOOSH! As I watched, I saw that the pendulum was lower. Very slowly, the pendulum was getting closer to me. Now I saw the reason for the pendulum. This was how I was going to die! The sharp blade of the pendulum was going to kill me. But it was not going to kill me quickly. It was going to cut my body very, very slowly. The pain would be terrible. How many times was the blade going to cut my body? How long was I going to lie on the wooden bed? How many times was I going to scream, as my blood ran onto the floor?

One of the rats ran over my hand. I cried out and pulled my hand away quickly. The dish of meat was still beside me. The rats could smell the meat and they

wanted it.

Suddenly I had an idea. I reached out my hand and took some of the meat from the dish. Then I rubbed the spiced meat onto the rope that was around my body. I nibbled the meat all along the rope. Then I lifted my hands above my head and lay still.

At first, the rats were frightened of me. They did not come too close. Then one of them jumped onto my chest. I did not move. I felt the rat's sharp little feet on my body. I saw its red eyes and sharp teeth. I tried not to scream.

The rat put its nose closer to the rope. It smelled the spiced meat on the rope. The rat started to bite the rope with its sharp teeth. It was eating the meat that was on the rope. Soon another rat jumped onto me. It started to eat the rope too.

More and more rats came. They ran over my face. They ran over my body. I kept my mouth and eyes closed. I tried not to shout in fear. I tried to stop my body shaking. The rats' feet and tails touched me. I felt the horrible animals on my mouth and my eyes and my nose. I heard their high, sharp cries.

The sound of the pendulum became louder. Soon, the whooshing sound of the pendulum was louder than the sound of the rats. The blade was coming closer to my body. I felt the air move as the pendulum passed over my face.

The pendulum swung very wide. I counted each time that it passed over me. Six seconds...seven seconds—then the blade swung back. Six...seven...WHOOSH! Six...seven...WHOOSH! The pendulum swung lower and lower. It was now only a few inches above me. And it was moving more slowly.



The rat started to bite the rope with its sharp teeth.

The huge blade frightened the rats and they ran away. The animals knew that they were in danger. They had eaten part of the rope, but I was not yet free. I waited for the pendulum to cut the rope completely.

Seven seconds...eight seconds. The pendulum whooshed above my body from head to foot—and then from foot to head. Seven...eight...WHOOSH! It was very close to me now. I tried to make my body lower on the bed. Where was the blade of the pendulum going to bite me? Was it going to cut my head? Was it going to cut my chest or stomach? I screamed. The blade bit and it cut the rope! The pendulum swung toward my feet.

Suddenly I was free. I jumped from the wooden bed and lay on the floor. Sweat was pouring from my skin. I was breathing quickly. The pendulum whooshed past one more time, and then it stopped.

The small door in the ceiling was open. My torturers were watching. They had seen me escape from the blade. Suddenly, the pendulum moved up into the ceiling, and it was still.

I was not safe for long. A little later, I smelt something. It was not the smell of rats. And it was not the smell from the deep, dark pit. It was the smell of hot iron.

The metal walls of the cell were becoming hot! I moved closer to the pit. It was cooler here. This was my torturers' plan. They were heating the walls. When the cell became too hot, I must jump into the pit. The pit was cool and damp. But the cell walls were not only hot, they were also moving! The hot metal walls were moving toward me. The pictures of the evil spirits and monsters were now red. They were getting hotter. I was going to burn on the walls, or I was going to fall into the pit. I had very little time.

I stood on the edge of the pit and I closed my eyes. The walls were hot and the floor was hot. The air was hot! I felt the terrible heat on the skin of my face and hands. I was ready to fall. This was the end. I was going to die in this terrible place.

Suddenly, I heard voices. People were shouting. I heard the sounds of guns. People were fighting. Then I heard another sound. The walls were moving again.

What was happening now? I was weak and tired. My arms and legs were shaking. The walls were moving back, but it was too late. My clothes were starting to burn. I was about to fall. I was already falling...

Then someone held my arm and pulled me back. As I turned my head, I saw the person who was holding me. It was a soldier who was wearing the uniform of the French army. French soldiers had captured the city of Toledo. All the prisoners were free.

THE GOLD BUG

I first met Mr William Legrand many years ago. He lived on Sullivan's Island, near Charleston. The island is in the Atlantic Ocean, opposite the coast of South Carolina.

Sullivan's Island is small. It is three miles long and three-quarters of a mile wide. A creek—a narrow area of sea—lies between the island and the mainland. There was only one large building on Sullivan's Island—Fort Moultrie. A group of soldiers lived in this large wooden building on the western side of the island. The soldiers in Fort Moultrie guarded the coast of South Carolina from our enemies.

William Legrand had been very rich, but he lost all his money. His fine house and property in New Orleans was sold and he left the state of Louisiana. Soon after this, he moved to Sullivan's Island.

Legrand had no family. His parents were dead and he had no brothers or sisters. He was not married and he had no children. He lived with a servant named Jupiter. Legrand and Jupiter lived in a small wooden house by the edge of the sea. They caught fish and birds for food. Charleston was not far, but they did not often go there.

I lived in Charleston and sometimes I visited Legrand. I crossed the creek to the island in a small boat.

William Legrand was an interesting man who had a good education. But he was also a strange man. Legrand enjoyed living in this quiet place because he did not like meeting people. Often, he did not speak for several days. Sometimes he became excited and talked for many hours. When I visited Sullivan's Island, Legrand and I talked about many things. We talked about books that he had

read. He talked about the animals, birds and insects near his home. He drew pictures of the creatures that he saw on the island.

One day in the month of October, I went to visit Legrand. But when I got to his home, no one was there. It was a cold day, so I went into Legrand's little wooden house. Then I lit a fire and waited for him.

Legrand and Jupiter returned late in the afternoon. They had been walking by the edge of the sea and they had found an unusual bug. Legrand was very excited by this insect.

"It has strange patterns on its back," he said.

"Can I see it?" I asked.

"No, I'm sorry," replied Legrand. "You can't see it tonight. I showed it to Lieutenant Gray this afternoon. He is interested in all kinds of insects. He has taken the bug to the fort. He has a book about insects. But I don't think that he will find any information about this bug in his book."

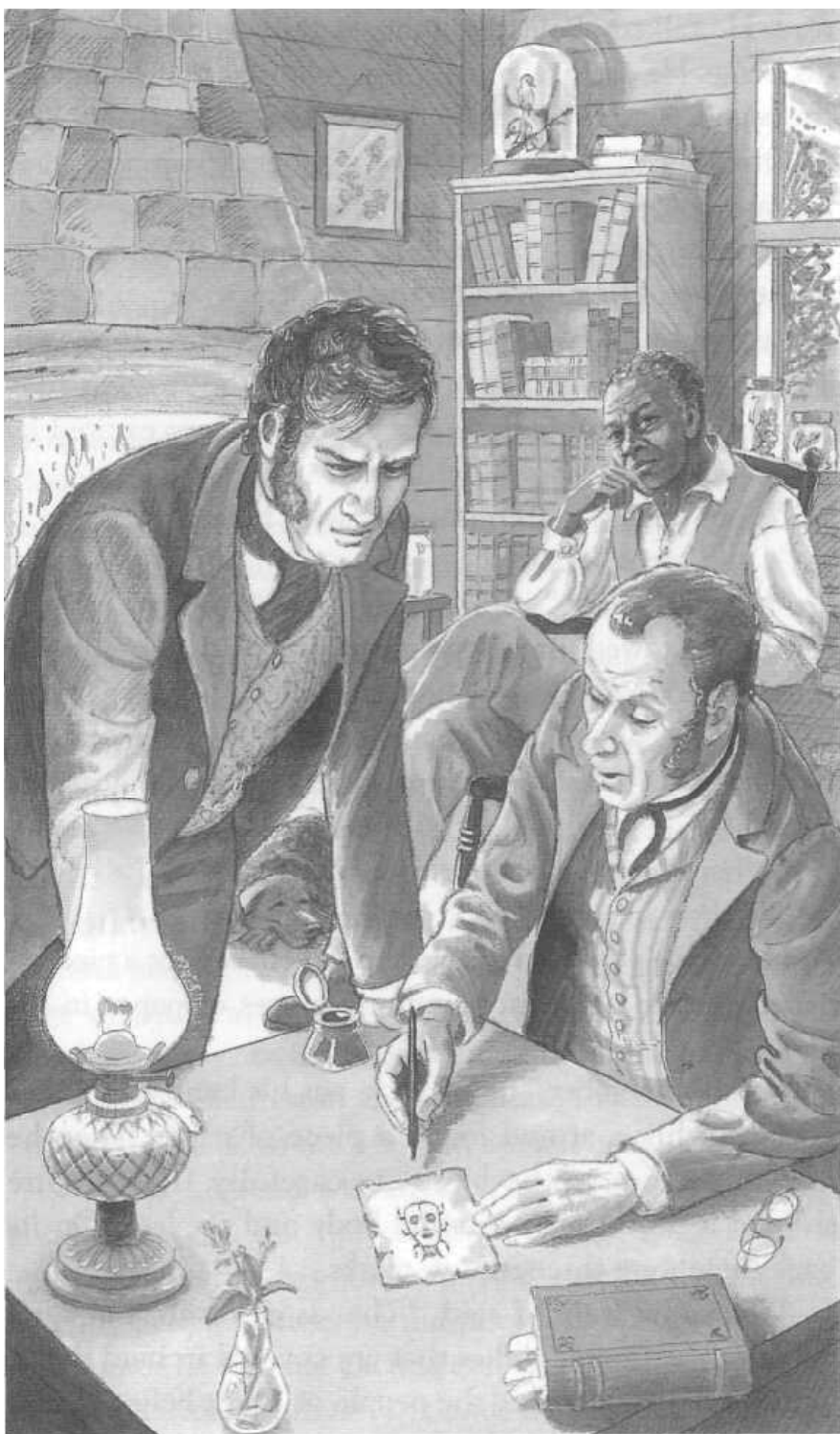
"What is unusual about the bug?" I asked.

"I'll draw a picture of it," said Legrand.

He took a pen from his pocket and looked for a piece of paper. But he could not find any pieces of paper in his desk.

"Oh, I remember," he said. He put his hand in another pocket of his coat and found a piece of paper. Then he drew a picture of the bug very carefully. The picture showed a beetle with a round body and six legs. On its back there were three strange marks.

"You draw well," I said. "That is a scarab, I'm sure. Scarabs have round bodies that are covered in hard shells. Thousands of years ago, the people of Egypt believed that scarabs had magical powers."



The picture showed a beetle. On its back there were three strange marks.

"That bug was never alive," said Jupiter suddenly. "It's made of metal—gold. I've never held such a heavy bug."

"Don't listen to Jupiter," said Legrand. "Maybe the bug is a scarab. And yes, it is a golden color. But it has these very unusual marks on its back—three black spots. There are two small spots above a larger spot. The spots are like two eyes and a mouth. It's a pattern of a skull—the head of a dead man. A picture of a skull is sometimes called a death's head. I have discovered a bug that no one has seen before!"

I took the paper and looked at the drawing. It was now late. Outside, it was almost dark. I went closer to the fire and held the paper near to the light of the flames. Now I could see the drawing more clearly.

The paper was very old and thick. It was made of an animal's skin. I saw the three spots on Legrand's drawing of the bug. It certainly had a pattern of a skull—a death's head. I also saw some writing in red ink. I had not seen the writing earlier.

"What do these strange letters mean?" I asked. I gave the paper back to Legrand.

Legrand stared at the paper for several minutes. But he did not say anything. He did not speak about the bug or the picture again. He did not speak to me at all for the rest of the evening.

I thought that he wanted to be alone. So, the next morning, I said goodbye to him and Jupiter. Then I left Sullivan's Island and returned to Charleston. I thought no more about the picture of the bug, or the red writing.

About a month later, Jupiter came to Charleston. This was unusual. Jupiter did not leave Sullivan's Island often, and he never came to Charleston alone. He came to see

me.

"Is anything wrong?" I asked him.

"Mr Legrand is sick," said Jupiter.

"Does he have a fever?"

"No, he's sick in his mind," Jupiter replied. "He walks about the island. He takes the boat across the creek to the mainland. He won't eat and he doesn't sleep. His face is pale—like a ghost. All day and all night he writes numbers and letters in a book. He only talks about the gold bug and a death's head. The bug has made Mr Legrand mad. Mr Legrand has sent me here. He has written this note to you."

I opened the note and read these words:

Dear friend

I was not polite when you visited me. I'm sorry about that. But I must speak to you again. Please come to Sullivan's Island. I have something very important to tell you. Poor Jupiter is worried about me, but I'm not sick. Come to my home immediately and I'll tell you my news.

William Legrand

I went to Sullivan's Island with Jupiter immediately. I found Legrand sitting in his wooden house. He did not look sick. He was not lying in his bed. He was sitting at a table. He was looking at something on the table in front of him. Then he wrote in a small book.

"Are you well?" I asked.

"I'm very well," Legrand said quickly. His eyes were bright and shining. "I'm glad that you have come. Look at this."

He showed me a golden beetle that was lying on the table.

"That is the gold bug!" said Jupiter.

The golden insect was very heavy. Was it made of gold?

"I've studied the beetle," said Legrand. "But I've also studied this paper."

Legrand picked up the piece of thick, old paper that had his drawing on it.

"On the day of your visit, I found the bug when I was walking with Jupiter," said Legrand. "We were by the sea. The bug was lying on the ground. A few feet further along, there was a boat. The boat was very old and broken, and it was lying on the edge of the sea. In the bottom of the boat there was this piece of paper. I put the bug in the paper and put them both in my pocket. A few minutes later, we met the lieutenant from the fort. I gave him the bug because he wanted to study it. Then Jupiter and I went back to the house."

"When we talked about the bug, I wanted to make a drawing for you," Legrand went on. "But I had no paper. Then I remembered the paper in my pocket. I drew my picture on one side of the paper. I did not know that there were some letters in red ink on the other side of the paper. You held the paper near to the heat of the fire. This made the letters clearer. Then you gave the paper back to me. Since that evening, I've studied that writing."

"I don't understand," I said. "Please explain."

Legrand was excited. He started to speak quickly.

"I believe that the gold bug has magic powers," he said. "Its showing us the way to something very important. The gold bug, the skull pattern on its back, and the red letters on the paper. These are all clues—important pieces of information. That is what I think. The clues will show us where to find something that is very valuable. Come with me and Jupiter."

"Where are we going?" I asked. But Legrand did not answer. Maybe Jupiter was right. Maybe Legrand was mad.

I followed the two men to their little rowboat that was outside the house. There were some tools in the bottom of the boat—two shovels and a pickax.

I looked at the tools. "Are we going to dig a hole in the ground?" I asked. But Legrand did not reply. He started to push the boat down into the sea.

Legrand, Jupiter and I got into the boat. Jupiter pulled on the oars and the boat started to move away from the island. Many times, Legrand looked at a compass. Sometimes he asked Jupiter to row the boat further toward the north.

When we had crossed the creek to the mainland, we pulled the boat up out of the water. Then we walked for about two hours. Again and again, Legrand looked at the compass in his hand. I did not speak and neither did Jupiter. A few times Legrand said the words, "Good! Good!"

I became tired and I wanted to return home. What was the reason for this journey? I could not guess.

As the sun was setting, we came to a tall cliff that rose up from the land. The light of the sun shone onto the side of the cliff. We could see a flat, narrow ledge on the cliff's side. The ledge was like a wide mouth in the rock.

Trees surrounded the tall cliff. One tree was very tall and very, very old.

Legrand took us toward the tall tree and stopped. He looked up at its branches.

"Can you climb that tree?" Legrand asked Jupiter.

"I can climb any tree," Jupiter answered.

"Very well, Jupiter. Take the gold bug and climb the

tree," said Legrand to his servant. "Climb the tree and tell me what you can see."

Legrand gave the golden insect to Jupiter. There was a piece of string around the bug.

Jupiter started to climb the tree. I watched him as he went up and up. Soon we could not see him.

"Jupiter!" Legrand called out. "How many branches have you climbed?"

"I'm on the sixth branch," Jupiter replied.

"Climb to the seventh branch on the east side of the tree. Then look along that branch of the tree," Legrand said excitedly. "Can you see anything on the branch?"

"There's something white!" Jupiter shouted. "Oh, sir! It's a skull! A dead man's head is sitting on this branch. The skull is fixed to the branch. Someone took a dead man's head up here!"

"Good. Drop the bug into the left eye of the skull," Legrand shouted to Jupiter.

"But the bug will fall down!" Jupiter replied.

"Yes, yes!" Legrand shouted. "I want the bug to fall to the ground."

"Yes, sir," Jupiter said. "I'm dropping the bug now."

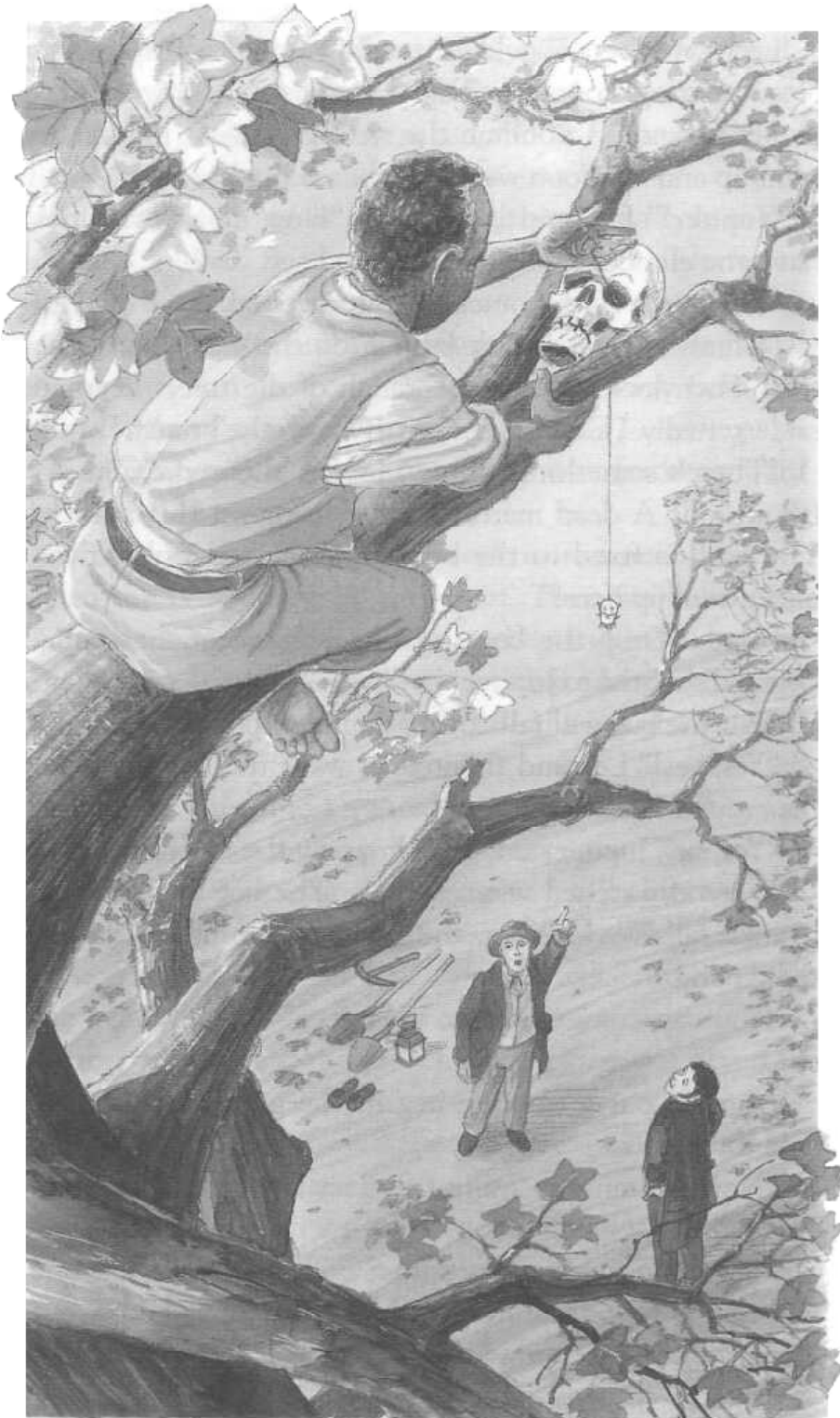
Legrand watched very carefully. The bug was heavy. I heard it fall. We both saw the gold bug shining as it lay on the ground.

"You can come down now, Jupiter," he said. "I've got the bug."

Legrand put a wooden peg in the ground where the gold insect fell.

"Now we must measure fifty feet from the tree," said Legrand.

He took a tape measure from his pocket. He put one end of the tape measure against the tree and laid it out



"I'm dropping the bug now."

along the ground, toward the peg. Where the tape measure measured fifty feet, Legrand stopped.

"Dig here," he said.

Jupiter took the pickax and started to dig. He soon hit something in the ground.

"Oh, sir," he said. "More bones of a dead man."

I saw long bones and a skull. Legrand removed the bones from the hole. Then he picked up a shovel.

"Dig deeper, Jupiter," he said.

I saw the blade of a knife. Then I saw three or four old coins. They looked like pieces of gold.

The sun was very low in the sky now. It was almost dark. I lit a lantern and held it above my head. The light shone down into the deep hole.

Soon there was a sharp sound. Legrand's shovel had hit wood and metal.

"My shovel has touched something," he said. "It's a box." Then he removed more soil from the hole.

After a few minutes, I saw a wooden box with handles made of metal. It was very heavy and Legrand and Jupiter could not lift it. But Legrand pulled open the lid of the box and looked inside.

I held the lantern nearer to the box and looked closer. Inside the box there was wonderful treasure! There were gold and silver coins, and beautiful jewels! I was shocked. Legrand put his hands into the box and laughed.

"We'll take this treasure back to Sullivan's Island," he said. "We'll take as many of the coins and jewels as we can carry. Then we'll come back for more."

I forgot that I was tired. I was excited. We carried about one third of the treasure back to the rowboat. Then we went back to Sullivan's Island and put the gold, silver and jewels in Legrand's house.

We made two more journeys to the mainland. Each time, we took away another third of the treasure. As we returned to Sullivan's Island for the third time, the sun was rising. By dawn, we were exhausted. But all the treasure was in Legrand's house. Then the three of us, Legrand, Jupiter and I, slept for several hours.

When we awoke, we looked at the treasure. Legrand started counting the coins and jewels.

"Legrand, how did you know about this treasure?" I asked. "And how did you know where to look for it?"

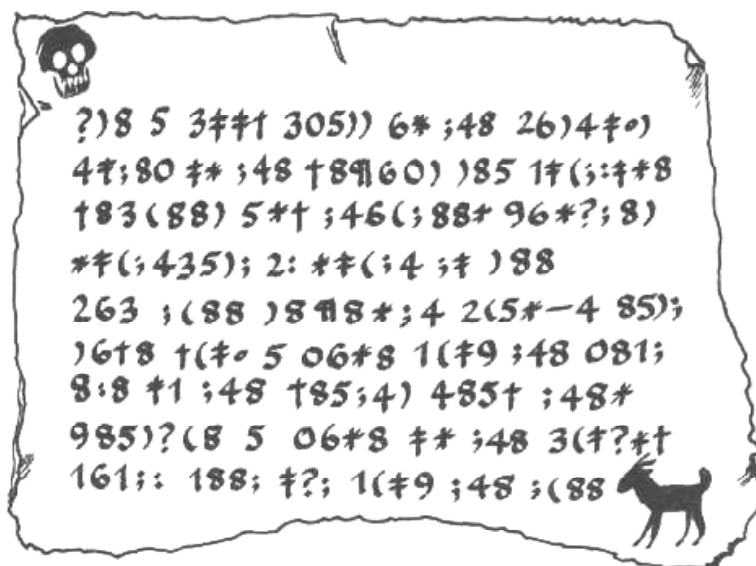
"The old paper gave me the clues," Legrand said. "And you helped me to understand the clues."

"But I did nothing," I said.

"You're wrong," said Legrand. "You held the paper close to the fire. There's secret writing on the paper. When the paper became hot, the writing became red."

Legrand took the old piece of paper from his pocket and put it on the table.

"Look," he said. And he pointed at lines of letters, numbers and marks that were written in red ink.



"There are also two small pictures with the message,"

Legrand said. "At the beginning of the message there's a picture of a skull—a death's head. Pirates used skulls—death's heads to frighten people. Pirates put black flags with pictures of white skulls and bones on their ships."

Legrand smiled. Then he went on. "At the end of the message there's a picture of a small goat. The word for a young goat is a KID. One of the most famous pirates was Captain Kidd. The drawing of the goat is a picture word for Captain Kidd's name."

"Captain William Kidd sailed along this coast in the seventeenth century," I said. "People believed that he buried some of his treasure somewhere in South Carolina. This is a message about his treasure!"

"Yes!" replied Legrand. "I believe that too. After I'd seen those pictures, I looked more closely at the message. I worked for a very long time."

"E is the most common letter in the English language," said Legrand. "E is used most frequently in the spelling of English words. The next letter that is used most frequently is A. After that, the most frequent letter is O, then I. The order of frequency is this: AOIDHNRSTUYC FGLMWBK PQXZJV. The number 8 appears forty-one times in this message. I decided that the number 8 must be the letter E. After many hours, I discovered the code for these letters. This is the code."

Legrand showed me the code that he had written:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L		
5	2	-	†	8	1	3	4	6			0		
M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
9	*	‡	°		()	;	?	¶			:	

At last I understood the message," he said. "This is what it said."

Legrand took a paper from his desk and put it in front of me. I read these words:

USE A GOOD GLASS IN THE BISHOPS
HOTEL ON THE DEVILS SEAT FORTYONE
DEGREES AND THIRTEEN MINUTES
NORTHEAST BY NORTH TO SEE
BIG TREE SEVENTH BRANCH EAST
SIDE DROP A LINE FROM THE LEFT
EYE OF THE DEATHS HEAD THEN
MEASURE A LINE ON THE GROUND
FIFTY FEET OUT FROM THE TREE

"Where are the Bishop's Hotel and the Devil's Seat?" I asked. "I've never heard of these places."

"More than one hundred and forty years ago, a man named Bishop lived in this area," said Legrand. "Mr Bishop had a hotel—an inn—on the top of a tall cliff. People went to the inn to drink."

"On the cliff, near Bishop's inn, there was a ledge in the rock," Legrand said. "The ledge was called the Devil's Seat. Some people believed that the pirate, Captain William Kidd, visited the inn. He sat on the ledge in the rock. He watched the ships sailing along the coast."

"I read the message again," said Legrand. "I looked at the words: 'Use a good glass.' You drink from a glass. But there is another meaning. 'Glass' is an old word for a 'telescope'. Sailors used telescopes to see things that were far away."

"Did you find Bishop's Hotel and the Devil's Seat?" I asked quickly.

"Yes," Legrand replied. "I found the tall cliff and the ledge—the Devil's Seat. Bishop's inn disappeared a long time ago. I sat down on the ledge and I looked through a telescope. I looked towards the northeast. Then I saw a tall tree. There was something white on one of the branches. I became very excited. Soon after this I returned to Sullivan's Island, and I wrote you a note."

"The bodies with the treasure!" I said suddenly. "The skull and the bones in the ground! Do you think that they were the bodies of pirates?"

"Yes," Legrand said. "I think that those bodies must be two pirates from Kidd's ship. Kidd killed them when he buried his treasure near the tree. Now we must decide how to spend his money! We are all rich!"

THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF MR VALDEMAR

I am a scientist and I am a hypnotist. I am interested in hypnotism. Hypnotism helps sick people as they sleep. That is what I believe. Some patients have an illness in their bodies. Some patients are sick in their minds. When a patient is hypnotized they can help themselves.

As the patient sleeps, he or she listens to the words of the hypnotist. The patients' own thoughts can help their minds and bodies to get well.

This is the way that I make my patients sleep. First, I move my hands in front of the patient's face. Then I speak slowly and clearly. My voice is deep and soft.

"Your eyes are heavy," I say. "You will sleep."

A few seconds later, the person is sleeping, but the person is also awake! The person can hear everything that I say. I give orders. The person follows my orders. Some people are easier to hypnotize than others. But I cannot hypnotize a person who does not want to be hypnotized.

A few years ago, I had an interesting idea. No one had been hypnotized just as they died. What happened to the mind and body of a person as they died? Was it possible to stop death ? Soon I was able to study this idea. I had a very interesting case. Here are the facts about a special patient.

Mr Ernest Valdemar was a scientist, like myself. I knew him well and he liked me. Mr Valdemar was also interested in hypnotism. We talked about my idea. We talked about death and hypnotism.

Mr Valdemar was very ill. He had a disease in his lungs. In a few months, he was going to die. He was frightened of death. His illness gave him a lot of pain. And he did not want to have a painful death. He wanted to sleep because of the pain. He wanted to be hypnotized.

"I will hypnotize you just before you die," I said.

Mr Valdemar was pleased. Then one Saturday night, he sent me a note.

Please come to my room immediately. My death is close. I cannot live another day.

I went to Mr Valdemar's room. His doctor was with him. The doctor could do nothing more for Mr Valdemar. He said goodbye to his patient and left his room. A nurse was looking after Mr Valdemar in his last hours of life.

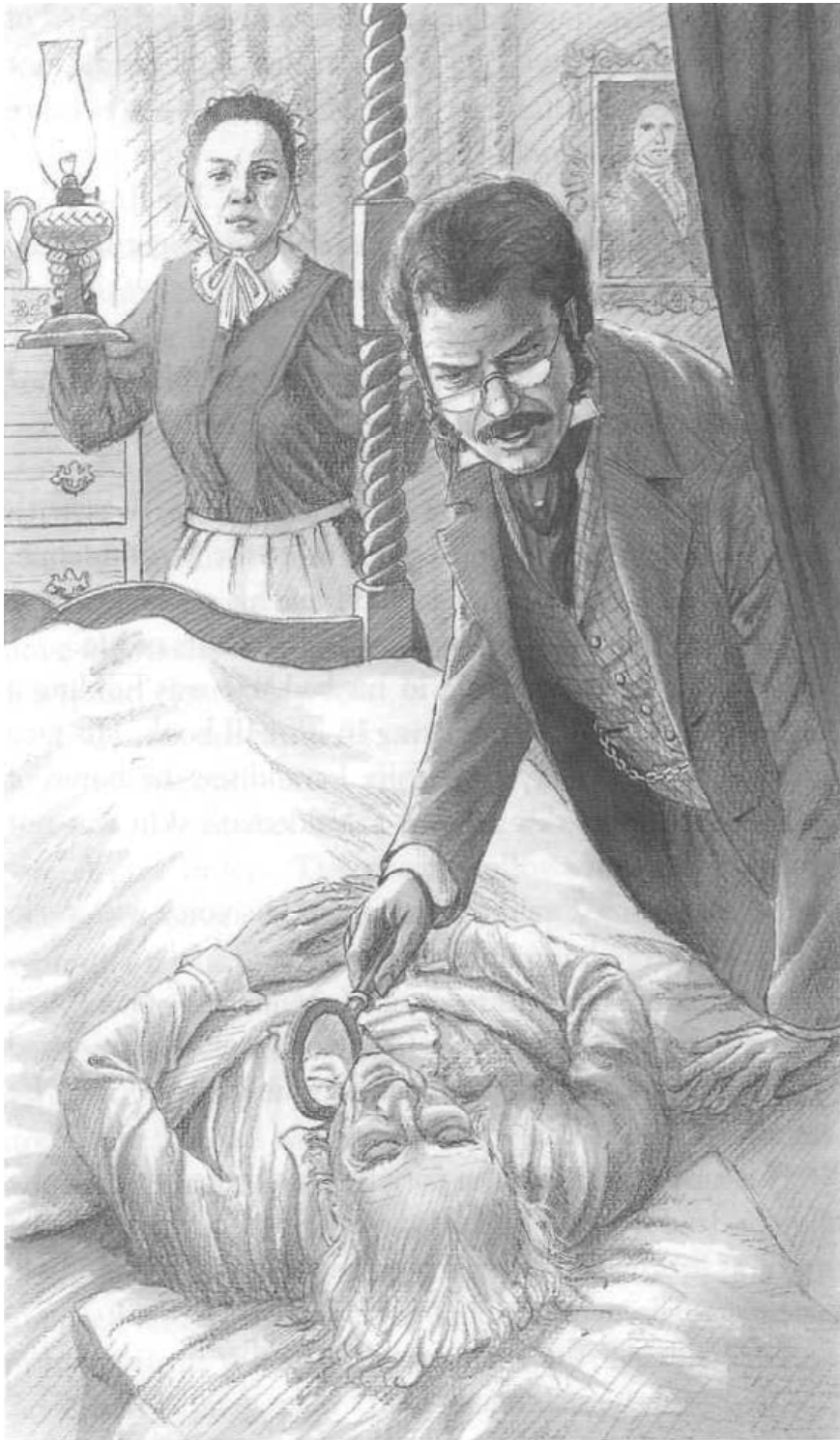
Mr Valdemar was sitting in his bed. He was holding a pen in his hand. He was writing in a small book. His face was very pale and very, very thin. I could see the bones of his skull under his skin. And Mr Valdemar's skin was not white—it was gray.

"Hypnotize me," said the sick man. His voice was weak. "I will die before midnight. Hypnotize me now."

I moved my hands in front of Mr Valdemar's face. I had done this many times before. I did not speak. I hypnotized Mr Valdemar easily. His eyes closed immediately. Soon he was asleep.

The nurse and I laid the patient flat on the bed. Was he alive or dead? He was breathing very slowly. I held a mirror up to his lips. I saw his breath on the mirror. He was alive, but he was very weak.

"Mr Valdemar, are you asleep?" I asked. Yes," said the



*I saw his breath on the mirror. He was alive,
but he was very weak.*

sick man. "Don't wake me. I'm dying."

After a few minutes, I asked the question again.

"Mr Valdemar, are you asleep?"

Mr Valdemar gave the same answer. "Yes," he replied. "Don't wake me. I'm dying."

Then his eyes opened a little. I saw only the white part of his eyes. His lips moved and I saw his teeth. Then his mouth opened and I saw his tongue. It was black. Suddenly all the breath came out of Mr Valdemar's body and he was quiet.

Mr Valdemar was dead. I was sure of this. His arms and legs were cold. He was not breathing and his heart was not beating. So I was very surprised when he spoke to me. But his voice did not come from his mouth. It came from somewhere deep in his body.

"I've been sleeping, but now I'm dead," said Mr Valdemar.

After this, Mr Valdemar did not change. He was dead, but he was not dead. The nurse closed Mr Valdemar's mouth.

Maybe he was not dead! I spoke to him again. Maybe he tried to reply, but he could not.

The next morning Mr Valdemar's doctor returned. The doctor looked at Mr Valdemar but he did not sign a death certificate.

"I can't sign the official document," he said. "I don't think that the patient is dead. You mustn't put him in a coffin. You mustn't bury him in a tomb. Wait another day."

The doctor came back the next day, and the day after that. Mr Valdemar lay on the bed. His body did not move. He did not breathe. He did not speak. He lay like a dead man. It was the sleep of death. But his body did not

change. Mr Valdemar was not dead.

Tell me when his body changes," said the doctor. "Soon his skin and flesh will become black and bad. Then

you'll know that Mr Valdemar is dead. I will sign a death certificate when you tell me this."

How long did we wait by Mr Valdemar's body? You will not believe me! Mr Valdemar lay on the bed for seven months! His body never became black and bad. It never changed.

At the end of seven months, I made a decision. I was going to end the hypnotism. I was going to wake Mr Valdemar. This sleep of death was wrong.

I moved my hands in front of Mr Valdemar's face. I spoke in a loud and clear voice.

"You will wake up," I said.

Did Mr Valdemar's eyes move? Was he trying to open his eyes? A yellow liquid came out of his ears.

"Mr Valdemar," I said. "How do you feel? Can you speak?"

Did the patient move? Did he move his hands? I was not sure. But I was sure about his voice. I heard a voice that came from deep inside his body.

"Quickly! Make me sleep, or wake me up! Quickly! I tell you that I am dead."

More yellow liquid came from Mr Valdemar's body. Then there was a terrible smell. I stepped back from the bed. Then Mr Valdemar's body started to disappear. It was like black ice in hot sunlight. His body became liquid—yellow liquid that smelt terrible. Soon there was nothing left of Mr Valdemar's skin or body. There was only a pool of yellow liquid and some bones.