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Dead Sunday

Excerpt 1

I knew every fitting in that apartment, though it was neither mine nor properly speaking an apartment. There were no windows or doors. A narrow arch in the wall led to the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. At the end of a wide corridor there was a decompression chamber with a deep steel porthole-entrance. When closed and sealed this porthole became an elevator to the surface, to be used in the case of emergency or at the end of the operation. These living quarters of mine were no fewer than thirty thousand feet below the surface of the earth, that is more than five miles.

When I went down that hole I had everything going for me---girls, enough money to get about in the evenings, a large and cosy flat within wind of Kensington Gardens. From the moment I stepped into that elevator-cage my life changed for good. It was never the same again. I got back to the surface of the earth all right. But that had changed too. And why I went down that hole I shall never know. As a matter of fact I don't even know if I *did* go down it.

Excerpt 2

I saw women as wizards. Which is a tall choreography to impose on them. Jane was a wizard. She was climbing for forty, too. A lovely age in a woman, I habitually said with an idiotic expression on my face. One day after we'd made love she patted my right cheek with three fingers and said, 'What a *colourful* engineer you are.'

I do believe I blushed.

The pity of it was that I could make a woman feel so well looked after---in restaurants, at parties. I could mend a car, a fuse, do first aid, all the things a woman expects in a man and finds only in a bore. I belonged to enough clubs and discos not to have to repeat myself on a night out. I didn't get drunk, only merry. If it is true that a woman likes best a man who makes her laugh my over-dated notebook is explained. A woman could let go with me, which in the hell-world we live in is pretty important.

But my God how hard I worked for it. I only realized it five miles under the earth---in a silence that rested me for the first time in my life while frightening me so much my balls got gooseflesh.

Only once in my life did I ask a girl of mine for a second date in one week. It was in an all-night café.

'I can't,' she said.

'Why not?'

'I'm going out with somebody else.'

'Oh yes?'

'And I slept with him last night.'

'Was it disappointing?'

'As a matter of fact it was very nice.'

'Then congratulations.'

She watched me sitting there in my self-satisfied way and said, 'My God, you never change, do you?'

She looked as if she wanted to hit me. It was all untrue what she said about sleeping with another man, he didn't even exist, a little to my chagrin.

I think I opted to maybe die five miles under the earth because my old life had worn itself out. My work didn't bring me the right friends. I wanted intelligent people and all I got was colleagues and their wives, so I preferred girls, many of whom were intelligent. I hardly had a male friend. So I was living lop-sided. I used to get home around seven in the evening and unless I had homework to do I went straight to the phone to order a table at a restaurant I couldn't afford and before I'd even taken my shower or sat down to think out what I really wanted to do I had booked a girl to go with the table. It wasn't a dog's life but it was hardly a man's.

One of the reasons I changed girls so often was that they nearly always turned out to be cripples. The problems started pouring out and you wanted to call their families in. As I abhorred families I moved on to the next girl. You began to see how carefully designed those first feminine advances had been (just like mine).

In truth I felt sorry for women. They didn't have a chance. There were supposed to be starting out on a big adventure, free at last, and the only thing missing was a sane world to adventure in. You spend a thousand years throwing off the shackles, or at least you think you did, and then when the shackles are off and you're ready to walk out of prison into the city of honours you find the prison's on fire! The men omitted to tell you (like women they have a natural desire to make it all up) that they are prisoners too---and always have been.

And now not only can't you get out of prison, even if you're a man, but it's all ablaze, with you and him *inside*. It's enough to make you die laughing!