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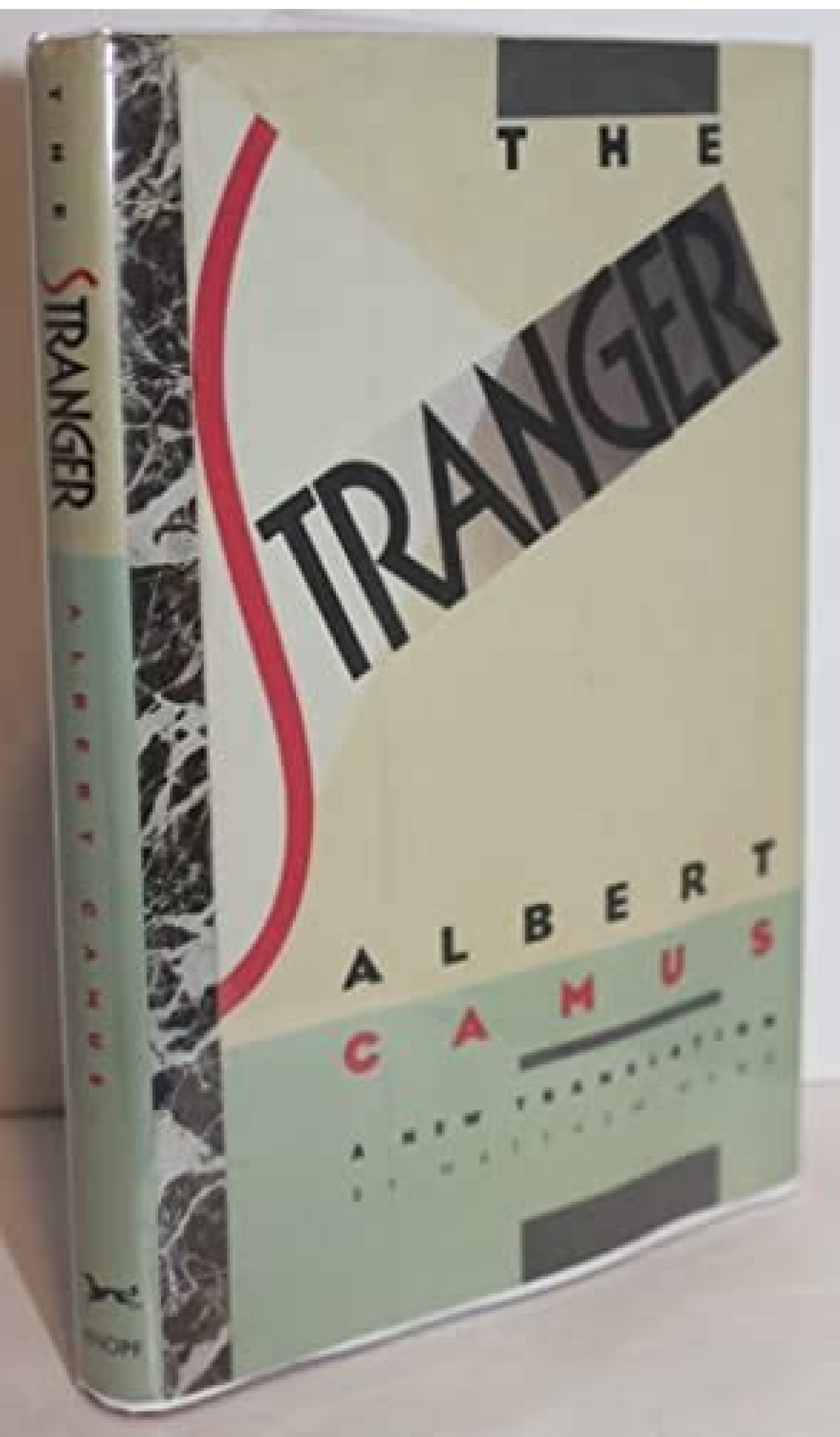
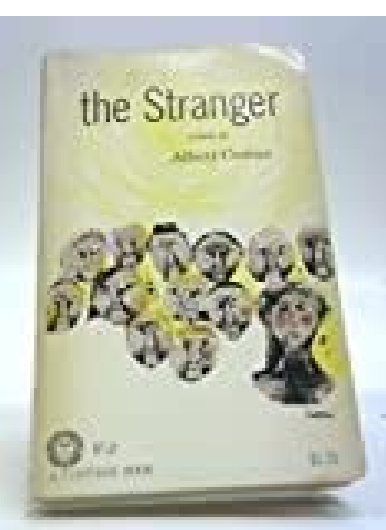
ALBERT CAMUS

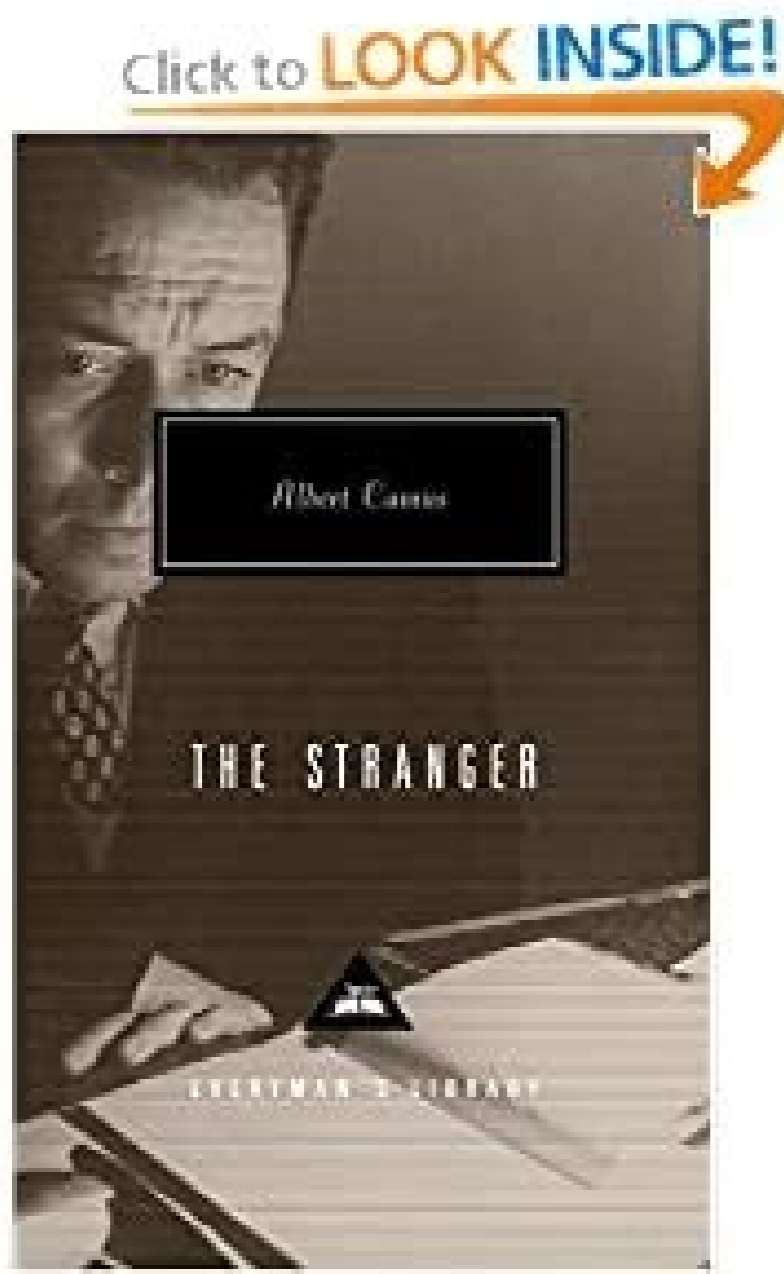
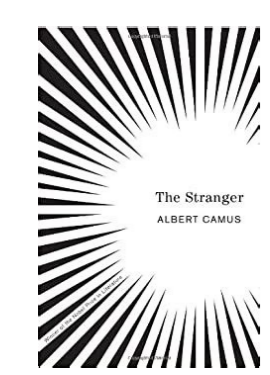
TRANSLATED BY MATTHEW WARD

the stranger



NARRATED BY JONATHAN DAVIS





Why is the stranger called the stranger. Albert camus the stranger explained. The stranger camus explained. Albert camus the stranger short summary. The stranger ending explained camus.

The Stranger is not merely one of the most widely read novels of the 20th century, but one of the books likely to outlive it. Written in 1946, Camus's compelling and troubling tale of a disaffected, apparently amoral young man has earned a durable popularity (and remains a staple of U.S. high school literature courses) in part because it reveals so vividly the anxieties of its time. Alienation, the fear of anonymity, spiritual doubt—all could have been given a purely modern inflection in the hands of a lesser talent than Camus, who won the Nobel Prize in 1957 and was noted for his existentialist aesthetic. The remarkable trick of The Stranger, however, is that it's not mired in period philosophy. The plot is simple. A young Algerian, Meursault, afflicted with a sort of aimless inertia, becomes embroiled in the petty intrigues of a local pimp and, somewhat inexplicably, ends up killing a man. Once he's imprisoned and eventually brought to trial, his crime, it becomes apparent, is not so much the arguably defensible murder he has committed as it is his deficient character. The trial's proceedings are absurd, a parsing of incidental trivialities—that Meursault, for instance, seemed unmoved by his own mother's death and then attended a comic movie the evening after her funeral are two ostensibly damning facts—so that the eventual sentence the jury issues is both ridiculous and inevitable. Meursault remains a cipher nearly to the story's end—dispassionate, clinical, disengaged from his own emotions. "She wanted to know if I loved her," he says of his girlfriend. "I answered the same way I had the last time, that it didn't mean anything but that I probably didn't." There's a latent ominousness in such observations, a sense that devotion is nothing more than self-delusion. It's undoubtedly true that Meursault exhibits an extreme of resignation; however, his confrontation with "the gentle indifference of the world" remains as compelling as it was when Camus first recounted it. --Ben Guterson "The Stranger is a strikingly modern text and Matthew Ward's translation will enable readers to appreciate why Camus's stoical anti-hero and devious narrator remains one of the key expressions of a postwar Western malaise, and one of the cleverest exponents of a literature of ambiguity." --from the Introduction by Peter Dunwoodie Through the story of an ordinary man unwittingly drawn into a senseless murder on an Algerian beach, Camus explored what he termed "the nakedness of man faced with the absurd." First published in 1946; now in a new translation by Matthew Ward. Born in Algeria in 1913, Albert Camus published The Stranger—now one of the most widely read novels of this century—in 1942. Celebrated in intellectual circles, Camus was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957. On January 4, 1960, he was killed in a car accident. Maman died today. Or yesterday maybe, I don't know. I got a telegram from the home: "Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Faithfully yours." That doesn't mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday. The old people's home is at Marengo, about eighty kilometers from Algiers. I'll take the two o'clock bus and get there in the afternoon. That way I can be there for the vigil and come back tomorrow night. I asked my boss for two days off and there was no way he was going to refuse me with an excuse like that. But he wasn't too happy about it. I even said, "It's not my fault." He didn't say anything. Then I thought I shouldn't have said that. After all, I didn't have to apologize for. He's the one who should have offered his condolences. But he probably will day after tomorrow, when he sees I'm in mourning. For now, it's almost as if Maman weren't dead. After the funeral, though, the case will be closed, and everything will have a more official feel to it. I caught the two o'clock bus. It was very hot. I ate at the restaurant, at Céleste's, as usual. Everybody felt very sorry for me, and Céleste said, "You only have one mother." When I left, they walked me to the door. I was a little distracted because I still had to go up to Emmanuel's place to borrow a black tie and an arm band. He lost his uncle a few months back. I ran so as not to miss the bus. It was probably because of all the rushing around, and on top of that the bumpy ride, the smell of gasoline, and the glare of the sky and the road, that I dozed off. I slept almost the whole way. And when I woke up, I was slumped against a soldier who smiled at me and asked if I'd been traveling long. I said, "Yes," just so I wouldn't have to say anything else. The home is two kilometers from the village. I walked there. I wanted to see Maman right away. But the caretaker told me I had to see the director first. He was busy, so I waited awhile. The caretaker talked the whole time and then I saw the director. I was shown into his office. He was a little old man with the ribbon of the Legion of Honor in his lapel. He looked at me with his clear eyes. Then he shook my hand and held it so long I didn't know how to get it loose. He thumbed through a file and said, "Madame Meursault came to us three years ago. You were her sole support." I thought he was criticizing me for something and I started to explain. But he cut me off. "You don't have to justify yourself, my dear boy. I've read your mother's file. You weren't able to provide for her properly. She needed someone to look after her. You earn only a modest salary. And the truth of the matter is, she was happier here." I said, "Yes, sir." He added, "You see, she had friends here, people her own age. She was able to share things from the old days with them. You're young, and it must have been hard for her with you." It was true. When she was at home with me, Maman used to spend her time following me with her eyes, not saying a thing. For the first few days she was at the home she cried a lot. But that was because she wasn't used to it. A few months later and she would have cried if she'd been taken out. She was used to it. That's partly why I didn't go there much this past year. And also because it took up my Sunday—not to mention the trouble of getting to the bus, buying tickets, and spending two hours traveling. The director spoke to me again. But I wasn't really listening anymore. Then he said, "I suppose you'd like to see your mother." I got up without saying anything and he led the way to the door. On the way downstairs, he explained, "We've moved her to our little mortuary. So as not to upset the others. Whenever one of the residents dies, the others are a bit on edge for the next two or three days. And that makes it difficult to care for them." We crossed a courtyard where there were lots of old people chatting in little groups. As we went by, the talking would stop. And then the conversation would start up again behind us. The sound was like the muffled jabber of parakeets. The director stopped at the door of a small building. "I'll leave you now, Monsieur Meursault. If you need me for anything, I'll be in my office. As is usually the case, the funeral is set for ten o'clock in the morning. This way you'll be able to keep vigil over the departed. One last thing: it seems your mother often expressed to her friends her desire for a religious burial. I've taken the liberty of making the necessary arrangements. But I wanted to let you know." I thanked him. While not an atheist, Maman had never in her life given a thought to religion. I went in. It was a very bright, whitewashed room with a skylight for a roof. The furniture consisted of some chairs and some cross-shaped sawhorses. Two of them, in the middle of the room, were supporting a closed casket. All you could see were some shiny screws, not screwed down all the way, standing out against the walnut-stained planks. Near the casket was an Arab nurse in a white smock, with a brightly colored scarf on her head. Just then the caretaker came in behind me. He must have been running. He stuttered a little. "We put the cover on, but I'm supposed to unscrew the casket so you can see her." He was moving toward the casket when I stopped him. He said, "You don't want to?" I answered, "No." He was quiet, and I was embarrassed because I felt I shouldn't have said that. He looked at me and then asked, "Why not?" but without criticizing, as if he just wanted to know. I said, "I don't know." He started twirling his moustache, and then without looking at me, again he said, "I understand." He had nice pale blue eyes and a reddish complexion. He offered me a chair and then sat down right behind me. The nurse stood up and went toward the door. At that point the caretaker said to me, "She's got an abscess." I didn't understand, so I looked over at the nurse and saw that she had a bandage wrapped around her head just below the eyes. Where her nose should have been, the bandage was flat. All you could see of her face was the whiteness of the bandage. When she'd gone, the caretaker said, "I'll leave you alone." I don't know what kind of gesture I made, but he stayed where he was, behind me. Having this presence breathing down my neck was starting to annoy me. The room was filled with beautiful late-afternoon sunlight. Two hornets were buzzing against the glass roof. I could feel myself getting sleepy. Without turning around, I said to the caretaker, "Have you been here long?" Right away he answered, "Five years"—as if he'd been waiting all along for me to ask. After that he did a lot of talking. He would have been very surprised if anyone had told him he would end up caretaker at the Marengo home. He was sixty-four and came from Paris. At that point I interrupted him, "Oh, you're not from around here?" Then I remembered that before taking me to the director's office, he had talked to me about Maman. He'd told me that they had to bury her quickly, because it gets hot in the plains, especially in this part of the country. That was when he told me he had lived in Paris and that he had found it hard to forget it. In Paris they keep vigil over the body for three, sometimes four days. But here you barely have time to get used to the idea before you have to start running after the hearse. Then his wife had said to him, "Hush now, that's not the sort of thing to be telling the gentleman." The old man had blushed and apologized. I'd stepped in and said, "No, not at all." I thought what he'd been saying was interesting and made sense. In the little mortuary he told me that he'd come to the home because he was destitute. He was in good health, so he'd offered to take on the job of caretaker. I pointed out that even so he was still a resident. He said, no he wasn't. I'd already been struck by the way he had of saying "they" or "the others" and, less often, "the old people," talking about the patients, when some of them weren't any older than he was. But of course it wasn't the same. He was the caretaker, and to a certain extent he had authority over them. Just then the nurse came in. Night had fallen suddenly. Darkness had gathered, quickly, above the skylight. The caretaker turned the switch and I was blinded by the sudden flash of light. He suggested I go to the dining hall for dinner. But I wasn't hungry. Then he offered to bring me a cup of coffee with milk. I like milk in my coffee, so I said yes, and he came back a few minutes later with a tray. I drank the coffee. Then I felt like having a smoke. But I hesitated, because I didn't know if I could do it with Maman right there. I thought about it; it didn't matter. I offered the caretaker a cigarette and he smoked. At one point he said, "You know, your mother's friends will be coming to keep vigil too. It's customary. I have to go get some chairs and some black coffee." I asked him if he could turn off one of the lights. The glare on the white walls was making me drowsy. He said he couldn't. That was how they'd been wired: it was all or nothing. I didn't pay too much attention to him after that. He left, came back, set up some chairs. On one of them he stacked some cups around a coffee pot. Then he sat down across from me, on the other side of Maman. The nurse was on that side of the room too, but with her back to me. I couldn't see what she was doing. But the way her arms were moving made me think she was knitting. It was pleasant; the coffee had warmed me up, and the smell of flowers on the night air was coming through the open door. I think I dozed off for a while. It was a rustling sound that woke me up. Because I'd had my eyes closed, the whiteness of the room seemed even brighter than before. There wasn't a shadow anywhere in front of me, and every object, every angle and curve stood out so sharply it made my eyes hurt. That's when Maman's friends came in. There were about ten in all, and they floated into the blinding light without a sound. They sat down without a single chair creaking. I saw them more clearly than I had ever seen anyone, and not one detail of their faces or their clothes escaped me. But I couldn't hear them, and it was hard for me to believe they really existed. Almost all the women were wearing aprons, and the strings, which were tied tight around their waists, made their bulging stomachs stick out even more. I'd never noticed what huge stomachs old women can have. Almost all the men were skinny and carried canes. What struck me most about their faces was that I couldn't see their eyes, just a faint glimmer in a nest of wrinkles. When they'd sat down, most of them looked at me and nodded awkwardly, their lips sucked in by their toothless mouths, so that I couldn't tell if they were greeting me or if it was just a nervous tic. I think they were greeting me. It was then that I realized they were all sitting across from me, nodding their heads, grouped around the caretaker. For a second I had the ridiculous feeling that they were there to judge me. Soon one of the women started crying. She was in the second row, hidden behind one of her companions, and I couldn't see her very well. She was crying softly, steadily, in little sobs. I thought she'd never stop. The others seemed not to hear her. They sat there hunched up, gloomy and silent. They would look at the casket, or their canes, or whatever else, but that was all they would look at. The woman kept on crying. It surprised me, because I didn't know who she was. I wished I didn't have to listen to her anymore. But I didn't dare say anything. The caretaker leaned over and said something to her, but she shook her head, mumbled something, and went on crying as much as before. Then the caretaker came around to my side. He sat down next to me. After a long pause he explained, without looking at me, "She was very close to your mother. She says your mother was her only friend and now she hasn't got anyone." We just sat there like that for quite a while. The woman's sighs and sobs were quieting down. She sniffled a lot. Then finally she shut up. I didn't feel drowsy anymore, but I was tired and my back was hurting me. Now it was all these people not making a sound that was getting on my nerves. Except that every now and then I'd hear a strange noise and I couldn't figure out what it was. Finally I realized that some of the old people were sucking at the insides of their cheeks and making these weird smacking noises. They were so lost in their thoughts that they weren't even aware of it. I even had the impression that the dead woman lying in front of them didn't mean anything to them. But I think now that that was a false impression. We all had some coffee, served by the caretaker. After that I don't know any more. The night passed. I remember opening my eyes at one point and seeing that all the old people were slumped over asleep, except for one old man, with his chin resting on the back of his hands wrapped around his cane, who was staring at me as if he were just waiting for me to wake up.

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