

6. The Signal

Question-Answer:

1. How did Semyon get the job as a rail track walker?

One of the officers to whom Semyon served as a servant during the war and then the station master offered Semyon the job of a rail track walker.

2. What work did Semyon do in the war?

Semyon Ivanov worked as a servant in the war. He would carry hot tea and meals to the officers during the war.

3. What was Semyon's impression of the job?

Semyon was very excited getting the job of a railway track walker. He was rejoiced to see new hut with free vegetable garden, lighting and firing.

4. How did he consider his neighbor Vasily?

Semyon observed that Vasily was a wicked man. He was revengeful in his attitude and always dissatisfied with his work and wages.

5. What did Semyon discover on the tracks?

Semyon saw that a man holding a crow-bag in his hand was loosening a rail to bring a tragedy to the train.

Q-3

1. How was Semyon different from his neighbors?

Semyon had a different way of working than his neighbors. He was very dedicated in his work as a track walker. He memorized the timetable of the trains that would pass through his section and reached at the places before two hours of the train arrival. He would go over his section, sit on the bench at his hut and listened to the trembling of the train.

2. Why was Vasily fined?

Vasily had ploughed cabbages in the garden without taking permission from the inspector. So when inspector saw it, he was furious and asked him to remove them. But Vasily didn't follow his command and next time when the inspector revisited the place, he fined him for disobedience with three rubles.

3. What did Vasily plan to do about the fine?

Vasily got angry for being fined by the inspector and thought of lodging a complaint against the inspector at the head office, Moscow. He did so because he was punched hard on his nose by the inspector. This made him revengeful.

4. Why was Semyon collecting reeds?

Semyon had learnt to make flutes out of a reed. He used to burn out the heart of the stick make holes where necessary, drill them, fix a mouthpiece at one end and tune them so well that it was possible to play any air on them. He used to send them on a sale in the bazaar on two kopeks each.

5. How did Semyon save the train?

Semyon pulled off his cap, took out a cotton scarf from it and took out a knife from the upper part of his boot. He buried the knife in his left arm above the elbow. With the blood, he soaked his scarf, tied it to the stick and hung out his red flag. He was almost going to faint and fall down yet he did not leave the flag from his hand. He held it high and sent the signal to the engineer and saved many lives at the risk of his own life.

Q-2 Short-notes:

1. Semyon and his contribution to the war:

Semyon had served as a servant to the officers during the war. He worked with utter dedication in the roasted sun, frozen cold and famished hunger. Many times bullets would whizz near him but none had struck him.

When there was a steady crossfire between the two hostile armies for three continuous days, it was only Semyon who would carry a hot container and his officers' meals from the camp kitchen. It was at the risk of his life, he would do his duty. Many times, he was terrified and cried loudly but he never missed his

duty. His officers were always happy with him because he would always keep hot tea ready for them.

The continuous services in the war made Semyon the patient of rheumatism.

2. Semyon's health:

Semyon's health was affected while working in the war. He became a patient of rheumatism. His condition even worsened to find that his father and his little four year old son had died. He just remained alone with his wife. It was difficult for him plough with rheumatic arms and legs. They left their village in search of a job but nowhere found luck. The wife went out to service and Semyon would travel everyday in search of a job.

3. The personality of Vasily:

Vasily Stepanych was a fellow track walker of Semyon. He was skeptical in his approach. When Semyon talked to him for the first time, he didn't respond him well. After sometime, Semyon observed that Vasily was very hot-tempered and was highly dissatisfied with the kind of life he was living. He would always tell Semyon that it is not God or the luck that unfavours men but it is man who harasses another man. He was frustrated with the wages he received for his work. He always condemned the higher officials for injustice in wages (salary) and held them responsible for putting him in this pathetic and poor life.

4. The cabbage patch of Vasily:

Once Vasily had ploughed cabbages in his vegetable garden. When the inspector came to supervise, he was furious to see the cabbages and scolded him for not taking his permission. He warned him to remove them out but Vasily didn't do that. Next time, when the inspector arrived and saw that he had not removed the cabbages, he fined him with three rubles. Vasily was angry and wanted to complain the chief about this. When he went to the chief, he was not only scolded again but humiliated Vasily even more and punched him on his nose. This made Vasily very revengeful and he left informing that he was going to the head office to complain about the two.

7. The Man with the Scar

I. Answer the following in a sentence or two each.

1. How did the man with the Scar earn a living?

The man with the Scar earned his living by selling lottery tickets at a palace hotel in Guatemala City.

2. What drink was he offered?

He was offered brandy by the narrator's friend.

3. Where was he exiled from?

He was exiled from Nicaragua to Guatemala City.

4. How did he escape his execution?

He escaped his execution by killing his wife whom he loved the most and didn't want to keep her lonely after his death.

5. How did he get the scar?

He got the scar over his face due to a bottle of ginger ale (one type of beer) that burst when the narrator's friend was opening it.

II Write short notes on the following:

1. The significance of gambling in the story.

The man with the scar is presented with a tragic past of his life in the story. His past reveals that he was a general in the Army and was caught in the controversy of ammunition. He was given punishment of execution through shooting at dawn. The morning that was going to bring end to his life had filled him with sense of complete loss and bad luck. The theme of loss is explored in this event of gambling. The last night before his execution, the man with the scar was playing poker with the other five members who were present in the same cell. He confessed to the narrator's friend that he had never had such a bad luck in his life. He lost so many matches in the game that any other man would have lost in his entire life. This signifies the sense of loss and despair. He was hopeless and

didn't have a single hope of survival. The man who once had a glorious life and powerful position was now lost in the utter sense of loss and bad luck.

2. Character sketch of the man with the scar

The man with the scar is an unnamed character in the story and had a broad and Red Crescent shaped wound over his face, ugly and plain expressions that did not match his fat body. He was always in shabby grey suit, a khaki shirt and a rough hat. He used to sell lottery tickets at the palace hotel in Guatemala city. He went there everyday and around every table but no one would take interest or give attention to him. He was living a pathetic and poor life. Sometimes, members in the bar who knew about his past life would offer him drink. He would never deny to it.

From his behavior, he looked like a ruffian (thug) but he had a very tragic past. Once a general, he lived life of glory and power. One day he was caught in the controversy of weapons and given death punishment. Before the execution, he was allowed to meet his beautiful wife. When he met her, he hugged her and kissed her deep. This was a gesture of love and suddenly he brought out a knife from his pocket and cut her neck leaving her dead. When he was asked the reason, he said that he killed her because he loved her. As a result, he was not executed but exiled selling lottery tickets at present in the bar.

The man with the scar is a mysterious personality who killed his wife out of love. This is uncommon and cannot be justified. Also it is doubtful how he brought knife in his pocket. It cannot be decided whether he applied any trick to get saved from the death punishment or was accidentally saved. His present life is not so happy or dignified. He is living a life of loss and pain where he is just passing his time with no hopes from life left anymore. Thus, he seems to be a man of mercy yet not justified fully.

3. The narrator's perception of the man with the scar

The narrator from the very beginning of the story is fascinated with the personality of the man with the scar. He always wondered how he got a scar over his face. He would imagine that he must have got a huge wound. Once when he visited the bar where the man was selling lottery tickets, the man with the scar

came to him almost twenty times to sell the tickets until the narrator's friend came. He described the past life of the man with the scar. The narrator develops pity, shock and interest in his life. He could see that the man with the scar with his ugly looks had an ugly past and was living ugly life full of pain, loss and poverty. But he does not get the reason why the man got a scar over his face. When his friend informed him that he got it due to a bottle of ginger beer that burst while opening, the narrator is disillusioned. He thought that the reason of that scar must be a war as he was the general in the army but is surprised to know the mediocre and good for nothing reason behind the scar.

4. The killing of the wife

(Refer to short note no. 2 – Character sketch of the man with the scar.)

5. The actual reason for the scar

1. (Refer to short note no. 3 - The narrator's perception of the man with the scar.)

III Answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think the man killed his wife? Do you think it can be justified?

When the man was asked the reason why he killed his wife, he replied that he loved her the most. It could be said that he loved his wife so much that he did not want her to live alone after his death and face questions from the society due to him. Also it can be said that he wanted her to live and die together with him. This kind of love for the wife can never be justified.

2. Why did the general allow the man to live?

The general was there to attend the execution of the man with the scar. Before shooting him, he was asked his last wish. He said that he wanted to meet his wife for the last time. When he saw his wife, he went running to her and hugged and kissed her. Then he cut her neck with a knife and killed her. He justified the killing by saying that he loved her a lot. The general was happily surprised after a momentary silence. He considered it highest expression of love and decided not to kill him.

3. Why did he not suffer for killing his wife?

He made killing of his wife out of love. It could be said that he loved his wife so much that he did not want her to live alone after his death and face questions from the society due to him. Also it can be said that he wanted her to live and die together with him. He did not suffer because his action was taken as the noble gesture of love and was exiled instead of death punishment.

4. What is the significance of the line 'I never liked it?'

This line is spoken by the narrator at the end of the story when he comes to know the actual reason of the scar. When his friend informed him about the bottle of ginger beer that burst while opening and gave a scar to the man, the narrator does not like the reason unlike his imagination. He imagined a respectable reason due to his profession but was disillusioned by the common and disliking reason. He said this because he disliked the reason as much as he disliked his scar from the beginning.

5. Do you think the general was justified in his actions throughout the story?

The general was living a life of poverty, loss, pain and pity that displayed no hope of gaining happiness. He was just living his life full of bad luck symbolized in his action of selling lottery tickets. The way none took interest in buying those tickets, his life was also left with no interest at all. The killing of wife out of love cannot be justified anyway. The general is living the afterlife as a punishment.

8. The Stolen Bacillus

Q.1 Answer the following in a sentence or two each:

1. How did the pale faced man gain access to the bacteriologist?

The pale faced man visited the bacteriologist with a note of introduction from one of his old friends. On his arrival, he showed keen interest in the living bacteria of cholera.

2. What did the bacteriologist show the pale faced man?

The bacteriologist showed the germs of cholera that were stained and killed in a tube. When the pale faced man inquired about the living bacteria of cholera, he showed him another tube that contained the living microbe of cholera.

3. What caused the bacteriologist to get distracted from the visitor?

When the bacteriologist and the visitor were involved talking about the cholera germ while observing the tube that contained it, the bacteriologist was called by his wife Minnie and he got distracted.

4. What did the visitor take from the laboratory?

The visitor stole the tube from the laboratory that contained the living germ of cholera in the absence of the bacteriologist.

5. What was the anarchist's plan?

The anarchist wanted to spread the bacteria of cholera in water and everywhere in the city by touching people and causing destruction of mankind.

Q.3 Answer the following:

1. Do you think the bacteriologist was a careless man?

No. The bacteriologist was not a careless man. When the stranger came to visit him with a note of introduction from his old friend, the bacteriologist was surprised to see a common man (not belonging to science) showing keen interest in the field of bacteria. When the stranger began inquiring about the effect of living cholera, the bacteriologist was sure of his intention. When the bacteriologist described in detail about how the bacteria could kill millions of people, the stranger's eyes shone and he replied if the small bacteria could bring such a huge destruction to the mankind, why would foolish anarchists use bombs. Thus, the bacteriologist was confirmed of his intention and dealt with him carefully and playfully.

2. What did the anarchist plan with the cholera germ?

The anarchist stole the living bacteria from the laboratory in the absence of the bacteriologist and wanted to bring mankind destruction in the city. He wanted to reach quickly to the area where there was water supply and break the little tube into it. He was imagining the destruction and feeling proud of him. He thought that his plan was brilliant. He made an artificial note of introduction to convince and get access of the bacteriologist. He got the chance to find and steal the

living cholera germ. He thought that the world had neglected him up to now and kept him under. So this was an idea that would bring him fame and success and he will seek attention of the people.

3. What if the cholera germ was real? What do you think would have happened?

If the cholera germ was real, it would have brought a huge destruction to the city and the mankind. The cholera germ is easily spread and infected through water. If it is mixed with water, it can cause heavy devastation to the world. This minute particles can increase and multiply bringing swift and terrible deaths full of pain and indignity. It can separate families from one another, children from mothers, cities from nation. The small particle of cholera was enough to bring heavy disaster to the whole globe.

4. Express the use of fear and suspense in the story.

H. G. Wells has brilliantly made use of fear and suspense in the story 'The Stolen Bacillus'. When the bacteriologist narrates proudly about the effect of cholera germ and describing minutely about how the small particle of cholera germ can take millions of lives and destroy cities bringing painful deaths, the reader is filled with terrible fear with the highest power of the smallest bacteria that not even visible without microscope.

The story is full of suspense from the beginning as it creates a mood of the bacteriologist being careless and describing the effects of living cholera to the anarchist. When the anarchist leaves his laboratory in his absence, the bacteriologist realizes that he had taken the tube of living cholera with him. He ran after him without wearing hat, coat and shoes in the heavy cold of London. He follows the cab of the anarchist being restless. When the anarchist drinks the broken tube of cholera and informs about it to the bacteriologist, he feels surprised and smiles. The reader has created this impression of the heavy destruction of the living cholera. It is only in the last two lines of the story, the suspense is revealed when the bacteriologist discloses the secret to his wife Minnie that the tube did not contain any cholera germ but other kind of microbe that changed the colour of man to blue.

5. Does the story fall under the genre of science fiction? If so, how?

Yes. The story falls under the sci-fi genre as it deals with the theme of science and imagination. H. G. Wells has brilliantly portrayed the theme of bio-terrorism by showing the huge power of small bacteria and how it can cause destruction to mankind. The story is interesting as it takes us in the world of science and reveals the dangerous aspects of bacteriology filling sense of fear and caution in the mind of a reader. The story turns out to be the finest example of science fiction.

II Short notes:

1. The Anarchist

The Anarchist is the one who rebels against establishment, system and rules and is always doubtful of the authority. In this story, the anarchist planned to destroy the mankind with his sadist idea of bio terrorism. He came with a note of introduction from an old friend to visit the bacteriologist. On his arrival, he started inquiring about the cholera germ very keenly. The bacteriologist was surprised witnessing a common man taking interest in the field of science. When he came to know that the bacteria was killed and stained, he provoked the bacteriologist to show him the living bacteria. The bacteriologist brought a little tube containing the living cholera germ and the anarchist started inquiring about its effect when mixed with water. When the bacteriologist narrated in detail the dangerous effects of the bacteria, he became happy. He stole the tube containing living cholera germ in the absence of the bacteriologist and ran in the cab to reach to the nearest water supply. When he was in the cab, his state of mind is disclosed. He thought that he was never taken seriously in his life and that no one paid attention to him. So this was the best plan to gain people's attention towards him. He was eager to see the dangerous effects that a bacterium was going to bring. Hence, we come across a man with dangerous plans to risk the mankind and thereby achieving sense of proud and revenge.

2. The bacteriologist's lie :

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intention. When the bacteriologist described in detail about how the bacteria could kill millions of people, the stranger's eyes shone and he replied if the small bacteria could bring such a huge destruction to the mankind, why would foolish anarchists use bombs. Thus, the bacteriologist was confirmed of his intention and dealt with him carefully and playfully.

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3. The stolen 'Cholera germ' and its effect :

The anarchist stole the living bacteria from the laboratory in the absence of the bacteriologist and wanted to bring mankind destruction in the city. He wanted to reach quickly to the area where there was water supply and break the little tube into it. He was imagining the destruction and feeling proud of him. He thought that his plan was brilliant. He made an artificial note of introduction to convince and get access of the bacteriologist. He got the chance to find and steal the living cholera germ. He thought that the world had neglected him up to now and kept him under. So this was an idea that would bring him fame and success and he will seek attention of the people.

But it was not a cholera germ. It was other bacterium that changed the color of animals and men to blue. If the cholera germ was real, it would have brought a huge destruction to the city and the mankind. The cholera germ is easily spread

and infected through water. If it is mixed with water, it can cause heavy devastation to the world. This minute particles can increase and multiply bringing swift and terrible deaths full of pain and indignity. It can separate families from one another, children from mothers, cities from nation. The small particle of cholera was enough to bring heavy disaster to the whole globe.

4. The role of Minnie as a commentator

The character of Minnie plays a significant part in the story. Minnie is the bacteriologist's wife. She has seen his husband working in the field of science for years and is now convinced that he has gone half mad due to this bacterium study. Minnie brings turning point in the story when she calls out her husband for few minutes and the anarchist gets the chance to steal the tube of cholera germ. When her husband ran after him without shoes, hat and coat in the heavy cold of winter, Minnie just keeps watching out the drama from the window. When she sees her husband's cab running after the anarchist's cab, she takes her husband's shoes, coat and hat and catches another cab to follow him. Thus, her character adds humour in the moments of fear and suspense. When she is informed by her husband about the lie, she doesn't feel surprised to her husband's actions and takes her back to home in the same cab she came.

5. The reason for the anarchist's actions

Please refer to short note no. 1 (The Anarchist)