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## [The Plumed Serpent](#)

[D. H. Lawrence](#)

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### Chapter 14 - Home To Sayula

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The morning came perfectly blue, with a freshness in the air and a blue luminousness over the trees and the distant mountains, and birds so bright, absolutely like new-opened buds sparking in the air.

Cipriano was returning to Guadalajara in the automobile, and Carlota was going with him. Kate would be rowed home on the lake.

To Ramón, Carlota was still, at times, a torture. She seemed to have the power still to lacerate him, inside his bowels. Not in his mind or spirit, but in his old emotional, passionate self: right in the middle of his belly, to tear him and make him feel he bled inwardly.

Because he had loved her, he had cared for her: for the affectionate, passionate, whimsical, sometimes elfish creature she had been. He had made much of her, and spoiled her, for many years.

But all the while, gradually, his nature was changing inside him. Not that he ceased to care for her, or wanted other women. That she could have understood. But inside him was a slow, blind imperative, urging him to cast his emotional and spiritual and mental self into the slow furnace, and smelt them into a new, whole being.

But he had Carlota to reckon with. She loved him, and that, to her, was the outstanding factor. She loved him, emotionally. And spiritually, she loved mankind. And mentally, she was sure she was quite right.

Yet, as time went on, he had to change. He had to cast that emotional self, which she loved, into the furnace, to be smelted down to another self.

And she felt she was robbed, cheated. Why couldn't he go on being gentle, good, and loving, and trying to make the whole world more gentle, good, and loving?

He couldn't, because it was borne in upon him that the world had gone as far as it could go in the good, gentle, and loving direction, and anything farther in that line meant perversity. So the time had come for the slow, great change to something else - what, he didn't know.

The emotion of love, and the greater emotion of liberty for mankind seemed to go hard and congeal upon him, like the shell on a chrysalis. It was the old caterpillar stage of Christianity evolving into something else.

But Carlota felt this was all she had, this emotion of love, for her husband, her children, for her people, for the animals and birds and trees of the world. It was her all, her Christ, and her Blessed Virgin. How could she let it go?

So she continued to love him, and to love the world, steadily, pathetically, obstinately, and devilishly. She prayed for him, and she engaged in works of charity.

But her love had turned from being the spontaneous flow, subject to the unforeseen comings and goings of the Holy Ghost, and had turned into will. She loved now with her WILL: as the white world now tends to do. She became filled with charity: that cruel kindness.'

Her winsomeness and her elfishness departed from her, she began to wither, she grew tense. And she blamed him, and prayed for him. Even as the spontaneous mystery died in her, the will hardened, till she was nothing but a will: a lost will.

She soon succeeded in drawing the life of her young boys all to herself, with her pathos and her subtle will. Ramón was too proud and angry to fight for them. They were her children. Let her have them.

They were the children of his old body. His new body had no children: would probably never have any.

'But remember,' he said to her, with southern logic, 'you do not love, save with your will. I don't like the love you have for your god: it is an assertion of your own will. I don't like the love you have for me: it is the same. I don't like the love you have for your children. If ever I see in them a spark of desire to be saved from it, I shall do my best to save them. Meanwhile have your love, have your will. But you know I dislike it. I dislike your insistence. I dislike your monopoly of one feeling, I dislike your charity works. I disapprove of the whole trend of your life. You are weakening and vitiating the boys. You do NOT love them, you are only putting your love will over them. One day they will turn and hate you for it. Remember I have said this to you.'

Doña Carlota had trembled in every fibre of her body, under the shock of this. But she went away to the chapel of the Annunciation Convent, and prayed. And, praying for his soul, she seemed to gain a victory over him, in the odour of sanctity. She came home in frail, pure triumph, like a flower that blooms on a grave: his grave.

And Ramón henceforth watched her in her beautiful, rather fluttering, rather irritating gentleness, as he watched his closest enemy.

Life had done its work on one more human being, quenched the spontaneous life and left only the will. Killed the god in the woman, or the goddess, and left only charity, with a will.

'Carlota,' he had said to her, 'how happy you would be if you could wear deep, deep mourning for me. - I shall not give you this happiness.'

She gave him a strange look from her hazel-brown eyes.

'Even that is in the hands of God,' she had replied, as she hurried away from him.

And now, on this morning after the first rains, she came to the door of his room as he was sitting writing. As yesterday, he was naked to the waist, the blue-marked sash

tied round his middle confined the white linen, loose trousers - like big, wide pyjama trousers crossed in front and tied round his waist.

'May I come in?' she said nervously.

'Do!' he replied, putting down his pen and rising.

There was only one chair - he was offering it her, but she sat down on the unmade bed, as if asserting her natural right. And in the same way she glanced at his naked breast - as if asserting her natural right.

'I am going with Cipriano after breakfast,' she said.

'Yes, so you said.'

'The boys will be home in three weeks.'

'Yes.'

'Don't you want to see them?'

'If they want to see me.'

'I am sure they do.'

'Then bring them here.'

'Do you think it is pleasant for me?' she said, clasping her hands.

'You do not make it pleasant for me, Carlota.'

'How can I? You know I think you are wrong. When I listened to you last night - there is something so beautiful in it all - and yet so monstrous. So MONSTROUS! - Oh! I think to myself: What is this man doing? This man of all men, who might be such a blessing to his country and mankind - '

'Well,' said Ramón. 'And what is he instead?'

'You know! You know! I can't bear it. - It ISN'T for you to save Mexico, Ramón. Christ has already saved it.'

'It seems to me not so.'

'He has! He has! And He made you the wonderful being that you are, so that you should WORK OUT the salvation, in the name of Christ and of love. Instead of which - '

'Instead of which, Carlota, I try something else. - But believe me, if the real Christ has not been able to save Mexico - and He hasn't - then I am sure the white Anti-Christ of charity, and socialism, and politics, and reform, will only succeed in finally destroying her. That, and that alone, makes me take my stand. - You, Carlota, with your charity works and your PITY: and men like Benito Juarez, with their Reform and their Liberty: and the rest of the benevolent people, politicians and socialists and so forth, surcharged with pity for living men, in their mouths, but really with hate - the hate of the materialist HAVE-NOTS for the materialist HAVES: they are the Anti-Christ. The old world, that's just the world. But the new world, that wants to save the People, this is the Anti- Christ. This is Christ with real poison in the communion cup. - And for this reason I step out of my ordinary privacy and individuality. I don't want everybody poisoned. About the great mass I don't care. But I don't want everybody poisoned.'

'How can you be so sure that you yourself are not a poisoner of the people? - I think you are.'

'Think it then. I think of you, Carlota, merely that you have not been able to come to your complete, final womanhood: which is a different thing from the old womanhoods.'

'Womanhood is always the same.'

'Ah, no, it isn't! Neither is manhood.'

'But what do you think you can do? What do you think this Quetzalcoatl nonsense amounts to?'

'Quetzalcoatl is just a living word, for these people, no more. All I want them to do is to find the beginnings of the way to their own manhood, their own womanhood. Men are not yet men in full, and women are not yet women. They are all half and half, incoherent, part horrible, part pathetic, part good creatures. Half arrived. - I mean you as well, Carlota. I mean all the world. - But these people don't assert any righteousness of their own, these Mexican people of ours. That makes me think that grace is still with them. And so, having got hold of some kind of clue to my own whole manhood, it is part of me now to try with them.'

'You will fail.'

'I shan't. Whatever happens to me, there will be a new vibration, a new call in the air, and a new answer inside some men.'

'They will betray you. - Do you know what even your friend Toussaint said of you? - Ramón Carrasco's future is just the past of mankind.'

'A great deal of it is the past. Naturally Toussaint sees that part.'

'But the boys don't believe in you. Instinctively, they disbelieve. Cyprian said to me, when I went to see him: "Is father doing any more of that silly talk about old gods coming back, mother? I wish he wouldn't. It would be pretty nasty for us if he got himself into the newspapers with it."'

Ramón laughed.

'Little boys,' he said, 'are like little gramophones. They only talk according to the record that's put into them.'

'YOU don't believe out of the mouths of babes and sucklings,' said Carlota bitterly.

'Why, Carlota, the babes and sucklings don't get much chance. Their mothers and their teachers turn them into little gramophones from the first, so what can they do, but say and feel according to the record the mother and teacher puts into them? Perhaps in the time of Christ babes and sucklings were not so perfectly exploited by their elders.'

Suddenly, however, the smile went off his face. He rose up, and pointed to the door.

'Go away,' he said in a low tone. 'Go away! I have smelt the smell of your spirit long enough.'

She sat on the bed, spell-bound, gazing at him with frightened, yet obstinate, insolent eyes, wincing from his outstretched arm as if he had threatened to strike her.

Then again the fire went out of his eyes, and his arm sank. The still, far-away look came on his face.

'What have I to do with it!' he murmured softly.

And taking up his blouse and his hat, he went silently out on to the terrace, departing from her in body and in soul. She heard the soft swish of his sandals. She heard the faint resonance of the iron door to the terrace, to which he alone had access. And she sat like a heap of ash on his bed, ashes to ashes, burnt out, with only the coals of her will still smouldering.

Her eyes were very bright, as she went to join Kate and Cipriano.

After breakfast, Kate was rowed home down the lake. She felt a curious depression at leaving the hacienda: as if, for her, life now was there, and not anywhere else.

Her own house seemed empty, banal, vulgar. For the first time in her life, she felt the banality and emptiness even of her own milieu. Though the Casa de las Cuentas was not purely her own milieu.

'Ah, Niña, how good! How good that you have come! Ay, in the night, how much water! Much! Much! But you were safe in the hacienda, Niña. Ah, how nice, that hacienda of Jamiltepec. Such a good man, Don Ramón - isn't he, Niña? He cares a great deal for his people. And the Señora, ah, how sympathetic she is!'

Kate smiled and was pleasant. But she felt more like going into her room and saying: For God's sake, leave me alone, with your cheap rattle.

She suffered again from the servants. Again that quiet, subterranean insolence against life, which seems to belong to modern life. The unbearable note of flippant jeering, which is underneath almost all modern utterance. It was underneath Juana's constant cry. - Niña! Niña!

At meal-times Juana would seat herself on the ground at a little distance from Kate, and talk, talk in her rapid mouthfuls of conglomerate words with trailing, wistful endings: and all the time watch her mistress with those black, unseeing eyes on which the spark of light would stir with the peculiar slow, malevolent jeering of the Indian.

Kate was not rich - she had only her moderate income.

'Ah, the rich people - !' Juana would say.

'I am not rich,' said Kate.

'You are not rich, Niña?' came the singing, caressive bird-like voice: 'Then, you are poor?' - this was indescribable irony.

'No, I am not poor either. I am not rich, and I am not poor,' said Kate.

'You are not rich, and you are not poor, Niña!' repeated Juana, in her bird-like voice, that covered the real bird's endless, vindictive jeering.

For the words meant nothing to her. To her, who had nothing, COULD never have anything, Kate was one of that weird class, the rich. And, Kate felt, in Mexico it was a crime to be rich, or to be classed with the rich. Not even a crime, really, so much as a freak. The rich class was a freak class, like dogs with two heads or calves with five legs. To be looked upon, not with envy, but with the slow, undying antagonism and curiosity which 'normals' have towards 'freaks.' The slow, powerful, corrosive Indian mockery, issuing from the lava-rock Indian nature, against anything which strives to be above the grey, lava-rock level.

'Is it true, Niña, that your country is through there?' Juana asked, jabbing her finger downward, towards the bowels of the earth.

'Not quite!' said Kate. 'My country is more there - ' and she slanted her finger at the earth's surface.

'Ah - that way!' said Juana. And she looked at Kate with a subtle leer, as if to say: what could you expect from people who came out of the earth sideways, like sprouts of camote!

'And is it true that over there, there are people with only one eye - here!' Juana punched herself in the middle of her forehead.

'No. That isn't true. That is just a story.'

'Ah!' said Juana. 'Isn't it true! Do you know? Have you been to the country where they are, these people?'

'Yes,' said Kate. 'I have been to all the countries, and there are no such people.'

'Verdad! Verdad!' breathed Juana awestruck. 'You have been to all the countries, and there are no such people! - But in your country, they are all gringos? Nothing but gringos?'

She meant, no real people and salt of the earth like her own Mexican self.

'They are all people like me,' said Kate coldly.

'Like you, Niña? And they all talk like you?'

'Yes! Like me.'

'And there are many?'

'Many! Many!'

'Look now!' breathed Juana, almost awestruck to think that there could be whole worlds of these freak, mockable people.

And Concha, that young, belching savage, would stare through her window-grating at the strange menagerie of the Niña and the Niña's white visitors. Concha, slapping tortillas, was real.

Kate walked down towards the kitchen. Concha was slapping the masa, the maize dough which she bought in the plaza at eight centavos a kilo.

'Niña!' she called in her raucous voice. 'Do you eat tortillas?'

'Sometimes,' said Kate.

'Eh?' shouted the young savage.

'Sometimes.'

'Here! Eat one now!' And Concha thrust a brown paw with a pinkish palm, and a dingy-looking tortilla, at Kate.

'Not now,' said Kate.

She disliked the heavy plasters that tasted of lime.

'Don't you want it? Don't you eat it?' said Concha, with an impudent, strident laugh. And she flung the rejected tortilla on the little pile.

She was one of those who won't eat bread: say they don't like it, that it is not food.

Kate would sit and rock on her terrace, while the sun poured in the green square of the garden, the palm-tree spread its great fans translucent at the light, the hibiscus dangled great double-red flowers, rosy red, from its very dark tree, and the dark green oranges looked as if they were sweating as they grew.

Came lunch time, madly hot: and greasy hot soup, greasy rice, splintery little fried fishes, bits of boiled meat and boiled egg-plant vegetables, a big basket piled with mangoes, papayas, zapotes - all the tropical fruits one did not want, in hot weather.

And the barefoot little Maria, in a limp, torn, faded red frock, to wait at table. She was the loving one. She would stand by Juana as Juana bubbled with talk, like dark bubbles in her mouth, and she would stealthily touch Kate's white arm; stealthily touch her again. Not being rebuked, she would stealthily lay her thin little black arm on Kate's shoulder, with the softest, lightest touch imaginable, and her strange, wide black eyes would gleam with ghostly black beatitude, very curious, and her childish, pock-marked, slightly imbecile face would take on a black, arch, beatitudinous look. Then Kate would quickly remove the thin, dark, pock-marked arm, the child would withdraw half a yard, the beatitudinous look foiled, but her very black eyes still shining exposed and absorbedly, in a rapt, reptilian sort of ecstasy.

Till Concha came to hit her with her elbow, making some brutal, savage remark which Kate could not understand. So the glozing black eyes of the child would twitch, and Maria would break into meaningless tears, Concha into a loud, brutal, mocking laugh, like some violent bird. And Juana interrupted her black and gluey flow of words to glance at her daughters and throw out some ineffectual remark.

The victim, the inevitable victim, and the inevitable victimizer.

The terrible, terrible hot emptiness of the Mexican mornings, the weight of black ennui that hung in the air! It made Kate feel as if the bottom had fallen out of her soul. She went out to the lake, to escape that house, that family.

Since the rains, the trees in the broken gardens of the lake front had flamed into scarlet, and poured themselves out into lavender flowers. Rose red, scarlet and lavender, quick, tropical flowers. Wonderful splashes of colour. But that was all: splashes! They made a splash, like fireworks.

And Kate thought of the blackthorn puffing white, in the early year, in Ireland, and hawthorn with coral grains, in a damp still morning in the lanes, and foxgloves by the bare rock, and tufts of ling and heather, and a ravel of harebells. And a terrible, terrible longing for home came over her. To escape from these tropical brilliancies and meaninglessnesses.

In Mexico, the wind was a hard draught, the rain was a sluice of water, to be avoided, and the sun hit down on one with hostility, terrific and stunning. Stiff, dry, unreal land, with sunshine beating on it like metal. Or blackness and lightning and crashing violence of rain.

No lovely fusion, no communion. No beautiful mingling of sun and mist, no softness in the air, never. Either hard heat or hard chill. Hard, straight lines and zigzags, wounding the breast. No soft, sweet smell of earth. The smell of Mexico, however subtle, suggested violence and things in chemical conflict.

And Kate felt herself filled with an anger of resentment. She would sit under a willow-tree by the lake, reading a Pio Baroja novel that was angry and full of No! No! No! - Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint! But she herself was so much angrier and fuller of repudiation than Pio Baroja. Spain cannot stand for No! as Mexico can.

The tree hung fleecy above her. She sat on the warm sand in the shadow, careful not to let even her ankles lie in the biting shine of the sun. There was a faint, old smell of urine. The lake was so still and filmy as to be almost invisible. In the near distance, some dark women were kneeling on the edge of the lake, dressed only in their long wet chemises in which they had bathed. Some were washing garments, some were pouring water over themselves, scooping it up in gourd scoops and pouring it over their black heads and ruddy-dark shoulders, in the intense pressure of the sunshine. On her left were two big trees, and a cane fence, and little straw huts of Indians. There the beach itself ended, and the little Indian plots of land went down to the lake-front.

Glancing around in the great light, she seemed to be sitting isolated in a dark core of shadow, while the world moved in inconsequential specks through the hollow glare. She noticed a dark urchin, nearly naked, marching with naked, manly solemnity down to the water's edge. He would be about four years old, but more manly than an adult man. With sex comes a certain vulnerability which these round-faced, black-headed, stiff-backed infant men have not got. Kate knew the urchin. She knew his tattered rag of a red shirt, and the weird rags that were his little man's white trousers. She knew his black round head, his stiff, sturdy march of a walk, his round eyes, and his swift,

scuttling run, like a bolting animal.

'What's the brat got?' she said to herself, gazing at the moving little figure within the great light.

Dangling from his tiny outstretched arm, held by the webbed toe, head down and feebly flapping its out-sinking wings, was a bird, a water-fowl. It was a black mud-chick with a white bar across the under-wing, one of the many dark fowl that bobbed in little flocks along the edge of the sun-stunned lake.

The urchin marched stiffly down to the water's edge, holding the upside-down bird, that seemed big as an eagle in the tiny fist. Another brat came scuttling after. The two infant men paddled a yard into the warm, lapping water, under the great light, and gravely stooping, like old men, set the fowl on the water. It floated, but could hardly paddle. The lift of the ripples moved it. The urchins dragged it in, like a rag, by a string tied to its leg.

So quiet, so still, so dark, like tiny, chubby little infant men, the two solemn figures with the rag of a bird!

Kate turned uneasily to her book, her nerves on edge. She heard the splash of a stone. The bird was on the water, but apparently the string that held it by the leg was tied to a stone. It lay wavering, a couple of yards out. And the two little he-men, with sober steadfastness and a quiet, dark lust, were picking up stones, and throwing them with the fierce Indian aim at the feebly fluttering bird: right down upon it. Like a little warrior stood the mite in the red rag, his arm upraised, to throw the stone with all his might down on the tethered bird.

In a whiff, Kate was darting down the beach.

'Ugly boys! Ugly children! Go! Go away, ugly children, ugly boys!' she said on one breath, with quiet intensity.

The round-headed dot gave her one black glance from his manly eyes, then the two of them scuttled up the beach into invisibility.

Kate went into the water, and lifted the wet, warm bird. The bit of coarse fibre-string hung from its limp, greenish, waterfowl's ankle. It feebly tried to bite her.

She rapidly stepped out of the water and stood in the sun to unfasten the string. The bird was about as big as a pigeon. It lay in her hand with the absolute motionlessness of a caught wild thing.

Kate stooped and pulled off her shoes and stockings. She looked round. No sign of life from the reed huts dark in the shadow of the trees. She lifted her skirts and staggered out barefoot in the hot shallows of the water, almost falling on the cruel stones under the water. The lake-side was very shallow. She staggered on and on, in agony, holding up her skirts in one hand, holding the warm, wet, motionless bird in the other. Till at last she was up to her knees. Then she launched the greeny-black bird, and gave it a little push to the uprearing expanse of filmy water, that was almost dim, invisible with the glare of light.

It lay wet and draggled on the pale, moving sperm of the water, like a buoyant rag.

'Swim then! Swim!' she said, trying to urge it away into the lake.

Either it couldn't or wouldn't. Anyhow it didn't.

But it was out of reach of those urchins. Kate struggled back from those stones, to her tree, to her shade, to her book, away from the rage of the sun. Silent with slow anger, she kept glancing up at the floating bird, and sideways at the reed huts of the Indians in the black shadow.

Yes, the bird was dipping its beak in the water, and shaking its head. It was coming to itself. But it did not paddle. It let itself be lifted, lifted on the ripples, and the ripples would drift it ashore.

'Fool of a thing!' said Kate nervously, using all her consciousness to make it paddle away into the lake.

Two companions, two black dots with white specks of faces, were coming out of the pale glare of the lake. Two mud-chicks swam busily forward. The first swam up and poked its beak at the inert bird, as if to say Hello! What's up? Then immediately it turned away and paddled in complete oblivion to the shore, its companion following.

Kate watched the rag of feathered misery anxiously. Would it not rouse itself? wouldn't it follow?

No! There it lay, slowly, inertly drifting on the ripples, only sometimes shaking its head.

The other two alert birds waded confidently, busily among the stones.

Kate read a bit more.

When she looked again, she could not see her bird. But the other two were walking among the stones, jauntily.

She read a bit more.

The next thing was a rather loutish youth of eighteen or so, in overall trousers, running with big strides towards the water, and the stiff little man-brat scuttling after with determined bare feet. Her heart stood still.

The two busy mud-chicks rose in flight and went low over the water into the glare of light. Gone!

But the lout in the big hat and overall trousers and those stiff Indian shoulders she sometimes hated so much was peering among the stones. She, however, was sure her bird had gone.

No! Actually no! The stiff-shoulder lout stooped and picked up the damp thing. It had let itself drift back.

He turned, dangling it like a rag from the end of one wing, and handed it to the man-brat. Then he stalked self-satisfied up the shore.

Ugh! and that moment how Kate hated these people: their terrible lowness, à terre, à terre. Their stiff broad American shoulders, and high chests, and above all, their walk, their prancing, insentient walk. As if some motor-engine drove them at the bottom of their back.

Stooping rather forward and looking at the ground so that he could turn his eyes sideways to her, without showing her his face, the lout returned to the shadow of the huts. And after him, diminutive, the dot of a man marched stiffly, hurriedly, dangling the wretched bird, that stirred very feebly, downwards from the tip of one wing. And from time to time turning his round, black-eyed face in Kate's direction, vindictively, apprehensively, lest she should swoop down on him again. Black, apprehensive male defiance of the great, white weird female.

Kate glared back from under her tree.

'If looks would kill you, brat, I'd kill you,' she said. And the urchin turned his face like clockwork at her from time to time, as he strutted palpitating towards the gap in the cane hedge, into which the youth had disappeared.

Kate debated whether to rescue the foolish bird again. But what was the good!

This country would have its victim. America would have its victim. As long as time lasts, it will be the continent divided between Victims and Victimizers. What is the good of trying to interfere!

She rose up in detestation of the flabby bird, and of the sulky- faced brat turning his full moon on her in apprehension.

Lumps of women were by the water's edge. Westwards, down the glare, rose the broken-looking villas and the white twin towers of the church, holding up its two fingers in mockery above the scarlet flame-trees and the dark mangoes. She saw the rather lousy shore, and smelt the smell of Mexico come out in the hot sun after the rains: excrement, human and animal dried in the sun on a dry, dry earth; and dry leaves; and mango leaves; and pure air with a little refuse-smoke in it.

'But the day will come when I shall go away,' she said to herself.

And sitting rocking once more on her veranda, hearing the clap-clap of tortillas from the far end of the patio, the odd, metallic noises of birds, and feeling the clouds already assembling in the west, with a weight of unborn thunder upon them, she felt she could bear it no more: the vacuity, and the pressure: the horrible uncreated elementality, so uncouth, even sun and rain uncouth, uncouth.

And she wondered over the black vision in the eyes of that urchin. The curious void.

He could not see that the bird was a real living creature with a life of its own. This, his race had never seen. With black eyes they stared out on an elemental world, where the elements were monstrous and cruel, as the sun was monstrous, and the cold, crushing black water of the rain was monstrous, and the dry, dry, cruel earth.

And among the monstrosity of the elements flickered and towered other presences: terrible uncouth things called gringos, white people, and dressed up monsters of rich people, with powers like gods, but uncouth, demonish gods. And uncouth things like birds that could fly and snakes that could crawl and fish that could swim and bite. An uncouth, monstrous universe of monsters big and little, in which man held his own by sheer resistance and guardedness, never, never going forth from his own darkness.

And sometimes, it was good to have revenge on the monsters that fluttered and strode. The monsters big and the monsters little. Even the monster of that bird, which had its own monstrous bird- nature. On this the mite could wreck the long human vengeance, and for once be master.

Blind to the creature as a soft, struggling thing finding its own fluttering way through life. Seeing only another monster of the outer void.

Walking forever through a menace of monsters, blind to the sympathy in things, holding one's own, and not giving in, nor going forth. Hence the lifted chests and the prancing walk. Hence the stiff, insentient spines, the rich physique, and the heavy, dreary natures, heavy like the dark-grey mud-bricks, with a terrible obstinate ponderosity and a dry sort of gloom.