

Therese Raquin

by Emile Zola

(Adapted book. Intermediate level)

Chapter 1. Vernon

The Raquin family lived in the town of Vernon, in Normandy. Madame Raquin had a small drapers shop in the town, where she worked hard for nearly twenty-five years. Madame Raquin's business was successful and she was able to save money. Then her husband died and Madame Raquin became a widow. A few years later, she decided to sell her business and have an easier life.

After she had sold the business, Madame Raquin had quite a lot of money. With some of this money, she was able to rent a little house with a garden. The house stood on a bank of the River Seine. The pretty garden went down to the river and the house was surrounded by fields and trees.

Madame Raquin was now more than fifty years old and she lived happily in her quiet little house with her son, Camille, and her niece, Therese. Camille Raquin was twenty years old and Therese was a few years younger. Camille Raquin had been ill all his life. He was small and thin, with a pale, blotchy face.

Camille's mother had spoiled her son when he was a child. She had worried about him and she had done everything for him. He had had many illnesses and she had looked after him with great care. She still treated him as if he was a sickly child.

Camille had often been too ill to go to school and he had not been well educated. His empty mind was as weak as his body. Camille's mother wanted her son to stay at home with her for ever. But he wanted to meet other people. When he was eighteen, Camille had got a job as a clerk in a small office. The boring work pleased the stupid young man.

Camille thought of nothing and no one but himself. His mother did everything for him, but he did not love her. He was now a selfish and vain young man. Camille was a man, but his body was as weak as a

child's. His pale face, with its thin red beard, always had a stupid, angry expression. But Madame Raquin's feelings for her son had never changed. She had loved the sickly child. Now she loved the selfish, stupid, young man. This love made Camille angry with his mother and he was often rude to her. Madame Raquin did not care. Her love for her son was the most important thing in her life. She would always look after Camille.

Therese Raquin was Madame Raquin's niece. Therese's father had been a captain in the French army. He had spent many years fighting in North Africa. In Algeria, he had met and married Therese's mother, a beautiful Algerian woman.

Sixteen years ago, Madame Raquin had been surprised when her brother had come to her house in Vernon. He was holding a two-year-old child in his arms.

'Here is Therese, my little daughter,' Captain Degans had said to his sister. 'The poor child's mother is dead, so I've brought my Therese home to France, and to you. I must soon return to the army in Algeria. There is no one to look after my daughter there. You are Therese's aunt and I'm asking you to help me. I'm giving my Therese to you. Please will you look after her?'

Madame Raquin smiled. 'I've always wanted a daughter,' she said. 'Leave the dear little girl with me. I shall love her as I love my own child. She can take my married name - Raquin. Your Therese and my Camille will grow up together in a safe and happy home.'

Therese grew up strong and healthy, but her aunt treated the girl like her sickly cousin. Madame Raquin kept both children in warm rooms. Sometimes she made Therese take Camille's medicine.

'Therese,' Madame Raquin often said to her niece, 'Camille is ill again. Sit quietly by the fire so that Camille can sleep.'

Therese had grown into an unusual-looking young woman. She had thick black hair and large dark eyes. Her face was pale and she had a long nose and pale thin lips. Sometimes, eighteen-year-old Therese looked very plain. But at other times she looked very beautiful.

Every evening, Camille came home from his office to eat the meal that his mother had made for him. Then the young man sat looking at books until it was time to sleep.

Therese never read books and Camille thought that she was stupid. The two young people almost never spoke to each other.

Every evening, Therese would sit calmly and silently. The young woman wanted to run and dance, but she did not. Sometimes she sewed some clothes. Sometimes she did nothing. Sometimes Therese just sat looking at the flames of the fire. Francois, Madame Raquin's big tabby cat, sat and stared at the fire too.

Madame Raquin was pleased with her quiet, family life. She was happy and cheerful. Every evening, she did her sewing and made careful plans for the family's future.

'I'm so pleased that your father brought you to us,' Madame Raquin said to Therese one evening. 'And I'll be very happy when you and Camille marry. That is my dearest wish, Therese. And I know that you will be happy together. But we'll wait until you are twenty-one, my dear.'

Therese nodded, but she said nothing. She looked across the room at Camille, but he had fallen asleep.

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On warm days in the summer, Therese sometimes went down to the river. She lay in the long grass on the river bank. She looked like a cat who is waiting to catch a mouse.

Therese loved to feel the heat of the sun. She loved to watch the water of the river and listen to the sound that it made. Therese felt more alive. But she kept all these strong feelings to herself. No one ever knew her thoughts.

In the Raquins' little house by the fast-flowing river, every day was the same. Every day was quiet and peaceful.

Camille sometimes became angry with his mother. She was always worried about his health. Sometimes on summer evenings, Camille would take Therese walking by the river. He held her hand and

pulled her along the path. He laughed at her and tried to make her angry. Sometimes he pushed her off the path.

One evening, Camille pushed his cousin so hard that she fell to the ground. Therese jumped up as quickly as a cat. Her eyes were bright with anger and she hit Camille hard with her fists. The sickly young man fell to the ground and looked up at the girl in surprise. He was very frightened. He never tried to make Therese angry again.

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Soon Therese was twenty-one and it was time for her to marry Camille. Madame Raquin spoke kindly to her young niece when they were alone.

'You don't remember your father or your mother, my dear,' Madame Raquin said. 'Your father was a brave soldier and he fought and died for his country. I never knew the lady who became his wife. But she must have been beautiful, like you, Therese.'

'Your father and mother only had a short time together,' Madame Raquin went on. 'I hope that you and my son will be married for many happy years!'

Therese stood up and kissed her aunt. But the strange, quiet girl did not say a word.

And so Camille and Therese were married. On the night of her wedding, Therese did not go to her own bedroom.

She walked quietly into her cousin's bedroom. That was the only way that her life changed.

The next morning, Camille walked downstairs as calmly as usual. He took no notice of his wife. Therese behaved as she had always done. She was silent and her face did not show her thoughts or feelings.

Chapter 2. The Passage du Pont-Neuf

A week after his marriage, Camille told his mother about his plans for the future.

'Until now, you have planned my life for me,' Camille said rudely. 'I've taken all the medicines that you have given me and I've never

complained. I'm a married man now, but you still treat me like a child. I want things to be different. There's going to be a change in all our lives. I'm going to live in Paris. You and Therese are coming with me!

Madame Raquin was very surprised. 'My dear Camille, I've lived in Vernon all my life!' she said. 'I've worked hard and made a good home for us here in the country. I don't want to live in Paris.'

'But I do,' Camille replied. 'That is what I want. We will leave Vernon at the end of the month.'

No one asked Therese what she wanted.

Madame Raquin did not sleep well that night. But she thought carefully about her son's words. She wanted Camille to be happy. Then she would be happy too. Soon Madame Raquin had a plan of her own.

'This is what we will do,' she said cheerfully the next morning at breakfast. 'I'll go to Paris tomorrow. I'll look for a small drapers shop that we can rent. Therese and I can work in the shop. It will keep us busy. You can work, if you want to, Camille, or you can just enjoy yourself in Paris.'

'I'll get a job,' Camille said. He wanted to be a clerk in a big, important office. He wanted to talk to other young men.

Madame Raquin went to Paris the next day. A friend had told her about a drapers shop in the centre of the city. The shop was in a little arcade called the Passage du Pont-Neuf.

Paris was big and noisy. Madame Raquin was frightened by the busy streets, the big shops and the crowds of people. At last she found the Passage du Pont-Neuf.

The little arcade was narrow and dark. And the little drapers shop was dark too. But Madame Raquin felt safe there and the business was being sold very cheaply. The shop's rent was not expensive and the rooms above the shop could be rented cheaply too. Madame Raquin decided that her little family could live very comfortably in the Passage du Pont-Neuf.

By the time that Madame Raquin got back to Vernon, she was feeling very cheerful and excited. She was happy to have her own business again and every night she talked about her plans.

'Oh, my dear Therese, we'll all be so happy living in that little arcade,' Madame Raquin said. 'It's a quiet place, but it's in the centre of Paris. There are three fine rooms and a kitchen above the shop. The shop itself will keep us both busy! We'll arrange our goods in the very best ways. And our name will be painted on the front of the shop in red letters: Raquin - Drapers.'

'The arcade is always full of people,' Madame Raquin went on. 'We'll have lots of customers all day. We'll never be bored!'

As Madame Raquin talked to her niece, she forgot that the shop was small and dark. As usual, Therese said nothing.

She waited to see the place herself.

Not long after this conversation, the Raquins left their peaceful home in Vernon and went to live in Paris.

The Passage du Pont-Neuf was a dark, narrow arcade between two high black walls. The arcade was about two metres wide and thirty metres long. It was paved with damp, cracked stones and its glass roof was black with dirt. During the day, very little light came through the roof of the arcade. In the evening, the narrow passage was lit by three square lanterns. The lanterns gave a strange yellow light. When the wind blew, the lanterns made shadows that moved along the walls.

Narrow shops were built along the left wall of the arcade. These little shops were dark and damp. The shop windows were made of squares of dirty green glass. It was almost impossible to see the goods - cheap clothes, old books, toys and paper - that were inside the shops. On the right wall of the arcade there were narrow cupboards. Many kinds of different goods lay on the dirty brown shelves of these cupboards.

No one walked slowly through the Passage du Pont-Neuf. No one went there to enjoy shopping. Servants and tradespeople hurried through the passage. They always wanted to get somewhere else quickly. Their shoes made a loud noise on the stone paving.

When Therese went into the drapers shop for the first time, she felt sick and ill. The dark, damp place felt like an open grave. The girl stood and looked at everything in the narrow little shop. There was a

counter on one side and a spiral staircase on the other. All round the walls, there were green boxes, and cupboards with glass doors.

Therese went slowly up the spiral staircase to the rooms above the shop. There was a sitting-room, two bedrooms and a very small kitchen. In the sitting-room, there was a stove and a table, with four chairs standing round it. Everything was old and dirty.

Therese walked into each room and then sat down in despair. Her body was stiff with shock and horror. She felt cold and dead inside. She wanted to cry, but she could not. This awful place - this narrow shop and these few small rooms - was her new home. She was going to live here for the rest of her life!

Madame Raquin knew that she had made a mistake. She knew that she should not have rented the shop. But she tried to speak cheerfully to Camille and Therese.

'The arcade looks dark because the sun isn't shining today,' she said. 'And the shop's dirty now, but we can soon clean it. Choose some new wallpaper for the rooms upstairs, Therese. We can get new curtains and carpets too. We'll put flowers in every room, my dear!'

'Why should we do that?' Therese said sadly. 'We'll be comfortable as we are. We don't have to change anything.'

'The place is all right,' Camille said to his mother. 'We'll only be upstairs in the evenings. I'll be at my office all day. You and Therese will be busy in the shop all day. You won't be bored.'

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Camille looked forward to leaving the Passage du Pont-Neuf every morning. He was going to work in a warm and comfortable office every day. Every evening, he would come home, eat his dinner and go to bed early.

Madame Raquin arranged all the furniture in the rooms above the shop. Then she cleaned the shop. It was a month before Camille got a job. But while he was looking for work, he stayed away from the shop all day. He did not return home until the evening. At last he found a job as a clerk with the Orleans Railway Company. He was going to earn one hundred francs a month. The young man was delighted.

Camille left home at eight o'clock every morning. He enjoyed the long walk to his office, along the banks of the River Seine. He enjoyed his time away from the shop, his mother and Therese. Everything in Paris pleased the stupid young man. In the evenings, he walked very slowly back to the Passage du Pont-Neuf.

Madame Raquin and Therese sat behind the counter of the dark little shop, day after day. Madame Raquin often fell asleep and the tabby cat, Francois, slept on the counter beside her. Therese sat quietly, without moving. Her pale face became paler and paler. She never complained.

Cheap clothes, women's hats and stockings were for sale in the little drapers shop. There were piles of green wool. There were knitting-needles, boxes of buttons and cheap ribbons. Madame Raquin tried to arrange all of the goods in an interesting way, but business was bad. There were not many customers and the shop did not make much money.

Therese smiled sadly when she served the poor girls who were their customers. Madame Raquin talked to everyone cheerfully. The customers always wanted Madame Raquin to serve them.

Days passed and every day was the same. And for Therese Raquin, every morning was the start of another boring day in the Passage du Pont-Neuf. The cheap goods in the shop became damp and dirty. Therese saw the dark, sad days going on and on to the end of her life. Every evening, she sat silently upstairs in the sitting-room. At ten o'clock, Madame Raquin went downstairs to lock the door of the shop. When she came up the stairs again, she kissed her son and his wife, and went happily into her bedroom. Francois, the cat, went to sit on his chair in the kitchen. Then the family went to bed.

Therese followed Camille into their bedroom. Every evening, she walked across the room and opened the window.

She stood there for a minute, looking out at the high, black wall. Then she closed the shutters and turned towards her husband and their cold bed.

One day in the week was different from the others. Every Thursday evening, the Raquins had visitors. Thursday evening was the most important time of the week. The Raquins and their visitors played dominoes, talked and drank tea. The visitors left late in the evening and the Raquins did not go to bed until eleven o'clock.

Their visitors were always the same people. The first was Old Michaud. He had known Madame Raquin in Vernon and he had been the Police Commissioner there. He was now retired and living in Paris. One wet day, soon after they had moved to Paris, Michaud had met Madame Raquin outside her shop. He was soon visiting the Raquin family every Thursday.

After a few weeks, Michaud brought his son Olivier, who worked in the police department, to the drapers shop. Olivier was a tall, thin young man, about thirty years old. Suzanne, Olivier's pale little wife, came with him.

Grivet was a friend of Camille. He worked for the Orleans Railway Company with Camille. Grivet was an important man in the railway's office and Camille respected him. Camille hoped that, one day, he would get Grivet's job.

Every Thursday evening was the same. At seven o'clock, Madame Raquin went into the sitting-room and lit the fire in the stove. Then she put a big lamp in the middle of the table. Beside the lamp, Camille put the box of dominoes. Chairs were moved from along the walls and put round the table. Then Madame Raquin prepared the cups and saucers for tea.

At eight o'clock exactly, Old Michaud and Grivet met outside the little shop and went inside. Then everyone went up the spiral staircase to the sitting-room, sat down round the table, and waited for Olivier Michaud and his wife. They always arrived late.

When all the guests were in the sitting-room, Madame Raquin gave everyone some tea. Then Camille took the dominoes out of the box, put them on the table, and the game began.

The only sound came from the dominoes as they were moved about on the table. At the end of every game, the players talked about it for a few minutes. Then there was silence as the next game began.

Thursday evenings were terrible for Therese. She hated their visitors and she hated playing dominoes. Therese was so unhappy that she played the game badly. This made Camille angry with her.

Therese would often pick up Francois, the big tabby cat, and hold him in her arms. Sometimes Therese said that she had a headache and could not play. Then she would sit, half-asleep, with her elbow on the table and her hand against her face.

Therese stared at the people round the table and their ugly faces made her half-mad. She could see them clearly in the yellow light of the lamp. Old Michaud's face was pale, with red blotches on it. He was a very old man, and in the light of the lamp, he looked half-dead. Grivet's stupid face was narrow and he had round eyes and thin lips. Olivier had a small head on his long, stiff body. Suzanne's face, with its small eyes and pale lips, was soft and white.

'None of these people seem alive,' thought Therese. 'They are like ghosts.'

Therese found it difficult to breathe in the quiet room and this terrified her. She sometimes had a feeling that they were all buried together, deep under the ground.

There was a little bell on the door of the shop. It rang every time that a customer entered. Every Thursday evening, Therese hoped that a customer would come into the shop. She listened for the sound of the shop-bell. When she heard it, she would run downstairs and stay in the shop for as long as possible. The damp air of the shop cooled the heat of her face and hands. She would sit down behind the counter in her usual place, and forget everything.

Camille was angry when his wife left the sitting-room. After a time, he would go to the top of the stairs and shout down to Therese.

'What are you doing down there?' he would say. 'The customer went a long time ago. Come up at once! Grivet has just won another game and we need you up here!'

Then Therese would get up slowly and return to her place at the table in the sitting-room. She would pick up the tabby cat and hold him in her arms. At eleven o'clock, the four visitors would leave the Passage du Pont-Neuf. Then Madame Raquin would lock the door of the shop and walk slowly back up the stairs.

Chapter 3. A New Visitor

One Thursday evening, Camille returned from his office with a tall young man who had a black beard and thick black hair.

As usual, Madame Raquin and Therese were sitting in the shop.

'Well, Mother,' Camille said. 'Do you recognize this fine young man? You used to give him bread and butter when we lived in Vernon!'

Madame Raquin looked at the man and shook her head.

'No, Camille. I don't know this gentleman,' she said.

Therese stared at the visitor too.

'Well, it's a long time since you saw him,' Camille said with a laugh. 'It was twenty years ago. This is little Laurent, the son of Old Laurent, the farmer. Laurent used to go to school with me in Vernon. He came to our house nearly every day!'

'I'm sorry that I didn't recognize you!' Madame Raquin said to the visitor and she smiled. 'I'm very pleased to see you, Laurent. Welcome to our home. I can't call you "little Laurent" now. You are too tall! Sit down and tell me where you met Camille.'

'I work at the Orleans Railway Station, here in Paris,' Laurent replied with a smile. He sat down and looked around him happily.

'We both work for the same company - the Orleans Railway Company - but I didn't see Laurent until today,' said Camille. 'The office is very big and many people work there.'

'Laurent's father sent him away to a school to study law,' Camille went on. 'But Laurent didn't want to be a lawyer. So then he studied art and painted pictures instead. Now he's got a job at the railway company. Laurent is doing very well there. He earns one thousand five hundred francs a month!'

Camille turned to Laurent. 'You must have dinner with us,' he said.

'I'd be delighted to dine with you,' Laurent replied.

Madame Raquin went upstairs to cook the dinner and Laurent sat in the shop with Camille and Therese.

Therese stared at Laurent without speaking. Camille's friend was tall and very powerful. His body looked firm and strong. He did not look like her weak, pale husband. Therese looked down at Laurent's big hands, then up to his short, broad neck. She looked at the young man's round, healthy face. She looked at his red smiling lips and his thick black hair. Laurent was the first real man that Therese had ever seen. Her body shook with excitement.

'You must remember Therese, my wife,' Camille said. 'She's my little cousin. She used to play with us in Vernon!'

'I recognized her immediately,' Laurent said, looking into Therese's eyes.

Therese felt that Laurent could see into her heart. She smiled, stood up quickly and went upstairs to help her aunt.

At dinner, Camille asked his friend about his life in Paris.

'Well, at the beginning, I told my father that I wanted to study law,' Laurent said with a smile. 'He paid me an allowance of one hundred francs a month. But I soon stopped studying law and I began to paint instead. I had met a friend who was an artist. I had been to school with this artist, who now had a studio in Paris. I was much happier when I was painting. But then my father found out that I wasn't studying law. He refused to give me any more money.'

Madame Raquin went into the kitchen to prepare tea. Camille and Therese stared at Laurent in surprise.

'So did you get work as an artist?' Camille asked.

Laurent laughed. 'No. I'm afraid that I didn't,' he said. 'But I enjoyed myself for a time. I stayed all day in my friend's studio. There were always lots of beautiful models there. My favourite model was a woman with long red hair and a fine body.'

Camille's eyes and mouth were now wide open. 'Did the model take some of her clothes off?' he asked.

'Yes, she did,' Laurent said. He looked at Therese as he spoke. Her face had become extremely pale.

'But my life as an artist wasn't successful,' Laurent went on. 'I couldn't earn enough money by painting. So I got a job in the railway office as a clerk. It's easy work and I make enough money to buy food. I'm glad that I'm not a farmer, like my father! I haven't seen the old man for years.'

Laurent was lazy and selfish. He liked to eat good food, do very little work and make love to women. Then he was completely happy. He tried not to smile as he looked at the surprised faces of Camille and Therese.

Therese's eyes were like two black holes in her pale face. Her mouth was open and she sat completely still. She was listening to every word that Laurent said.

'I've got an idea!' Laurent said to Camille suddenly. 'I'll paint your portrait. I'll come here for two hours every evening. The painting will be finished in a week.'

Camille was delighted. 'You can have dinner with us every evening, Laurent!' he said. 'I'll curl my hair and wear my best coat for the portrait.'

It was now eight o'clock and the Thursday visitors soon arrived to play dominoes. Camille introduced Laurent to Grivet and the Michauds and then they all sat down round the table. Laurent was careful. He behaved well. He laughed and told stories. He was soon everyone's friend.

The shop-bell rang once, but Therese did not leave her chair. She sat with the others, playing and talking, until eleven o'clock.

Therese did not look at Laurent again, but she felt uncomfortable and afraid. Laurent took no notice of her.

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From that day, Laurent visited the Raquins every evening. The Raquins' sitting-room was warm and he always dined with them.

The young man was delighted. It was good luck that he had met Camille again. Laurent lived in a very small attic at the top of an old house. The room was cold and he had very little money for food. He usually spent the evenings sitting in a cheap cafe, smoking a cigar and drinking one glass of coffee with brandy.

Now Laurent had a new home and a comfortable place to sit every evening. He ate dinner with the Raquins and enjoyed their company until ten o'clock. Then he walked slowly home to his little attic.

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One evening, Laurent brought his easel and paints to the Passage du Pont-Neuf. He prepared his canvas and started to work on his portrait of Camille. Laurent had decided to paint the picture in Camille and Therese's bedroom.

'Good strong light comes through the window there,' he said. 'The sitting-room is too dark.'

Laurent was a very bad artist. He could not draw well. It took him three days to draw Camille's head. Then, on the fourth day, Laurent began to put paint on the portrait. He put spots and short lines of paint all over the canvas. Laurent's painting was worse than his drawing. The paints that he put on the canvas soon all became a dirty green colour.

The Raquins had never seen an artist working before. They thought that Laurent was very clever. Camille was very pleased with the portrait and he did not know how bad it was.

Therese stayed close to Laurent all the time. Every evening, she went into the bedroom and watched the young man working. She sat very still and did not say a word. Laurent noticed all this and now he began to think about his future.

'Therese is a young woman who needs a lover,' Laurent said to himself on his way home one evening. 'Her husband doesn't please her. She's a passionate woman - she has very strong feelings. Her eyes show this. And she's bored in that shop. She likes me. One day, she'll find a lover. Perhaps that lover should be me. I'll kiss her and see what happens.'

Laurent walked on and then he thought again.

'Therese Raquin is not beautiful and I don't love her,' he said to himself. 'But she might be an interesting lover. However, I must be careful. The Passage du Pont-Neuf is an awful place to live. But I enjoy going there in the evenings. The sitting-room is warm and comfortable and Madame Raquin is a good cook. I don't want to lose all that. I must think carefully before I do anything.'

Finally, Laurent made a decision - he would try to seduce Therese.

'I'll wait until we're alone,' he said to himself, 'and then I'll kiss her. She won't tell her husband. But if Camille finds out, I can knock him down and leave!'

Several evenings passed, but Laurent could not kiss Therese. He was never alone with her.

At last the portrait was finished and Laurent and the Raquin family looked at it together. The picture was very bad, but the Raquins did not understand that. Laurent had made the painting of Camille's face look very strange. The face was covered in green and brown paint and the mouth was twisted. It looked like the face of a drowned man.

But stupid Camille was delighted. 'You've made me look very unusual,' the vain young man said to Laurent. 'Now I'm going to buy two bottles of champagne and we can all have a drink together!'

He ran downstairs and out of the shop. A few minutes later, the shop-bell rang and Madame Raquin went to serve a customer in the shop.

Therese stayed in the bedroom, looking at the portrait of Camille. Laurent was collecting his brushes and paints. Seconds passed. Suddenly, the young man turned round. Therese was standing very close behind him.

Therese and Laurent looked at each other for a few moments. Their faces were only inches apart. Then Laurent pulled Therese towards him. He put his hand in her hair and pulled her head back as he kissed her hard on the lips.

At first, she fought him. She tried to push him away and hit him. Then suddenly she stopped fighting him and fell to the floor. Neither of

them said a word. Their love-making was silent and brutal. And it changed their lives for ever.

Chapter 4. Love

From the evening that the painting was finished, Laurent and Therese made love whenever they were alone. They felt as if they had been lovers for years. Therese made careful plans. She could not leave the house, so Laurent came to the Passage du Pont-Neuf.

'We can meet here, in my bedroom,' Therese said calmly. Then she pointed at a door across the corridor. 'Behind that door, there are some stone stairs. They lead down to a little alley which goes into the arcade. I'll leave that door open for you.'

'When shall I come?' Laurent asked. He was surprised by Therese's behaviour. She was calm and careful. She knew exactly what to do.

'You must leave your office in the afternoon,' Therese said to her lover. 'Madame Raquin will be serving in the shop and Camille will be at work. Be careful when you go into the alley. No one must see you. Come tomorrow.'

The next day, Laurent told his manager at the railway office that he had to leave work for two hours. He walked to the Passage du Pont-Neuf and went towards the drapers shop. When no one was looking, Laurent walked quickly into the alley behind the shop. He ran up the stone stairs.

The door opened and the light of a lamp shone onto Therese, who was standing at the top of the stairs. She was wearing only her white petticoats. Her thick black hair was tied behind her head.

As Laurent stepped inside, she shut the door and put her arms around him. She smelt of violets.

Laurent was amazed. He had never seen Therese like this before. She was strong and beautiful. Her eyes shone with the madness of love and her body shone in the light.

From their first kiss, Therese had shown Laurent how passionate she was. No one had taught her how to be a lover, but she understood how to love a man.

Therese was a married woman, but her husband was weak and cold. Camille had no desire for his wife. Now, with her strong and passionate lover, Therese's mind and body were awake for the first time.

Laurent had never known a woman like Therese. She almost frightened him. When Laurent left Therese that afternoon, he walked like a drunken man.

Laurent decided that he would not visit Therese again. It was too dangerous. Then he thought of her holding out her arms to him and welcoming him to her bed. He knew that he could not keep away from her. From that day, Therese became part of Laurent's life.

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Therese was completely happy and she had no fear. She told Laurent all her thoughts. She told him everything that had ever happened to her.

'I've been unhappy all my life,' Therese said one day. 'I was a strong and healthy child. But I was treated like that weak, sickly Camille. My aunt made me drink his medicine. I slept in the same room as him.'

'Madame Raquin has been kind to me,' Therese went on. 'She looked after me, when my father could not. But I wanted fresh air, not hot rooms. I wanted to run and dance and shout. But I had to sit quietly all day, because of Camille. I liked the little house by the river at Vernon. I liked the river too. It was strong and powerful, like you.'

'My mother was Algerian,' she continued. 'I'm sure that she was a passionate woman. I am passionate too. You know that now. But the Raquins turned me into a silent, stupid thing. Sometimes I was mad with anger. I often thought about throwing myself into the river. I thought about running away from Vernon. But I did nothing. The Raquins' kindness almost destroyed me. But then we came to this dark, damp hole. We came to this awful shop. My mind was dead.'

Therese was so excited, that she had begun to shout.

'Don't make so much noise!' Laurent whispered. 'Madame Raquin will hear you!'

Therese laughed, but she stopped talking for a moment and walked about the room. Then she went up to Laurent and held his strong hands in her two small hands.

'Why did I marry Camille?' she said. 'He has never been a real husband to me. He has never loved me like you do. I was afraid of you at first. I could not show my feelings. I waited for you to do something. But now I have you - and I love you! My heart is alive. My mind is alive. I'm alive! Madame Raquin can come up to this room. I don't care!'

Laurent was not very happy about his visits to the Passage du Pont-Neuf. But he returned every afternoon, week after week. He had to see Therese and make love to her. He could not stay away.

Then, one day Madame Raquin came up to the bedroom when Laurent was there.

Therese had been upstairs for three hours and her aunt was worried about her. Laurent heard the old lady coming up the spiral staircase. He jumped off the bed and started to pick up his clothes.

Therese laughed. She pushed him and his clothes onto the end of the bed.

Then she threw the bedclothes and her petticoats on top of him.

'Stay there and don't move,' she said.

Therese got back onto the bed, just as the door opened. She covered her body with the bedclothes and pretended to be asleep.

'Therese, my dear, are you ill?' Madame Raquin asked her niece kindly.

Therese opened her eyes slowly and turned her head towards her aunt.

'I have a terrible headache,' she said in a quiet voice. 'Please leave me. I want to sleep.'

Madame Raquin left the room without saying another word. The lovers laughed and kissed each other.

'You see, we've nothing to fear,' Therese said. 'No one can see what is happening between us. They cannot see how we love each other!'

On another afternoon, Francois the cat was with them. He sat in the middle of the bedroom and watched the lovers with his bright green eyes.

'Look at Francois,' Therese said. 'Do you think that he understands? Does he know that we are lovers? Perhaps he'll tell Camille everything this evening!'

'Cats can't speak,' Laurent said quickly. He did not like cats and he was a little afraid of Francois.

'How can you be sure?' Therese said with a laugh. 'Think of all the stories that Francois could tell about us! He watches us with his big green eyes. He has seen us make love many times.'

Laurent looked at the cat and felt afraid.

'Look, this is what Francois will do,' Therese said. She stood up and held up her hands. She made the noise of a cat.

'He'll stand on his back legs and point at us with his feet like this,' Therese said. 'Then he'll say, "Laurent and Therese were kissing each other in the bedroom this afternoon. They thought that I did not understand, but I did. Put them into prison at once!"'

Therese laughed again and moved her body like a cat. Francois stared at her with his green eyes and Laurent thought that the cat was smiling.

Laurent got up quickly, opened the door, and put the cat into the corridor. He was afraid of the animal and sometimes a little afraid of Therese too. He did not understand her.

* * *

Laurent thought that his life was perfect. Every afternoon, he made love with Therese in the bedroom above the drapers shop. Every evening, he left work with his good friend Camille, and walked back to the Passage du Pont-Neuf.

Madame Raquin always greeted Laurent cheerfully. She treated him as her own son and gave him a good dinner every day.

In the evenings, Laurent talked to Therese politely, but she never smiled at him when they all sat together.

Laurent was now the wife's lover, the husband's friend and the mother's spoilt child. He had everything that he wanted and he was part of the family too. He did not think about the future - he was enjoying himself too much.

Therese was nervous about her affair with Laurent. But she was used to hiding her feelings. She had been hiding her feelings for most of her life. She knew that she and Laurent were doing wrong. But she enjoyed deceiving Camille and his mother. When Laurent was in the house, Therese's face became plain and cold. She spoke to her lover rudely. But when Laurent was not in the house, Therese could show her happiness. She sometimes sang and she often laughed.

Therese bought flowers and put them in her bedroom. She put new wallpaper on the walls. She asked her aunt for new carpets and new curtains. She wanted fine new furniture.

She did all these things to please Laurent.

'Camille and Laurent are good friends,' thought Madame Raquin. 'I feel as if I have two sons, not one.'

Therese's face was calm and still. But her mind was full of thoughts of her lover and their afternoons of love-making. The young woman laughed to herself. She was happy that she was deceiving her husband and her aunt.

When Camille and Madame Raquin went downstairs, Therese jumped up from her chair and kissed her lover on his lips. When she heard the Raquins coming back to the sitting-room, she sat down again. Her face became completely still and calm once again.

On Thursday evenings, Therese talked to the visitors and played dominoes cheerfully. Laurent behaved well too and the others all enjoyed his company.

As the visitors got ready to leave, Therese and Laurent whispered together. They made plans for their next meeting. Sometimes they were alone for a few seconds and she kissed him.

This life of passion and calm lasted for eight months. Therese was never bored. She no longer felt cold and dead inside. And Laurent was happy and well-fed.

Chapter 5. Saint-Ouen

One afternoon, Laurent's manager spoke to the young man angrily.

'You've been spending too much time away from the office,' the manager said. 'We pay clerks to work, not to go out every afternoon. You must stay in the office all day. If you leave your desk again, you'll lose your job.'

Laurent was going to see Therese that afternoon, but he did not want to lose his job. He needed the money. He knew that his father would not give him an allowance now. Laurent did not move from his desk all day.

In the evening, he went quickly to the Passage du Pont-Neuf. Therese looked at him angrily, but he was not able to speak to her alone for some time. When Laurent was alone with Therese for a few minutes, he spoke to her quietly.

'We can't meet again!' Laurent whispered. 'My manager won't let me leave the office.'

Then Camille came back into the room and Laurent could not say anything more.

Therese did not sleep that night. She lay in the bed beside Camille and tried to think of a plan. On Thursday, she told Laurent when she wanted to see him, but he did not come.

* * *

Two weeks passed. Therese had only one thought in her mind - she wanted to be alone with Laurent again.

Laurent was like a wild animal in a cage. He was half-mad because he could not hold Therese. Laurent loved her and he could not live without her. He had never felt like this before. His desire for Therese was very strong. He needed her in the same way that he needed

food and drink. He could not go to the Passage du Pont-Neuf in the evenings now. He was frightened that he would show his feelings. He thought that Camille and his mother would find out about his affair with Therese.

Then Therese wrote to Laurent. She told him to stay at home the next evening. She would come to his room at eight o'clock.

The next afternoon, Laurent spoke to Camille as they were leaving the office of the Orleans Railway Company.

'I'm sorry, my friend,' he said. 'But I'm very tired. I think that I'll go home. I will not dine with you tonight.'

Therese told Madame Raquin that she had to go out.

'A lady bought several things this morning but she didn't pay for all of them,' Therese said. 'I know where the customer lives, so I'm going to her house. I'll get the money. I'll be out for about two hours, I think.'

Madame Raquin did not like losing money. 'Very well, my dear,' she said to Therese. 'But be careful. You don't go out in the evenings very often.'

Therese put on her coat, hat and gloves and went towards the house where Laurent lived. She walked quickly, pushing people out of her way. Therese's face and hands were very hot and she walked like a drunken woman.

Therese ran up the stairs of the house where Laurent lived. When she reached the sixth floor, she was breathing very fast. Laurent was standing there, waiting for her. Therese ran into the attic and her wide skirts almost filled the little room. She took off her hat and fell onto the bed.

The little attic had a skylight in the roof. The cold evening air came in through the window and cooled the room and the two lovers. They stayed together until the bell of a church clock rang ten times. Therese wished that she had not heard it. She got up slowly, found her hat and put it on. Then she sat down on the bed again. Laurent knelt on the floor in front of her.

'I must go,' Therese said. 'Goodbye.' But she did not move.

'Don't just say goodbye. Tell me when you are coming back,' said Laurent.

Therese looked into her lover's eyes. 'I don't think that I can come back,' she said.

'So we must say goodbye for ever?' Laurent asked quietly.

'I don't want to say goodbye,' Therese replied. Then she repeated, 'I must go.'

Laurent thought about Camille, but he did not want to say his name.

'I don't dislike him, but he is a problem,' Laurent said. 'Why can't he go away? Can't you send him on a journey?'

'A journey?' Therese said sadly. 'Camille will never leave the Passage du Pont-Neuf. He will never leave home until he goes on his last journey - the journey that no one comes back from. You know what I mean. But he'll live longer than all of us. Sickly people always live the longest.'

'I want to spend the whole night with you,' said Laurent. 'I want to sleep with you every night. I want to be with you forever. I want to be your husband.'

Therese kissed Laurent and then she began to cry.

'Help me to be strong!' Therese cried. 'Say that you love me and that one day we'll be together. Please tell me that you need me!'

'I do need you. Come back tomorrow,' Laurent said.

'That is not possible,' Therese replied. 'But perhaps I'll tell Camille everything and then I'll leave him. I'll come back here and live with you. I don't care what people say about me. I want you to be happy.'

Laurent began to think more clearly. Therese could not live with him in his little attic. It was too small. And if she left the Passage du Pont-Neuf, he could never visit the Raquins again.

Laurent spoke slowly. 'If your husband was dead, we could be happy together.'

'If... if he was dead,' Therese repeated. She looked down at her lover. Her eyes looked very dark in her pale face.

'Sometimes, people die suddenly,' she said. 'But there might be a problem for the family later.'

'I'm not stupid,' Laurent said quickly. 'I want to live with you and love you in peace. Perhaps your husband could have an accident. People have accidents every day. But we must be careful. I'll think of a plan.'

They both stood up and Therese walked to the door. Laurent put his arms around her.

'You are mine, aren't you?' he said. 'You belong to me?'

'Yes, I belong to you. Do what you like with me,' Therese replied.

They stood there silently for a moment. Their love for each other was wild and dangerous. Then Therese pulled herself away from Laurent's arms and ran down the stairs.

Laurent lay down on the bed again. The bedclothes were warm and smelt of violets. He lay on his back and looked up through the skylight at the square of dark blue sky. He did not sleep that night. Before Therese's visit, he had not thought of killing Camille. Now, because of his desire for Therese, he could only think of killing her husband. He thought about what could go wrong. He thought about what would happen to Therese and himself. He thought about his father.

'Perhaps my father will live for another ten years,' Laurent said to himself. 'And when he dies, I might not get his money. I can't go on living in this room, working in the office, and living on cheap food for ever. But if Camille was dead, I could marry Therese. Madame Raquin would call me her son and I'd get her money. And I might get my father's money too, when he is dead.'

Laurent wanted Therese. He did not want to share Therese with her husband, Camille. If Camille disappeared, Laurent could become Therese's husband. Camille must be killed. But no one must know who had killed him.

'I must kill him. I must kill him,' Laurent said to himself again and again, until he fell asleep.

Therese got home at eleven o'clock. She could not remember getting back to the Passage du Pont-Neuf. She felt cold and very ill.

Madame Raquin and Camille were worried about her, but Therese would not answer any of their questions.

Therese's body shook with cold and fear when she got into bed with Camille. He fell asleep at once and lay there with his mouth open. Therese hated him. Camille was her husband and she wished that he was dead.

* * *

Three weeks passed. Once again, Laurent started visiting the shop every evening. Madame Raquin welcomed him as usual, but she said that he looked tired. Therese did not speak to Laurent. She made herself look as ugly and stupid as Camille. Madame Raquin was worried by the girl's silence.

'Take no notice of Therese's cold behaviour,' the old woman said to Laurent one day. 'Sometimes, she is not friendly, but she has a warm heart.'

The lovers did not make plans to meet each other. Their faces were calm, but their hearts were full of anger and fear. They could not speak to each other about their true feelings - feelings of murder and desire.

Sometimes, when they were alone, Laurent and Therese held each other's hands for a moment. They held hands so tightly, that they hurt each other. But they did nothing more. They were waiting.

One Thursday evening, Old Michaud, the retired police commissioner, began to talk about unsolved crimes.

'I could tell you about some terrible crimes - including murder - that are still unsolved,' the old man said.

'Do you mean that there are killers walking in the streets?' Grivet cried. 'Are there murderers who have never been caught?'

'They have not been caught, because no one knows that they are murderers,' Olivier said. 'We try to find them, but the police can't catch everyone. There are some murderers who will never be caught. Their crimes will never be solved. These murderers are too clever.'

Laurent and Therese listened to this conversation, but they did not say anything. They looked at each other and Therese shook with fear.

* * *

Sometimes, on Sundays, when the weather was fine, Camille made Therese walk with him along the wide streets of Paris. The stupid young man liked people to look at his beautiful wife. But Therese hated going out with her husband.

Madame Raquin was always worried when Therese and Camille left the Passage du Pont-Neuf. She would follow them slowly to the end of the arcade and then call out, 'Be careful! There is a lot of traffic in Paris these days. So many people have accidents. Look where you are going!'

Then the old woman would walk very slowly back to the shop and she would worry until Camille and Therese returned.

Laurent began to go with Therese and Camille on these Sunday walks. Sometimes, the three of them left Paris and found a cafe on the banks of the Seine. They would have a meal and walk by the water.

Therese loved to walk by the River Seine. She loved to sit on the grass and put her hand in the water. She loved to breathe the warm, sweet air.

One Sunday in the autumn, Camille, Therese and Laurent left the arcade at eleven o'clock. On this day, the sky was blue and the sun was warm. Laurent, Camille and Therese were going on a longer visit. They rode in a cab across Paris and then they walked to Saint-Ouen. When they reached this small town to the north of Paris, Camille and Therese walked along the warm, dusty road beside the River Seine. Camille had one hand on his wife's arm. In his other hand, he held a parasol over Therese's head. Laurent walked behind them. Sometimes he looked down at the road. Sometimes he looked at his lover.

The three young people walked along one bank of the river. Then they went over a little bridge to a small island and looked for a comfortable place to sit down. They found a quiet place, where grass was growing under tall trees. Red leaves had fallen from the trees. The leaves made a dry, crunching noise as the young people walked over them. The island was quiet and peaceful. The cool green water of the river flowed round and past the island.

Camille sat down on the soft grass. Therese dropped down onto the ground and her wide skirts spread round her in a big circle. Laurent lay on his stomach and looked at Therese. He could just see one of her legs beneath her wide skirts. Her leg was slim and beautiful, with its white stocking and black shoe.

The three of them - Laurent, Camille and Therese - stayed on the island for three hours. They waited for the cool of the evening.

At first Camille told the others silly stories, but at last, he fell asleep. He lay on the ground, with his hat over his eyes and his mouth wide open.

Laurent moved closer to Therese. He kissed her shoe and then her leg. Therese smelt of violets and desire burned through Laurent's body like fire. He wanted to hold his lover in his arms, but he could not. Camille might wake up.

Laurent thought that Therese was asleep. He stood up, went over to a tree and leant against it. Then he saw that Therese was not asleep, her black eyes were wide open. Laurent stared down at her, but she did not look at him.

Laurent looked at Camille. The silly, weak young man looked ugly and stupid and Laurent hated him. He lifted his foot above Camille's face and Therese gave a cry. Laurent put his foot back on the ground. It would be stupid to murder Camille like that. Laurent walked down to the fast-flowing river and stared at the water. Then suddenly, he had a plan.

'I can murder Camille and never be caught,' Laurent thought. 'Then I'll be able to enjoy the rest of my life with Therese. My plan is perfect!'

Laurent woke his sleeping friend and told him to stand up. Therese stood up too and shook the red leaves from her dress.

'Let's go and get something to eat. I'm hungry,' Laurent said.

They left the island and walked along little roads that were full of happy, laughing people. The sun was not so bright now and the air was getting cooler. Camille and Laurent walked together and Therese walked

more slowly behind them. She was sure that Laurent had a plan and she felt very frightened. Therese's legs shook and she felt weak.

'Come on!' Camille shouted to Therese. 'I'm hungry. Aren't you?'

'Yes,' Therese replied, but she was not hungry. She was too frightened.

They soon found a cheap little cafe on the river bank. The lower floor of the cafe was full of customers, so they went upstairs to a terrace.

Chapter 6. The Accident

Therese, Laurent and Camille sat on the terrace and looked down at the many people below them. Waiters were running about, serving customers with food and wine. Girls wearing brightly-coloured dresses were dancing and shouting. There were some students who were watching the girls and laughing at them.

The sun was setting now and the sky was as red as fire. Far away, the hills above the city were blue.

Laurent started to call for a waiter, but then he stopped.

'Why don't we go for a boat-trip on the river?' Laurent said suddenly to Camille. 'Then we can come back and eat here later.'

'Therese is hungry now,' Camille said.

'I can wait,' his wife replied quietly.

The three friends walked down the steps of the terrace and spoke to a waiter. They ordered their meal and told him that they would return in an hour.

The owner of the cafe hired out boats. Laurent chose a very narrow rowing-boat and the cafe-owner untied the rope that held it to the river bank.

Camille and Therese looked at the boat.

'Is this boat big enough for all of us?' Camille said. 'We'll have to sit very still, or one of us will fall in!'

'Are you frightened?' Laurent asked, laughing.

'No, of course not,' Camille replied.

But Camille could not swim and he was afraid of water. He got into the little boat very carefully and sat at the far end of it. Laurent turned towards Therese. As she stood on the bank beside the boat, he whispered to her.

'Don't be afraid. I'm going to push him into the river.

Don't worry. I'll do everything.'

Therese's face became very pale. She could not move.

'Therese is frightened,' Camille said with a laugh. 'Look at her, Laurent! Will she get in the boat or not?'

Camille's words made Therese angry. She jumped into the boat and sat at the opposite end to Camille. Laurent sat down in the middle of the boat and picked up the oars. As he pulled the oars, the boat moved away from the bank and towards some small islands. Soon the boat was in the middle of the River Seine.

The sun was very low now and the sky was getting dark. The black shadows of the trees fell across the water. It was colder too. Laurent stopped rowing and the fast-flowing river moved the boat along. Laurent, Camille and Therese sat in silence as the sky and the river became darker.

Camille was lying on his back. He put his hand into the fast-flowing water of the Seine. 'That's cold!' he said. 'I wouldn't like to fall in there!'

Laurent did not answer. He was sitting completely still, with his big hands on his knees. Therese sat at the other end of the boat. Her body was stiff with fear.

Now their boat was moving into a narrow space between two of the small islands. There were no other boats here. Laurent stood up and moved to the end of the boat where Camille was sitting. He put his hands on Camille's waist.

'What are you doing?' the young man said, laughing. 'Be careful, Laurent! I shall fall into the water!'

Then Camille saw the cold, cruel expression on Laurent's face and he was terrified. Laurent put one hand around the weak young man's throat. Camille shouted out.

'Help me! Therese!'

Therese sat very still. She held onto the sides of the boat with both of her hands. She wanted to shut her eyes, but she could not. The little boat moved from side to side.

'Therese!' Camille cried out again.

Therese could not watch what was happening. She felt shocked and ill. She fell down into the bottom of the boat and began to cry.

Camille held the sides of the boat tightly, but Laurent pulled his hands away. Then he picked up Camille and held the weak young man like a child. As Laurent bent his head forward, Camille bit him on his neck. With a cry of pain, Laurent threw Camille into the water. Camille screamed two or three times, as his head came up out of the water. Then there was silence.

Laurent moved quickly. He took hold of Therese and pushed the narrow rowing-boat over. As the boat rolled over, Laurent and Therese fell into the cold water.

'Help! Help!' Laurent shouted loudly.

Laurent was strong and a good swimmer. He was in no danger. He easily held Therese in his arms as he swam to the river bank. Some men in another boat heard his cries and they rowed towards Laurent and Therese as fast as they could.

Laurent and Therese were soon safely on the bank. Therese had fainted but Laurent jumped into the water again. He began to look for Camille. He looked under the rowing-boat and around it. But he was careful to look in the wrong places. Laurent came back to the river bank alone.

'It was my fault!' Laurent cried. 'My friend Camille moved in the boat too much. Then he stood up! I should have stopped him. He didn't understand the danger. The boat turned over. As Camille fell into the water, he called out to me. "Help my Therese!" he shouted.'

'Yes, we saw it all!' some of the young men said.

This was not true. The young men had not seen anything, but they wanted to feel important. They helped Laurent to turn his rowing-boat over again so that it lay safely in the water once more.

'The poor woman has fainted,' said one of the young men, looking at Therese. 'Someone must look after her.'

The young men tied the narrow rowing-boat to their own boat and pulled Laurent and Therese back to the cafe. Very soon, everyone in Saint-Ouen knew about the accident. They knew that Laurent's friend - Therese's husband - had fallen into the river and disappeared.

The young men described the accident exactly as Laurent had told them the story. Everyone thought that the young men had seen the accident and so everyone believed Laurent's story. The owner of the cafe and his wife were kind people. They gave Laurent some dry clothes. Therese could not stop crying and shaking and they put her into a bed.

Laurent left Therese in Saint-Ouen and went back to Paris alone. He wanted to tell Madame Raquin the terrible news himself. He did not want Therese to tell Camille's mother. He wanted Therese to become calm and think more clearly.

'Therese will say too much,' he thought. 'She might make a mistake and tell Madame Raquin the truth.'

Laurent went back into Paris on an omnibus. As he rode back into the city, he thought of the story that he was going to tell Madame Raquin. He was a little worried, but he was happy too. Laurent was sure that people would believe his story. It had been a perfect murder. No one would ever know the truth.

* * *

Laurent got off the omnibus when it reached Paris. Then he took a cab to Old Michaud's house. Laurent had decided that he did not want to tell Madame Raquin about Camille's death himself. It would be safer to have Michaud with him.

It was now nine o'clock in the evening and Michaud was having dinner with Olivier and Suzanne. Laurent told them his terrible story. He pretended to be shocked and unhappy.

He wept as he walked up and down the Michauds' dining-room.

'I've come to you for help,' Laurent said with tears in his eyes. 'You are the Raquins' closest friends. Those two poor women! Therese

is suffering already. Madame Raquin will suffer too, when she hears the terrible news of her son's death. I don't know what Madame Raquin will do. Please come with me, so that we can tell her together.'

Olivier stared at Laurent but he said nothing. Laurent suddenly felt a little afraid of the police official. But Olivier believed Laurent's story.

'Oh, poor Camille!' Old Michaud cried. 'What a terrible accident! How will Madame Raquin live without her son? She loved Camille so much!

'You came to us,' the old man went on. 'That was the right thing to do. We are Madame's friends. We'll go with you at once.'

They went together to the Passage du Pont-Neuf. When they arrived at the arcade, Old Michaud stopped Laurent.

'Wait here,' the old man said. 'If Madame Raquin sees you without Camille and Therese, she'll know that something terrible has happened. Wait here for us.'

Laurent waited for half an hour. He walked up and down the damp, narrow street outside the drapers shop. Suddenly, he felt very hungry. He went into a bakers shop, bought some cakes and ate them quickly.

In the little drapers shop, Madame Raquin listened to Old Michaud tell the story of her son's death. She screamed and wept. The mother thought only of her poor son who had drowned in the fast-moving water of the River Seine. She had saved his life so many times when he had been a child. And now he had died without her. He had drowned in cold dirty water. As she thought about it, Madame Raquin wanted to die too.

Old Michaud and Olivier left Suzanne with the old woman and went to find Laurent. Then the three men took a cab back to Saint-Ouen. The journey was terrible for all of them and no one spoke.

In the cafe by the river bank, Therese could not get out of bed. Her body was shaking and her skin was burning hot. She had a fever. Therese was terrified that she might confess to the murder. So she had

made herself ill. Her mouth and eyes were tightly shut and her body was curled in the bed like a baby.

In her mind, Therese could see her lover, Laurent. She could see him murdering her husband, Camille. It was like a terrible dream. She saw the murder happening again and again. She thought that she could see Camille rising up out of the dirty water and coming towards her.

Old Michaud tried to talk to Therese, but she turned her face away and began to weep again.

'Let her sleep, sir,' the cafe owner said. 'She needs to rest.'

* * *

In the cafe, a police officer was asking questions about the accident. When Olivier told the officer that he was an important police official, no one asked any more questions.

Several people said that they had seen the accident happen. But they were only repeating Laurent's lies. Everyone believed Laurent's story. He was not going to be accused of any crime. He had nothing to fear now, and he knew this.

'We can't leave poor Therese here,' Laurent said to the Michauds. 'We must take her back to Paris with us.'

Laurent went upstairs to talk to Therese. He repeated her name several times. When Therese heard her lover's voice, she gave a cry and opened her eyes. She looked terribly ill, but she sat up and looked at Laurent.

The cafe-owner's wife helped Therese to get dressed.

Then Therese walked slowly downstairs and Olivier helped her into the cab.

On the way home, no one spoke. It was dark inside the cab and Laurent held Therese's hand tightly. Therese was very frightened and she sat very still. But she did not take her hand away. When the cab stopped, Laurent whispered to Therese.

'Be strong, Therese,' he said. 'Remember. We have a long time to wait.'

'Oh, I'll remember,' she replied quietly.

Laurent went with her to the shop and left her there with Olivier. Madame Raquin was in her bedroom where Suzanne had been looking after her. Suzanne came down the stairs and took Therese up to her own bedroom. The young widow fell onto her bed and lay still.

It was now after midnight. Laurent walked back through the empty streets to the house where he lived. Everything had gone well and he felt pleased with himself. Camille was dead and no one thought that he had been murdered.

'Everything is perfect,' Laurent said to himself. 'I've killed Camille but no one knows that I'm his murderer. Now I must wait for a few months and live alone. Then I can marry Therese and we can begin our new life together.'

Laurent felt very tired as he walked up the stairs. When he reached his little attic room, he lay down on his bed and fell asleep at once. The murderer slept well that night.

Chapter 7. The Morgue

The next day, Laurent woke up feeling very cheerful. Only one thing was troubling him. The place on his neck where Camille's teeth had broken the skin was sore. The bite-mark was red and it was very painful. Laurent washed off the blood and turned up the collar of his shirt to hide the mark. Then he put on his suit and necktie and went to his office as usual. He told everyone in the railway office about Camille's death and how it had happened. The story was reported in all the Paris newspapers. Laurent was a hero.

Laurent was only worried about one thing. Camille's body had not been found and so a death certificate could not be signed. If the body of a dead person was found, it was taken to the Paris Morgue. The corpse was kept in this cold, damp building for several days. People went to the morgue to see if the dead body of a friend or relation had been found in a street or the River Seine. The morgue was a horrible place, but Laurent now went there every day. He was sure that Camille's body would soon be found in the river.

The dead bodies lay on huge blocks of stone, with cold water running over them. There was a wall of glass between the corpses and the people who came to look at them.

Every day, Laurent moved slowly along the glass wall. He looked carefully at all the bodies of the people who had been found in the river, but he could not see Camille.

Laurent began to have bad dreams because of his visits to the morgue. He went there every day for more than a week, and every night he had dreams. Then, on the tenth day, he saw Camille's body there. It was lying on one of the cold, wet blocks of stone.

When he saw Canaille's body, a terrible pain went through Laurent's heart. The drowned man's eyes were open and he seemed to be looking at his murderer.

For more than five minutes, Laurent stared at his dead friend. Camille had been in the water for some time and his corpse was a horrible sight. His face was still smooth, but his skin was brown and green. Camille's body had many terrible green and black wounds on it. His head was twisted to one side and his black lips seemed to be smiling.

Laurent turned away and left the morgue quickly. He felt sick.

'I made Camille like this,' Laurent said to himself. 'I've never seen a more horrible sight. I thank God that I won't have to see his corpse again!'

Laurent went to Old Michaud, and told the retired Police Commissioner what he had seen. No one thought that Camille had been murdered. They did not believe that a crime had been committed. They believed that Camille had died in a terrible accident. So the officials at the Paris Morgue wrote and signed a death certificate and Camille's body was buried.

Laurent thought that he could stop worrying. Now he could forget about the murder! He decided to enjoy himself. He began to look forward to the future.

After the death of Camille, the drapers shop in the Passage du Pont-Neuf was closed for three days. Madame Raquin and Therese stayed in their beds for two days. They did not speak and they did not see each other. Suzanne Michaud looked after the two women. But she could do very little to help them.

Camille's death had been terrible for Madame Raquin. For twenty-four years, she had looked after her sickly son. Because of her care, Camille had not died when he was a child. Then, in a few minutes, the young man had been taken away from his mother. Sometimes the old woman sat up in her bed and stared at the walls of her room. She did not speak and her face looked like a pale corpse. At other times, she screamed and wept. Sometimes she called out Camille's name as she slept.

Therese lay in her bed, stiff and silent. Her face was always turned towards the wall and she pulled the bedclothes over her eyes. She did not speak and she did not weep. On the third day, Therese suddenly sat up in her bed. After a few seconds, she threw off the bedclothes and got out of the bed.

At first her legs were weak and she could not stand. Then she slowly walked towards a mirror which was on the wall and looked at her face. Her pale skin was blotchy and she looked much older.

Therese pulled her hair away from her face and tied it behind her head. Then she dressed quickly and went to Madame Raquin's bedroom. The old woman turned her head and looked at her niece. Then she held out her arms to Therese and kissed her.

'My poor child! My poor Camille!' she said.

Madame Raquin began to weep loudly. Therese knelt on the floor and hid her face in her aunt's bedclothes. She stayed completely still for a few minutes. Therese had been very afraid of her first meeting with the old woman, but all seemed to be going well. She stood up and spoke to Madame Raquin for the first time.

'My dear aunt, you must try to get up,' Therese said in a quiet voice. 'Everyone is very worried about you. You'll feel better if you go

into the shop again.' At this moment, Suzanne Michaud came into the bedroom.

'Suzanne and I are here to help you,' said Therese. 'You have your other friends too. Let me get you something to eat now.'

Madame Raquin stared at Therese and then she began weeping again. When she spoke, the old woman sounded like a child.

'Thank you, thank you,' she said to Suzanne. 'Thank you for looking after me. And you, my dear Therese! You're unhappy too. I've lost my son, but you've lost your husband! We must always stay together now. We must always help each other.'

That evening, Madame Raquin got out of bed. Her legs felt very weak. She had to use a stick to help her to walk.

The next day, she told Therese to open the shop.

'I'll go mad if I stay in bed another day,' Madame Raquin said in a weak voice. 'We'll sit together in the shop again, my dear Therese. We must try to live.'

When the shop opened again, it seemed darker and damper than before. The windows were dirty and all the goods looked dirty too.

Every morning, Madame Raquin walked slowly down the spiral staircase. Then Therese helped the old woman to her seat behind the counter. Madame Raquin and Therese sat there all day. They did not move. People walked past the shop and saw Therese's calm, pale face as she sat at the counter. Everyone felt sorry for the young widow and her old aunt, Madame Raquin.

* * *

Every two or three days, Laurent visited the drapers shop in the Passage du Pont-Neuf. He came in the evenings and sat in the shop with Madame Raquin for half an hour. The old lady welcomed him. Laurent had been brave at the river. He had tried to help her son and he had saved her niece. During his visits, Laurent did not look at Therese or speak to her.

Laurent was in the shop at eight o'clock one Thursday evening when the Thursday visitors arrived. They had not met together since Camille's death.

Madame Raquin was surprised to see her friends, but she lit the lamp in the sitting-room and began to make tea. Everyone sat round the table. But when Grivet took the dominoes out of their box, the old lady began to cry.

'My dear lady, you mustn't cry,' Old Michaud said. 'You'll become ill and you'll upset your friends too.'

But Madame Raquin shook her head and went on weeping.

Old Michaud spoke again.

'Madame,' he said. 'We've come here to help you. We want to help you to forget this terrible time. Let's play a game of dominoes!'

Madame Raquin decided that the old man was right. She continued crying, but she began to play dominoes with her friends.

Laurent and Therese watched and listened but they said nothing. Laurent wanted everything to continue as it had before Camille's death. He wanted to meet the same friends at the shop. He wanted to play dominoes with them on Thursday evenings. It made him feel safe. When other people were in the room, he was able to look at Therese again.

Therese was dressed in black clothes. The young widow looked very beautiful. Sometimes she looked calmly into Laurent's eyes. Laurent was happy. Therese still belonged to him.

* * *

Fifteen months passed. As the days went by, Laurent and Therese began to feel safe. Soon, Laurent was coming to the shop every evening after he finished work. But some things had changed. Laurent now arrived at about half past nine - after dinner. He stayed until Madame Raquin locked the shop. On Thursday evenings, Laurent went to the sitting-room before Madame Raquin's other guests arrived and he lit the fire in the stove. He looked after the old woman and did little things to help her.

Therese watched Laurent carefully. The young woman was more cheerful now. But sometimes her pale face had an expression of pain and terror.

Madame Raquin was not thinking clearly. The lovers could have done what they liked and she would not have known. But the lovers

never tried to be alone together and they never kissed. The murder of Camille had killed their desire for each other. They no longer wanted to make love. When they were together, they did not know what to do or say.

Therese and Laurent tried to understand their feelings but they could not talk about them. The lovers thought that they were being careful and that their desire for each other would return. And now that Camille was dead, Laurent and Therese could get married. They believed that when they were married, they would have peace.

At night, alone in her bed, Therese was happy. Weak, stupid Camille was no longer there to make her angry. Therese felt like a little girl again. She felt safe in the big bedroom. Sometimes she opened the window and stared at the high black wall and the narrow strip of sky above it. Sometimes she had bad dreams. Only at these times did she think of Laurent. Therese did not desire her lover. She only wanted Laurent in her bed to keep her safe. She wanted Laurent because she did not want to be lonely. And she did not want anyone to think that she had killed Camille.

During the day, Therese was much happier. She became interested in the people around her and she talked more.

One day, Therese noticed a young man who lived near the Passage du Pont-Neuf. He was completely different from Laurent in every way. The young man was tall and slim, with fair hair and blue eyes. For a week, Therese was in love with this young man. But she never spoke to him and when he went away, she forgot about him.

Therese began to read books. She read romances and she fell in love with the heroes of these love stories. She began to think about other people and how they felt. But Therese could not understand her own feelings. She became nervous and worried about everything.

Laurent's feelings changed too.

'Did I really kill a man?' he said to himself. 'What a fool I was! I must have been drunk or mad. I committed a terrible crime. I did it for a woman and now I don't care about her at all!'

'Well, I was clever, and I was lucky too. No one thought that I killed Camille Raquin. But I will never do anything like that again.'

Laurent became fat and lazy and he had no desire to make love with Therese. He wanted to get married because it would make his life more comfortable. When he came to live in the Passage du Pont-Neuf, he would have a bigger home, more money and good meals every day.

Then one day, Laurent met his old friend who was an artist and he began to spend a lot of time in the artist's studio.

When Laurent went to the studio, he saw that his friend was painting a picture of a pretty young woman. Laurent liked the artist's model, so he took her home with him. The girl became his lover and stayed with him.

Laurent did not love the model, but that did not worry him. He enjoyed making love with her and that pleased him. He never told Therese about the girl.

Then things changed again.

* * *

Therese no longer wore black clothes. She began to wear pretty, brightly-coloured dresses again.

One evening, Laurent noticed that Therese was looking younger and more beautiful. He also noticed that she laughed a lot and seemed very nervous. Sometimes she was very happy and sometimes she was very sad. Laurent did not like to see Therese behave in this way. He did not trust her and he began to feel afraid.

Laurent began to think about marriage again. Sometimes he thought that he would not marry Therese. He thought that he would stay away from her and live with the pretty young model.

'But if I don't marry Therese,' Laurent thought, 'then I killed her husband for nothing! I'm a fool if I don't marry Therese now. She might go to the police and tell them everything. I can't let her do that.'

Then the model left Laurent. She moved out of his room and once again, Laurent was alone at night. After a week, Laurent went back to the drapers shop in the Passage du Pont-Neuf. He spent more time there

and his desire for Therese returned. She looked at him with desire too. All their feelings for each other were strong again.

One evening, Laurent spoke to Therese as he was leaving the shop.

'I want you,' he said. 'I want to make love to you. Shall I come to your room tonight?'

Therese looked terrified. 'No, let's wait,' she said. 'We must be careful.'

'I've waited long enough,' Laurent replied. 'I want you,' he said again.

Therese stared at him. Her dark eyes shone brightly in her pale face. Then her cheeks became red.

'As soon as we are married, I'll be yours for ever,' she replied.

Chapter 8. The Return of Camille

Laurent felt very worried as he left the little shop in the arcade. His desire for Therese had returned, but he was also very afraid of returning to his attic room. And for the first time, he was afraid of being alone. He went into a wine-shop and drank several glasses of wine. He was angry with Therese.

'I wouldn't be afraid if I'd stayed with her,' he thought. He turned towards a waiter. 'Bring me another glass of wine!' he shouted.

Laurent stayed in the wine-shop for many hours. Then he bought some matches and walked home to his attic.

He had left a candle on a table on the first floor of the building. He had to go along a dark corridor, and up the stairs to the first floor to find his candle. He was terrified of the dark corridor. He believed that someone was waiting to kill him there.

Laurent struck a match and the flame gave a weak yellow light. Suddenly, the corridor became full of dark shadows. Laurent walked quickly up the stairs to the first floor and found his candle. He lit it and walked slowly up to the sixth floor, holding the candle in front of him.

When he reached his attic room, Laurent shut the door behind him. Then he closed the skylight and looked under the bed. The shadows in the room looked like people who were waiting to kill him. At last, he lay on the bed and began to think about Therese. He had to make a decision. Should he marry Therese, or not? He wanted to sleep, but his thoughts and fears kept him awake.

As he thought about Therese, Laurent's desire for her returned. He dreamt that he went back to the drapers shop in the Passage du Pont-Neuf. In his dream, he ran along the dark streets and into the arcade. He went through the alley and up the stairs to Therese's bedroom. Therese opened the bedroom door and stood there, waiting for him.

Laurent could see everything so clearly in his dream that he sat up in his bed and cried out. 'I must go!' he shouted. 'Therese is waiting for me!'

He jumped out of his bed. The floor under his feet was very cold. Suddenly, Laurent felt afraid again. He was too frightened to leave his little room in the middle of the night. So he got back into the bed and pulled the bedclothes over his head. This quick movement made the bite-mark on his neck burn with pain. He touched the sore place and it reminded him of Camille. Laurent began to shake with fear. Perhaps Camille was in the room now! Perhaps he was under the bed!

Laurent sat up and lit the candle. Long, dark shadows moved on the walls.

'What a fool I am,' he said to himself. 'I shouldn't have stayed so long in the wine-shop. I drank too much wine. That's why I have been dreaming. I'll drink some water and try to sleep again.'

So Laurent drank some water, blew out the candle-flame, and lay down on the bed again. He felt calm now and he was sure that he would sleep. His body felt heavy and tired, but his mind was still busy.

Once more, he dreamt that he was on his way to the arcade in the Passage du Pont-Neuf. He ran along the little alley beside the shop and up the stairs. He knocked on the door and it opened immediately. But, oh, horror! It was Camille who opened the door! The corpse of his dead friend stood in the bedroom. Its skin was green and brown and covered

in terrible wounds. Camille's body looked the same as when Laurent had seen it in the morgue!

The dead Camille held out his arms to his murderer and a laugh came from his twisted mouth. Laurent could see the dead man's black tongue behind his white teeth. Laurent woke up with a loud cry of fear. His bedclothes were damp from the cold sweat, which covered his body.

'I must sleep,' Laurent said to himself. 'It will be morning soon.'

But every time that Laurent fell asleep, he had the same terrible dream. Again and again, the young man woke up and found cold sweat covering his skin.

At last he decided to get out of bed and get dressed. It was sunrise. Light was coming through the square skylight above the bed.

'I can't sleep because of Therese,' he said to himself. 'If she had let me stay with her, I wouldn't have had this terrible dream.'

After he had washed his face and got dressed, Laurent felt a little better.

'I'm not a coward,' he thought. 'I was strong and brave when I killed Camille. I wasn't afraid of him when he was alive. I'm not afraid of him now that he's dead. When Therese and I are married, I'll hold her in my arms and forget all about Camille.'

Laurent stood in front of a mirror and looked at the bite-mark on his neck. Camille's teeth had made the mark more than a year ago. But the sore place was still red and it felt very painful. Laurent turned up his shirt collar to hide the mark.

'I'll ask Therese to kiss my neck,' he said. 'Then the mark will disappear.'

Laurent felt very tired in the office all that day. He fell asleep many times.

'Poor Therese is very tired,' Madame Raquin told Laurent that evening. 'She did not sleep well last night. She had bad dreams and cried out while she was sleeping. When the poor girl woke up this morning, she felt ill.'

While Madame Raquin was talking, Therese came into the sitting-room. She looked at Laurent and he looked at her.

The ghost of Camille had visited Therese too. Her desire for Laurent had returned. But in her dreams, she had seen the terrible corpse of her husband.

Laurent and Therese had drowned Camille. His dead body would hold the lovers together for ever. They would never be able to escape from his ghost. They had to marry as soon as possible. Only then would the ghost of Camille leave them in peace.

* * *

The months passed. The lovers made a plan. They would not talk about marriage themselves. Laurent would continue to come to the Raquins' shop each evening. He would be kind and polite to Therese and her aunt. He would help them as much as possible. Soon Madame Raquin would believe that Therese should marry her husband's friend, Laurent. If the old woman suggested the marriage, there would be no problem.

As soon as Laurent and Therese were married, the ghost of Camille would leave them alone. That is what they believed. But they did not want to marry immediately. If they did, their friends might think about the relationship between Laurent and Therese. And then their friends might ask questions about Camille's death.

Every night, the lovers slept in their own beds. Every night, Camille's ghost came and they were unable to sleep.

Therese kept a lighted candle in her room. But the pale yellow flame did not stop the shadow of Camille's corpse from visiting her.

Laurent was afraid to go home and he sometimes walked through the streets all night. Whenever he slept, he dreamt that he was holding Therese in his arms. But then his dream changed and he saw that he was holding Camille's corpse.

Laurent and Therese became more terrified every day. But their desire for each other was like a burning fever.

Therese wanted to marry Laurent because she was afraid. And she needed Laurent and his kisses. Laurent wanted to marry Therese because he wanted an easy, comfortable life. He wanted to eat, drink, sleep and make love to Therese whenever he wished.

He also wanted money. He had not seen his father for years. He would never get any money from him. But Madame Raquin had about forty thousand francs. If he married her niece, Laurent would not have to work. For all these reasons, he had murdered Camille.

After several months, the lovers' plan began to work. Therese behaved like a sad, young widow. She moved slowly and she took no interest in anything. She said very little and she often wept.

'Perhaps Therese is ill. Perhaps she's dying!' Madame Raquin thought. She became very worried. The old woman had no other relatives. Madame Raquin feared that she would be alone if Therese died.

One Thursday evening, Madame Raquin told Old Michaud her fears.

'My dear friend, don't you know why Therese is behaving like this?' he said, laughing. 'Your niece is unhappy because she has been alone every night for nearly two years. She needs a husband!'

Madame Raquin could not believe these words. Did Therese want another husband now that her dear Camille had died?

'Make her marry as soon as possible,' Old Michaud said. 'Please believe me. I know that I'm right.'

Michaud's words made Madame Raquin cry. She cried for her dead son and she cried for herself. She could not believe that people were forgetting Camille already.

But Therese's unhappiness was making the old woman unhappy. Madame Raquin liked people to be cheerful and friendly. She wanted her niece to be happy again. But she did not want a stranger in her family.

Laurent came to the shop nearly every day. He helped Madame Raquin as much as possible. Then he would sit for many hours and talk to her in a soft, kind voice.

Laurent also told the old woman that he was worried about Therese.

'Dear Therese is very ill,' he said sadly. 'I'm afraid that we will lose her soon. What will happen to us then? Poor Therese loved Camille

very much. We all loved him! Your niece has been slowly dying for the past two years. Therese is getting weaker every day.'

Laurent almost believed his own words. Madame Raquin began to cry. At last, the poor mother began to think of Laurent as her son and she soon loved him as her own child.

* * *

On the next Thursday evening, Old Michaud noticed Laurent talking kindly to Therese. Michaud whispered to his old friend.

'Look, my dear Madame,' he said. 'Here is the husband that your niece should marry. Laurent should be Therese's husband. You must tell them this. We'll help you!'

Therese marry Laurent? Madame Raquin had never thought of this. But she understood immediately. It was a good idea! The three of them would be a perfect family.

All through the evening, Madame Raquin smiled at Laurent and her niece. The murderers knew that their plan was working well.

When they left the drapers shop that night, Old Michaud spoke to Laurent. He told him his idea about the marriage.

Laurent pretended to be very surprised.

'But Therese is the widow of my dear friend, Camille. Therese is like a sister to me,' Laurent said in a quiet voice. 'I couldn't marry her.'

'But you would take the place of your dear friend,' Michaud said. 'Therese needs a husband. And you are the only man that Madame Raquin likes and trusts. She will accept you. The marriage would please her very much.'

'Therese was a good wife to Camille,' Michaud went on. 'She will be a good wife to you. You must marry her. We all think that this should happen.'

Laurent pretended to think for a moment.

'You're much older than me and I trust you,' he said. 'If the marriage will make Madame Raquin happy, then yes, I agree to it. I'll marry Therese Raquin.'

At the same time, Madame Raquin was talking to her niece.

'I've been a widow for many years,' the old woman said. 'I know that it's terrible to lose a husband, Therese. I loved my husband, and you loved Camille. I know that. His death was terrible and we will never forget it. But you are unhappy, my dear. Don't you ever think of marrying again?'

'Camille was my husband. No one can ever take his place,' Therese said quietly.

'I think that you're wrong, my dear,' Madame Raquin said. She was crying now and so was Therese.

'Laurent is already part of this family,' the old woman went on. 'He has been kind to both of us. We could all be happy together.'

'I want to please you, dear aunt,' Therese said. 'I love Laurent as a brother. But I'll try to accept him as a husband, if that will make you happy.'

She kissed Madame Raquin and held the old woman in her arms. The two women wept together.

The next morning, Michaud spoke to Madame Raquin outside the shop. They agreed that Therese and Laurent should get married.

Old Michaud was in the shop when Laurent arrived at five o'clock.

'Therese has agreed,' he whispered to Laurent. 'She will marry you.'

Therese looked up and stared at Laurent and he looked at her. Then Old Michaud went over to Madame Raquin and put his hand on her shoulder.

'Dear Madame,' he said. 'These two young people want to make you happy.'

Madame Raquin could not speak for several minutes. She held Therese's hand and placed it in Laurent's hand.

'I want you to get married,' she said. 'I want you, my dear niece, Therese, to marry dear Laurent. Then Laurent can be my true son.'

The guilty lovers' bodies shook as their hands touched.

'Therese, would you like to make your aunt happy?' Laurent asked.

'Yes,' Therese replied.

Laurent turned to Madame Raquin. 'When Camille fell into the water, he cried, "Help my Therese!"' Laurent said. 'He wanted me to look after her. I'm sure of that, Madame. I will marry Therese. I think that is the right thing to do.'

Therese could not listen to these words and she turned away. But Madame Raquin was weeping with happiness.

'Yes, yes. Make Therese happy, my dear,' she said to Laurent. 'My son thanks you from his grave!'

'Kiss each other,' Old Michaud said to Laurent and Therese.

Laurent kissed Therese and her pale face became red. This was the first time that anyone had seen them kissing each other.

By the following Thursday, all their friends knew about the marriage between Laurent and Therese.

'The marriage was my idea,' Old Michaud said. 'Laurent and Therese will be happy when they are husband and wife!'

Suzanne Michaud kissed Therese, and Grivet made a few stupid jokes. Laurent and Therese were polite to each other, but they did not show their true feelings. They carefully hid their desire.

Laurent wrote to his father. He hoped that Old Laurent would be pleased and that he would send his best wishes. But the old man said that he did not care about his son. He also said that Laurent would never get his money. When Madame Raquin heard this, she did a very stupid thing. She gave all her money - forty thousand francs - to her niece. She knew that Therese and Laurent would always look after her. The preparations for the wedding started at once.

Chapter 9. The Wedding Night

The day of the wedding had come at last. Laurent and Therese woke up in their own rooms. They were both very happy. Their last night of fear was over.

It was December and very cold. Laurent was pleased that he was leaving his small, cold attic for ever.

'I will be warmer tonight,' he said to himself, smiling.

Madame Raquin had given him five hundred francs and he had spent most of the money on new clothes. Now, the young man washed and dressed carefully. As he was putting on his shirt, he felt a sharp pain in his neck. The old bite-mark made by Camille's teeth looked red and sore. Every time that he moved, Laurent felt a sharp pain.

When he was ready, Laurent got into a cab and went to the town hall. At the town hall, the official asked Laurent and Therese if they wanted to marry each other. After Therese and Laurent had both agreed, the official spoke the rest of the words of the marriage ceremony, and the two young people signed a paper. Laurent and Therese were calm and quiet. They felt as if they were in a dream. They were married! They could forget about the past.

At six o'clock, Laurent, Therese and Madame Raquin met their friends in a cafe outside Paris. The new husband and wife could not believe what was happening. That night, they would sleep together in the same bed, and everyone would be happy. Therese and Laurent believed that their future would be comfortable and happy. They were too tired to think clearly. Madame Raquin was very happy. And she also believed that she would have a safe and comfortable future.

By half past nine, everyone returned to the little drapers shop. Therese went into her bedroom with Suzanne and Madame Raquin. Laurent stayed in the sitting-room with the men. He listened to Grivet's jokes and said nothing.

At last, Suzanne and Madame Raquin came out of the bedroom.

'Your wife is waiting for you,' the old woman said to Laurent.

Laurent stood up and shook his friends' hands. Then he walked into the bedroom like a drunken man.

* * *

Laurent shut the bedroom door behind him and looked across the room at Therese.

A bright fire was burning in the fireplace and a lighted lamp stood on a little table. All the bedclothes on the bed were smooth and white. There were big vases full of roses and the sweet smell of the red flowers

filled the bedroom. The room was a place for love - a place of calm and peace.

Therese was sitting on a small chair on the right of the fireplace and she was staring at the flames. She did not look at Laurent when he came into the room. Her white petticoats looked very bright in the light from the fire.

Laurent took off his coat and waistcoat. He walked towards Therese and kissed her on the shoulder. As his lips touched her skin, Therese's body shook. She turned and looked at Laurent with fear and disgust.

Laurent sat in a chair on the left side of the fireplace. Both lovers sat completely still for five minutes.

It was almost two years since Therese and Laurent had first been alone in this room. They had not made love since Therese's visit to Laurent's little attic. They had waited until this night - their wedding night. Now they could hold each other and kiss each other. But they did not. Their desire had turned to horror and disgust. They had killed a man and waited a long time for this moment. There was nothing to stop them loving each other, except their own feelings.

'Therese,' Laurent said, very quietly, 'do you remember those afternoons when we were in this room? I wanted to stay with you and fall asleep in your arms. And tonight that dream is coming true.'

Therese looked up at Laurent. This man was her husband now. But did she know him? In the fire-light, Laurent's face looked red. It looked as if it was covered with blood. Therese turned away.

'All our plans have succeeded, Therese,' Laurent went on. 'This is the beginning of our life together. Camille has gone for ever.'

Laurent made a terrible mistake when he said Camille's name. Immediately, the lovers felt that the ghost of the drowned man had come into the room. They felt that the corpse was sitting between them.

The bedroom was warm and smelled sweetly. But there was also the cold damp smell of death. They could not forget what they had done.

Therese looked at her new husband with fear and hate. Laurent realized that he had made a mistake and he began to talk about other

things - the roses, the fire, anything that he could see. Therese tried to answer him. They were both afraid of their thoughts. They were both afraid of silence.

They could think of nothing and no one but Camille. Whatever they said aloud, the guilty lovers could not stop thinking about his death. Finally, they stopped talking. But the voices in their heads would not be silent.

'We killed Camille and his corpse is here between us. It will never go away.'

'Did - did you see him in the morgue?' Therese asked quietly.

'Yes,' Laurent replied.

'Was his body badly injured?' Therese asked.

Laurent remembered the terrible body of the drowned man, but he did not answer. He stood up and walked towards the bed. Then he walked back and held out his arms to Therese.

'Kiss me!' he said.

Therese stood up too. She leant against the wall. She tried to move her head away as Laurent came towards her.

'Kiss me. Kiss me,' he repeated.

Then Therese saw the mark on Laurent's neck. 'What's that?' she asked.

'It's - it's where Camille bit me,' Laurent said quickly. 'Kiss me, Therese. Kiss me there! Take away the pain.'

'Oh, no, no!' Therese cried. 'Not there. There's blood on it!'

She fell back down onto her chair. Laurent bent down and held her head in his big hands. He made her press her lips against the mark on his neck. Therese did not move until Laurent let her go. Then she wiped her hand across her mouth and spat into the fire.

Laurent turned away. He walked around the room for almost an hour. Therese sat in the chair without moving. They both knew the truth. When they had killed Camille, they had killed their desire for each other too.

The flames of the fire were weaker now and the room had become darker. As Laurent turned, he thought that he saw something in the

corner of the room. Camille was there! He was standing in the dark shadow between the fireplace and a cupboard! His face was green and twisted.

'Look there!' Laurent cried, pointing at the shadows in the corner of the room. 'Look! It's Camille!'

'It's his portrait - the picture that you painted of him,' Therese replied very quietly. 'My aunt forgot to take it to her room.'

'His portrait?' Laurent repeated.

The portrait looked exactly like the face of Camille's corpse in the morgue.

'Take it off the wall! Take it away!' Laurent whispered.

'No, I can't,' Therese replied. 'I can't touch it. You must do it.'

But neither of them were able to touch the picture. They were too frightened.

Laurent started walking around the room again. Again and again, he looked at the portrait of Camille. Laurent was going mad with terror and despair.

Then Laurent heard a scratching noise. He thought that the sound was coming from the portrait and he turned round quickly. Then he realized where the sound was coming from. Something was scratching at the door which led to the stairs. The drowned man was trying to get into the room!

The sound became louder and then there was a cry - the cry of a cat! Madame Raquin's cat, Francois, had been asleep in the bedroom all this time. Now he was awake and he wanted to get out. Laurent moved towards the cat and Francois jumped onto a chair. The cat lifted his back and stood there. He looked at Laurent with his big green eyes.

Laurent did not like cats and he hated Francois.

'Don't hurt him!' Therese cried.

A terrible idea had come into Laurent's mind.

'The ghost of Camille has entered the cat,' he thought. 'I must kill Francois.'

Laurent remembered how, more than a year ago, Therese had made noises like the cat. Did Francois really know the truth about them?

Laurent wanted to throw the cat out of the window. But he was too afraid to touch the angry animal with the bright green eyes.

The cat watched Laurent move across the room. Laurent opened the door and the cat ran out, crying loudly.

Therese watched as Laurent walked between the bed and the window. They did not want to get into the bed together. They did not want to touch each other. And that is how they spent the first night of their marriage.

Daylight came, bright and cold. Laurent felt calmer now. He took the portrait of Camille off the wall and turned it round. Laurent no longer felt afraid of the picture.

Therese went to the bed and pulled back the bedclothes. Her aunt must not know the truth. She must not know that they had not slept in the bed.

'I hope that we are going to get some sleep tonight,' Laurent said angrily. 'We've been behaving like frightened children. That can't happen again. It's all your fault. Try to be more cheerful tonight, do you understand?'

'I'll try,' Therese said quietly.

Laurent laughed, but he did not know why.

Chapter 10. The Ghost

Laurent and Therese's wedding night was bad, but the nights that followed it were worse. They now both knew the truth. They would never escape from Camille. Their fear turned to anger, and everything that they said or did made the anger worse.

Before their marriage, Therese had been nervous and excited. Laurent had been calm and cheerful. He had eaten, drunk and slept like an animal. Nothing had worried him. Now he had become as nervous and frightened as Therese. He could not sleep. Terrible pictures of Camille were always in Laurent's mind. He was not sorry that he had killed his friend. But he was afraid of what was happening to himself.

In the daytime, he promised to be strong. But at night, when he was locked in the house with Therese, Camille was there too. Laurent saw frightening shadows in the corners of every room. His thoughts were making his body weak. His desire for Therese and his fears were making him mad.

Therese felt half-mad too. When she was a child, she had hidden her thoughts and feelings. After meeting Laurent, she showed the feelings that were in her heart. Now she felt guilty about Camille's death. She wanted to tell everyone what had happened on the river.

Laurent became afraid that Therese would tell Madame Raquin everything. His fear made him angry with Therese. When they were alone, he began to shout at her and beat her. He hit her again and again.

The guilty lovers could not lie in the bed. They sat by the fire or walked around the room. Sometimes they slept in the chairs. But they were terrified of lying together in the bed. In the mornings, their bodies were stiff and cold. Their faces were pale and blotchy. They both thought that they could see the terrible corpse of Camille. The drowned man was always between them.

A week passed in this way. Laurent and Therese fell asleep during the day and they were awake all night. The guilty lovers both pretended that this life and their behaviour was normal. But they were mad.

One evening, they were so tired that they lay down on the bed. The next night, they got under the bedclothes, but they did not touch each other. Therese lay down on one side of the bed, near the wall. Then Laurent lay down on the other side of the bed. There was a wide space between them. This space was for Camille. They believed that his corpse lay between them. They could feel the damp body. They were terrified of touching it.

Sometimes Laurent thought of holding Therese in his arms but the drowned man stopped him. Laurent thought that Camille was jealous of him.

One night, Laurent tried to kiss Therese. But she turned away from him and her body shook with fear.

'Why are you shaking?' he shouted. 'Are you afraid of Camille? Yes, you are, aren't you? You're afraid that he will come and pull you out of this bed! I'll take you to his grave one night. You can see his corpse for yourself. Then you will know that he can't harm you. Come! Kiss me! That will make you forget him!'

They kissed, but Therese's lips were as cold as ice. Laurent started to shake with cold too. Laurent could not kill Camille for a second time. Camille was a ghost. Laurent realized that Therese was not a widow. She was still married - married to a drowned man. Camille had destroyed them. They would never make love again. As they moved apart, they began to cry.

After Laurent and Therese were married, the domino games continued on Thursday evenings. The Michauds and Grivet came to the shop in the arcade as usual. Old Michaud and Grivet had been afraid that the domino games would end after Camille's death. They were delighted when they all met at the drapers shop as before.

Therese hated the visitors, but Laurent told her to be polite to them. Old Michaud had been a Police Commissioner in Paris and Olivier still worked for the police. The Michauds were important friends.

Laurent and Therese's days and nights had now changed completely. At night, they were terrified. But when day came, they pretended that they were happily married.

Every morning, Laurent got up and dressed quickly. After he had eaten his breakfast, he was ready for the day.

'Goodbye. I'll see you this evening,' he said cheerfully to Therese and Madame Raquin. And he went to his office at the Orleans Railway Company.

Spring had come and Laurent walked by the river. He enjoyed looking at the trees and the water. He enjoyed breathing the cool, clean air. He stayed in his office all day, but he did very little work.

In the evenings, as he walked back to the shop, his fears returned. Terror was waiting for him in the arcade.

After Laurent left every morning, Therese felt cheerful too. She cleaned the house and the shop and kept busy all day. Then Therese would cook lunch for Madame Raquin and herself.

In the afternoons, Therese would sit down behind the counter. The terrors of the night seemed very far away. She looked out of the shop window, into the arcade. Then she dreamt that she was buried in a cold grave with many other people. But she was alive and they were dead. This strange idea did not frighten her. She felt calm and safe. Sometimes Suzanne Michaud came to see Therese. Later, Therese would cook Laurent's dinner. Then the fears of the night would return.

The evenings were very quiet. Laurent and Therese stayed in the sitting-room until it was very late. They did not speak to each other, but they listened to Madame Raquin telling them stories of her life in Vernon. She told Therese and Laurent her plans for their future too.

Madame Raquin sat in the light of the lamp. The young people sat in the shadows, looking at the old woman. But they never looked at each other. The sound of the old woman's voice almost stopped their fears.

On Thursday evenings, Laurent and Therese did not think about the terrors of the night because their friends were in the house. Therese would sometimes talk and laugh and Laurent would tell jokes.

But soon the guilty lovers had something different to worry about. Madame Raquin had been ill for some time. She could not move about easily and sometimes she could not speak clearly.

Laurent and Therese were worried. They were not sorry for the poor old woman, but they were sorry for themselves. The terrors of the night now began at six o'clock, when Laurent came home.

They looked after the old woman well. Everyone told Laurent and Therese that they were good and kind to Madame Raquin. But she became weaker every day.

After four months, Laurent made a decision. He wanted to change his life. He had married Therese and stayed with her because he wanted the Raquins' money. But now he had an idea to make his life more enjoyable.

'I've something to tell you,' he said to the two women one evening. 'I've told my manager that I'm leaving the office. I don't want to work as a clerk any more. I'm going to start painting again. I've always wanted to be an artist.'

Therese looked unhappy. She knew that Laurent wanted money and she did not want to give it to him.

'How much money will you earn?' Therese asked. 'The shop doesn't make much money, you know.'

Laurent looked at his wife. She understood him at once.

'Well,' she began, 'I might be able to give you a little money each month'

'Of course, Laurent must have some money,' Madame Raquin said kindly. 'He could be a great artist. He needs your help, Therese.'

'I'll have to rent a studio,' Laurent said quickly. 'Just a small one at first. Then I must buy new paints and brushes. One hundred francs a month would be enough.'

Laurent rented a studio the next day. Two weeks later, he left his job at the Orleans Railway Company.

The studio was small, but Laurent could be alone there. He did not start painting immediately. He did nothing. One day, Therese visited him in the studio, but he pretended to be out. In the evening, he told her that he had spent the day at the Louvre museum.

After a few weeks, Laurent bought paints and canvases and started to work. He could not pay for a model, so he drew and painted pictures from his imagination.

Laurent usually painted in the mornings. In the afternoons, he walked around Paris. On one of these walks he met an old friend. The man was a successful artist and he was making a lot of money.

'Why, it's you, Laurent!' the painter cried in a surprised voice. 'I didn't recognize you. You've become thin and pale.'

'I got married,' Laurent said. 'And I've started painting again.'

'Well, your marriage must be very successful,' the artist said, with a laugh. 'You look very well and you are better dressed too! Let me see what you are painting.'

'Come to my studio now,' Laurent said. 'I'm starting a big picture.'

The artist was very surprised by Laurent's work. 'These drawings of faces are very good,' he said to Laurent. 'Your work is much better now.'

The artist looked at the painting again.

'There is something strange about the faces,' he said. 'The faces are of men and women, but they all look the same. Change some of them. Then they will be good.'

When his friend had left, Laurent looked at the painting carefully. His face became pale and he suddenly felt very cold.

The faces were all the same - they all looked like Camille!

Laurent picked up a new canvas and drew another face. Again, it was Camille's face who looked back at him.

With a cry of terror, Laurent picked up a knife. He began to cut the pictures into many pieces. He could never be an artist. He would never paint again.

Laurent looked down at his hand. Whatever he tried to do, every painting would look like Camille. Camille would always be with him in his studio.

Chapter 11. Madame Raquin

Madame Raquin had been ill for some time. Then she had a stroke. She stopped speaking in the middle of a sentence and she never said another word again. She also became paralysed - she could not move any part of her body, except her eyes.

Laurent and Therese were shocked and upset. But they were sorry for themselves, not for the poor old woman. From that day, their lives became worse. Madame Raquin's happy conversation had given them peace. Now she was silent and they lived with the ghost of death all the time.

The light of the lamp fell on Madame Raquin's round pale face. Therese and Laurent sat in the shadows and watched the old woman.

When Madame Raquin shut her eyes, they woke her up. The old woman's eyes seemed to be the only living things in the room.

Therese looked after her aunt carefully and gently. She fed her and dressed her. She tried to understand what the old woman needed. Every morning, Laurent carried the silent old woman into the sitting-room and she sat there all day. Then Laurent went to his studio and Therese sat in the shop. In the evenings, they all sat together in the sitting-room.

The Thursday evenings went on as usual. Madame Raquin's friends talked to her. They pretended that nothing had happened. They pretended that she was talking with them.

Madame Raquin could not move and she could not speak. But she was happy because her children were looking after her. Her eyes were bright with joy. The only person who understood the old woman was Therese. She watched her aunt's eyes carefully and tried to help her.

Madame Raquin lived like this for several weeks. She thought that nothing worse could happen to her. But she was wrong. Laurent and Therese became careless. They began to talk about Camille so that the old woman could hear their conversation.

'Is he there in the shadows?' Laurent asked Therese one evening. 'Is that why you are shaking? Drowned men do not return from their graves, do they?'

'You know that they do, you murderer!' Therese replied. 'You killed him. It is because of you that he comes here.'

'And did you help Camille when I pushed him in the water?' Laurent asked his wife. 'No! If I'm a murderer, then so are you. We both wanted him dead.'

'We were fools!' Therese said. 'Our lives were better when Camille was alive. We made love every day and he didn't know. We were happy then. We killed our own happiness when we killed stupid Camille.'

Madame Raquin was horrified. The poor old woman knew the truth at last, but it was too late. She could do nothing. She tried to speak,

but she could not. She tried to move her hands, but she could not. Tears ran down her face.

Therese and Laurent saw what they had done.

'We must put her into her bed,' Therese said. 'Take her out of this room.'

Laurent picked up the old woman. Her bright eyes stared at him.

'Look at me if you want to,' Laurent said. 'Camille is dead. There is nothing that you can do about it now.'

But Therese was not so sure. Thursday came and she was very worried.

'My aunt might find a way to tell her friends,' Therese told Laurent. 'There's a terrible look in her eyes. I'm sure that she will find a way to tell them our secret.'

'How?' replied Laurent. 'She can't move and she can't speak. What can she do? Nothing! Her friends are stupid. We must behave normally. We are quite safe.'

So that Thursday evening was the same as all the other Thursdays. Suzanne, Olivier, Old Michaud and Grivet sat round the table with them and began to play dominoes. Madame Raquin sat in her chair. She did not move and she did not speak. But she had a plan.

Madame Raquin slowly moved her right hand from her knee. Slowly, very slowly, her hand moved up and onto the table. The hand lay there, soft and white.

'Look at that!' Old Michaud said. 'Madame Raquin can move her fingers! Perhaps she's trying to tell us something.'

The two murderers looked at the hand that was going to tell everyone the truth. One of the fingers on Madame Raquin's right hand moved on the table.

'She is trying to write some words,' Grivet said. 'Yes, she has written your name, Therese.' He started to read the words. 'Therese and ... Go on, dear Madame, go on.'

Olivier continued reading the message. 'Therese and Laurent ... Therese and Laurent are ...' he said. 'What are they? Your dear children?'

The two murderers were now mad with fear. They almost completed the sentence themselves.

Madame Raquin's hand moved once more and then became still.

'I know what our poor friend wanted to say,' Grivet said. 'Madame Raquin wanted to tell us about her children. She wanted to say: Therese and Laurent are taking good care of me.'

The others all agreed and they started another game of dominoes.

Madame Raquin was in despair. Her friends had not understood her! Her son's murderers would never be caught and punished now.

* * *

Two more months passed. Therese and Laurent hated each other and they hated their marriage. There was no escape. Their marriage was their punishment and they would never be happy again. Every night, Laurent and Therese quarrelled. The guilty lovers made each other angry about nothing. The quarrels started with cruel words and often ended with a beating. Laurent hit Therese until he could not lift his fists.

Madame Raquin watched and listened. And so she learnt everything about Laurent and Therese's adultery. She learnt about her son's death. Every evening, the old woman heard something new and the tears ran down her face.

Sometimes Therese asked Laurent to stop talking about the murder in front of her aunt.

'Let her cry! Who cares about her?' he shouted. 'She can't do anything and we've got her money. We don't have to feel sorry for her!'

And then the quarrel would begin all over again. They did not take Madame Raquin to her own room. She heard every terrible word.

One evening at dinner, Laurent decided that the water in a jug was not cold enough.

'I can't drink warm water. It makes me feel sick,' he said.

'I couldn't get any ice,' Therese replied. 'The water tastes all right.'

'No, it doesn't, it tastes like river water,' Laurent told her angrily.

'River water!' Therese screamed. 'How can you talk about river water? You drowned Camille in the river!'

'You made me do it!' Laurent shouted. 'You sat and watched as I pushed him under the water. You are as guilty as I am. You knew what I was going to do. I told you my plan. Then you got in the boat. You didn't try to stop me, did you?'

'I was too shocked,' Therese replied. 'I couldn't think clearly. You murdered Camille, not me.'

'You helped me to commit the crime! You are guilty too!' Laurent shouted. 'You asked me to come to your husband's bed. Then you came to my room to make love. You hated Camille and you wanted him dead. You made me kill him.'

'The power of your love made me mad and weak,' Therese replied. 'I wasn't strong enough to fight you. You've destroyed my life!'

Laurent lifted his hand. He was going to hit her.

'That's right, hit me!' Therese screamed. 'Murder me too! Then I'll be dead, like Camille!'

And so they went on. They would shout and scream at each other until they could no longer speak. And all the time, Madame Raquin was watching them destroy each other.

Therese was on the edge of complete madness. She could not control her thoughts, her feelings, or what she did. The unhappy young woman talked to Madame Raquin for many hours. She told her everything that she thought and felt. She fell onto her knees in front of her aunt and begged her forgiveness.

'You were always good to me and I deceived you!' Therese cried. 'You can see my pain. Please forgive me!'

Therese kissed her aunt and the young woman's tears fell on the old woman's stiff, pale face.

'Yes! You have forgiven me,' Therese cried. 'I knew that you would forgive me!'

But Madame Raquin could not forgive Therese. She wanted revenge. She wanted the murderers to be punished. That was all that the poor woman thought about.

When Laurent came home, he pulled Therese to her feet.

'Get up!' he said to her. 'You are doing this to make me angry. Cry if you want to. But you aren't sorry for anything.'

'I am sorry,' Therese cried. 'I'm as guilty as you. I am guilty of adultery. I am guilty of murder.'

'Well, that's true,' Laurent said. 'But leave the old woman alone. You can see that she hates you.'

'You're wrong. She is good and so was Camille,' Therese said. 'I loved Camille and he loved me.'

'If you loved your husband, why did you want a lover?' Laurent shouted.

'I loved Camille,' Therese replied. 'I loved him as if he was my brother. Camille and his mother were always kind to me. We were all happy until we met you here. I loved him and I hate you.'

'Be quiet!' Laurent shouted.

'No, I won't be silent!' Therese screamed. Tears ran down her face. 'You're a murderer!'

Laurent knocked Therese down and held her on the floor. He lifted his hand.

'Hit me! Murder me too!' she cried. 'You're not a man, you're an animal!'

As Laurent hit his wife, Madame Raquin watched and she was happy.

After this, Therese began to speak about Camille every day. She spoke about him in every conversation. When he thought about Camille, Laurent became mad and Therese knew this. She would repeat Camille's name until Laurent hit her. Then she knew that she had won.

Chapter 12. Punishment

Madame Raquin's life was terrible. She wanted to die. She decided that she would stop eating. She refused all food. She wanted to kill herself. Therese tried to make her aunt eat some food, but the old woman would not open her mouth.

'Leave her alone,' Laurent shouted at his wife. 'If the old woman wants to die, let her die.'

When she heard these words, Madame Raquin made a decision. She did not want to die now. She did not want to make the murderers' lives easier. She decided to live.

Madame Raquin wanted revenge. And she believed that she would not have long to wait. The murderers would soon be punished. Laurent and Therese were slowly destroying each other.

Therese and Laurent wanted to escape from each other. They wanted to run away, but they could not. If they ran away, their friends would think again about Camille's death. They would remember that Laurent had been Camille's best friend. They would think about how and why Laurent and Therese got married. Then they would think that Laurent and Therese were guilty of a crime. The murderers would be caught, brought back to Paris, and executed.

* * *

One day, Therese asked Suzanne Michaud to come and serve in the shop with her. Suzanne was delighted and the two women sat behind the counter, talking all day. Madame Raquin and Francois sat upstairs.

The drapers shop had very few customers now. All the goods were old and dirty. Therese did not care about her customers or the business at all. Sometimes she went out in the afternoon and left Suzanne to look after the shop. When Therese returned to the Passage du Pont-Neuf in the evening, she looked very tired.

Laurent had nothing to do and he was very bored. He could not paint, because every face that he painted looked like Camille. Sometimes Laurent walked along by the River Seine. Sometimes he slept all day in his studio. The mark left by Camille's teeth on Laurent's neck was still painful. The bite-mark had not disappeared. Laurent saw it every day and remembered how he had murdered Camille.

Laurent hated his wife and he hated Madame Raquin. And his hatred of Madame Raquin's tabby cat, Francis, became stronger and stronger.

The cat sat on Madame Raquin's knees all day. He watched Laurent with his big green eyes. Laurent began to think that Francois knew all about the murder of Camille.

One evening, Laurent decided to kill the animal. He picked up the cat and opened the sitting-room window. Immediately, Madame Raquin understood what Laurent was going to do. Two tears ran down her pale face.

Francois fought Laurent and tried to bite him. But the poor cat could not get away. Laurent threw the animal out of the window. Francois's head hit the high black wall and, with one terrible cry, he died.

Poor Madame Raquin had cried when her son died. And now she cried when she saw Francois die.

Laurent soon had other things to worry him. Therese had become very quiet. She no longer tried to please her aunt. Therese also stopped quarrelling with her husband. Sometimes she did not speak to him at all.

Then Therese started to go out of the house four or five times a week. Laurent did not trust his wife. He was afraid that she would go the police and tell them about the murder of Camille. He thought that she would confess to the crime. Laurent decided to follow Therese and find out what she was doing.

* * *

Early one morning, Laurent sat down outside a wine-shop near the Passage du Pont-Neuf and waited. After half an hour, Therese came out of the arcade. She was dressed in brightly-coloured clothes and her black hair hung about her shoulders. She lifted her dress as she walked and everyone could see her white stockings and black shoes. She smiled at all the men as she walked along.

Laurent followed his wife carefully. She was walking more quickly now. A police officer passed her and Therese smiled at him. Laurent was terrified. Therese was going to tell the police officer everything! But she walked on until she came to a little cafe. The tables outside the cafe were crowded with students and young women. Therese

sat down at one of the tables and greeted all the young people. The men and women were drinking wine, smoking cigars and kissing each other.

Therese spoke to a waiter and ordered a drink. Then she started to talk to a fair-haired young man. When they had finished their drinks, Therese and the young man got up and walked away. Therese was holding the young man's arm.

Laurent followed them and saw them go into a cheap hotel. A few minutes later, Therese and the young man were standing together by an open window. The fair-haired man put his arms round Therese and kissed her.

'Therese is making love to strangers and they are paying her,' Laurent said to himself. 'I don't care. I'll ask Therese for a few thousand francs when she gets home this evening.'

That night, Therese came home late. Laurent did not say that he had seen her at the cafe with the young man.

Therese looked tired and she smelt of cigar smoke and wine. She ate nothing at dinner.

'I want you to give me some money,' Laurent said. 'Five thousand francs will be enough.'

Therese refused. 'No. You'll soon want more,' she replied. 'We're spending too much money. You've got no job. The shop isn't making any money now. I give you an allowance of one hundred francs a month and I pay for all your food. That's more than enough.'

'I want five thousand francs,' Laurent said again.

'We've bought everything for you for four years!' Therese shouted. 'There's a word for a man who women pay for!'

'You've learnt that word from your new friends,' Laurent said. But he did not say more. He did not tell Therese that he had seen her with her new friends.

Therese looked at her husband with anger in her dark, shining eyes. 'At least my new friends are not murderers,' she said quietly.

Laurent's face became very pale. 'I don't want to quarrel any more,' he said. 'Give me the money.' 'No.'

Laurent jumped up and Therese thought that he was going to hit her. 'You're making me mad!' he shouted. 'I shall go to the police and tell them everything.'

Therese stood up too. 'Very well,' she said. 'Let's go to the police together.'

'Yes. We'll go together,' Laurent replied.

But when they got downstairs they both stopped. They were too afraid to go any further. Therese was the first to speak.

'You can have the money,' she said. 'I don't care.'

She left the room and came back a few minutes later with five thousand francs.

Laurent now had money and he began to enjoy himself.

He went out with women. He got drunk in wine-shops and sometimes he stayed out all night. But nothing made him feel happy. Laurent did not care for food and kisses any more. And when he returned home to Therese and Madame Raquin, he felt afraid again. After a few weeks, he decided not to spend any more money.

Then Therese stopped going out and meeting men. Nothing made her happy now. She stayed in the house, wore dirty clothes and did not wash herself.

The two murderers were together in the house all day. They began to quarrel again. They both said that they would go to the police and confess. They watched each other with fear in their eyes. Therese began to wish that Laurent was dead. And Laurent began to wish that Therese was dead. Only a second murder could save them.

Laurent decided to kill Therese because he hated and feared her. Therese decided to kill her husband for the same reasons. Their plans were exactly the same. First, murder, then escape with Therese's money. Therese had hidden the money, but Laurent knew where it was.

Laurent bought some prussic acid - a powerful poison. Therese took a sharp knife from the kitchen and hid it in the pocket of her dress.

Thursday evening arrived and the domino players walked cheerfully up the stairs to the room over the drapers shop. They had been meeting together every Thursday for four years. They had never

thought that anything was wrong in the Raquins' home. And they did not think that anything was wrong on this day. They were sure that the Raquins were all happy.

Therese and Suzanne talked together, as usual. Grivet told his silly jokes, as usual. Laurent laughed loudly at all of Grivet's stories, as usual.

Madame Raquin waited and watched. Soon the murderers would be punished for their crime. She hoped that she would live long enough to see them punished.

That evening, the friends stayed much later than usual. It was half past eleven when they finished their last game of dominoes. Grivet and the Michauds got ready to leave.

'This is such a happy place. We never want to go home,' Old Michaud said and he smiled at Madame Raquin.

'I'll be here tomorrow at nine o'clock,' Suzanne said to Therese.

'No,' Therese said quickly. 'I'll be out tomorrow morning. Come in the afternoon.'

Therese and Laurent went downstairs with their visitors and locked the door of the shop. Their hands were shaking and they did not look at each other. Then they went upstairs and sat down at the table. They did not look at Madame Raquin.

Suddenly Laurent said, 'Well, are we going to bed?'

'Yes, we're going to bed,' Therese replied. She stood up and picked up the water jug. 'I'll prepare a drink for us before you take aunt to her bed.'

'No. I'll make a drink tonight,' Laurent said quickly. He turned away from his wife and filled a glass with water from the jug. He poured the poison into the glass and then put in some sugar.

As Laurent turned away from her, Therese pulled the knife out of her pocket.

They both turned towards each other at the same moment. Therese looked at the glass and then Laurent saw the knife in his wife's hand. Madame Raquin sat and watched.

Suddenly, Therese and Laurent began to cry. They stood completely still, looking at each other for the last time. Then Therese took the glass, drank half of the poisoned water and gave the glass back to Laurent. He drank too.

As they fell down to the floor together, Therese's mouth touched the mark on Laurent's neck.

* * *

Laurent and Therese lay on the sitting-room floor all night. The light from the lamp shone down on their twisted bodies.

For almost twelve hours, Madame Raquin stared at the corpses of the murderers. She could not move and she could not cry out. But she had a look of terrible joy in her eyes. She was happy. Her son's murderers had their punishment at last.

- THE END -

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