



Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature

The First Man

ALBERT CAMUS

Acclaim for Albert Camus's

THE FIRST MAN

“*The First Man* is perhaps the most honest book Camus ever wrote, and the most sensual.... Camus is not writing at the height of his powers, he is writing at the depth of his powers.... It is a work of genius.”

—*The New Yorker*

“Rending, brilliant ... joyfully vivid.... *The First Man* has an overwhelming emotional integrity.... To read [it] is to visit a tomb and find that a spring is bubbling from it.”

—Richard Eder, *Los Angeles Times Book Review*

“A beautiful paean to the past, memory and family.... A moving novel and a welcome addition to the Camus *oeuvre*, *The First Man* underscores Camus's lifelong celebration of existence itself.”

—*San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle*

“Fascinating.... *The First Man* helps put all of Camus's work into a clearer perspective and brings into relief what separates him from the more militant literary personalities of his day, like Malraux and Sartre.... There is humor, too, and evidence of a great capacity for affection, friendship and gratitude.... Camus's voice has never been more personal than in *The First Man*.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

“Utterly absorbing and evocative.... Much can be gleaned along these lines from the appended interleaves and notes and sketches that detail the author's wider vision. These items ... provide an unusual and privileged window into the writer's craft.... They demonstrate in a simple and haunting way what Albert Camus was thinking as he penned his last words.”

—*Boston Book Review*

“In his final project, Camus vigorously captures the tactile truths of his childhood and adolescence within a formal frame of fiction.... In *The First Man*, isolated young Albert Camus speaks painfully through the sentences of the world-wise artist, revealing the spare, poignant origins of his exceptional moral conscience.... With the publication of *The First Man*, many readers will come to love Camus again.”

—*Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Heartbreaking.... Every page bears the clarity of the Camus we have read, and beyond that a lyric sense of longing.... Camus’s story is the oldest story, yet he infuses it with the intensity of childhood and the beneficence of his love for the people of Algeria. *The First Man* will expand posterity’s judgment of Camus and leave the reader sandblasted by feeling.”

—*Miami Herald*

“A bittersweet story about finding one’s place in the world without betraying one’s origins.... With *The First Man* we encounter a new Camus, more personal and personable. Drawing explicitly for the first time on the circumstances of his life, he is, as ever, wisely humane. But this time, he is more human as well.”

—*Newsweek*

“Let nobody mistake this work for a fragment of interest only to scholars and fans.... *The First Man* is as satisfying as a noble Greek statue some of whose limbs are missing: Our regret over the lost arms of the Venus de Milo is nothing compared to our joy over what remains.”

—*Washington Post Book World*

“The very unfinished quality of *The First Man* lends it an appealing directness ... these pages ... shimmer with a lyricism and sensuousness.... [Algeria] is movingly memorialized in this book, its brilliant colors, spectral light and lush scents conjured up in luxuriant detail.”

—*The New York Times*

“Camus obviously held high literary ambitions for his book, which was going to be large.... No one knows how *The First Man* would have turned out.... But what survives is complete in design, detail and density; radiant and deeply necessary.”

—*Boston Globe*

THE FIRST MAN

Albert Camus

*Translated from the French
by David Hapgood*

*VINTAGE INTERNATIONAL
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Editor's Note

Judith Jones, editor of the American edition of this book, has asked me for a more explanatory preface than the one I wrote for the French edition. Knopf has taken such pains with this book that I cannot refuse. But I must warn the reader that I am neither a writer, nor an academic, nor even an expert on Camus. I am just his daughter, and so I ask you to read this note with forbearance and to forgive any awkwardness in it.

Why publish this manuscript so long after my father's death? To understand this delay we must evoke the mood of 1960, the year my father died, and my mother, Francine, and his friends decided not to publish his manuscript. I shall try briefly to summarize the mood of that time by means of what is certainly an oversimplified sketch of people's opinions as they related to the question of publication.

French intellectuals were preoccupied with two topics: the Soviet Union and the war in Algeria. On the first, the prevailing opinion on the left forbade criticism of the Communist regime on the grounds that any such criticism would, by damaging the regime's credibility, delay humanity's progress toward a better world. On the second topic, the same people favored independence for Algeria under Arab rule and supported the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale).

Camus, for his part, condemned the Gulag, Stalin's trials, and totalitarianism in the Soviet Union, in the belief that ideology must serve humanity, not the contrary, and that the ends did not justify the means. He went so far as to say that the means used by totalitarian regimes destroyed any hope for a better world. As for Algeria, he advocated a federation in which the Arab and European peoples would be equally represented. Those who read this book may better understand his position.

So, in denouncing totalitarianism, and in advocating a multicultural Algeria where both communities would enjoy the same rights, Camus

antagonized both the right and the left. At the time of his death he was very much isolated and subject to attacks from all sides designed to destroy the man and the artist so that his ideas would have no impact.

In these circumstances, to have published an unfinished manuscript—144 handwritten pages, often lacking periods and commas, never revised—might well have given ammunition to those who were saying Camus was through as a writer. His friends and my mother decided not to run that risk. My twin brother and I had no say in the decision, for we were only fourteen years old.

The years went by, my mother died in 1979, and I assumed the responsibility that had been hers. Between 1980 and 1985 voices began to be heard saying that perhaps Camus had not been so wrong, and little by little the old disputes died down. As for me, I first had to learn how to deal with a work of literature. I prepared Camus's *Carnet III* for publication, and then in the early 1990s my brother and I had to confront the question of *Le Premier Homme*. Two considerations persuaded us. First, we believed a manuscript of such importance would sooner or later be published unless we destroyed it. Since we had no right to destroy it, we preferred to publish it ourselves so that it would appear exactly as it was. Secondly, it seemed to us that this autobiographical account would be of exceptional value to those interested in Camus.

Finally, it is obvious that my father would never have published this manuscript as it is, first for the simple reason that he had not completed it, but also because he was a very reserved man and would no doubt have masked his own feelings far more in its final version. But it seems to me—and I say this with hesitation, for I can claim no objectivity—it seems to me that one can most clearly hear my father's voice in this text because of its very rawness. That is why I hope readers will come to it in a spirit of brotherhood.

Catherine Camus

March 1995

The text of this edition was established from the manuscript and from a first typescript by Francine Camus. Punctuation has been added as an aid to

comprehension. Words that were not clear are bracketed. Words or parts of sentences that were not decipherable are shown by white space between brackets. The author's variants, written at the top of the manuscript page, appear as footnotes indicated by an asterisk; his marginal inserts are indicated by letters; the editor's or translator's notes, by numbers.

In the appendix are the author's interleaves, which have now been numbered I to V. Some of these were inserted in the manuscript (sheet I before [chapter 4](#), II before [chapter 6A](#)), and the rest (III, IV, and V) were at the end of the manuscript.

Also in the appendix is "[The First Man \(Notes and Sketches\)](#)," the contents of the author's small spiral notebook with graph paper. These notes will give the reader an idea of the author's plans for the rest of the book. It seems certain that what he wrote was only the beginning of a novel that would have been longer by several hundred pages, about Algeria from the arrival of the French to the Second World War, including the war itself, and the Resistance to the German Occupation as lived by the protagonists in a love affair.

Once you have read [The First Man](#) you will understand why the appendix includes the letter Albert Camus wrote to his teacher, Louis Germain, after he received the Nobel Prize, and the last letter Louis Germain wrote to him.

PART ONE

Search for the Father

Intercessor: Widow Camus

*To you who will never be
able to read this book^a*

Above the wagon rolling along a stony road, big thick clouds were hurrying to the East through the dusk. Three days ago they had inflated over the Atlantic, had waited for a wind from the West, had set out, slowly at first then faster and faster, had flown over the phosphorescent autumn waters, straight to the continent, had unraveled^b on the Moroccan peaks, had gathered again in flocks on the high plateaus of Algeria, and now, at the approaches to the Tunisian frontier, were trying to reach the Tyrrhenian Sea to lose themselves in it. After a journey of thousands of kilometers over what seemed to be an immense island, shielded by the moving waters to the North and to the South by the congealed waves of the sands, passing scarcely any faster above this nameless country than had empires and peoples over the millennia, their momentum was wearing out and some already were melting into occasional large raindrops that were beginning to plop on the canvas hood above the four travelers.

The wagon was creaking over a route that was fairly well marked but had scarcely any surfacing. From time to time a spark would flash under a metal wheel rim or a horse's hoof, and a stone would strike the wood of the wagon or else would sink with a muted sound into the soft soil of the ditch. Meanwhile the two small horses moved steadily ahead, occasionally flinching a bit, their chests thrust forward to pull the heavy wagon, loaded with furniture, continuously putting the road behind them as they trotted along at different paces. One of them would now and then blow the air noisily from its nostrils, and would be thrown off its pace. Then the Arab who was driving would snap the worn* reins flat on its back, and the beast would gamely pick up its rhythm.

The man who was on the front seat by the driver, a Frenchman about thirty, gazed with an impenetrable look at the two rumps moving rhythmically in front of him. He was of medium height, stocky, with a long face, a high square forehead, a strong jaw, and blue eyes. Though the season was well along, he wore a three-button duckcloth jacket, fastened at the neck in the style of that time, and a light pith helmet^c over his close-cut hair.^d When the rain began streaming across the canvas above them, he turned toward the inside of the vehicle: "Are you all right?" he shouted.

On a second seat, wedged between the first seat and a heap of old trunks and furniture, sat a woman who, though shabbily dressed, was wrapped in a coarse woolen shawl. She smiled feebly at him. "Yes, yes," she said, with a little gesture of apology. A small four-year-old boy slept leaning against her. She had a gentle look and regular features, a warm gaze in her brown eyes, a small straight nose, and the black wavy hair of a Spanish woman. But there was something striking about that face. Not only would fatigue or something similar momentarily mask its features; no, it was more like a faraway look, a look of sweet distraction, such as you always see on some simpletons, but which would burst out only fleetingly on the beauty of this face. The kindness of that gaze, which was so noticeable, would sometimes be joined by a gleam of unreasoning fear that would as instantly vanish. With the flat of her hand, already worn with work and somewhat gnarled at the joints, she tapped her husband's back: "It's all right, it's all right," she said. And immediately she stopped smiling to watch, from under the canvas top, the road where puddles were already beginning to shine.

The man turned to the Arab, placid in his turban with its yellow cords, his body made stouter by baggy pants with a roomy seat gathered above the calf. "Do we have much farther to go?"

The Arab smiled under his big white moustache. "Eight kilometers and you're there."

The man turned to look at his wife, not smiling yet attentive. She had kept her eyes on the road. "Give me the reins," the man said.

"As you wish," said the Arab. He handed him the reins, and the man stepped across while the old Arab slipped under him to the place just vacated. With two slaps of the flat of the reins the man took over the horses, who picked up their trot and suddenly were pulling straighter. "You know horses," the Arab said.

The husband's reply was curt and unsmiling. "Yes," he said.

The light had dimmed and all at once night settled in. The Arab took the square lantern from its catch at his left and, turning toward the back, used several crude matches to light the candle inside it. Then he replaced the lantern. Now the rain was falling gently and steadily. It shone in the weak light of the lamp, and, all around, it peopled the utter darkness with its soft sound. Now and then the wagon skirted spiny bushes; small trees were faintly lit for a few seconds. But the rest of the time it rolled through an empty space made still more vast by the dark of night. The smell of burned grass, or, suddenly, the strong odor of manure, was all that suggested they were passing by land under cultivation. The wife spoke behind the driver, who held his horses in a bit and leaned back. "There are no people here," the wife said again.

"Are you afraid?"

"What?"

The husband repeated the question, but this time he was shouting.

"No, no, not with you." But she seemed worried.

"You're in pain," the man said.

"A little."

He urged his horses on, and once more all that filled the night were the heavy sounds of the wheels crushing ridges in the road and the eight shod hooves striking its surface.

It was a night in the fall of 1913. Two hours earlier the voyagers had left the railroad station in Bône where they had arrived from Algiers after a journey of a night and a day on hard third-class benches. In the station they had found the wagon and the Arab waiting to take them to the farm located near a small village, about twenty kilometers into the interior of the country, where the husband was to take over the management. It had taken time to load the trunks and their few belongings, and then the bad road had delayed them still further. The Arab, as if aware of his companion's disquiet, said to him: "Have no fear. Here there are no bandits."

"They're everywhere," the man said. "But I have the necessary." And he slapped his tight pocket.

"You're right," said the Arab. "There's always madmen."

At that moment, the woman called her husband. "Henri," she said. "It hurts."

The man swore and pushed his horses a bit more.^e “We’re getting there,” he said. After a moment, he looked at his wife again. “Does it still hurt?”

She smiled at him with a strangely absent air, yet she did not seem to be suffering. “Yes, a lot.”

He continued to gaze gravely at her.

Again she apologized. “It’s nothing. Maybe it’s the train.”

“Look,” the Arab said, “the village.” Indeed they could see, to the left of the road and a little farther on, the lights of Solférino blurred by the rain. “But you take the road to the right,” said the Arab.

The man hesitated, then turned to his wife. “Should we go to the house or the village?” he asked.

“Oh, to the house, that’s better.”

A bit farther, the vehicle turned to the right toward the unfamiliar house that awaited them. “Another kilometer,” said the Arab.

“We’re getting there,” the man said, in the direction of his wife. She was bent over double, her face in her arms. “Lucie,” the man said. She did not move. The man touched her with his hand. She was weeping silently. He shouted, stressing each syllable and acting out his words: “You are going to lie down there! I will go get the doctor!”

“Yes. Go get the doctor. I think this is it.”

The Arab was watching them with surprise. “She’s going to have a baby,” the husband said. “Is there a doctor in the village?”

“Yes. I’ll get him if you wish.”

“No, you stay at the house. You keep watch. I’ll go faster. Is there a small cart or a horse?”

“There’s a cart.” Then the Arab said to the wife, “You will have a boy. Let him be a fine one.” The wife smiled at him without seeming to understand.

“She doesn’t hear,” the man said. “At the house, you’ll have to shout out loud and make signs.” Suddenly the wagon was rolling almost without sound over the chalky subsurface of tuff. The road was narrower now. It passed alongside some tiled sheds behind which could be seen the first rows of the vineyard. They were met by a strong smell of fermenting grapes. They passed some large buildings with high-pitched roofs, and the wheels flattened the slag of a yard where there were no trees. The Arab took the reins without speaking and pulled them in. The horses stopped, and one of

them snorted.^f With his hand the Arab indicated a small whitewashed house. A creeping vine ran around a low door with a frame stained blue by copper sulfate. The man jumped to the ground and ran through the rain to the house. He opened the door. It led to a dark room which smelled of an empty hearth. The Arab, who was following him, walked straight through the dark to the fireplace, and, scraping an ember, lit a kerosene lamp that hung in the middle of the room over a round table. The man barely took time to notice that he was in a whitewashed kitchen with a sink of red ceramic tile, an old sideboard, and a sodden calendar on the wall. Stairs finished with the same red tiles led to the second floor. "Light the fire," he said, and he returned to the wagon. (He took the little boy?) The woman was waiting in silence. He took her in his arms to set her on the ground and, holding her close for a moment, he lifted her head. "Can you walk?"

"Yes," she said, and she stroked his arm with her worn hand.

He led her to the house. "Wait," he said.

The Arab had already lit the fire, and with skillful and precise motions he was stoking it with shoots of vine. She was standing near the table, hands on her belly, and now her handsome face turned up to the lamplight was crossed by brief waves of pain. She seemed to notice neither the dampness nor the odor of neglect and poverty. The man was busy in the rooms upstairs. Then he appeared at the head of the stairs. "There's no fireplace in the bedroom?"

"No," said the Arab. "Not in the other room either."

"Come," said the man. The Arab joined him, then reappeared, walking backwards, carrying a mattress that the husband was holding by the other end. They placed it next to the fireplace. The man pulled the table to a corner, while the Arab went back upstairs and soon returned with a bolster and blankets. "Lie down there," the man said to his wife, and he led her to the mattress.

She hesitated. Now they could smell the odor of damp hair rising from the mattress. "I can't undress," she said, looking around fearfully as if she were only now seeing the place.

"Take off what you have underneath," the man said. And he repeated: "Take off your underwear." Then to the Arab: "Thanks. Unhitch a horse. I'll ride him to the village." The Arab went out. The wife went about her preparations, her back to her husband, who had also turned his back. Then

she stretched out, and as soon she had done so, drawing the covers over her, she gave a single, long, full-throated howl, as if she wanted to rid herself at once of all the cries that pain had stored up in her. The man, standing by the mattress, let her cry; then, when she fell silent, he took off his pith helmet, put one knee to the ground, and kissed the fine forehead over her closed eyes. He put his hat on again and went out into the rain. The unhitched horse was turning its head, its front hooves planted in the slag. "I'll get a saddle," the Arab said.

"No, leave the reins on. I'll ride him like this. Take the trunks and the other things into the kitchen. Do you have a wife?"

"She died. She was old."

"Do you have a daughter?"

"No, God be thanked. But I have the wife of my son."

"Tell her to come."

"I'll do that. Go in peace."

The husband looked at the old Arab motionless in the fine rain and smiling at him under his wet moustache. He himself was still unsmiling, but he watched the Arab with his direct attentive gaze. Then he extended his hand. The other man took his hand in the Arab fashion, with the ends of his fingers, then lifted it to his lips. The husband turned, making the cinders crunch, strode to the horse, vaulted onto it bareback, and rode off at a lumbering trot.

As he left the property, the man headed toward the crossroads from which they had first seen the lights of the village. They were shining now with a more dazzling light, the rain had stopped falling and the road, to the right, that led toward the village was laid out straight through the vineyards where the trellis wires glistened here and there. About halfway, the horse slowed down to a walk. He was nearing a sort of rectangular shanty; one part was a room made of masonry, and a second, larger part was built of wooden planks. Projecting from this second part was a kind of counter with a big matting pulled down over it. On a door recessed in the masonry one could read: "Mme. Jacques's Farm Canteen." Light seeped under the door. The man stopped his horse right by the door, and knocked without dismounting. Immediately a firm resonant voice asked from inside, "What is it?"

“I’m the new manager of the Saint-Apôtre property. My wife is giving birth. I need help.”

No one answered. After a moment bolts were drawn, bars were lifted, then dragged away, and the door opened partway. He could make out the black curly head of a European woman with plump cheeks and a flattish nose above full lips. “My name is Henri Cormery. Can you go to be with my wife? I’m going to get the doctor.”

She gazed at him with the eye of one accustomed to weighing men and misfortune. He met her look squarely, but without adding a word of explanation. “I’ll go,” she said. “You hurry.”

He thanked her and kicked the horse with his heels. A few moments later he entered the village by passing between rampart-like walls made of dried mud. Stretching before him lay what seemed to be the only street, bordered with small one-story houses, all alike; he followed it to a small hard-surfaced square where, surprisingly, he found a metal-framed bandstand. The square, like the street, was deserted. Cormery was already headed toward one of the houses when the horse shied. An Arab, in a torn somber-colored burnoose, appeared from the shadows and came toward him. “The doctor’s house,” Cormery immediately asked. The Arab studied the horseman. “Come,” he said after he had looked him over. They went back up the street. Written on a building with a raised ground floor reached by whitewashed stairs were the words: “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.” Next to it was a small garden surrounded by roughly finished walls; at its far end was a house, to which the Arab pointed. “That’s it,” he said. Cormery jumped down from the horse, and, at a pace that showed no sign of fatigue, he crossed the garden, where all he noticed was, at the exact center, a dwarf palm with withered leaves and a rotted trunk. He knocked at the door. No one answered.^g He turned around. The Arab was waiting in silence. The husband knocked again. From inside could be heard footsteps that stopped behind the door. But the door did not open. Cormery knocked again and said, “I’m looking for the doctor.”

At once the bolts were drawn and the door was opened. A man appeared. His face was young and chubby, but his hair was almost white. He was tall and well built, and his legs were squeezed into leggings. He was putting on a sort of hunting jacket. “Well! Where did you come from? I’ve never seen you before,” he said, smiling. The husband explained. “Oh yes, the mayor

told me. But, you know, this is a strange place to come to have a baby.” The husband said he had been expecting the event later and that he must have made a mistake. “Well, that happens to everyone. Go ahead, I’ll saddle Matador and follow you.”

Halfway back, and through the rain that had begun to fall again, the doctor, mounted on a dappled gray horse, caught up with Cormery, who was now soaked through but still erect on his heavy farm horse. “Strange way to arrive,” the doctor called out. “But you’ll see, there’s good in this place, not counting the mosquitoes and the bandits in the bush.” He stayed alongside his companion. “About the mosquitoes, you know, you don’t have to worry till spring. As for the bandits ...” He laughed, but the husband rode on without a word. The doctor looked at him with curiosity. “Have no fear,” he said, “it will all go well.”

Cormery turned his straightforward gaze on the doctor, and, looking calmly at him, said with a touch of warmth: “I’m not afraid. I’m used to hard knocks.”

“Is this your first?”

“No, I left a four-year-old boy in Algiers with my mother-in-law.”

They came to the crossroads and took the road to the property. Soon the cinders were flying under the horses’ hooves. When the horses stopped and silence fell once more, they heard a loud cry from the house. The two men dismounted.

Awaiting them was a shadowy figure sheltered under a vine that was dripping water. Drawing closer, they recognized the old Arab wearing an improvised hood made of a sack. “Greetings, Kaddour,” said the doctor. “How is it going?”

“I don’t know, I especially don’t go in where the women are,” the old man said.

“Good rule,” said the doctor. “Particularly when women are crying.” But no cries were coming now from inside. The doctor opened the door and went in, Cormery behind him.

In front of them a big fire of vine branches flaming in the fireplace lighted the room more than did the kerosene lamp, with copper and bead trim, that hung from the middle of the ceiling. To their right, the sink was now all covered with towels and metal pitchers. The table in the middle of the room had been pushed over to the left, in front of a rickety sideboard

made of unfinished wood. On it were an old traveling bag, a hatbox, and various bundles. Pieces of old luggage, including a big wicker trunk, filled all the corners of the room, leaving a space only in the middle, not far from the fire. In that space, on a mattress set at right angles to the fireplace, the wife lay stretched out, head laid back on a pillow without a case, her hair let down. The blankets now covered only half the mattress. The uncovered part of the mattress was hidden from sight by the owner of the canteen, who was on her knees to its left. She was wringing out, over a washbasin, a towel dripping reddish drops of water. To the right, sitting cross-legged, an unveiled Arab woman held out, as if making an offertory, a second, somewhat flaking enamel basin full of steaming hot water. The two women were on either side of a folded sheet that lay under the wife. The shadow and light of the fireplace rose and fell on the whitewashed walls, on the baggage that cluttered the room, and, still closer, glowed red on the faces of the two nurses and on the form of the wife, bundled up under the blankets.

When the two men entered, the Arab woman glanced quickly at them, gave a brief laugh, then turned to the fire, her thin brown arms still offering the washbasin. The owner of the canteen looked at them and joyfully exclaimed: "No more need for you, Doctor. It happened by itself." She got to her feet and the two men saw, near the patient, something shapeless and bloody stirring with a sort of still movement and making a continuing, barely perceptible sound like a muffled screeching.^h

"So they say," said the doctor. "I hope you haven't touched the cord."

"No," said the woman, laughing. "We had to leave you something to do."

She got up and gave her place to the doctor, who again blocked the newborn from the sight of Cormery, still at the door, his head uncovered. The doctor squatted and opened his case; then he took the basin from the hands of the Arab woman, who immediately withdrew from the circle of light and took refuge in the dark angle of the fireplace. The doctor washed his hands, his back still to the door, then poured on those hands some alcohol that smelled a bit like grape liquor; its odor at once filled the room. At that moment, the wife lifted her head and saw her husband. A marvelous smile transfigured that exhausted beautiful face. Cormery went over to the mattress. "He came," she said under her breath, and she reached out her hand to the infant.

“Yes,” said the doctor. “But stay still.” The wife gave him a questioning look.

Cormery, standing at the foot of the mattress, made a quieting gesture. “Lie down.”

She lay back down again. The rain began to come down twice as hard on the old tile roof. The doctor went to work under the blanket. Then he straightened up and seemed to shake something in front of him. A small cry was heard. “It’s a boy,” the doctor said. “And a good sturdy one.”

“There’s one who’s getting off to a good start,” said the owner of the canteen. “By moving to a new home.”

The Arab woman in the corner laughed and clapped her hands twice. Cormery glanced at her and she turned away, embarrassed.

“All right,” said the doctor. “Now leave us for a moment.”

Cormery looked at his wife. But her face was still tilted back. Her hands, lying relaxed on the coarse blanket, were all there was to remind him of the smile that a while ago had filled and transfigured that wretched room. He put on his helmet and headed toward the door.

“What are you going to name him?” the owner of the canteen called out.

“I don’t know, we haven’t thought about it.” He looked at her. “Since you were here, we’ll call him Jacques.”

The woman burst out laughing and Cormery went out. The Arab, his head still covered with the sack, was waiting under the vine. He looked at Cormery, who said nothing to him. “Here,” said the Arab, and held out an end of the sack.

Cormery took shelter. He could feel the shoulder of the old Arab against him, and he smelled the smoke given off by his clothes; he felt the rain falling on the sack over their two heads. “It’s a boy,” he said without looking at his companion.

“God be praised,” answered the Arab. “You are a chief.” The water that had come from thousands of kilometers away went on falling before them, on the cinders and the many puddles that pitted them, on the vineyards farther distant, and the trellis wires still gleamed under the raindrops. It would never get to the sea to the East, and now it was going to drench the whole country, the marshy land by the river and the mountains around them, the immense almost uninhabited territory whose powerful odor

reached the two men huddled under the one sack, while behind them a feeble cry resumed from time to time.

Late in the night, Cormery was lying stretched out, in long drawers and undershirt, on a second mattress by his wife, watching the flames dance on the ceiling. The room was now pretty well tidied. On the other side of his wife, in a laundry basket, the infant slept in silence except for an occasional weak gurgle. His wife was also sleeping, her face turned toward him, her mouth partly open. The rain had stopped. Tomorrow he would have to start work. Near him, his wife's hand, already so worn it almost seemed made of wood, also reminded him of work. He reached out his own hand, placed it gently on hers, and, laying his head back, closed his eyes.

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- a. (add geological anonymity. Land and sea)
 - b. Solférino.
 - * split from wear and tear
 - c. or a kind of derby?
 - d. wearing heavy boots.
 - e. The little boy. [In the course of this chapter, the author variously places the boy in the wagon (p. 5) or in Algiers (p. 14)—*Trans.*]
 - f. Is it night?
 - g. I fought against the Moroccans (with a cryptic look) Moroccans, they're no good.
 - h. like that of certain cells under the microscope.