

## **A Rose for Emily**

Novel, 1936

Donald Akers

American Writer ( 1897 - 1962 )

Other Names Used: Faulkner, William Cuthbert;

*Short Stories for Students*. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2002. From *Literature Resource Center*.

Full Text:

Akers is a freelance writer and editor. In the following essay, he discusses the major critical interpretations "**A Rose for Emily**."

William Faulkner is widely considered to be one of the great American authors of the twentieth century. Although his greatest works are identified with a particular region and time (Mississippi in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries), the themes he explores are universal. He was also an extremely accomplished writer in a technical sense. Novels such as *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* feature bold experimentation with shifts in time and narrative. Several of his short stories are favorites of anthologists, including "**A Rose for Emily**." This strange story of love, obsession, and death is a favorite among both readers and critics. The narrator, speaking for the town of Jefferson in Faulkner's fictional Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, tells a series of stories about the town's reclusive spinster, Miss Emily Grierson. The stories build up to a gruesome revelation after Miss Emily's funeral. She apparently poisoned her lover, Homer Barron, and kept his corpse in an attic bedroom for over forty years. It is a common critical cliché to say that a story "exists on many levels." In the case of "**A Rose for Emily**", this is the truth. Critic Frank A. Littler, in an essay published in *Notes on Mississippi Writers* regarding the chronology of the story, writes that "**A Rose for Emily**" has been read variously as ". . . a Gothic horror tale, a study in abnormal psychology, an allegory of the relations between North and South, a meditation on the nature of time, and a tragedy with Emily as a sort of tragic heroine." These various interpretations serve as a good starting point for discussion of the story.

The Gothic horror tale is a literary form dating back to 1764 with the first novel identified with the genre, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Ontralto*. Gothicism features an atmosphere of terror and dread: gloomy castles or mansions, sinister characters, and unexplained phenomena. Gothic novels and stories also often include unnatural combinations of sex and death. In a lecture to students documented by Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner in *Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia 1957-1958*, Faulkner himself claimed that "**A Rose for Emily**" is a "ghost story." In fact, Faulkner is considered by many to be the progenitor of a sub-genre, the Southern gothic. The Southern gothic style combines the elements of classic Gothicism with particular Southern archetypes (the reclusive spinster, for example) and puts them in a Southern milieu. Faulkner's novels and stories about the South include dark, taboo subjects such as murder, suicide, and incest.

James M. Mellard, in *The Faulkner Journal*, argues that "**A Rose for Emily**" is a "retrospective Gothic;" that is, the reader is unaware that the story is Gothic until the ending when Homer Barron's corpse is discovered. He points out that the narrator's tone is almost whimsical. He also notes that because the narrator's flashbacks are not presented in an ordinary sequential order, readers who are truly unfamiliar with the story don't put all the pieces together until the end. However, a truly careful first reading should begin to reveal the Gothic elements early in the story. Emily is quickly established as a strange character when the aldermen enter her decrepit parlor in a futile attempt to collect her taxes. She is described as looking ". . . bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue." She insists that the aldermen discuss the tax situation with a man who has been dead for a decade. If she is not yet a sinister character, she is certainly weird. In section two of the story, the unexplained smell coming from her house, the odd relationship she has with her father, and the suggestion that madness may run in her family by the reference to her "crazy" great-aunt, old lady

Wyatt, are elements that, at the very least, hint at the Gothic nature of the story. Emily's purchase of arsenic should leave no doubt at that point that the story is leading to a Gothic conclusion. It would seem that a reader would have to be very naive not to suspect that something awful is going to happen at the end of the story.

It is Emily's awful deed that continues to captivate readers. Why would she do something so ghastly? How could she kill a man and bed his corpse? This line of questioning leads to a psychological examination of Emily's character. David Minter, in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work*, notes in several different passages the significant influence that Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychoanalysis, had on Faulkner's fiction. Freud theorized that repression, especially if it is sexual in nature, often results in psychological abnormality. In the story, Emily's overprotective, overbearing father denies her a normal relationship with the opposite sex by chasing away any potential mates. Because her father is the only man with whom she has had a close relationship, she denies his death and keeps his corpse in her house until she breaks down three days later when the doctors insist she let them take the body. Later in the story, the ladies of the town and her two female cousins from Alabama work to sabotage her relationship with Homer Barron. Of course, the narrator suggests that Homer himself may not exactly be enthusiastic about marrying Emily. However, it is left to the reader to imagine the exact circumstances leading to Homer's denouement. Finally, Emily takes the offensive by poisoning Homer so he can't abandon her. The discovery of a strand of her hair on the pillow next to the rotting corpse suggests that she slept with the cadaver or, even worse, had sex with it. Emily's repressive life therefore contributes to her (rather severe) psychological abnormality: necrophilia.

Some readers have interpreted the story as an allegory of the relations between the North and the South. This is apparently because the character of Homer Barron is a Yankee and Emily kills him. However, it would be difficult to argue that Emily's motivation in dating Homer is to kill him because he is a Northerner. The most obvious explanation for her willingness to date a man outside of her social caste would be that she is simply a very lonely woman. A less obvious, but nonetheless reasonable, explanation for her relationship with Homer would be that is her way of rebelling against her dead father. During his lifetime, her father prevented her from having an "acceptable" suitor. Thus, she rebels by associating with a man her father would have considered a pariah: a Yankee day-laborer. There is really little to suggest that the story is an allegory of the Civil War other than the fact that a Yankee is killed by a Southerner. Faulkner himself, in his lecture on the story at the University of Virginia, denies such an interpretation. He said that he believed that a writer is ". . . too busy trying to create flesh-and-blood people that will stand up and cast a shadow to have time to be conscious of all the symbolism that he may put into what he does or what people may read into it."

One can more confidently argue that "**A Rose for Emily**" is a meditation on the nature of time. Although the story is only a few pages long, it covers approximately three-quarters of a century. Faulkner cleverly constructed the story to show the elusive nature of time and memory. Several critics have written papers in attempts to devise a chronology for the story. It would surely please Faulkner that few of these chronologies are consistent with each other. In "**A Rose for Emily**, he is not concerned with actual dates. He is more interested in the conflict between time as a subjective experience and time as a force of physics. For example, in section five of the story, the narrator describes the very old men gathered at Emily's funeral. The old men, some who fought in the Civil War, mistakenly believe that Emily was a contemporary of theirs when in fact Emily was born sometime around the Civil War. The old men have confused ". . . time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottleneck of the most recent decade of years." Here, Faulkner profoundly and poetically comments on the human need to deny the passage of time and the astounding capacity of the human mind to use memory in that ultimately futile denial. Emily, of course, has other methods of denying time.

Since the denial of time is futile, it is also tragic. This is one reason the story can be read as a tragedy. But every tragedy needs a hero or heroine. Can Emily actually be considered a tragic heroine? At first

glance, this is a tough sell. Many readers quite reasonably believe that Emily is some kind of monster, regardless of what Freud might have said. However, as many critics have noted, Faulkner's title suggests that he may think otherwise. "In his fiction," notes Minter in his biography of Faulkner, "he characteristically mingles compassion and judgement. Even his most terrible villains. . .he treats with considerable sympathy." Emily is such an example. In fact, the narrator twice describes Emily as an idol. Although she commits a foul crime, Faulkner views Emily as a victim of her circumstance. Faulkner despised slavery and racism, but he admired much of the chivalry and honor of the old South. Emily is a product of that society and she clings desperately to it as when she refuses to give up her father's body. She also becomes a victim of her old society. The one time in her life that she dares to let the past become a "diminishing road," that is, when she dates Homer, she is ridiculed, ostracized, shamed, and finally jilted. Her response is an effort to actually freeze time by poisoning Homer and keeping his corpse in her ghoulish boudoir.

Finally, it is a tribute to Faulkner's talent that this compact yet expansive story lends itself to so many interpretations. The discussion above briefly describes the most common interpretations made by readers and critics. However, there is a great deal of scholarship, entire volumes, written on "**A Rose for Emily.**" Several critics, including Isaac Rodman in *The Faulkner Journal* and Milinda Schwab in *Studies in Short Fiction*, have presented convincing arguments of the town's complicity in Homer's murder. Many critics written interesting papers on literary allusions that they find in the story; alternately, many critics find allusions to "**A Rose for Emily**" in contemporary literature. (A interesting paper might be written comparing and contrasting Faulkner's Emily with the character of Norman Bates, the schizophrenic, homicidal hotel-keeper/amateur taxidermist of Alfred Hitchcock's 1963 film, *Psycho*.) "**A Rose for Emily**" remains a remarkable, provocative work regardless of the critical approach.

**Source Citation** (MLA 8<sup>th</sup> Edition)

Akers, Donald. "A Rose for Emily." *Short Stories for Students*, Gale, 2002. *Literature Resource Center*, [https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/H1420022906/GLS?u=tel\\_s\\_tsla&sid=GLS&xid=f8c153d4](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/H1420022906/GLS?u=tel_s_tsla&sid=GLS&xid=f8c153d4).

**Gale Document Number:** GALE|H1420022906

first published - 1930

passage of time

**A Rose for Emily**  
by William Faulkner (1897-1962)

I

When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old manservant---a combined gardener and cook- had seen in at least ten years.

historical

Machinery -  
industry  
Civil war

It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighbourhood; only Miss Emily's house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps-an eyesore among eyesores. And now Miss Emily had gone to join the representatives of those august names where they lay in the cedarbemused cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson.

1870s  
setting -  
depressin  
ugly  
make not  
for new  
age -  
honest

Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town, dating from that day in 1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor-he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron-remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity. Not that Miss Emily would have accepted charity. Colonel Sartoris invented an involved tale to the effect that Miss Emily's father had loaned money to the town, which the town, as a matter of business, preferred this way of repaying. Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it.

old way

When the next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction. On the first of the year they mailed her a tax notice. February came, and there was no reply. They wrote her a formal letter, asking her to call at the sheriff's office at her convenience. A week later the mayor wrote her himself, offering to call or to send his car for her, and received in reply a note on paper of an archaic shape, in a thin, flowing calligraphy in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all.

The tax notice was also enclosed, without comment.

They called a special meeting of the Board of Aldermen. A deputation waited upon her, knocked at the door through which no visitor had passed since she ceased giving china-painting lessons eight or ten years earlier. They were admitted by the old Negro into a dim hall from which a staircase mounted into still more shadow. It smelled of dust and disuse-a close, dank smell. The Negro led them into the parlour. It was furnished in heavy, leather-covered furniture. When the Negro opened the blinds of one window, they could see that the leather was cracked; and when they sat down, a faint dust rose sluggishly about their thighs, spinning with slow motes in the single sunray. On a tarnished gilt easel before the fireplace stood a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father.

again,  
all  
old +  
decayin

They rose when she entered-a small, fat woman in black, with a thin gold chain descending to her waist and vanishing into her belt, leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head. Her skeleton was small and spare; perhaps that was why what would have been merely plumpness in another was obesity in her. She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue. Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough as they moved from one face to another while the visitors stated their errand.

\*

She did not ask them to sit. She just stood in the door and listened quietly until the spokesman came to a stumbling halt. Then they could hear the invisible watch ticking at the end of the gold chain.

Her voice was dry and cold. 'I have no taxes in Jefferson. Colonel Sartoris explained it to me. Perhaps one of you can gain access to the city records and satisfy yourselves.'

"But we have. We are the city authorities. Miss Emily. Didn't you get notice from the sheriff, signed by him?"

"I received a paper, yes," Miss Emily said. "Perhaps he considers <sup>him</sup> himself the sheriff... I have no taxes in Jefferson."

"But there is nothing on the books to show that, you see. We must go, by the -"

"See Colonel Sartoris. 'I have no taxes in Jefferson.'"

"But, Miss Emily..."

"See Colonel Sartoris, (Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years.) I have no taxes in Jefferson. Tobe!" The Negro appeared. "Show these gentlemen out."

II

So she vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell. That was two years after her father's death and a short time after her sweetheart--the one (we) believe (would marry her--had deserted her. After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at an. A few of the ladies had the temerity to call, but were not received, and the only sign of life about the place was the Negro man--a young man then--going in and out with a market basket.

"Just as if a man--any man--could keep a kitchen properly," the ladies said; so they were not surprised when the smell developed. It was another link between the gross, teeming world and the high and mighty Griersons. A neighbour, a woman complained to the mayor, judge Stevens, eighty years old.

"But what will you have me do about it, madam?" he said.

"Why, send her word to stop it," the woman said. "Isn't there a law?"

"I'm sure that won't be necessary," judge Stevens said. "It's probably just a snake or a rat that nigger of hers killed in the yard. I'll speak to him about it."

The next day he received two more complaints, one from a man who came in diffident deprecation. "We really must do something about it judge. I'd be the last one in the world to bother Miss Emily, but we've got to do something." That night the Board of Aldermen met--three grey-beard and one younger man, a member of the rising generation.

"It's simple enough," he said. "Send her word to have her place cleaned up. Give her a certain time to do it in, and if she don't. . ."

"Dammit, sir," judge Stevens said, "will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?"

So the next night, after midnight, four men crossed Miss Emily's lawn and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings while one of them performed a regular sowing motion with his hand out of a sack stung from his shoulder. They broke open the cellar door and sprinkled lime there, and in all the outbuildings. As they recrossed the lawn, a window that had been dark was lighted and Miss Emily sat in it, the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol. They crept quietly across the lawn and into the shadow of the locusts that lined the street. After a week or two the smell went away.

That was when people had begun to feel really sorry for her. People in our town, remembering how old lady Wyatt, her great-aunt, had gone completely crazy at last, believed that the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such. We had long thought of them as a tableau; Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door. So when she got to be thirty and was still single, we were not pleased exactly, but vindicated; even with insanity in the family she wouldn't have turned down all of her chances if they had really materialized.

When her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her; and in a way, people were glad. At last they could pity Miss Emily. Being left alone, and a pauper, she had become humanized. Now she too would know the old thrill and the old despair of a penny more or less.

Doesn't recognize the new way, holding on to past

"we" - narrator as town's consciousness

Contrast young + old

"woman" is -- common not of the upper class



The day after his death all the ladies prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, as is our custom. Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body. just as they were about to resort to law and force, she broke down, and they buried her father quickly.

We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.

### III

She was sick for a long time. When we saw her again, her hair was cut short, making her look like a girl, with a vague resemblance to those angels in colored church windows-sort of tragic and serene.

The town had just let the contracts for paving the sidewalks, and in the summer after her father's death they began the work. The construction company came with niggers and mules and machinery, and a foreman named Homer Barron, a Yankee-a big, dark, ready man, with a big voice and eyes lighter than his face. The little boys would follow in groups to hear him cuss the niggers, and the niggers singing in time to the rise and fall of picks. Pretty soon he knew everybody in town.

Whenever you heard a lot of laughing anywhere about the square, Homer Barron would be in the centre of the group. Presently we began to see him and Miss Emily on Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow-wheeled buggy and the matched team of bays from the livery stable.

At first we were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest, because the ladies all said, "Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day labourer." But there were still others, older people, who said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget noblesse oblige-without calling it no blesse oblige. They just said, "Poor Emily. Her kinsfolk should come to her." She had some kin in Alabama; but years ago her father had fallen out with them over the estate of old lady Wyatt, the crazy woman, and there was no communication between the two families. They had not even been represented at the funeral.

And as soon as the old people said, "Poor Emily," the whispering began. "Do you suppose it's really so?" they said to one another. "Of course it is. What else could. . ." This behind their hands; rustling of craned silk and satin behind jalousies closed upon the sun of Sunday afternoon as the thin, swift clop-clop-clop of the matched team passed: "Poor Emily."

She carried her head high enough-even when we believed that she was fallen. It was as if she demanded more than ever the recognition of her dignity as the last Grierson; as if it had wanted that touch of earthiness to re her imperviousness. Like when she bought the rat poison, the arsenic. That was over a year after they had begun to say "Poor Emily," and while the two female cousins were visiting her.

"I want some poison," she said to the druggist. She was over thirty then, still a slight woman, though thinner than usual, with cold, haughty black eyes in a face the flesh of which was strained across the temples and about the eye sockets as you imagine a lighthouse keeper's face ought to look. "I want some poison," she said.

"Yes, Miss Emily. What kind? For rats and such? I'd recom--"

"I want the best you have. I don't care what kind."

The druggist named several. "They'll kill anything up to an elephant. But what you want is--"

"Arsenic," Miss Emily said. "Is that a good one?"

"Is. . . arsenic? Yes, ma'am. But what you want--"

"I want arsenic."

The druggist looked down at her. She looked back at him, erect, her face like strained flag. "Why, of course," the druggist said. "If that's what you want. But the law requires you tell what you are going to use it for."

She is above the law - 447

reverting to the past

change/modern (H.B. - The North)

} gossip

→ HB had become her lover.

Fallen from height - mixing w/ the lower class

'noblesse oblige' - the inferred responsibility of the privileged to act noble + generous

Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look him eye for eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up. The Negro delivery boy brought her the package; the druggist didn't come back. When she opened the package at home there was written on the box under the skull and bones: "For rats."

(CD 15157)

IV

*gossip/  
why the best?*

So the next day we all said, 'She will kill herself'; and we said it would be the best thing.

When she had first begun to be seen with Homer Barron, we had said, "She will marry him.

Then we said, "She will persuade him yet," because Homer himself had remarked he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks' Club-that he was not a marrying man. Later we said, "Poor Emily" behind the jealousies as they passed on Sunday afternoon in the glittering buggy, Miss Emily with her head high and Homer Barron with his hat cocked and a cigar in his teeth, reins and whip in a yellow glove.

*aristocracy -  
Episcopal -  
Baptist -  
middle -  
class -  
Want to impose  
stricter morality  
on her.*

Then some of the ladies began to say that it was a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people. The men did not want to interfere, but at last the ladies forced the Baptist minister-Miss Emily's people were Episcopal-to call upon her. He would never divulge what happened during that interview, but he refused to go back again. The next Sunday they again drove about the streets, and the following day the minister's wife wrote to Miss Emily's relations in Alabama.

*Man vs.  
woman*

So she had blood-kin under her roof again and we sat back to watch developments. At first nothing happened. Then we were sure that they were to be married. We learned that Miss Emily had been to the jeweller's and ordered a man's toilet set in silver, with the letters H. B. on each piece. Two days later we learned that she had bought a complete outfit of men's clothing, including a nightshirt, and we said, "They are married." We were really glad. We were glad because the two female cousins were even more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been.

*even Em.  
wants to  
get rid of  
the cousins*

So we were surprised when Homer Barron-the streets had been finished some time since-was gone. We were a little disappointed that there was not a public blowing-off, but we believed that he had gone on to prepare for Miss Emily's coming, or to give her a chance to get rid of the cousins. (By that time it was a cabal, and we were all Miss Emily's allies to help circumvent the cousins.) Sure enough, after another week they departed. And, as we had expected all along, within three days Homer Barron was back in town. A neighbour saw the Negro man admit him at the kitchen door at dusk one evening.

And that was the last we saw of Homer Barron. And of Miss Emily for some time. The Negro man went in and out with the market basket, but the front door remained closed. Now and then we would see her at a window for a moment, as the men did that night when they sprinkled the lime, but for almost six months she did not appear on the streets. Then we knew that this was to be expected too; as if that quality of her father which had thwarted her woman's life so many times had been too virulent and too furious to die.

When we next saw Miss Emily, she had grown fat and her hair was turning grey. During the next few years it grew greyer and greyer until it attained an even pepper-and-salt iron-gray when it ceased turning. Up to the day of her death at seventy-four it was still that vigorous iron-grey, like the hair of an active man.

From that time on her front door remained closed, save for a period of six or seven years, when she was about forty, during which she gave lessons in china-painting. She fitted up a studio in one of the downstairs rooms. where the daughters and grand-daughters of Colonel Sartoris' contemporaries were sent to her with the same regularity and in the same spirit that they were sent to church on Sundays with a twenty-five-cent piece for the collection plate. Meanwhile her taxes had been remitted.

*Change -  
new gen.  
not int.  
in tradition*

Then the newer generation became the backbone and the spirit of the town, and the painting pupils grew up and fell away and did not send their children to her with boxes of colour and tedious brushes and pictures cut from the ladies' magazines. The front door closed



upon the last one and remained closed for good. When the town got free postal delivery, Miss Emily alone refused to let them fasten the metal numbers above her door and attach a mailbox to it. She would not listen to them.

*no change*

Daily, monthly, yearly we watched the Negro grow greyer and more stooped, going in and out with the market basket. Each December we sent her a tax notice, which would be returned by the post office a week later, unclaimed. Now and then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows-she had evidently shut up the top floor of the house-like the carven torso of an idol in a niche, looking or not looking at us, we could never tell which. Thus she passed from generation to generation-dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse.

And so she died. Fell in the house filled with dust and shadows, with only a doddering Negro man to wait on her. We did not even know she was sick; we had long since given up trying to get any information from the Negro. He talked to no one, probably not even to her, for his voice had grown harsh and rusty, as if from disuse.

She died in one of the downstairs rooms, in a heavy walnut bed with a curtain, her gray head propped on a pillow yellow and moldy with age and lack of sunlight.

## V

The Negro met the first of the ladies at the front door and let them in, with their hushed, sibilant voices and their quick, curious glances, and then disappeared. He walked right through the house and out the back and was not seen again.

The two female cousins came at once. They held the funeral on the second day, with the town coming to look at Miss Emily beneath a mass of bought flowers, with the crayon face of her father musing profoundly above the bier and the ladies sibilant and macabre; and the very old men-some in their brushed Confederate uniforms-on the porch and the lawn, talking of Miss Emily as if she had been a contemporary of theirs, believing that they had danced with her and courted her perhaps, confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottleneck of the most recent decade of years.

Already, we knew that there was one room in that region above stairs which no one had seen in forty years, and which would have to be forced. They waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground before they opened it.

The violence of breaking down the door seemed to fill this room with pervading dust. A thin, acrid pall as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a bridal: upon the valance curtains of faded rose colour. upon the rose-shaded lights, upon the dressing table. upon the delicate array of crystal and the man's toilet things backed with tarnished silver, silver so tarnished that the monogram was obscured. Among them lay a collar and tie, as if they had just been removed, which, lifted, left upon the surface a pale crescent in the dust. Upon a chair hung the suit, carefully folded; beneath it the two mute shoes and the discarded socks.

The man himself lay in the bed.

For a long while we just stood there, looking down at the profound and fleshless grin. The body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him. What was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt, had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay; and upon him and upon the pillow beside him lay that even coating of the patient and biding dust.

*Death*

Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron-grey hair.