

“Perhaps,” he wrote, “we can only reach approximations of sainthood. In which case we must make shift with a mild, benevolent diabolism.” (Tarrou 248)

He added that he had still much to do, but that was no reason for not “holding himself in readiness,” and he questioned if he were ready. As a sort of postscript—and, in fact, it is here that Tarrou’s diary ends—he noted that there is always a certain hour of the day and of the night when a man’s courage is at its lowest ebb, and it was that hour that he feared.” (Narrator, Tarrou 252)

When the squall had passed, the silence in the room grew denser, filled only by the silent turmoil of the unseen battle. His nerves overwrought by sleeplessness, the doctor fancied he could hear, on the edge of the silence, that faint eerie sibilance which had haunted his ears ever since the beginning of the epidemic. (Narrator 257)

Tarrou tried to shape a smile, but it could not force its way through the set jaws and lips welded by dry saliva. In the rigid face only the eyes lived still, glowing with courage. (Narrator 259)

The human form, his friend’s, lacerated by the spear-thrusts of the plague, consumed by searing, superhuman fires, buffeted by all the raging winds of heaven, was foundering under his eyes in the dark flood of the pestilence, and he could do nothing to avert the wreck. He could only stand, unavailing, on the shore, empty-handed and sick at heart, unarmed and helpless yet again under the onset of calamity. And then, when the end came, the tears that blinded Rieux’s eyes were tears of impotence, and he did not see Tarrou roll over, face to the wall, and die with a short, hollow groan as if somewhere within him an essential chord had snapped. (Narrator 260)

Certainly he’d take a rest “over there.” It, too, would be a pretext for memory. But if that was what it meant, winning the match--how hard it must be to live only with what one knows and what one remembers, cut off from what one hopes for! It was thus, most probably, that Tarrou had lived, and he realized the bleak sterility of a life without illusions. There can be no peace without hope, and Tarrou, denying as he did the right to condemn anyone whomsoever—though he knew well that no one can help condemning and it

befalls even the victim sometimes to turn executioner—Tarrou had lived a life riddled with contradiction and had never known hope's solace. (Narrator 262-263)

For even Rambert felt a nervous tremor at the thought that soon he would have to confront a love and a devotion that the plague months had slowly refined to a pale abstraction, with the flesh-and-blood woman who had given rise to them. (Narrator 265)

In short, they denied that we had ever been that hag-ridden populace a part of which was daily fed into a furnace and went up in oily fumes, while the rest, in shackled impotence, waited their turn. (Narrator 268)

And, indeed, as he listened to the cries of joy rising from the town, Rieux remembered that such joy is always imperiled. He knew what those jubilant crowds did not know, but could have learned from books, that the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can be dormant for years and years, in furniture and linen-closets; that it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks, and bookshelves; and that perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and the enlightening of men, it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city. (Narrator 278)

Grand: tall, big, important, remarkable personage; great man or woman;  
contrast *grandiose*, *grandiloquent*

Tarrou: the cost, price; from *tarir* = to dry up, to run dry

Cottard: costume complete; from *costard* = costume; also chop, cutlet;

Paneloux: all-praising; from *louer* = to praise, to congratulate; to let, to rent

Rieux: cheerful; from *rieur* = cheerful

Rambert: to take back—*il ramene tout a lui* = he sees things only in terms of how they affect him

Othon: to take away, get out of the way; from *option* = to take an option on

Oran: gold now; from *or* = gold

