



The Birth

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**Dr. Andrew
Manson**




Balaenelly



Mining


IN this excerpt from *The Citadel*, **Andrew Manson**, newly out of medical school, has just begun his medical practice as an assistant to Dr. Edward Page in the small Welsh **mining** town of **Balaenelly**. As he is returning from a disappointing evening with Christine, the girl he loves, he is met by Joe Morgan, Joe and his wife, who have been married nearly twenty years, are expecting their first child.



THOUGH it was nearly midnight when Andrew reached Bryngower, he found Joe Morgan waiting for him, walking up and down with short steps between the closed surgery and the entrance to the house. At the sight of him the **burly driller's face expressed relief.**

Burly: large and strong






“Eh, Doctor, I’m glad to see you. I been back and forward here this last hour. The missus wants ye—before time, too.” Andrew, **abruptly** recalled from the **contemplation** of his own affairs, told Morgan to wait. He went into the house for his bag, then together they set out for Number 12 Blaina Terrace.

Abruptly: Sudden and unexpected

**Contemplation: time spending
thinking future assumption**






The night air was cool and deep with quiet mystery. Usually so **perceptive**, Andrew now felt dull and **listless**. He had no **premonition** that this night call would prove unusual, still less that it would influence his whole future in Blaenelly.

Perceptive: trying to understand


Listless: with no energy


Premonition: Fear of something bad would befall in near future





The two men walked in silence until they reached the door of Number 12, then Joe drew up short. “I’ll not come in,” he said, and his voice showed signs of strain. “But, man, I know ye’ll do well for us.”






Inside, a narrow stair led up to a small bedroom, clean but poorly furnished, and lit only by an oil lamp. Here Mrs Morgan's mother, a tall, grey-haired woman of nearly seventy, and the **stout**, elderly midwife waited beside the patient, watching Andrew's expression as he moved about the room.

Stout: strong






“Let me make you a cup of tea, Doctor, bach,” said the former quickly, after a few moments. Andrew smiled faintly. He saw that the old woman, wise in experience, realised there must be a period of waiting that, she was afraid he would leave the case, saying he would return later. “Don’t **fret, mother, I’ll not run away.”**



Fret: Nervous and worried




Down in the kitchen he drank the tea which she gave him. **Overwrought** as he was, he knew he could not snatch even an hour's sleep if he went home. He knew, too, that the case here would demand all his attention. A queer **lethargy** of spirit came upon him. He decided to remain until everything was over.

Overwrought: Upset and nervous

Lethargy: with little energy and spirit






An **hour later** he went upstairs again, noted the progress made, came down once more, sat by the kitchen fire. It was still, except for the **rustle** of a **cinder** in the **grate** and the slow tick-tock of the wall clock. No, there was another sound—the beat of Morgan’s footsteps as he paced in the street outside.

Rustle: a sound

Cinder: partially burned charcoal

Grate: To rub against the surface





The old woman opposite him sat in her black dress, quite motionless, her eyes strangely alive and wise, **probing**, never leaving his face. His thoughts were heavy, **muddled**.

Probe: investigate

Muddle: Confused






Living Unhappily

The episode he had witnessed at Cardiff station still obsessed him **morbidly**. He thought of Bramwell, foolishly devoted to a woman who deceived him **sordidly**, of Edward Page, bound to the shrewish Blodwen, of Denny, **living unhappily**, apart from his wife.

Sordidly: unpleasant way




His reason told him that all these marriages were **dismal** failures. It was a conclusion which, in his present state, made him wince. He wished to consider marriage as an **idyllic** state; yes, he could not otherwise consider it with the image of Christine before him.

Dismay: Sad, Hopeless

Idyllic: Pleasant






Her eyes, shining towards him, admitted no other conclusion. It was the conflict between his level, doubting mind and his overflowing heart which left him **resentful** and confused.

Resentful displeasure to do sth





He let his chin sink upon his chest, stretched out his legs, stared **broodingly** into the fire. He remained like this so long, and his thoughts were so filled with Christine, that he started when the old woman opposite suddenly addressed him. Her meditation had **pursued** a different course.

Brood: to think deeply

Pursue: to follow






chloroform

“Susan said not to give her the **chloroform** if it would harm the baby. She’s awful set upon this child, Doctor, **bach.**” Her old eyes warmed at a sudden thought. She added in a low tone: “Ay, we all are, I fancy.”

Bach: term to show respect



He collected himself with an effort. “It won’t do any harm, the **anaesthetic,**” he said kindly. “They’ll be all right.” Here the nurse’s voice was heard calling from the top landing. Andrew glanced at the clock, which now showed half-past three. He rose and went up to the bedroom. He **perceived** that he might now begin his work.

Anesthetic: substance against pain

Perceive: belief





A lifeless newborn

An hour **elapsed**. It was a long, harsh struggle. Then, as the first **streaks** of dawn strayed past the broken edges of the blind, the child was **born, lifeless**. As he gazed at the still form a **shiver of horror** passed over Andrew. After all that he had promised! His face, heated with his own **exertions**, chilled suddenly.

EIapse: pass

Streak: Thin light

Exertion: tiredness



Baby Resurrection

He hesitated, torn between his desire to attempt to **resuscitate** the child, and his obligation towards the mother, who was herself in a desperate state. The **dilemma** was so urgent he did not solve it consciously. Blindly, **instinctively**, he gave the child to the nurse and turned his attention to Susan Morgan who now lay collapsed, almost pulseless, and not yet out of the **ether**, upon her side.

Resuscitate: to give life again

Dilemma: difficult situation b/w two things

Instinctively: naturally




Glass Ampule

His haste was **desperate**, a **frantic** race against her **ebbing** strength. It took him only an instant to smash a **glass ampule** and inject the medicine. Then he flung down the hypodermic syringe and worked unsparingly to restore the **flaccid** woman. After a few minutes of feverish effort, her heart strengthened; he saw that he might safely leave her. He swung round, in his shirt sleeves, his hair sticking to his damp brow.

Frantic : life mad

Flaccid: weak and loosely




“Where’s the child?” The midwife made a frightened gesture. She had placed it beneath the bed. In a flash Andrew knelt down. Fishing amongst the **sodden** newspapers below the bed, he pulled out the child. A boy, perfectly formed. The **limp**, warm body was white and soft as **tallow**¹. The cord, hastily slashed, lay like a broken stem. The skin was of a lovely texture, smooth and tender. The head **loll**ed on the thin neck. The limbs seemed boneless.

Loll: to rest, sit, lie

Sodden: wet

Limp: To walk slowly with difficulty






Still kneeling, Andrew stared at the child with a **haggard frown**. The whiteness meant only one thing: **asphyxia, pallida²**, and his mind, unnaturally tense, raced back to a case he once had seen in the **Samaritan**, to the treatment that had been used. Instantly he was on his feet.

Haggard: Ill and tired

Asphyxia pallida: Suffocation due to lack of oxygen in womb

Samaritan: one who helps other





“Get me hot water and cold water,” he threw out to the nurse. “And basins too. Quick! Quick!” “But, Doctor—” she **faltered**, her eyes on the pallid body of the child. “*Quick!*” he shouted. Snatching a blanket, he laid the child upon it and began the special method of **respiration**.

Falter: Hopeless

Respiration: breathing






Plunging

The basins arrived, the ewer, the big iron kettle. **Frantically** he splashed cold water into one basin; into the other he mixed water as hot as his hand could bear. Then, like some crazy **juggler**, he hurried the child between the two, now **plunging** it into the icy, now into the steaming bath. Fifteen minutes passed. Sweat was now running into Andrew's eyes, blinding him.

Frantically: quickly in a confused manner



One of his sleeves hung down, dripping. His breath came **pantingly**. But no breath came from the **lax body** of the child. A desperate sense of defeat pressed on him, a **raging** hopelessness.

Rage:anger





Midwife




Old Woman

He felt the **midwife** watching him in stark **consternation**, while there, pressed back against the wall where she had all the time remained— her hand pressed to her throat, **uttering** no sound, her eyes burning upon him— was the **old woman**. He remembered her **longing** for a grandchild, as great as had been her daughter's longing for this child. All dashed away now; **futile**, beyond remedy...

Consternation: Worried, shock, confusion

Futile: useless




The floor was now a draggled mess. Stumbling over a **sopping** towel, Andrew almost dropped the child, which was now wet and slippery in his hands, like a strange, white fish. “For mercy’s sake, Doctor,” **whimpered** the midwife. “It’s stillborn.”

Sop: to make wet

Whimper: to say softly with fear






Andrew did not heed her. Beaten, despairing, having laboured in vain for half an hour, he still **persisted** in one last effort, rubbing the child with a rough towel, crushing and releasing the little chest with both his hands, trying to get breath into that **limp** body.


Persist: continue unpleasantly


Limp: lax, latent, not moving





² suffocation or unconscious condition caused by lack of oxygen and excess of carbon dioxide in the blood, accompanied by paleness of the skin, weak pulse, and loss of reflexes





And then, as by a miracle, the **pigmy** chest, which his hands enclosed, gave a short, **convulsive heave**, another... and another... Andrew turned **giddy**. The sense of life, springing beneath his fingers after all that **unavailing striving**, was so **exquisite** it almost made him faint. He redoubled his efforts feverishly.

Exquisite: delicate, beautiful


Pigmy: very small

Convulsive: a sudden movement

Heave: to move up and down

Strive: Work hard





The child was gasping now, deeper and deeper. A bubble of **mucus** came from one tiny **nostril** a joyful **iridescent** bubble. The limbs were no longer boneless. The head no longer lay back spinelessly. The **blanched** skin was slowly turning pink. Then, exquisitely, came the child's cry.

Iridescent: colourful





Baby handed to Midwife

“Dear Father in heaven,” the nurse sobbed **hysterically**. “It’s come—it’s come alive.” Andrew **handed** her the child. He felt weak and dazed. About him the room lay in a shuddering **litter**: blankets, towels, basins, soiled instruments, the hypodermic syringe impaled by its point in the **linoleum**, the **ewer** knocked over, the kettle on its side in a puddle of water.

Hysterically: in an uncontrolled way

Litter: small piece of rubbish

Linoleum: a floor covering




Old woman

Upon the **huddled** bed the mother still dreamed her way quietly through the anesthetic. The **old woman** still stood against the wall. But her hands were together, her lips moved without sound. She was praying. Mechanically Andrew **wrung out his sleeve**, pulled on his jacket.

Huddle: a mess

Wring: to hold and twist



“I’ll fetch my bag later, nurse.” He went downstairs, through the kitchen into the **scullery³. His lips were dry. At the scullery he took a long drink of water. He reached for his hat and coat. Outside he found Joe standing on the pavement with a tense, expectant face. “All right, Joe,” he said thickly. “Both all right.” It was quite light. Nearly five o’clock.**



Scullery: room next to kitchen



Miners

A few **miners** were already in the streets: the first of the night shift moving out. As Andrew walked with them, spent and slow, his footfalls **echoing** with the others under the morning sky, he kept thinking blindly, **oblivious** to all other work he had done in Blaenelly, “I’ve done something; oh, God! I’ve done something real at last.”

Echo: repetition of sound

Oblivious: Not known or conscious about what going around