

Tekst 3

De volgende tekst is het begin van het eerste hoofdstuk van The End of the Affair, van Graham Greene

BOOK ONE

1

A STORY has no beginning or end: arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead. I say 'one chooses' with the inaccurate pride of a professional writer who – when he has been seriously noted at all – has been praised for his technical ability, but do I in fact of my own will *choose* that black wet January night on the Common, in 1946, the sight of Henry Miles slanting across the wide river of rain, or did these images choose me? It is convenient, it is correct according to the rules of my craft, to begin just there, but if I had believed then in a God, I could also have believed in a hand plucking at my elbow, a suggestion, 'Speak to him: he hasn't seen you yet.'

For why should I have spoken to him? If hate is not too large a term to use in relation to any human being, I hated Henry – I hated his wife Sarah too. And he, I suppose, came soon after the events of that evening to hate me: as he surely at times must have hated his wife and that other, in whom in those days we were lucky enough not to believe. So this is a record of hate far more than of love, and if I come to say anything in favour of Henry and Sarah I can be trusted: I am writing against the bias because it is my professional pride to prefer the near-truth, even to the expression of my near-hate.

It was strange to see Henry out on such a night: he liked his comfort and after all – or so I thought – he had Sarah. To me comfort is like the wrong memory at the wrong place or time: if one is lonely one prefers discomfort. There was too much comfort even in the bed-sitting-room I had at the wrong – the south – side of the Common, in the relics of other people's furniture. I thought I would go for a walk through the rain and have a drink at the local. The little crowded hall was full of strangers' hats and coats and I took somebody else's umbrella by accident – the man on the second floor had friends in. Then I closed the stained-glass door behind me and made my way carefully down the steps that had been blasted in 1944 and never repaired. I had reason to remember the occasion and how the stained glass, tough and ugly and Victorian, stood up to the shock as our grandfathers themselves would have done.

Directly I began to cross the Common I realized I had the wrong umbrella, for it sprang a leak and the rain ran down under my macintosh collar, and then it was I saw Henry. I could so easily avoid him; he had no umbrella and in the light of the lamp I could see his eyes were blinded with the rain. The black

leafless trees gave no protection: they stood around like broken water-pipes; and the rain dripped off his stiff dark hat and ran in streams down his black civil servant's overcoat. If I had walked straight by him, he wouldn't have seen me, and I could have made certain by stepping two feet off the pavement, but I said, 'Henry, you are almost a stranger,' and saw his eyes light up as though we were old friends.

'Bendrix,' he said with affection, and yet the world would have said *he* had the reasons for hate, not me.

'What are you up to, Henry, in the rain?' There are men whom one has an irresistible desire to tease: men whose virtues one doesn't share. He said evasively, 'Oh, I wanted a bit of air,' and during a sudden blast of wind and rain he just caught his hat in time from being whirled away towards the north side.

'How's Sarah?' I asked because it might have seemed odd if I hadn't, though nothing would have delighted me more than to have heard that she was sick, unhappy, dying. I imagined in those days that any suffering she underwent would lighten mine, and if she were dead I could be free: I would no longer imagine all the things one does imagine under my ignoble circumstances. I could even like poor silly Henry, if Sarah were dead.

He said, 'Oh, she's out for the evening somewhere,' and set that devil in my mind at work again, remembering other days when Henry must have replied just like that to other inquirers, while I alone knew where Sarah was. 'A drink?' I asked, and to my surprise he put himself in step beside me. We had never before drunk together outside his home.

'It's a long time since we've seen you, Bendrix.' For some reason I am a man known by his surname – I might never have been christened for all the use my friends make of the rather affected Maurice my literary parents gave me.

'A long time.'

'Why, it must be – more than a year.'

'June 1944,' I said.

'As long as that – well, well.' The fool, I thought, the fool to see nothing strange in a year and a half's interval. Less than five hundred yards of flat grass separated our two 'sides'. Had it never occurred to him to say to Sarah, 'How's Bendrix doing? What about asking Bendrix in?' and hadn't her replies ever seemed to him ... odd, evasive, suspicious?

■ Tekst 3 De volgende tekst ...

- 3p 3 □ Geef van ieder van de onderstaande beweringen aan of deze, met betrekking tot de ‘ik-persoon’ in het verhaal, juist of onjuist is.
- 1 Iets buiten hemzelf heeft de ik-persoon doen aarzelen om Henry aan te spreken.
 - 2 De ik-persoon neemt zich voor niets positiefs over Henry en Sarah te schrijven.
 - 3 De ik-persoon verkeert in een ongelukkige fase van zijn leven.
 - 4 Als hij naar buiten gaat, wordt de ik-persoon aan een bombardement herinnerd.
 - 5 Door het slechte weer ziet de ik-persoon Henry te laat om hem te ontlopen.
 - 6 Het doet de ik-persoon plezier om te horen dat Sarah het slecht maakt.
 - 7 Sarah is de reden dat de ik-persoon en Henry elkaar lang niet gezien hebben.
- Noteer het nummer van iedere bewering, gevolgd door “juist” of “onjuist”.