

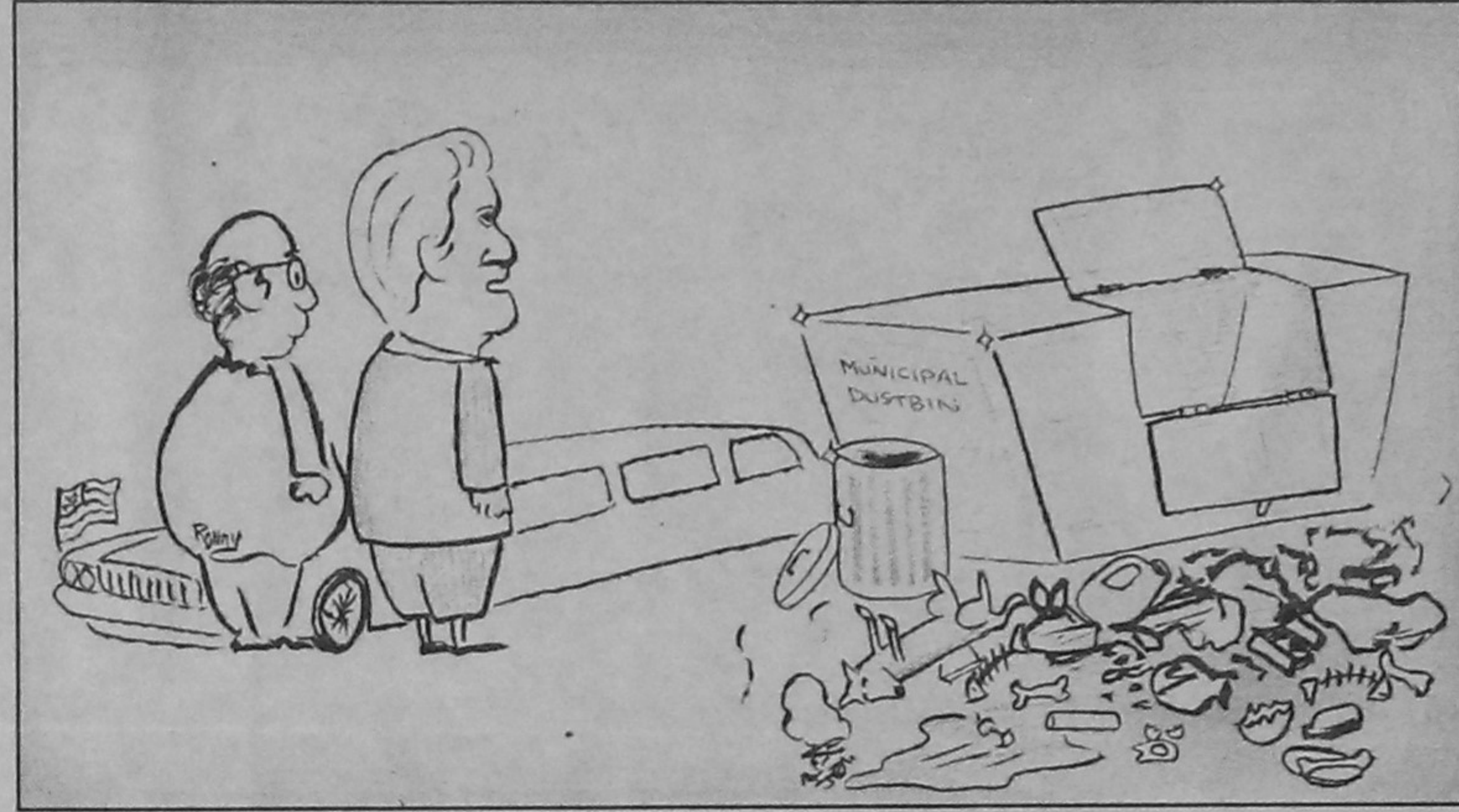
Living Inside A Dustbin!

Mohammad Zubair Hossain

This evening when I was walking on the red brick, herringbone pavement in Chandrima Udyan and littering the whole place with the shells of the peanuts that I was eating with relish, a simple truth struck me as I saw a signboard that read "Do Not Litter". Just like me, I guess everyone out there, who is now reading this article has had similar experiences one day or the other.

Yes, we all talk about cleanliness of the city, but do we really care to keep it clean? When we step on the road and see it marred with eye catching, colourful wastes from all over the universe, we usually say that the Municipal Corporation is good for nothing, or else, it is Bangalee's *khaislat!* Being much too blunt in nature, I am not ashamed to say that it is because of our own fault that we are finding ourselves in such a pitiable condition.

We all do (sometime or the other) peel the fruits that we eat and throw out the skins on the street while travelling, and when we do so, we find for ourselves a host of excuses. We try to rationalize our act by saying, well, we had no other option but to get rid of those in this manner. Was it really so? I think, the real cause behind such acts of ours that adds colour and 'beauty' to our city streets is the fact that we all are extremely lazy in nature although we are rather reluctant to accept it. While reading this piece you might think that I might have gone crazy, otherwise how could I express such



absurd ideas, but if you probe deep into your heart, I am confident, you will notice perfect matching between yours with my views.

Let me now refer to an article published in a magazine a few weeks back. The author wrote about a "gentleman", who was dressed exquisitely in a clean, ironed shirt but was observed disposing off the wastes of his house right on to the street in front of his beautiful house. While getting rid of those wastes, he carefully looked for only one thing, whether anybody was watching him. Unfortunately, he failed to ensure

that, otherwise, it would not have been possible on the part of the author to write about this incident. This is the everyday scenario of Dhaka city. Exceptions are very rare indeed. The very few who cannot be included in this group can be marked out as odd beats to the equal music being played on the roads and alleys of the city.

Surely, all around the city there reside a large number of gentlemen, who like the aforementioned person, throw off their regular day to day wastes on the streets in front of their houses without realizing that this way they are not only

polluting the city they are living in, but also are placing their own family members at health risk. The houses that they try to keep clean does not stay very clean either, particularly from the point of view of the onlooker who passes by. Naturally, when one notices a house in such a mess, he does not form a good impression about the house and its inmates.

All the newspapers have become tired reporting incidents of disposal of wastes into the rivers. The Buriganga, with its islets of industrial wastes, can very well be declared dead. Does anyone

genuinely care for the river? I think, no one does. There is no shortage of people delivering fiery speeches blaming the government and concerned authorities, only to prove themselves as great champions of environmental causes. But when asked to do something about it, what do they usually say? Well, it is not their responsibility. It is only the government, which can take action regarding such matters. When we take a close look, what do we see? Why is the great river by our great city dying? It is we, who have pushed the river towards such an end. We were the ones who threw away our untreated industrial wastes into the river. Now, it is we, the same group of people who speak of water pollution and deliver inspiring speeches, blaming the government for neglecting the river, which once mothered our city.

The same applies to all the cars that are honking their horns, spreading a fine cloud of smoke into the air, and thus polluting the environment of the city. It should not be surprising to notice a man driving such a car on the city streets start delivering lectures on the effects of noise and air pollution. To wrap up I can only write that we all need to look at our own reflections in the mirror with a view to changing ourselves. If and only if, we do so, we shall be able to pull ourselves out of the ever-widening gyre of environmental pollution and thus save our dear city from turning into a huge *Dustbin*.

John was a happy son, proud to be in the company of his father. Mr. Barnes was indeed an enlightened man. John had great admiration and respect for a person who was smart and intelligent, and, at the same time, one who cared immensely for his family.

Mr. Barnes was the perfect example of an ideal male. He always did things the way it should be done. He tackled each and every issue in the most befitting manner. Though a busy person, a managing director of a renowned bank, he always ensured that he had time to spend with his wife and son.

One morning, before departing for school, John went to his father's room, to bid him goodbye. He saw blood streaming out of his father's heart. He cried out in terror and this woke his mother who was sleeping beside Mr. Barnes. She appeared absolutely horrified, and started wailing immediately.

Everyone was duly informed about this horrible and untimely tragedy. Hundreds of well wishers came to Mr. Barnes' house to pray for the departed soul and to express their condolences to the unfortunate widow.

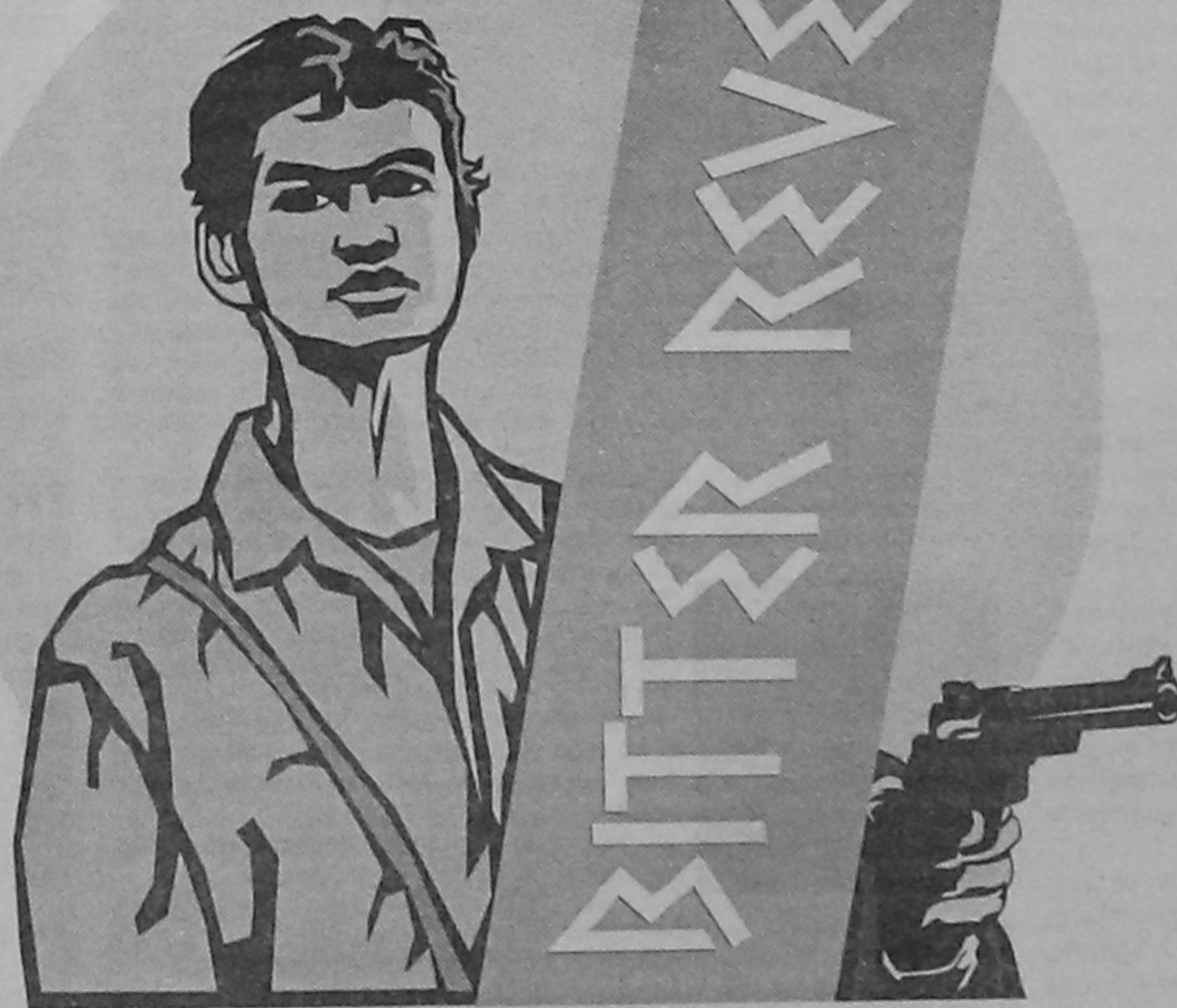
This event had a tremendous impact on John. He started losing his faith in goodness and in hard work. He was angry with God for allowing such a dedicated, sincere and good man to be murdered. He came to the conclusion that good people never get the acknowledgment they deserve.

At the same time, the police started investigating the murder. They could not proceed very far, as the murder weapon was missing and there were no fingerprints on the body of the deceased.

John also felt for his mother who had lost such a wonderful and loving husband. She mostly stayed in her bedroom and seemed disinterested in life. There was a terrible silence that swept across the household. John's uncle tried to comfort him and his mother by saying that Barnes would never have wanted his family to moan over his death so much. John believed that such a man was essential company to raise his dampened spirits.

After a few days, John started noticing that his uncle was making frequent visits to their house. What was more surprising was that he

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was spending most of his time in the master bedroom. John knew that his mother and uncle were always friendly, but their daily meeting certainly did not please him. After a while, he observed them going out together quite regularly. But still, he was not sure whether his fears had turned into reality.

On a Friday morning, he consulted his mother, regarding his suspicions. His mother remained quiet for a few minutes and then replied that she felt lonely and needed a companion to guide her through her life. She also said that, Rob, John's uncle, had always

been very kind to her and that she longed for his presence for the rest of her life. John felt alone and betrayed; not only because his mother had fallen in love with Rob, but, because it had been kept a secret from him. He slammed the bedroom-door behind him, making a loud noise.

That night, he wept more than he had ever cried in his life. He felt sorry for his father and found it pathetic that he was so insignificant to his mother that she needed the acquaintance of another man within just a few days of his death.

He sensed that his uncle had always been waiting for the opportunity to be by his mother's side. But, he knew that his mother had definitely given him indications that she desired him as well. John felt uncomfortable in his own house, and did not want to live there any longer.

One cold night, while walking past the master-bedroom door, he suddenly overheard a conversation between his uncle and his mother. They were repeatedly that they were happy that the 'old hog' did not stand in their path any longer. His mother said that it was the best way out, to have ended Barnes' life. John immediately comprehended that his uncle and mother had murdered his beloved father.

Though he was filled with rage, he was quick-witted enough to realise that he must avenge his father's death in a cool and calculating manner. The next day, while Rob and his mother were drinking, he suddenly entered the main-bedroom and expressed his joy in seeing them together. They were also happy with his warm acceptance of things and John requested Rob to give him a drink. He started taking small sips, while they kept on drinking one peg after another.

Then, shrewdly, he said that he was glad that his father was dead and wanted to thank the people who had committed such a noble deed. His mother and uncle laughed, and said that he was in the circle of people who murdered Barnes. John appeared delighted and shared in their laughter. He then asked what they had done with the body. Mrs. Barnes said that the body had been handled very carefully. Steadily, a furious rage started building inside him. He excused himself and went to his bedroom.

In the meantime, John had already planned how he would take revenge for the death of his father and had a gun ready for the purpose. He had bought the gun the day before.

He loaded the bullets and started strolling slowly towards the room where his mother and Rob were located. When they saw him in a mad fit, they screamed in terror. John pulled the trigger and fired at them several times. At last, the sinners had paid the price for the unpardonable act that they had committed.