To Whom It May Concern

14 February, 1915

If for no other purpose, I am writing simply to record the events of the past few weeks and the strange and horrifying tale of the Englishman Dr. Jack Lowry.

But first, for the sake of posterity, I will identify myself before beginning my story. My name is Edouard Blanc. I live in a small town of no consequence in Languedoc. The War does not reach us here; I fear the day that it may. My father has already been conscripted; doubtless I will be soon as well.

I cannot quite know where to begin. My first experience with Dr. Lowry came months after his wretched experiences. He came to our town earlier this month and was instantly met with suspicion by all the townsfolk, including myself. Such a remote and unimportant village as ours rarely receives visitors, and foreign visitors are even more noteworthy. Thus, the Englishman's arrival was something of an abnormality, noted and discussed by all. I was in a situation whereby I could become quite close to the man. Only time will tell if this was for better or worse.

My family runs the only boarding house in the village, and so when Dr. Lowry arrived, we found ourselves living in very close proximity. I was charged with tending to the man, for he was injured and sickly when he came to us. He attributed his injuries and poor health to the War --he had, he said, served as part of a British unit as a medic or doctor. His appearance did not necessarily radiate with the air of an important man.

He wasn't an exceptionally large or exceptionally small man, though he did seem to have something of a hunch that made him appear shorter than he was. He had thin, straw-like, black

hair with gray streaks mixed into it. He had a ragged-looking beard with the same coloration. A distinctive feature, which he wrote off as an injury suffered in the War, was his nearly debilitated right leg. He could hardly walk at all, and when he did, he had a severe limp and usually required assistance. He had some illness that he said baffled his knowledge, and thus further increased the pain and weakness his leg gave him. As for his age, this was a mystery. He often could be temperamental and snappish, and so I found myself asking as few questions as I could. Moods struck him often. He would seem forlorn and would hardly speak for days, and the next day would be full of energy and would feverishly write. Then, soon afterwards, he would seem to seethe with rage and I would find scraps of his ripped up papers around his room. Even more so than his fragile emotional state, his face was the most perplexing part about him. It possessed the passion and optimism one would expect of an idealistic child. And yet, this was countered by the hint of a wise and world-weary sage that dwelt in his features.

This contradiction struck me profoundly. I realized something must have happened to this man for his face to always be awash with unbridled optimism and the lowest depths of dejection. Due to his aggressive nature, I was unsure of how to go about my inquiry. But one day, an opportunity seemed to afford itself.

He spent nearly all his time in his room, owing to his leg injury. As I mentioned before, this meant that my mother or myself, usually the latter, would have to bring him meals or anything else he required. One day, when I was bringing him his breakfast, I found him in one of his disheartened moods. He simply sat upright on his bed, in the same clothes he had worn the last day, staring out the window.

He saw me and, much to my suprise, asked if I would stay with him for a while. This came as a shock to me as, up to this point, my visitor had been quite keen to keep to himself. My mother had made some attempts to engage him in local goings-on or with our family, but he would never accept.

I did as he had requested, and sat at the small desk that was near the bed. We remained in silence for some time before he sighed and began a conversation. It has been many weeks since these talks and so the precise wording may be off, but my memory is good enough to recall the idea of our discussions.

“Edouard,” he said to me. Although I would not have guessed it from seeing him, he spoke French remarkably well. It was much better than my English, and so French was the means of our conversation. “What do you want from your life?”

Such a heavy subject seemed to me a poor way to begin a talk with a veritable stranger, and I asked for clarity on the question.

“Where are you going? What will you be?” He still hadn’t looked away from his window, where his gaze seemed to drift along the tree line of the forest nearby.

I shuffled my feet and rotated my chair slightly to be more comfortable. “This is it.” Dr. Lowry seemed the sort of man who would appreciate a direct answer, and I hoped he would be satisfied with my straight forward declaration.

He was quiet for a moment, before he turned his head to face me and spoke. “I was in the Army, you know. I told you that before, didn’t I?” The omnipresent intensity of his stern gaze froze me to my chair.

I paused for a moment before I was able to stammer out, “Yes, you did. When you first arrived.”

He nodded solemnly. “Would you care to know how I got here? Why a renowned English physician who graduated with top honors now finds himself in a remote French country village?”

“Well, I’d assume it’s the War, sir.” I responded. His lips curved up in the faintest hint of a sarcastic smile.

“That is only part of it.” And then, he began his tale.

I do not know why he seemed so eager to tell me his story at this hour. I have a theory, but I shall wait until later before I put it forward. Whoever is reading this needs to first experience the events as they were described to me, back in December, little over a month ago. Again, all of the details are to the best of my recollection.

Dr. Lowry, to my surprise, began at the beginning of his life. He did not dwell on this subject for long, but I got the sense that he was from a well-to-do family of some social distinction. His family name and his talent seemed to play equal parts in helping him get admitted to top academies and schools. He soon found a passion for medicine, biology, and the natural sciences. He soared to the top of all of his classes and became well-acquainted with many of his professors and educators, who took a liking to him and admired his skill and determination.

More than anything else, the nature of life and death perplexed and enthralled him. If each part of us, he thought, such as an arm, a liver, a heart, was, by itself, non-living, then how could life be created as the sum of many non-living entities? Where did life come from? This was something that no professor could answer, and so he sought the answer himself. Due to

being in good standing with the faculty of his university, he was allowed use of their facilities, with minimal supervision or restraint, for his experiments.

He was astounded by the possibilities of his research. In fact, he remained at the university for several years after he graduated solely to continue his experiments. In that time, he hardly corresponded or visited with his family, who became increasingly worried about his apparent isolation.

His description of this stage in his life struck me as an almost callous disregard for his family. The way he described it, he hardly replied to their letters, if he read them at all. He devoted little time to explaining his family situation to me, and seemed much more keen to describe the experiments and theories he tested in the years he remained there after graduating. He went into every detail of his dissections of all sorts of animals, many times while they were still living, or at least, began the operation as living beings. I will spare any reader of this account those gruesome particulars of Dr. Lowry's story.

I shall skip ahead to when Dr. Lowry had been with the university for several years. His experiments, as they continued, caused an increasing degree of worry and trepidation among his colleagues and associates. Lowry seemed exceptionally bitter discussing their attitude towards him, scornfully lamenting how backwards their understanding of his work was.

Dr. Lowry found himself dismissed from the university after being accused of exhuming corpses for his studies. But the hands of fate conspired in such a way that Dr. Lowry was not out of work for long. A scant few weeks after he was disowned by the university, the War broke out. Dr. Lowry quickly volunteered for the British Expeditionary Force, was given a uniform, and shipped across the Channel.

At this time, I found myself called away to aid my mother in maintaining the boarding house, but I assured Dr. Lowry that I would return the next day to hear more.

Lowry's tale fascinated me as much as it scared me. His callousness and bitter nature seemed repulsive to all those in his past who had worked with him. And when talking about his dismissal from the university, he didn't seem to deny the allegation that he dug up bodies for his research. In the moment, I was simultaneously too enthralled and intimidated by the man to press that point, but the more I reflect on it, the more disturbing it is. Unfortunately, this was not the most disturbing part of his story, and I would continue to find myself disgusted by the things this man was capable of. The more I thought on this matter, the more it puzzled me. Why would a renowned scientist, who didn't seem to care for others' opinions, share his entire story with me? I couldn't identify any qualities I possessed that made me uniquely fit to hear his tale.

The next day, when I returned to Dr. Lowry for more of the story, I found him in a vastly different mood than the day prior. He had been melancholic previously, while now he seemed active and energetic. If not for his leg, I imagine he would have been inclined to leave his room for once. Yet, despite this change in his energy, he was still occupied with the same task he had been the other day; that is, attentively watching the tree line. He seemed convinced that there was something of significance there, and I almost detected the faintest hint of guilt in his eyes as he gazed out the window.

As I sat down in the same position I had yesterday, I felt distinctly uncomfortable. Lowry had, the previous day, revealed to me a revolting past. What man could, while in a sound state of mind, defy the sanctity one expected in death? A proud and competent intellectual should not stoop to such levels of glorified grave-robbing solely in the name of research. Being in his

presence imparted upon me a spirit of anxiety and worry that I had not felt before. I knew I was in the presence of a man obsessed to a fanatical degree with his work. I intended to raise these concerns with Lowry, and also inquire as to why he unloaded this information on to me, but Lowry began to speak. His skills in oratory were not lacking, and his storytelling was refined and polished. No matter how revolting the topic, Lowry's powers of speech kept me spellbound. He resumed his story with his early days in the British Expeditionary Force.

Lowry and his B.E.F. division saw action nearly instantly. Lowry, although viewed with suspicion and disdain in the academic world due to his experiments, forged a reputation as a young and prodigious medical mind, and so found himself a military doctor of some importance. He spoke of himself as wholly devoted to the cause of the War at this point, seeking to do his patriotic duty and keep the Kaiser at bay. But then came the Battle of the Marne.

With thousands of men wounded and needing care, Lowry was worked to the bone. To further complicate matters, his unit was somewhat cut off from its commanders. But Lowry worked hard and, at the end of it all, came to a disturbing revelation. His experiments had been stifled at the university because of his inability to acquire human bodies. I shudder to think of the moment he described next, where he realized that now, in a wartime environment, with minimal supervision from any medical authority, he had an almost endless reservoir of potential subjects after every battle or skirmish. And so, as the soldiers settled into their trenches for the rest of the year, he resumed his work. He said that it was during this time he made contact with his family for the first time in years, though his message was only a request that they send him some of his journals and writings from home.

Lowry spoke quite happily of these days. He, as one of the lead doctors present, was never near enough to the front to be in serious danger and was rarely questioned by any of the nurses or doctors under him. His military supervisors admired the enthusiasm with which he worked, and he was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross, which he pulled out of his bag to show to me.

He spent many months like this, gathering information from the dead and wounded he was able to study. He didn't trust his underlings to properly comprehend or perform his experiments, and so the ones he believed were most truly groundbreaking he performed himself. These were the live dissections, the details of which I shall again spare you. The thought that the man in front of me, a seemingly normal and functional man, was capable of such acts was beyond me. His obsession with life and death drove him ever forward in his quest to find answers. It was at this point that I asked him why he was so militant about his research.

This spurred in him a contemplative mood, seemingly puzzled over my question. He promised me an answer at a later date.

He went on to the next major event in his story: the Second Battle of Ypres. The first extensive use of poisonous gas at this battle gave Dr. Lowry a whole new realm of possibilities to explore. He himself handled almost every case of a soldier afflicted with gas injuries in his unit. And it was here that he said he reached his greatest achievement and made his most grievous mistake.

He would not reveal to me the means of this, but he told me that he managed to revive a man who had previously been clinically dead for several days. The man in question, one Alan Turner, showed only faint signs of life at first. His hands would twitch, his chest began to rise

and fall with breaths, but there was no doubt that he had been revived. Lowry expanded his operation on the young man to try and reconstruct some semblance of a decent body. Turner had been subjected to poisonous gas and, when he retreated to try and protect himself, was shot multiple times by advancing Germans. This left his physical form in shambles. His face was scarred and horrifically distorted from the gas. His back seemed curved unnaturally, and much of his right arm was frail and useless.

Lowry saw in Turner his opportunity. He could definitively prove his power of life and death, the unyielding powers of nature itself, by reviving and re-making this man. His methods were horrific; several injured fingers were replaced with wooden joints, his right arm surrounded by a thin metal casing to allow use of it again. Lowry repaired Turner's face by using skin from his other patients to try and rebuild a protective layer over the affected area. A heavy steel brace was mounted to try and fix the man's back. By the time the operation was completed, Lowry's soldier looked more like a sacreligious abomination than a man.

Lowry told his part of his tale in an almost repentful tone. He seemed ashamed, but when I pressed him on this, I discovered he was not apologetic. He knew he had done something immoral at best and inhuman at worst, but maintained that, through his work, mankind would soar to unimaginable heights. His science was to be the foundation of a whole new school of thought in the medical world, one devoted to channeling the endless ambition of man and putting it to use in overturning whatever problems may arise, including those of death itself.

The way Lowry spoke of what he had done with regards to Turner disgusted me. To view a man- a living, breathing, man- as merely a footnote on the path to greater scientific progress was behavior hardly befitting a true academic.

I voiced these concerns with the Doctor. He turned from looking out the window to face me. His face wasn't necessarily aggressive; if anything, it was inquisitive. I could hear a scratching sound as Lowry pulled at his beard.

"Do you know what my research could accomplish?" He said this in a flat tone as his dark eyes held mine in place. Even though his health continued deteriorating, and the strength of his voice with it, the gravity in his statement was unmistakable.

"It doesn't matter. If the-" I was abruptly cut off by Lowry.

"We, humanity, have the potential to conquer death." His hands made deliberate and powerful gestures as his voice rose and became more intense. "My current work is not the end, no. I still have much to do. But my research will be the bedrock of a new generation of scientists. New, fresh faces that will not be held back by the morality and conventions of others." His voice was more than emotional, it was feverishly passionate.

I was stunned after this loud and powerful outburst from Lowry. Seeing my apparent paralysis, Lowry saw fit to return to his story.

Turner gave the first signs of awareness about a week or so after Lowry's operation on him. Lowry spent most of his time in the same room as Turner, keeping special watch over his own personal work. His other patients suffered in neglect as Lowry poured all his energy into the study and documentation of his great breakthrough. Every day, Lowry tested Turner for any signs that he was conscious in any sense. He shined lights in his eyes, tapped his joints with rubber mallets, increased and decreased the temperature of the room, and utilized a wide variety of other stimuli. Slowly and incrementally, Turner began to exhibit responses. He would curl his fist if something was placed in his hand; he would make an effort to turn his head in the direction

of a sound, and his lips sometimes moved in what Lowry believed to be an attempt at speech. Lowry watched the proceedings with great interest, keeping incredibly thorough notes on his study. Lowry evidently still possessed these notes, as he gestured to a stack of papers on the floor when he spoke about his papers on Turner.

Turner continued his progress and slowly recovered from the extensive operations. His eyes opened ever so slightly more each day and his range of motion on his arms and legs also increased.

I sat, captivated and spellbound, by what Lowry was describing. Lowry spoke gleefully, like a schoolboy, about this time. But the more he talked, and the more I listened, I found myself incapable of suffering any more. I lashed out at the man, standing up and marching towards him while shouting my objections. How could this man - this vainglorious bastard- sit here and speak cheerfully of the horrors he subjected another man to simply in the name of science.

I raged furiously, anger coming out like a torrent in my voice. The worst part was Lowry's minimal reaction. He simply looked up from his sitting position and met my eyes with an icy stare. The apparent joy that he had previously possessed when talking about his experiences with Turner quickly faded and was replaced with cold determination.

"If you do not want to hear about me, or my work, there is nothing stopping you from leaving." He nodded towards the door. I coiled my hands into fists, took a deep breath, and walked out of the room, slamming the door behind me.

That night, I did not return home until late. I went out walking, simply strolling through the countryside near the village. I made circles around the village and I noted, with some irritation, that every time I came within sight of Lowry's window, I could see his vague

silhouette, almost exactly where I had left him earlier. This angered me even more. It was as if he wasn't even reacting to what I said, as if he didn't care. All I could think about as I circled the town was the inhumanity of the man I was caring for. His callous disregard for others was inexcusable.

And yet, as revolting as the man was, I needed to learn more about him. His story was not yet done. Where was Turner now? What forced this doctor, as horrible as he was, to come to my village?

The next morning, I returned to Lowry's room. I was instinctively repulsed by him on a fundamental level now. My previous discomfort in his presence was now amplified. As I came in the room with his food, he looked at me with a questioning gaze. "Do you want me to finish?" He asked. His voice was further weakened by his rapidly progressing illness, but the power of his voice held.

I could not deny my curiosity. Something in me demanded answers to the questions I had asked myself the night before. And so I agreed to hear the rest of the man's story.

His hope in Turner for a prime specimen to use to showcase his work was dashed unexpectedly. A German shell landed and exploded in the hospital. Turner, and most of the patients and staff, were killed almost instantly. Lowry, who had been fortunate in standing outside when the shell hit, survived, but a piece of debris had embedded itself in his thigh, the cause of his current predicament.

This sent Lowry into a period of deep depression. But the thing that struck me the most was that Lowry didn't mourn the loss of Turner the man. He mourned the loss of Turner the experiment. The loss of a fellow man didn't strike him at all; he explained his attitude by saying

that his profession had involved so many dead bodies that the loss of human life no longer fazed him. But the loss of such an ideal study as Turner- that was what hurt him.

Some of his superiors had already worried that Lowry was neglecting some of his patients, a valid concern given that he spent most of his time studying the corpses available to him. But his indifference and apathy reached their peak after Turner died. Lowry simply didn't care for his living patients at all anymore, instead locking himself away for days on end, taking incredibly thorough notes on every possible way death took a man. He never again resurrected a man as he had Turner. He did not comment as to why, but I theorized that he did not want to see his precious research destroyed and ripped away from him just as he thought it had reached its zenith.

And so, after complaints from other doctors and workers, as well as a significant group of soldiers, the B.E.F. leadership discharged Lowry.

Lowry believed himself ready to adapt to these new circumstances, and felt that a time of quiet retreat, study, and introspection would serve him well. This was how he came to my village.

After letting his story sink in for a moment, Lowry took a breath, sighed, and spoke again. "I'm going to die soon. I can feel it." After this, he went into a coughing fit for the better part of a minute. He stifled it with his fist, but when he discreetly wiped his hand on his handkerchief, I could see blood. "I had to tell someone. Someone needs to carry on my work."

At this, I scoffed. He continued, "I didn't say you. These journals I have in my bag- I need you to find someone to continue this." I made no comment. But I found that, in his demeanour, my theory had been proven correct. He felt guilty.

The end of this story did not strike me as anything peculiar. Lowry's story had shown him as a madman- a fanatical lunatic- who was ready to sacrifice hundreds, maybe thousands, simply in the name of scientific achievement.

But the man who sat before me seemed a different man. Even though he had not said it, or done anything to imply it, he appeared humbled. I was struck by the irony- the scientist, obsessed with defeating death, lying on his deathbed, knowing the end was near.

His speculation was right. After a few long and hard weeks, he finally succumbed to whatever strange plague had ailed him. Perhaps it had been divine reckoning for his actions.

I visited him a few times in those last weeks. He was incapable of long speech or, later, any communication at all, but I would enter his room and we would acknowledge each other. There was something of an understanding between us due to our common knowledge of his life.

When he died, he was buried in the only cemetery in our town. We didn't think we'd be able to find any relatives of his and, even if we did, they might not want the body. It didn't seem as though he and his family had been close.

This brings me to the present. I am to leave the village soon; a recruiting officer came by a few days ago, requesting that all able-bodied men report to him. We had been conscripted. We are to be sent to a place called Verdun.

We leave soon and I do not know what to do. I am in possession of the late Dr. Lowry's journals and writings. I've looked at them and can make very little out of his scientific babble. I'm sure if I were to give it to some other scientist or professor, they could continue his work. But should I? Maybe it's for the best if this is all forgotten. Lowry, Turner, the research, all of it, could disappear and the world might be better for it. And so I've reached my conclusion. I will

leave his papers here, in this desk, but I will also leave this manuscript with them. Anyone seeking to read his papers will first have to read this account of Dr. Lowry's life and actions. If they wish to continue after this story, then they will do so. But I can only hope that no man ever commits as fundamentally inhumane crimes and acts as the late Dr. Jack Lowry.