feet moving, perhaps. He would tense and sit up. The sound would move away. He would lie back and look out of the loft window, very late in the night, and see the lights go out in the farmhouse itself, until a very young and beautiful woman would sit in an unlit window, braiding her hair. It would be hard to see her, but her face would be like the face of the girl so long ago in his past now, so very long ago, the girl who had known the weather and never been burned by the fire-flies, the girl who had known what dandelions meant rubbed off on your chin. Then, she would be gone from the warm window and appear again upstairs in her moon-whitened room. And then, to the sound of death, the sound of the jets cutting the sky into two black pieces beyond the horizon, he would lie in the loft, hidden and safe, watching those strange new stars over the rim of the earth, fleeing from the soft colour of dawn.

In the morning he would not have needed sleep, for all the warm odours and sights of a complete country night would have rested and slept him while his eyes were wide and his mouth, when he thought to test it, was half a smile.

And there at the bottom of the hayloft stair, waiting for him, would be the incredible thing. He would step carefully down, in the pink light of early morning, so fully aware of the world that he would be afraid, and stand over the small miracle and at last bend to touch it.

A cool glass of fresh milk, and a few apples and pears laid at the foot of the steps.

This was all he wanted now. Some sign that the immense world would accept him and give him the long time needed to think all the things that must be thought.

A glass of milk, an apple, a pear.
He stepped from the river.

The land rushed at him, a tidal wave. He was crushed by darkness and the look of the country and the million odours on a wind that iced his body. He fell back under the breaking curve of darkness and sound and smell, his ears roaring. He whirled. The stars poured over his sight like flaming meteors. He wanted to plunge in the river again and let it idle him safely on down somewhere. This dark land rising was like that day in his childhood, swimming, when from nowhere the largest wave in the history of remembering slammed him down in salt mud and green darkness, water burning mouth and nose, retching his stomach, screaming! Too much water!

Too much land!

Out of the black wall before him, a whisper. A shape. In the shape, two eyes. The night looking at him. The forest, seeing him.

The Hound!

After all the running and rushing and sweating it out and half-drowning, to come this far, work this hard, and think yourself safe and sigh with relief and come out on the land at last only to find...

The Hound!

Montag gave one last agonized shout as if this were too much for any man.

The shape exploded away. The eyes vanished. The leafpiles flew up in a dry shower.

Montag was alone in the wilderness.

A deer. He smelled the heavy musk-like perfume mingled with blood and the gummed exhalation of the animal's breath, all cardamon and moss and ragweed odour in this huge night where the trees ran at him, pulled away, ran, pulled away, to the pulse of the heart behind his eyes.

There must have been a billion leaves on the land; he waded in them, a dry river smelling of hot cloves and warm dust. And the other smells! There was a smell like a cut potato from all the land, raw and cold and white from having the moon on it most of the night. There was a smell like pickles from a bottle and a smell like parsley on the table at home. There was a faint yellow odour like mustard from a jar. There was a smell like carnations from the yard next door. He put down his hand and felt a weed rise up like a child brushing him. His fingers smelled of liquorice.

He stood breathing, and the more he breathed the land in, the more he was filled up with all the details of the land. He was not empty. There was more than enough here to fill him. There would always be more than enough.

He walked in the shallow tide of leaves, stumbling.

And in the middle of the strangeness, a familiarity.

His foot hit something that rang dully.

He moved his hand on the ground, a yard this way, a yard that.

The railroad track.

The track that came out of the city and rusted across the land, through forests and woods, deserted now, by the river.

Here was the path to wherever he was going. Here was the single familiar thing, the magic charm he might need a little while, to touch, to feel beneath his feet, as he moved on into the bramble bushes and the lakes of smelling and feeling and touching, among the whispers and the blowing down of leaves.

He walked on the track.

And he was surprised to learn how certain he suddenly was of a single fact he could not prove.

Once, long ago, Clarisse had walked here, where he was walking now.

Half an hour later, cold, and moving carefully on the tracks, fully aware of his entire body, his face, his mouth, his eyes stuffed with blackness, his ears stuffed with sound, his legs prickled with burrs and nettles, he saw the fire ahead.
The fire was gone, then back again, like a winking eye. He stopped, afraid he might blow the fire out with a single breath. "Sit down," said the man who seemed to be the leader of the small group. "Have some coffee?"

He watched the dark steaming mixture pour into a collapsible tin cup. The camera, hovering in the belly of a helicopter, now swung down at an empty street. "I'll be right up at the end of that street," whispered Granger. "You're welcome, Montag. My name's Granger." He held out a small bottle of colourless fluid. "Drink this, too. I'll change the chemical index because it meant a different thing to him."

"You're welcome," Montag said. "Thanks very much." Granger nodded to a portable battery TV set by the fire. "You know my name," said Montag. "You know my name," he said again, thinking that if it meant a different thing to him.

"Let's have a look," Granger snapped the portable viewer on. "See that?" whispered Granger. "It'll be you; right up at the end of that street is our victim. See how our poor fellow's cut off a way. He's got a lot of queer ducks like that; men who walk mornings for the hell of it, or for reasons of insomnia. Anyway, the police have him charted for months. Never know what to say to them."

"Watch," Granger said. "They're taking over the street. It's their Palace of the Four Winds."

"What," Montag said. "They're taking over the street."

"Watch," Granger said again. "They're taking over the street."

"What," Montag said. "They're taking over the street."

"And them," Granger said. "They're taking over the street.

"Watch," Granger said. "They're taking over the street.

"What," Montag said. "They're taking over the street.

"And then one of the men looked up and saw him, for the first time perhaps.

"Oh, God," said the man who seemed to be the leader of the small group. "Oh, God, look there!"

"And then one of the men looked up and saw him, for the first time perhaps.

"Sit down," said the man who seemed to be the leader of the small group. "Sit down."

"And then one of the men looked up and saw him, for the first time perhaps.

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"Sit down," said the man who seemed to be the leader of the small group. "Sit down."
The men at the fire bent forward.

On the screen, a man turned a corner. The Mechanical Hound rushed forward into the viewer, suddenly. The helicopter light shot down a dozen brilliant pillars that built a cage all about the man.

A voice cried, “There’s Montag! The search is done!”

The innocent man stood bewildered, a cigarette burning in his hand. He stared at the Hound, not knowing what it was. He probably never knew. He glanced up at the sky and the wailing sirens. The cameras rushed down. The Hound leapt up into the air with a rhythm and a sense of timing that was incredibly beautiful. Its needle shot out. It was suspended for a moment in their gaze, as if to give the vast audience time to appreciate everything, the raw look of the victim’s face, the empty street, the steel animal a bullet nosing the target.

“Montag, don’t move!” said a voice from the sky.

The camera fell upon the victim, even as did the Hound. Both reached him simultaneously. The victim was seized by Hound and camera in a great spidering, clenching grip. He screamed. He screamed. He screamed!

Blackout.

Silence.

Darkness.

Montag cried out in the silence and turned away.

Silence.

And then, after a time of the men sitting around the fire, their faces expressionless, an announcer on the dark screen said, “The search is over, Montag is dead; a crime against society has been avenged.”

Darkness.

“We now take you to the Sky Room of the Hotel Lux for a half-hour of Just-Before-Dawn, a programme of —”

Granger turned it off.

“They didn’t show the man’s face in focus. Did you notice?”

Even your best friends couldn’t tell if it was you. They scrambled it just enough to let the imagination take over. Hell,“ he whispered. "Hell.”

Montag said nothing but now, looking back, sat with his eyes fixed to the blank screen, trembling.

Granger touched Montag’s arm. “Welcome back from the dead.” Montag nodded. Granger went on. “You might as well know all of us, now. This is Fred Clement, former occupant of the Thomas Hardy chair at Cambridge in the years before it became an Atomic Engineering School. This other is Dr. Simmons from U.C.L.A., a specialist in Ortega y Gasset; Professor West here did quite a bit for ethics, an ancient study now, for Columbia University quite some years ago. Reverend Padover here gave a few lectures thirty years ago and lost his flock between one Sunday and the next for his views. He’s been...
Thomas Love Peacock and Thomas Jefferson and Mr. Lincoln, if you please. We are also Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Everyone laughed quietly.

"I can be," said Montag.

"I think I was blind trying to do things my way, planting books in firemen's houses and sending out alarms. You did what you had to do. Carried better. We're all bits and pieces to history, that's the way things are. And the hour is late. And the war's begun. And we're out there, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be tortured. We're not in control of our time, just our knowledge. Dead, perhaps broken, we lie in the hills at night, and the city is there, all wrapped up in its own coat of a thousand colours. What do we do with our persons to incriminate us. The organization is flexible, very loose. It's not pleasant to be torture...