





The farm lay blazing in the midsummer heat; the harvest was in and the corn stacked, and it would soon be time for fruit picking.

The farmer leaned on the gate and gazed at the stubble fields. It had been a good crop, and he had done well on the poultry too.



Bill, the farm-hand was also having a rest under the haystack. He had finished his lunch and his mug of ale and was smoking a cigarette. There was half an hour to go, and it was pleasant in the shade of the rick. A warm smell of herbs came from the farm garden; it made Bill feel drowsy... he closed his eyes. Bill was asleep.



He woke suddenly, only a few minutes later, and wondered where the loud crackling noise came from. Then he smelt the smoke and leaped to his feet with a cry of horror.

The cigarette stump had rolled into the burnt grass, but it had done its deadly work. Already the rick was ablaze and the flames blowing toward the hen-coops and the house. Bill ran as he had never run before. The farmer would be at his dinner and they must phone the fire brigade.

Nothing could be done about the rick. It had already turned from a smouldering heap to a leaping furnace of flame: but they might save the poultry and the house.



