The Pills

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The two men sat in the small room which was illuminated only by a bare globe, suspended from the ceiling. No furniture was evident save a small table, directly under the light, and three folding chairs. Several half-pint milk bottles with small amounts of coffee in them were on the table along with various paper back novels and a time and sign in sheet.

"How is he tonight?" asked the man sitting closest to the table.
"Quite as they come" was the reply. "You know, I just can't figure why a guy would do something like that."

"Some guys just need different ways to express the old impulse, I guess," the first man answered.
"Maybe you're right."

The talk between the two men stopped. The first man sat looking at the bare wall while the other one leafed through a current issue of "True Detective."

"Say, this magazine has an article on him," the second man said and nodded his head toward the door. "Says in here he had a bad case of tuberculosis from the war. I didn't know that."
"Hell, haven't you ever saw that big, long scar on his back? That's where they opened him up to take out his left lung."
"I thought that was just a war wound of some kind. Sure is a nasty one, ain't it?"
"The war must of done more to him than just that. He must be half nuts to do what he did!"
"I dunno, if it hadn't been for his wife finding those things in the cellar he'd have gotten away with the whole mess."
"Oh, they'd have found him out, come spring when they opened up the cabin for the summer. Things like that just don't go unnoticed. Not with all the people tramping those woods in the summertime."

Talk between the two men again lapsed as they both stared at the floor or walls of the little room. Through the open door came the noise of doors being slammed and of people walking back and forth on steel plating. The clock on the north wall said nine o'clock.

The first man stood up, stretched his arms, yawned and said, "Guess I'll go take a look at him. I wouldn't want him to be doing anything to injure his health." After saying it, he laughed hollowly and left the room.

The second man picked up the magazine and resumed his reading. After about five minutes he closed the magazine and yawned. "I guess I'll have to get more sleep," he said to no one.
"I guess he'll last," said the first man as he re-entered the room.
"Say," said the second man, "how many of these have you seen?"
"Only about seven or eight, I guess" was the reply. "It's funny how after the first one it never bothers you."
"This will be my first time and I don't think it will bother me, not after what he did."
"You'll know for sure in about an hour."

"My brother has a girl that is the same age as that Byrant girl. Even goes to the same school. Boy, don't you think he felt funny when they found her! Why, he picked her up after school every day until the end of the semester."

"What good would that do?"

"I asked him the same thing and he said it didn't, but it made him feel better anyway."

As they talked on, the time slipped by and then another man came to the doorway. "It's time," he said and disappeared down the hallway.

"You got the keys?" asked the second man.

"Yeah!"

'Okay, I'll push the button in and you can go get him, then I'll join you."

"Give me three minutes, then let up on the button." With this the first man left.

Three minutes later the second man joined the first man. The first man addressed the third person of the group. "You know which way we go, Burtie?"

Burtie nodded his head and started down the hall with one man on either side of him.

They entered a large room with a large steel and glass box sitting in the center of the room. It was a peculiar box, about seven feet tall and five feet square, with glass windows on two sides, a blank side, and a door in the fourth side.

"How's the weather down in 'Frisco, tonight, Doc?"

The first man was speaking to a short, stocky man with glasses and a very shiny head. He had a black leather bag in one hand and was nervously scratching his ear with the other.

"So, so" was the reply. "You better get him in so we can be on time. You know how they are when we run late."

"You got the stuff in the timer box yet?" asked the first man.

"No," said the doctor, "I'll wait until you finish."

After the two men had finished their part of the task and the door had been shut and sealed, the doctor put the "stuff" in a box that was situated on the back of the large box. Then he set the timer for two minutes.

The three men stood and watched and soon they saw through the two inch thick glass the two tiny, greenish-colored pills roll down a little spout into the metal cup of water under the chair to which Burtie had been strapped.