

Chapter 8: The Carpet Beaters

Jim knew that he would have to make his break before old Marion did her rounds for the night. He had no idea how he was going to do it. At suppertime he stuffed his cheese in his pocket and Tip passed his own share along to him. At the end of the meal Mr Sissons stood up on his dais. All the shuffling and whispering stopped. He moved his body slowly around, which was his way of fixing his eyes on everyone, freezing them like statues.

"I'm looking for some big boys," he said, "to help the carpet-beaters." He waited in the silence, but nobody moved. "Just as I would expect. A rush to help, when there is sickness in the wards."

A cold sigh seemed to ripple through the room. Mr Sissons laughed into it in his dry, hissing way. "It might be cholera, my dears. That's what I hear. I've two thousand mouths to feed here and someone has to earn the money, cholera or not. Somebody has to buy the medicines. Somebody has to pay for the burials." He moved his body round in its slow, watchful circle.

1. Find and copy **one** example of parenthesis.

2. Find and copy **one** example of a simile.

3. Why do you think the shuffling and whispering stopped?

4. What do you think 'carpet-beaters' are?

5. Why did Jim stuff cheese into his pocket?

6. What do you think will happen next?
