

Excerpts: Tiger! Tiger!

Excerpt from 'In the Forests of the Night.' (page 41 of 'Tiger! Tiger!')

It's morning. I don't want it to be. Not yet. I keep my eyes closed but the light prickles against my eyelids and I have to put my hand across my face to block it out. Jack's talking on the telephone. I can tell by the rise and fall of his voice. I can't hear the words, though. I feel my heart slow down. It's all right. I can't hear the words. I reach back into the darkness inside me and watch it swirl around me. I start to lose myself in it but it's too late.

Jack's there. He's got hold of my shoulder and he's shaking me. 'Lena, wake up.'

Owl, I think, confused ; the owl who hunts by night and all the little, big-eyed creatures with me shudder and clutch at one another.

'Come on, Lena. Wake up.'

'No, I . . .' It isn't any use though. In the end I have to open my eyes.

'Maeve's coming,' Jack says, going over to the mirror and straightening his tie. 'I rang her. She's coming at ten with Cynthia. You'll have to get up.'

I hold my hands out in front of my face. They dart and swoop together like birds in flight. I concentrate on the patterns they make and feel myself begin to smile.

But Jack won't leave us alone. 'Maeve and Cynthia are going to take you out,' he says. 'The zoo, I think. They've promised Cynthia's little girl. You'll like that, won't you, Lena, something different.'

'I don't want . . .'

'Oh, Lena, stop it. It'll be fun. You always liked Cynthia. You said, when you were growing up, your cousin Cynthia was just like your sister.'

His voice makes me frown. It's got too many feelings in it.....

