

# **THE BLACK RIDERS AND OTHER LINES**

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The Black Riders and Other Lines by Stephen Crane

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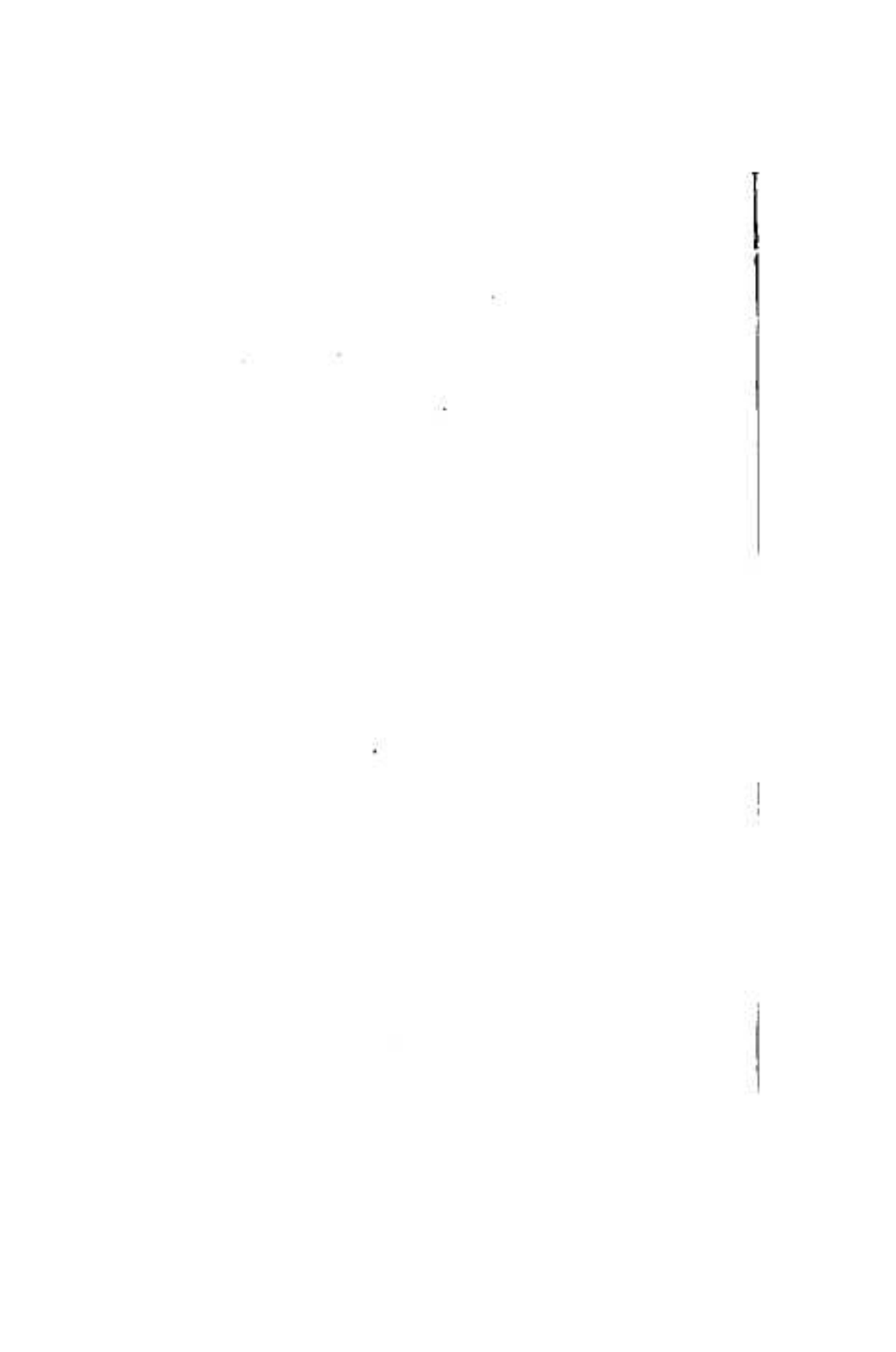
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**STEPHEN CRANE**

**THE BLACK RIDERS  
AND OTHER LINES**





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II

THREE LITTLE BIRDS IN A ROW

SAT MUSING.

A MAN PASSED NEAR THAT PLACE.

THEN DID THE LITTLE BIRDS NUDGE EACH  
OTHER.

THEY SAID, "HE THINKS HE CAN SING."

THEY THREW BACK THEIR HEADS TO LAUGH.

WITH QUAIN T COUNTENANCES

THEY REGARDED HIM.

THEY WERE VERY CURIOUS,

THOSE THREE LITTLE BIRDS IN A ROW.

## IN THE DESERT

I SAW A CREATURE, NAKED, BESTIAL,  
WHO, SQUATTING UPON THE GROUND,  
HELD HIS HEART IN HIS HANDS,  
AND ATE OF IT.

I SAID, "IS IT GOOD, FRIEND?"

"IT IS BITTER — BITTER," HE ANSWERED;

"BUT I LIKE IT

"BECAUSE IT IS BITTER,

"AND BECAUSE IT IS MY HEART."

IV

YES, I HAVE A THOUSAND TONGUES,  
AND NINE AND NINETY-NINE LIE.  
THOUGH I STRIVE TO USE THE ONE,  
IT WILL MAKE NO MELODY AT MY WILL,  
BUT IS DEAD IN MY MOUTH.