

# Chapter 5: Modernism (1914 - 1945)

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## 5.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify the causes and effects of Modernism
- Differentiate between High Modernism and Low Modernism
- Identify the social, cultural, and political movements occurring during Modernism
- Identify several major Modernist works

## 5.2 INTRODUCTION

The biggest driver for **Modernism** was World War I, also known as the **Great War**, and the social and political turmoil that ensued. Much of the innovative work of the Modernist period seemed to follow writer Ezra Pound's credo of "**Make It New!**" Whether it was technology, art, architecture, or poetry, **Modernism** sought to reinvent the world. Uninhibited by the past, the Modernist era redefined America's political, religious, economic, and social values. From areas of **women's suffrage** to the invention of the assembly line, from **Harlem** to the Deep South, Modernism was a time of social upheaval, extraordinary growth, and accelerated change for America.

### 5.2.1 The Great War

World War I, which lasted from 1914-1918, was largely a European conflict with Great Britain, France, Russia, and Italy serving as the pillars of the Allied Forces, and Germany and Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire anchoring the Central powers. Yet it brought turbulent changes to the entire world, America included. Although America did not officially enter the war effort until 1917, many young men already volunteered before then to fight with other detachments, such men including Ernest Hemingway, who was stationed as an ambulance driver on the Italian front. This war was the first global war and, as the world evolved, so did warfare. Additionally, this war was the first fully-industrialized war, featuring shelling, machine guns, mustard gas, and several other kinds of advanced weaponry. Indeed this war was the likes of which no one had ever seen. As such, it was a war of attrition, with over 30 million casualties. Never before in the history of civilization had there been such a large and full-scale military affair. Although in 1918, the

**Armistice** signaled the end to World War I, many tensions and hostilities remained, especially among the combatants who felt disillusioned and used by their country. It's no coincidence that in 1919, just one year later, riots broke out across the United States. After the dust settled, one thing was clear: the world had changed permanently; this change would be at the heart of Modernist literature and art.

Of course World War I did not end European conflict; tension began to arise when Adolf Hitler came to power in the 1930s and bristled under Germany's heavy sanctions imposed by the Armistice. Hitler's rise in Germany would lead to World War II, which the United States tried to avoid using isolationist policies. However, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) served as the catalyst for America's entrance into World War II. This period between the two wars marks an important time in American life and culture. During this time, America grew and matured, largely in reaction to these events that unified the nation against common enemies. This unprecedented American growth included growth from immigration, industrialization, technological developments, and the development of the modern cities.

### 5.2.2 Une Generation Perdue . . . (A Lost Generation)

If the mantra of Modernism was Pound's "Make it New," then the defining characteristic for the generation comes from Gertrude Stein's comment to young Ernest Hemingway that you are all "une generation perdue" (you all are a *lost* generation). With the economy at an all-time high—due to the increased industrial manufacturing and development of so many new industries—came an increase in wealth in America; indeed, the Modernist period is characterized by the boom of a growing economy before the bust of the Great Depression. While overall wealth increased, dissatisfaction with America also increased and a growing number of young people, artists and veterans alike lived as expatriates outside the country— largely taking up residence in France and Spain. Most notable among these expatriates were writers T. S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway. This movement is depicted in Hemingway's novel, *The Sun Also Rises*.

### 5.2.3 A Modern Nation

The industrial revolution and the meteoric rise of factories helped shift the nation's economy from its agricultural roots to an industry based economy. World War I (which began in 1914) along with America's entrance into the war (1917) put pressure on all of the citizens to ration goods and supplies. To meet demand, more factories began to experiment with mass production. This boom led to more jobs and a stronger economy, often referred to as the Boom years.

Furthermore, while live music led to the prevalence of nightclubs, Prohibition created an underground industry of bootlegging to supply alcohol for these entertainment and music venues. This instant wealth led to a greater population of the newly rich and encouraged growth throughout the country. Often called “**The Jazz Age**,” this era of wealth was written about by many different Modernists, but made famous by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

However, the Boom years did not last forever. This age of prosperity came to a sudden halt in October 1929, when the sudden stock market collapse led to the **Great Depression**. The economic downturn led to more than 10,000 banks shutting down and more than 15 million workers becoming unemployed. Worse still, a series of droughts in the early 1930s, known as the “**Dust Bowl**,” left 500,000 people homeless, as many of these families moved to California, looking for work. The Great Depression became a major literary theme chronicled, most notably, by John Steinbeck in his novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The election of Franklin Roosevelt (1932) ushered in the age of “The New Deal.” During the New Deal era, Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which used Federal funds to put more people to work, building America’s infrastructure. The WPA was responsible for roads, various public buildings, and other projects, most notably the Hoover Dam, using Federal funds. The WPA provided employment for millions, including writers and artists who were sponsored by the **Federal Writers’ Project**. James Agee’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, featuring the photography of Walker Evans, was an eye-opening book that captured the extent of **New Deal** poverty in the American South

At the same time, more and more people started migrating out of small rural agricultural areas into cities. Most notable among this time period is **the Great Migration**, during which African-Americans left the South to escape poverty and **Jim Crow** laws and moved to larger cities like Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and New York. The Great Migration included as many as 1.5 million African-Americans and represents the greatest population shift in American history. These cultural and population shifts, along with the freedom of transportation, caused cultural cross-pollination, as people brought their old customs to new places. These shifts helped spark regional cultural revolutions, such as the **Harlem Renaissance** in Harlem—which brought many important African-American artists to the forefront and is captured in works like Zora Neal Huston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* or Jean Toomer’s *Cane*—as well the **Southern Literary Renaissance**, also referred to by Southern Writers as the **Southern Literary Renaissance**—which foregrounded the creativity of the South and brought authors like William Faulkner and Eudora Welty to national prominence.

### 5.2.4 Technology

New technologies were changing the face of modern life. The Brooklyn Bridge, completed in 1883, was a giant suspension bridge which connected Brooklyn with Manhattan. Although it pre-dates Modernism, it was seen as one of America's greatest technological achievements and was the subject of Hart Crane's famous Modernist poem *The Bridge*. The invention of the automobile by inventors like Henry Ford and the development of the assembly line in the early 1920s not only created an industry, but also spurred investments in America's infrastructure, that is, its roads, highways. Suddenly, all of America was connected and personal travel was more readily available. The mass production of phonographs, projection reels, and telephones made these technologies more accessible to the public and allowed for more recording, making mass culture possible. The same could be said about the publishing industry, which flourished during this time. The paperback book made books more affordable, and the development of Book-of-the-Month clubs and subscription reading programs allowed for mass audiences, giving rise to the modern day "best seller." The affordability of magazines also made them a popular venue for many writers, as F. Scott Fitzgerald regularly published in *The Saturday Evening Post*, while many famous Modernist writers, such as Ezra Pound, held editorial positions for magazines, and literary magazines, such as *The Dial*, became popular venues for Modernist writers to publish.

### 5.2.5 Modernist Literature

The term Modernism as a literary term is largely used as a catchall for a global movement that was centered in the United States and Europe, for literature written during the two wars, which is said to be the first industrialized modern period. In another sense, Modernism refers to the general theme: much of the literature of the period is written in reaction to these accelerated times. After World War I, many writers felt betrayed by the United States, but even more than that, there was a general feeling of change, of progress, of questioning the ways of the past. Throughout the art of this time period, whether it is painting, sculpture, poetry, fiction, or non-fiction, all question the truths of the past, all question the status quo. Largely, this attitude goes hand-in-hand with the disaffection with politics caused by World War I.

#### *Poetry*

There is no single style that would encompass all of Modernist poetry; rather, a lot of Modernist poetry could be separated as **High Modernism** and **Low Modernism**. These terms are not meant to serve as an aesthetic judgment about the quality of the work, but rather help us

understand the range of experimentation occurring during this period. High Modernism features poets who are much more formal, such as T. S. Eliot with his “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,” and who look at the modern era as a period of loss, in some ways, looking at how much America has changed and fearing that the change might be for the worse. Essentially, in high modernist works, the authors realize that society has shifted so much, it will never be possible to return to the old ways, so they often represent the world as fragmented, disjointed, or chaotic. High Modernist poetry also maintains a traditional structure and form and often contains explicit allusions to history, myth, or religion, such as the epigraph from Dante’s *Inferno* which begins T. S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”

Low Modernism is much less formal, experimenting with form. The poetry of William Carlos Williams, the doctor turned poet, is a great example of Low Modernism. His poetry—like “This is Just to Say” and “The Red Wheelbarrow”—often plays with the traditional structure of a poem. These writers tend to be so different that first-time readers often questioned whether these works—Williams’s “This is Just to Say”; Pound’s “In a Station of the Metro”; Cummings’s “In Just”—are poems. Ezra Pound did not even consider himself a poet; rather, in his essay, “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste,” he refers to himself as an imagiste, or one who creates images.

### *Prose*

Experimentation was not limited to Modernist poetry, as **prose** (fiction and non-fiction) writers were also challenging form, style, and content, that is, what you could or could not write about. Authors such as Faulkner experimented with how to tell a story, especially by using a rotating cast of characters often set in the same county of Yoknapatawpha, while Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons* experimented with what exactly was a story. Sherwood Anderson’s book, *Winesburg, Ohio*, was able to blur the line between short stories and the novel by writing a book of short stories that fit together as a novel. In much the same way, Jean Toomer’s *Cane* combined poetry, prose, and drama in one strange and beautiful book, foregrounding the dangerous racial politics of the time. Modernist prose was much more than just experimentation, though, in that it also introduced new subject matter. Writers no longer felt the need to veil their opinions; instead, many were explicit in their political critiques. The Great Depression gave rise to Communism among many artists, especially in the works of Ellison and Baldwin, while the **Women’s Suffrage Movement** highlighted early **feminism**. Furthermore, the widespread distribution of easily affordable magazines and paperbacks meant that these writers were reaching a wider audience with a more radical message.

## *Drama*

The Modernist period was perhaps the birth of the American playwright. Before Modernism, theater consisted of largely vaudeville or productions of European works. However, the success of Eugene O’Neil paved the way for several other successful American playwrights, such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.

Although theirs was a time of great change, the common thread that ties the Modernist writers together—whether they write poetry, prose, or drama—is the techniques they invented. Writers such as Faulkner, whose novel *The Sound and the Fury* offered an entirely new way to narrate a book, or Langston Hughes, whose poetry blended music and verse, developed entirely new ways of telling a story. Modernist writers radically rejected previous standards in an attempt to “make it new” and, in the process, changed the course of literary history.

### **5.2.6 Further Reading: Additional Secondary Sources**

*Modernism: A Very Short Introduction*      Christopher Butler

*The Concept of Modernism*    Astradur Eysteinnsson

*After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*      Andreas Huyssen

*The Pound Era*      Hugh Kenner

*The American Adam*    RWB Lewis

*The Turning Word*    Joseph Riddel

## **5.3 ROBERT FROST (1874-1963)**



**Image 5.1 | Robert Frost, circa 1910**

Photographer | Unknown

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When Robert Frost was asked to recite “The Gift Outright” at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy in 1961, he was not only the first poet to be invited to participate in a presidential inauguration, he was also an American icon whose poetry was as recognizable to the nation as were Norman Rockwell’s *Saturday Evening Post* covers. Yet like his contemporary Rockwell, Frost’s poems reflect a rapidly changing cultural landscape in which the warm glow of memory was tinted by the cold reality of a highly mechanized, and often cruel, world. Frost was no passive megaphone for a comfortable past; like other Modernists, Frost melded traditional forms to the American vernacular to produce poetry that was strikingly American and contemporary.

Listeners and readers who are unfamiliar with Frost’s poetry often remark on the consistency of his poetic voice. Many of the poems, in fact, appear to originate from the same person, an older New England gentleman who spends much of his time reminiscing about the past, remarking wistfully on the changes taking place around him, and celebrating those rare moments when he has stepped out of the norm. Thus, poems like “The Road Not Taken,” are often recited at high school graduation ceremonies as a way to encourage students to take risks and celebrate life. Closer inspection of the poems reveals that this voice is not Frost’s at all, but that of an alter ego who exists not to highlight the past glories, but to underline very contemporary frustrations with a decaying world.



“Mending Wall,” a poem written around the time of Frost’s fortieth birthday in 1914, is a strong introduction to his use of this alter ego. A dramatic monologue in forty-five lines of iambic pentameter, the poem opens with the vague pronouncement, “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,” and proceeds to spell out the conditions for this seasonal activity, that of mending the fence that separates two farms. As the speaker and his neighbor proceed to rebuild the wall, each one responsible for the stones that have fallen onto his own side, the first farmer pauses to reflect on how it is that every year the wall requires new attention even though no one, save for a few hunters, has been observed disturbing the stones. This annual cycle of decay and reconstruction is at the heart of this poem, and the need for annual maintenance occurs not only in the world of fences, but in the world of human relationships as well.

This idea of continual decay and maintenance in human relationships provides a useful frame for understanding “Home Burial,” a longer narrative poem that describes the apparently divergent responses of a husband and wife to the death of one of their children. A primer in the relationship between appearance and reality as the wife and husband struggle to understand their individual responses to this most recent death, the poem continues the theme of decay and rebuilding that is apparent in “Mending Wall.” As the husband and wife appear to move closer together in the poem, they must also rebuild trust in their own relationship. Throughout Frost’s poetry this cycle of decay and reconstruction continues unabated.

### **5.3.1 “Mending Wall”**

Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.  
The work of hunters is another thing:  
I have come after them and made repair  
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,  
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,  
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,  
No one has seen them made or heard them made,  
But at spring mending-time we find them there.



I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;  
And on a day we meet to walk the line  
And set the wall between us once again.  
We keep the wall between us as we go.  
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.  
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls  
We have to use a spell to make them balance:  
“Stay where you are until our backs are turned!”  
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.  
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,  
One on a side. It comes to little more:  
There where it is we do not need the wall:  
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.  
My apple trees will never get across  
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.  
He only says, “Good fences make good neighbours.”  
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
If I could put a notion in his head:  
“Why do they make good neighbours? Isn’t it  
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
Before I built a wall I’d ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offence.  
Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,  
That wants it down.” I could say “Elves” to him,  
But it’s not elves exactly, and I’d rather

He said it for himself. I see him there  
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
He will not go behind his father's saying,  
And he likes having thought of it so well  
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

### **5.3.2 "Home Burial"**

He saw her from the bottom of the stairs  
Before she saw him. She was starting down,  
Looking back over her shoulder at some fear.  
She took a doubtful step and then undid it  
To raise herself and look again. He spoke  
Advancing toward her: "What is it you see  
From up there always—for I want to know."  
She turned and sank upon her skirts at that,  
And her face changed from terrified to dull.  
He said to gain time: "What is it you see,"  
Mounting until she cowered under him.  
"I will find out now—you must tell me, dear."  
She, in her place, refused him any help  
With the least stiffening of her neck and silence.  
She let him look, sure that he wouldn't see,  
Blind creature; and awhile he didn't see.

But at last he murmured, “Oh,” and again, “Oh.”

“What is it—what?” she said.

“Just that I see.”

“You don’t,” she challenged. ‘tell me what it is.’”

‘the wonder is I didn’t see at once.

I never noticed it from here before.

I must be wonted to it—that’s the reason.

The little graveyard where my people are!

So small the window frames the whole of it.

Not so much larger than a bedroom, is it?

There are three stones of slate and one of marble,

Broad-shouldered little slabs there in the sunlight

On the sidehill. We haven’t to mind *those*.

But I understand: it is not the stones,

But the child’s mound—”

“don’t, don’t, don’t, don’t,” she cried.

She withdrew shrinking from beneath his arm

That rested on the banister, and slid downstairs;

And turned on him with such a daunting look,

He said twice over before he knew himself:

“Can’t a man speak of his own child he’s lost?”

“Not you! Oh, where’s my hat? Oh, I don’t need it!

I must get out of here. I must get air.

I don’t know rightly whether any man can.”

“Amy! Don’t go to someone else this time.

Listen to me. I won’t come down the stairs.”

He sat and fixed his chin between his fists.

‘there’s something I should like to ask you, dear.”

“You don’t know how to ask it.”

“Help me, then.”

Her fingers moved the latch for all reply.

“My words are nearly always an offense.

I don’t know how to speak of anything

So as to please you. But I might be taught

I should suppose. I can’t say I see how.

A man must partly give up being a man

With women-folk. We could have some arrangement

By which I’d bind myself to keep hands off

Anything special you’re a-mind to name.

Though I don’t like such things ‘twixt those that love.

Two that don't love can't live together without them.

But two that do can't live together with them."

She moved the latch a little. 'don't—don't go.

Don't carry it to someone else this time.

Tell me about it if it's something human.

Let me into your grief. I'm not so much

Unlike other folks as your standing there

Apart would make me out. Give me my chance.

I do think, though, you overdo it a little.

What was it brought you up to think it the thing

To take your mother-loss of a first child

So inconsolably—in the face of love.

You'd think his memory might be satisfied—"

"there you go sneering now!"

"I'm not, I'm not!

You make me angry. I'll come down to you.

God, what a woman! And it's come to this,

A man can't speak of his own child that's dead."

"You can't because you don't know how to speak.

If you had any feelings, you that dug

With your own hand—how could you?—his little grave;

I saw you from that very window there,

Making the gravel leap and leap in air,

Leap up, like that, like that, and land so lightly  
And roll back down the mound beside the hole.  
I thought, Who is that man? I didn't know you.  
And I crept down the stairs and up the stairs  
To look again, and still your spade kept lifting.  
Then you came in. I heard your rumbling voice  
Out in the kitchen, and I don't know why,  
But I went near to see with my own eyes.  
You could sit there with the stains on your shoes  
Of the fresh earth from your own baby's grave  
And talk about your everyday concerns.  
You had stood the spade up against the wall  
Outside there in the entry, for I saw it."

"I shall laugh the worst laugh I ever laughed.  
I'm cursed. God, if I don't believe I'm cursed."

"I can repeat the very words you were saying:  
'three foggy mornings and one rainy day  
Will rot the best birch fence a man can build.'  
Think of it, talk like that at such a time!  
What had how long it takes a birch to rot  
To do with what was in the darkened parlor?  
You *couldn't* care! The nearest friends can go  
With anyone to death, comes so far short  
They might as well not try to go at all.

No, from the time when one is sick to death,  
One is alone, and he dies more alone.  
Friends make pretense of following to the grave,  
But before one is in it, their minds are turned  
And making the best of their way back to life  
And living people, and things they understand.  
But the world's evil. I won't have grief so  
If I can change it. Oh, I won't, I won't!"

"there, you have said it all and you feel better.  
You won't go now. You're crying. Close the door.  
The heart's gone out of it: why keep it up.  
Amy! There's someone coming down the road!"

"*You*—oh, you think the talk is all. I must go—  
Somewhere out of this house. How can I make you—"

"If—you—do!" She was opening the door wider.  
"Where do you mean to go? First tell me that.  
I'll follow and bring you back by force. I *will!*—"

### 5.3.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. Compare and contrast the speakers in "Mending Wall" and "Home Burial." How does each of these men understand the world around them?
2. The two figures in "Mending Wall" rebuild the wall in silence. What does their silence tell us about their relationship?
3. At the end of "Home Burial," Amy appears ready to exit the house? Does she depart?



4. Compare Frost's "Home Burial" to Williams's "The Dead Baby."

## 5.4 WALLACE STEVENS (1879-1955)



**Image 5.2 | Wallace Stevens**

Photographer | Unknown

Source | Wikipedia

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Wallace Stevens's reputation as an American poet has undergone something of a transformation over the sixty years since his death in the middle of the twentieth century. Celebrated during his lifetime for his imagery and for his attempts to unite the real world with the imagination, Stevens was also the target of frequent criticism for both the ordinary subjects of his early poetry and for the abstractness of his later work. Those who celebrate Stevens's work often point to this dichotomy, between the world of commerce and the world of the mind, as evidence of Stevens's particularly American upbringing. Unlike many of his generation, Stevens did not shy from commerce or industry in pursuit of his art; instead, he embraced both halves of himself by working during the day as a lawyer and insurance company executive and by writing poetry in the evenings and on vacation. While many modernist poets considered it a badge of honor to support themselves solely through their writings, Stevens saw no conflict in pursuing both the world of real things and the flights of the imagination. These were the stuff of poetry, not of conflict. From his first collection, *Harmonium*, published in 1923, to *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, published in 1954, the year before his death, Stevens resolutely mixed the ordinary and the imaginary in poems that are technically sophisticated while accessible to a wider audience.

The two selections from Stevens in this section highlight these two aspects of his poetry. In the first, “The Emperor of Ice-Cream” (1923), the poet uses just sixteen lines to connect the reader to an ordinary funeral, one in which there are no grand flourishes or flagrant displays, but only mourners in everyday clothes, bouquets of flowers wrapped in newspaper, and a widow who covers her face with a dresser cloth. Juxtaposed against a poet like Whitman, who celebrates the body, here in this poem we never even see the deceased in repose; nonetheless we know that he is an ordinary man. By 1923 Stevens warns us that the only emperor, the only one to deserve or receive a grand funeral, is the emperor of ice cream.

The second selection from Stevens is the much-quoted “Of Modern Poetry” (1942), which has become an iconic twentieth-century poem. Here Stevens makes his own argument for poetry that picks up on Marianne Moore’s call for more precise language that is found in her own poem, “Poetry” (1921), included earlier in this chapter. Stevens, like Moore, argues that a poem “has to be living” (7), and therefore poetry must embrace the simple language of ordinary things in order for the imagination to create images. Yet, Stevens cautions poets and readers that modern poetry must not seek merely to represent an image; it must also connect to the imagination in order for it to succeed. These two selections are but a small portion of Stevens’s rich body of work, but in reflecting both the early and the later parts of his career as a poet, they show a consistency of purpose, and a dedication to the natural language of readers, that few equaled in the twentieth century.

#### **5.4.1 “The Emperor of Ice Cream”**

Call the roller of big cigars,  
The muscular one, and bid him whip  
In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.  
Let the wenches dawdle in such dress  
As they are used to wear, and let the boys  
Bring flowers in last month’s newspapers.  
Let be be finale of seem.  
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.  
  
Take from the dresser of deal,

Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet  
On which she embroidered fantails once  
And spread it so as to cover her face.  
If her horny feet protrude, they come  
To show how cold she is, and dumb.  
Let the lamp affix its beam.  
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

### 5.4.2 “Of Modern Poetry”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/172210>

### 5.4.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. How does Stevens’s use of everyday language and situations shape the subjects of his poetry?
2. Compare Stevens’s “Of Modern Poetry” to Marianne Moore’s “Poetry.” How do these authors understand the roles and responsibilities of poets?

## 5.5 WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS (1883-1963)



### Image 5.3 | William Carlos Williams, 1921

Photographer | Unknown

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Affectionately known as “the good doctor,” the prolific William Carlos Williams published dozens of works of literature in his lifetime, including novels, plays, essay and poetry collections, an autobiography, and one of the longest modernist poems ever composed, the five-part epic *Paterson*. Born in Rutherford, New Jersey, in 1883, Williams attended medical school at the University of Pennsylvania, where he met fellow poets Hilda Doolittle (H. D.) and Ezra Pound. Soon after graduating, Williams settled back home in Rutherford with his wife and family to run a medical practice, delivering over 2000 babies during his lifelong career as a pediatrician. While establishing himself as a successful neighborhood doctor, Williams also established himself as an influential voice in New York City’s Modernist art scene, befriending writers such as Wallace Stevens and Marianne Moore and experimental painters such as Marcel Duchamp. In 1913, the International Exhibition of Modern Art at New York City’s 69th Regiment Armory introduced Americans to radical new styles of painting such as **Cubism** and **Fauvism**. Inspired by these new forms of visual art, Williams sought to craft a similarly new form of poetry for modern America. Like the modern painters, Williams focuses on the details of urban life through shifting perspectives and juxtaposed images. To both free his poetry from the restrictions of traditional verse forms and save it from the anarchy of free verse, Williams devised a new poetic rhythm called “the variable foot” that he used to structure his poems organically according to the rhythms of everyday American speech.

At a time when many American modernist authors were moving to Europe to find artistic inspiration, Williams found inspiration in his native New Jersey, taking its small cities and working people as the subjects for his poetry. Stylistically, Williams’s poetry is rooted in the **Imagism** championed by his friend Ezra Pound, as evidenced by the short imagist poem, “The Red Wheelbarrow” presented here. In his *Autobiography*, Williams writes that the poet is “not to talk in vague categories but to write particularly, as a physician works, upon a patient, upon the thing before him, in the particular to discover the universal.” Williams’s insistence on writing about the particular led him to differ from poets such as Pound and Eliot, who eventually sought to make modern poetry more universal by making it more international, infusing it with different cultures and languages. Williams chose instead to write most of his poems—to use the title of one of his essay collections—“in the American grain,” finding the universal in the everyday experiences of his native land. For example, in “The Dead Baby,” Williams draws from his own experience as a doctor to explore a sadly common but usually unsung moment of grief. In “This Is Just To Say,” Williams combines the linguistic economy of an Imagist poet with the shifts in perspective of a

Cubist painter, presenting multiple perspectives on a small family drama over the course of three brief stanzas.

### **5.5.1 “The Red Wheelbarrow”**

Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/guide/178804#poem>

### **5.5.2 “This Is Just To say”**

Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/245576>

### **5.5.3 “The dead baby”**

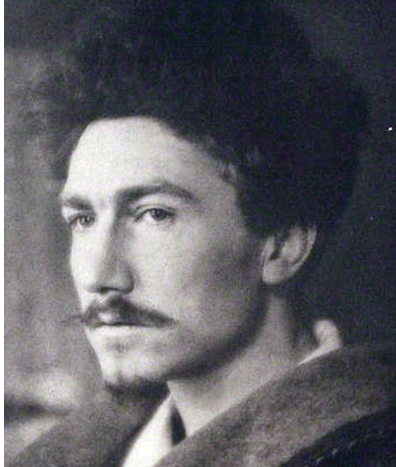
Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://www.poetrynook.com/poem/dead-baby-1>

### **5.5.4 Reading and Review Questions**

1. In his poem *Paterson*, Williams famously writes that there are “no ideas but in things.” What ideas do you find in “The Red Wheelbarrow”?
2. Discuss the use of repetition in “The Dead Baby.” What universal meanings can be derived by Williams’s careful observation of the particular repetitive behavior in this poem?
3. Explore the shifting perspectives in “This Is Just to Say.” How does the idea of the plums change over the poem’s course?

## **5.6 EZRA POUND (1885-1972)**



**Image 5.4 | Ezra Pound, 1913**

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As brilliant as he was controversial, Ezra Pound more than any other single poet or editor shaped modernist poetry into the forms you find in this chapter. Pound grew up in Philadelphia and attended the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied world languages and became friends with fellow poets Hilda Doolittle (H. D.) and William Carlos Williams. After being fired from his first college teaching job at Wabash College for his idiosyncratic behavior, Pound moved to London in 1908, working as a teacher, book reviewer, and secretary to William Butler Yeats. The energetic and prolific Pound soon became a force within London's literary scene, urging his fellow poets to break from poetic tradition and, as he famously wrote, "make it new." Over his lifetime Pound published collections of critical essays such as "Make it New" (1934) and *The ABC of Reading* (1934), translations of Chinese and Japanese poetry, and volumes of his own poetry, most notably his 116 *Cantos*, a decades-long project that he envisioned as the sum total of his life's learnings and observations. After the World War I, Pound became disillusioned with free-market democratic society, blaming it for both the immediate war and the general decline of civilization. He moved to Italy and became enamored with Italy's fascist government, recording hundreds of pro-fascist radio programs for Rome Radio that were broadcast to allied troops. After the war, Pound was arrested for treason, found mentally unfit, and incarcerated in Washington, D.C.'s Saint Elizabeth's Hospital until 1958, when his fellow poets successfully lobbied to have him freed.

Pound influenced modernist literature in two ways: by championing and editing numerous writers such as H. D., Robert Frost, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, Wyndham Lewis, and T. S. Eliot (whose *The Waste Land* he substantially revised); and by campaigning for the Imagist and Vorticist poetic movements. "In a Station of the Metro" is a perfect example of an

Imagist poem. The poem is based on an experience Pound had of stepping off a train in Paris's underground Metro. As he writes in his essay, "From Vorticism," he "saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another and another...and I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me..." It took Pound an entire year to find those words. His first draft of the poem was thirty lines long. His second draft was fifteen lines long. Still unable to express the emotion he felt that day, Pound continued to cut verbiage from the poem until it came closer in form to a Japanese haiku than a traditional Western lyric. The final two-line poem exemplifies Pound's three criteria for an Imagist poem: that the poet must treat things directly; eliminate unnecessary words; and use rhythm musically, not mechanically.

### **5.6.1 "In a Station of the Metro"**

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:

Petals on a wet, black bough.

### **5.6.2 Reading and Review Questions**

1. Consider the title as part of the poem. How does the title set your expectations for what follows?
2. Explore the word "apparition" in the poem's first line. What meanings and associations does this one word evoke?
3. What emotions does the imagery of petals and water in the poem's second line convey?
4. Scan the poem's meter. How does the poem's rhythm—its music— correspond to its imagery?

## **5.7 MARIANNE MOORE (1887-1972)**





**Image 5.5 | Marianne Moore, 1935**

Photographer | George Platt Lynes

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If Robert Frost’s poems demonstrate a continuing fascination with decay, it may be said that Marianne Moore’s poetry reveals an equally compelling fascination with development. Like Dickinson and Whitman in the previous century, Moore was a compulsive editor and revisionist who apparently struggled over the publication of each of her poems. Like Dickinson, she wished to see her poems laid out exactly as she wished, but as a professional, rather than an amateur poet, she seized upon each opportunity for publication as a chance for revision. Thus, like with Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, it is difficult to call any of Moore’s poems finished. Each time they were printed anew, she revised them. In this way, Moore’s poetry works on a number of textual levels. Like Dickinson, Moore expressed hesitation at the appearance of her published work, but like her Modernist contemporaries, she embraced the opportunities that twentieth-century publishing, and the existence of numerous “little magazines,” offered.

Moore’s first published poems appeared in these “little magazines,” the literary and artistic journals of the early twentieth century, around 1915, and her work was widely praised by the literary gatekeepers of the day, including Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. But it was her first collection of twenty-four entries, *Poems*, published without her knowledge in July 1921, that made her name widely known in the literary world. By the time that Moore herself produced a collection of poems, 1924’s *Observations*, she was beginning to develop a reputation as a “poet’s poet” that was only strengthened by winning the *Dial* prize in 1925. After winning the prize in 1925, Moore became editor of the *Dial*, a post that she held for the next four years.

“Poetry,” the selection that follows, is a manifesto for Modernism, a demonstration of Moore’s command of both technique and artistry, and an instruction manual. As a manifesto, “Poetry” is both disdainful of the rigid forms that dominated most poetry—what Moore calls, “this fiddle,”—and celebratory of the experience of reading poetry. The experience of reading poetry, she argues, must yield an understanding of “imaginary gardens with real toads in them,” and not be merely sites for “high-sounding,” but “unintelligible,” attempts at communication. Thus poetry, Moore argues, must be both precise and genuine.

Moore demonstrates both precision and authenticity throughout the poem by using concrete, rather than traditionally poetic, language and by avoiding many of our expectations about poetry. Not only does Moore’s poetry fail to rhyme, but she also rejects Dickinson’s rigid hymnody, eschews Whitman’s free verse, and ignores Frost’s blank verse in favor of poetry that shares more of its syntax with prose and the spoken word than it does with traditional poetic forms. In place of lines and stanzas, Moore forces us to confront her poetry as a single unit where the expression begins with the first capital “I,” and concludes with a single period at the end of the last line. Entangled in this extended expression, Moore guides the reader to a new understanding of poetry that reminds readers of Whitman’s *Song of Myself* while it advocates not for a song in the traditional sense but for the importance of ordinary human speech. While reading “Poetry,” careful readers should take note of the differences between Moore’s monologue, in which no response is required from the reader, and the dramatic monologues of Frost whose speaker is always questioning.

### 5.7.1 “Poetry”

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond

all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one

discovers in

it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes

that can dilate, hair that can rise

if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because  
they are  
useful. When they become so derivative as to become  
unintelligible,  
the same thing may be said for all of us, that we  
do not admire what  
we cannot understand: the bat  
holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless  
wolf under  
a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse  
that feels a flea, the base-  
ball fan, the statistician--  
nor is it valid  
to discriminate against "business documents and

school-books"; all these phenomena are important. One must make  
a distinction  
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the  
result is not poetry,  
nor till the poets among us can be  
"literalists of  
the imagination"--above  
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, “imaginary gardens with real toads in them,”

shall we have

it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,

the raw material of poetry in

all its rawness and

that which is on the other hand

genuine, you are interested in poetry.

### 5.7.2 Reading and Review Questions

1. How does the presentation of Moore’s poem—the ragged lines, the uneven breaks—shape our understanding of the poem?
2. How does Moore distinguish her work from the work of her predecessors like Dickinson and Whitman?

## 5.8 T. S. ELIOT (1888-1965)



**Image 5.6 | T. S. Eliot, 1934**

Photographer | Lady Ottoline Morrell

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Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri. Eliot's father, Henry Eliot, was a successful businessman, while his mother, Charlotte Stearns, wrote poetry and was involved in St. Louis's cultural scene. Eliot lived in St. Louis until 1906, when he enrolled at Harvard University where he studied until 1910. Later that year, Eliot left to study at the Sorbonne in Paris for a year, before returning to Harvard to begin work on a Ph.D. In 1914, Eliot left the United States and accepted a scholarship at Oxford University, where he stayed for a year. Although he did not finish his studies at Oxford, Eliot remained in England, completing his dissertation for Harvard University, since World War I prevented Eliot from returning to the U.S. Instead Eliot stayed in London, later renouncing his American citizenship in favor of British citizenship (1927). Although he was a successful writer, Eliot also worked for a living, first as a teacher, then a banker, before accepting a position at Faber and Faber Publishing House. Eliot would become a tastemaker of the Modernist period, discovering and publishing many Modernist writers and eventually serving as the director of Faber and Faber. Although Eliot never moved back to the United States, he returned quite often to visit as well as to give lectures and readings.

Eliot began writing poetry in college, but it was after he moved to England (1914) that he began to write in earnest. Once he started to publish, Eliot's reputation grew until he became one of the central figures of the modernist movement. His essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," offered a highly influential approach for reading and interpreting literature. However, Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land* (1922), was possibly the most famous work of the Modernist era, one that is considered a masterpiece and significantly raised Eliot's profile. Written with editorial guidance from fellow Modernist poet Ezra Pound, *The Waste Land* sought to express the disillusionment of the post WWI Modernist era. It is a poem that many other Modernist writers used in their own writing. Throughout his career, Eliot produced several major works spanning multiple genres, including his poems, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *The Waste Land*, "The Hollow Men," "Ash Wednesday," and *The Four Quartets*, as well as the famous essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and the play, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). Common themes in his work include isolation, religious insecurities, and frustration.

Eliot's poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," which begins with an **epigraph** from Dante's *Inferno*, is innovative in form because it is formatted as a **dramatic monologue** without a clearly identified audience. It quickly becomes evident to the reader that this poem defies the conventions of a traditional love letter; rather, it reads like a confessional, with Prufrock confessing his feelings to the reader. The reader is privy to Prufrock's own insecurities and self-doubt that cannot be assuaged by God/religion, his fear of rejection, and his fear of dying alone.

### 5.8.1 “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse  
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.  
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo  
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,  
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherized upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question . . .  
Oh, do not ask, “What is it?”  
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,

Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I dare?”  
Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —  
(They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”)



My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —  
(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!”)  
Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  
I know the voices dying with a dying fall  
Beneath the music from a farther room.  
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
Then how should I begin  
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—  
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)

Is it perfume from a dress  
That makes me so digress?  
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.  
And should I then presume?  
And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!  
Smoothed by long fingers,  
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,  
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.  
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?  
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,  
I am no prophet — and here's no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,  
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  
Would it have been worth while,  
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,  
To have squeezed the universe into a ball  
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,  
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—  
If one, settling a pillow by her head  
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all;  
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth while,  
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,  
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—  
And this, and so much more?—  
It is impossible to say just what I mean!  
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:  
Would it have been worth while  
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
And turning toward the window, should say:  
"That is not it at all,  
That is not what I meant, at all."

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,  
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  
Deferential, glad to be of use,  
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.  
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.  
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

### 5.8.2 Reading and Review Questions

1. The poem is titled “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” How does this poem differ from what we usually consider the typical themes of a love song? Are there any similarities to a love song?
2. Eliot’s famous line, “Do I Dare Disturb the Universe,” has been seen as the central line in this poem. What is Prufrock referring to in this line? How could he disturb the universe?

## 5.9 EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY (1892-1950)



**Image 5.7 | Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1933**

Photographer | Carl Van Vechten

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When the first of our selections from Edna St. Vincent Millay, “First Fig,” was published in *Poetry* in October 1918, the twenty-six year old author was already a published poet and a rising figure in the Greenwich Village literary scene. Yet “First Fig,” and the four other lyrics that appeared alongside it in that issue, are notable because they demonstrate—in a total of just twenty lines—both Millay’s mastery of the lyric form and her determined frankness. In this way, Millay represents both a continuation of poetic traditions and a new approach to appropriate subject matter for women’s poetry. Like many female poets of the early part of the twentieth century, Millay appears at once to straddle two worlds: on one hand her poetry shows great technical

skill, which permits her entry into the ranks of so-called serious poets, while on the other hand, her verses show a lightness, a frankness, and a freshness from which a poet like Dickinson would retreat. For Millay and other female poets, as for their African-American contemporaries like Countee Cullen, it was often necessary to embrace traditional poetic forms even as their subject matter was decidedly modern.

One of three daughters of a divorced mother at the turn of the century, Millay's early successes resulted in the unusual opportunity to attend Vassar College in her early twenties, and these social and educational connections proved highly useful to the young writer. A gifted playwright as well as a poet, Millay was a member of the experimental theatre group, the Provincetown Players, for whom she frequently wrote while also composing several books of poetry. As a sometime expatriate in the 1920s, Millay liberally combined traditional poetic forms and contemporary subjects in her verse, prose, and drama. The winner of the **Pulitzer Prize** for poetry in 1923, for *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver*, Millay was both a critically and a commercially successful writer.

"First Fig," the opening lyric in a group known as *Figs from Thistles*, is familiar to many readers who encountered it in high school, where it is often included as a tool for teaching about scansion and prosody. Composed of just four lines that alternate between iambic pentameter and iambic tetrameter, and featuring a strong end-rhyme, "First Fig" is often a gateway work in modernist poetry because it mimics forms with which readers are already comfortable. Yet the poem quickly challenges our expectations by celebrating excess: "My candle burns at both ends," for example, and then acknowledging the speaker's foes as readily as the speaker's friends. These elements combined with the exclamatory, "It gives a lovely light!" in the last line transport the imagery from the usual one of decay into a celebration. This celebration of rapid change unites "First Fig" with the other four lyrics with which it was first published into a celebration of the present.

The second selection from Millay, "I Think I Should Have Loved You Presently" (1922), provides additional evidence of the poet's technical skills. A sonnet in the Shakespearean tradition, "I Think I Should Have Loved You Presently," uses the occasion of an absent lover not as a moment for regret but as an occasion to acknowledge the impermanence of romantic love. In the first few lines, the speaker makes clear that it was a choice, and not mere caprice that caused her to act as she did in jesting with a recent lover. Despite the loss of her lover's affections, the speaker would not change her ways, instead choosing to "Cherish no less the certain stakes I gained" (11) than to regret her dalliance. For these and other epigrammatic lines, Millay remains one of the most quoted modernist poets.

### 5.9.1 “First Fig”

My candle burns at both ends;  
    It will not last the night;  
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—  
    It gives a lovely light!

### 5.9.2 “I Think I should Have loved You Presently”

I think I should have loved you presently,  
And given in earnest words I flung in jest;  
And lifted honest eyes for you to see,  
And caught your hand against my cheek and breast;  
And all my pretty follies flung aside  
That won you to me, and beneath your gaze,  
Naked of reticence and shorn of pride,  
Spread like a chart my little wicked ways.  
I, that had been to you, had you remained,  
But one more waking from a recurrent dream,  
Cherish no less the certain stakes I gained,  
And walk your memory’s halls, austere, supreme,  
A ghost in marble of a girl you knew  
Who would have loved you in a day or two.

### 5.9.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. How does Millay’s choice of the sonnet form distinguish her work from that of other Modernists such as Eliot, Moore, Stevens, and Williams? Also, why do writers like Cullen and Millay experiment with the sonnet form?



2. Millay is one of the first American poets to write candidly about female sexuality. How does Millay's poetry reflect the attitudes of Modernism in relation to female sexuality?

## 5.10E. E. CUMMINGS (1894-1962)



**Image 5.8 | e. e. cummings, 1953**

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Like a number of the modernist poets, e. e. cummings came from a family of teachers and ministers. But while many of his contemporaries were active members of the artistic communities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, cummings was a more solitary figure whose poetry and politics tended toward the everyday and the common. This is not to say that cummings was a passive observer of the world around him: while serving overseas during World War I, cummings and a friend were held by the French on charges that their letters home were derisive of authority and of the general war effort. At home in New York, however, cummings seems to have avoided the style of poetry and pronouncements that made his contemporaries like Pound, Williams, Moore, and Stevens into vanguards of Modernist poetry.

Nonetheless, contemporary readers are often startled by the appearance of cummings's poetry on the printed page. Eschewing capitalization, punctuation, and standard verse forms, cummings's works take full advantage of the printed page to present poems that are often better suited to private reading than public performance. Where the lack of punctuation and capitalization may disarm readers more accustomed to being told how to vocalize a poem, cummings's verses are presented without a beginning or an ending so as to allow the reader to move through a collection of cummings's verse in a way that befits the private reading experience. Like Marianne Moore, who also paid careful attention to the presentation of her works in print, cummings embraced the opportunities that modern print culture provided to poets.

The selection from cummings in this unit, "in Just-," published in 1920, demonstrates many of the attributes that are common in cummings's verse. This poem can be said to begin without a beginning, withholding even the suggestion of where these lines fall in the consciousness of the poetic voice. And yet, while cummings does away with many aspects of poetry, the beginning of the poem is still familiar to the reader. Consider the beginning of the poem written out in prose: in Justspring when the world is mud-luscious the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee. Written out this way, the reader can quickly ascertain the meaning of the first few lines, but it is not the form on the page, verse or prose, that makes this possible, but the fact that these lines follow an elementary syntax that feels natural to the ear, even if the eye is confused by the physical arrangement.

Once the first lines of the poem have been mastered, more traditional patterns begin to emerge for the reader. The three-times repetition of the words, "balloonman whistles far and wee," divides the poem into two sections describing the games and adventures of two groups of children, Eddie and Bill and Betty and Isbel. With these children, celebrating the early days of spring, the Just-spring of the opening lines are full of movement and energy in contrast to the infirmities of the balloonman; nonetheless, all five are part of a vignette whose appearance in the poem suggests further adventures to come. Although unusual in its shape and punctuation, cummings's poetry is linked to the same rhythms of life that have captivated poets from Chaucer to Eliot.

### 5.10.1 "in Just-"

in Just-

spring when the world is mud-

luscious the little

lame balloonman

whistles       far       and wee

and eddieandbill come

running from marbles and

piracies and it's

spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

the queer

old balloonman whistles

far       and       wee

and bettyandisbel come dancing

from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's spring and

the

goat-footed

balloonMan    whistles

far

and

wee

### 5.10.2 Reading and Review Questions

1. How does cummings's resistance to punctuation shape your understanding of this poem? Can you determine an internal structure in the poem that replaces the need for standard punctuation?
2. How does cummings's poetry compare to other iconic American poets like Whitman or Williams? Is cummings's rejection of punctuation and traditional forms part of the American quality of his poetry?
3. Analyze the ways in which cummings uses hyphenation and line breaks in "in Just-" to create a sense of overlapping time.

## 5.11F. SCOTT FITZGERALD (1896-1940)



**Image 5.9 | F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1937**

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F. Scott Fitzgerald was born in 1896 to a comfortable, solidly middle-class family in St. Paul, Minnesota. A social and cultural beneficiary of the Gilded Age, Fitzgerald's family did not enjoy the prominence and ease of the Carnegies, the Vanderbilts, or the Rockefellers, but in the fluidity of the 1890s a young man like Fitzgerald could, with the right manners and reading, pass among the wealthy without causing much of a stir. In an era when the ultra-rich and the working poor were separated by an unbridgeable chasm, Fitzgerald's modest means still placed him closer to the rich than the poor. Fitzgerald was nevertheless acutely aware of the shortcomings of his limited means and his Midwestern heritage. In his stories and novels, Fitzgerald returned time and again to three areas: money, unattainable love, and individual identity. The three short stories selected here present these themes in abundance.

Fitzgerald's short fiction has been overwhelmed by interest in his novel *The Great Gatsby*, but Fitzgerald survived by writing short stories for popular magazines like the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Metropolitan*, and *Cosmopolitan*. The selections that follow, each from the first decade of Fitzgerald's career, show his development as a writer of social fiction, and they allow us to understand his longer works in a new light. In "The Rich Boy," a story from 1926 and not reprinted in this collection, Fitzgerald clearly describes the project of his short stories:

Begin with an individual, and before you know it you find that you have created a type; begin with a type, and you find that you have created—nothing. That is because we are all queer fish, queerer behind our faces and voices than we want any one to know or than we know ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

These lines are particularly important to understanding Fitzgerald because they remind us that his characters are not intended to represent anything larger than the essential character. While *Gatsby* may be great, his story is uniquely his own and unrepresentative of any other industrial baron, brewer, or bootlegger of the 1920s. Thus, Fitzgerald portrays his most famous character through the eyes of a single, flawed narrator. We are not meant to know all of *Gatsby*'s secrets, and, by not knowing his secrets, the story of *Gatsby*'s rise and fall is both individual and universal.

Later in "The Rich Boy," Fitzgerald's narrator offers one of the most memorable and misquoted passages in American literature:

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<sup>1</sup> Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Fitzgerald Reader*. New York: Scribner, 1963. Print., 239

Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me. They possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and cynical where we are trustful, in a way that, unless you were born rich, it is very difficult to understand. They think, deep in their hearts, that they are better than we are because we had to discover the compensations and refuges of life for ourselves. Even when they enter deep into our world or sink below us, they still think that they are better than we are. They are different.<sup>2</sup>

The essential differences of the rich fascinated Fitzgerald and his readers. Throughout the 1920s, the rich and mysterious filled dozens of short stories that enabled Fitzgerald to marry Zelda Sayre, a Southern debutante, and to start a family. But constant exposure to the rich, without being rich, took its toll on both of them. The three stories here: “Bernice Bobs Her Hair,” “Winter Dreams,” and “The Diamond as Big as the Ritz,” are ultimately stories of disillusionment with a strong moral center. Filled with wonder and caution, these three stories blend realism and fable into a uniquely modernist take on wealth, love, and success.

The first of our stories, “Bernice Bobs Her Hair,” developed out of an actual letter that Fitzgerald wrote to his younger sister Annabel when she was a teenager. By the second decade of the twentieth century, Fitzgerald already had deep exposure to the wealthy that he would later write about, and in this early letter, he gives his sister advice meant to ease her transition into society. As we can see from the story, that transition into society required a sufficient degree of caution and self-protection. The second and third of our selections, “Winter Dreams” and “The Diamond as Big as the Ritz,” explore themes that are more closely related to Fitzgerald: young love between a rich girl and a middle-class boy. In both stories, however, the moral compass is very clear: the Midwesterner who stays true to his values will survive even as his romantic heart is damaged. Although each of these stories is from the early years of Fitzgerald’s career, readers will surely recognize these themes and their distinctly American ethic and tone.

### **5.11.1 “Winter Dreams”**

Some of the caddies were poor as sin and lived in one-room houses with a neurasthenic cow in the front yard, but Dexter Green’s father owned the second best grocery-store in Black Bear—the best one was “The Hub,” patronized by the wealthy people from Sherry Island—and Dexter caddied only for pocket-money.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

In the fall when the days became crisp and gray, and the long Minnesota winter shut down like the white lid of a box, Dexter's skis moved over the snow that hid the fairways of the golf course. At these times the country gave him a feeling of profound melancholy—it offended him that the links should lie in enforced fallowness, haunted by ragged sparrows for the long season. It was dreary, too, that on the tees where the gay colors fluttered in summer there were now only the desolate sand-boxes knee-deep in crusted ice. When he crossed the hills the wind blew cold as misery, and if the sun was out he tramped with his eyes squinted up against the hard dimensionless glare.

In April the winter ceased abruptly. The snow ran down into Black Bear Lake scarcely tarrying for the early golfers to brave the season with red and black balls. Without elation, without an interval of moist glory, the cold was gone.

Dexter knew that there was something dismal about this Northern spring, just as he knew there was something gorgeous about the fall. Fall made him clinch his hands and tremble and repeat idiotic sentences to himself, and make brisk abrupt gestures of command to imaginary audiences and armies. October filled him with hope which November raised to a sort of ecstatic triumph, and in this mood the fleeting brilliant impressions of the summer at Sherry Island were ready grist to his mill. He became a golf champion and defeated Mr. T. A. Hedrick in a marvellous match played a hundred times over the fairways of his imagination, a match each detail of which he changed about untiringly—sometimes he won with almost laughable ease, sometimes he came up magnificently from behind. Again, stepping from a Pierce-Arrow automobile, like Mr. Mortimer Jones, he strolled frigidly into the lounge of the Sherry Island Golf Club—or perhaps, surrounded by an admiring crowd, he gave an exhibition of fancy diving from the spring-board of the club raft. Among those who watched him in open-mouthed wonder was Mr. Mortimer Jones.

And one day it came to pass that Mr. Jones—himself and not his ghost—came up to Dexter with tears in his eyes and said that Dexter was the—best caddy in the club, and wouldn't he decide not to quit if Mr. Jones made it worth his while, because every other caddy in the club lost one ball a hole for him—regularly—

"No, sir," said Dexter decisively, "I don't want to caddy any more." Then, after a pause: "I'm too old."

"You're not more than fourteen. Why the devil did you decide just this morning that you wanted to quit? You promised that next week you'd go over to the State tournament with me."

"I decided I was too old."

Dexter handed in his "A Class" badge, collected what money was due him from the caddy master, and walked home to Black Bear Village.

“The best—caddy I ever saw,” shouted Mr. Mortimer Jones over a drink that afternoon. “Never lost a ball! Willing! Intelligent! Quiet! Honest! Grateful!”

The little girl who had done this was eleven—beautifully ugly as little girls are apt to be who are destined after a few years to be inexpressibly lovely and bring no end of misery to a great number of men. The spark, however, was perceptible. There was a general ungodliness in the way her lips twisted down at the corners when she smiled, and in the—Heaven help us!—in the almost passionate quality of her eyes. Vitality is born early in such women. It was utterly in evidence now, shining through her thin frame in a sort of glow.

She had come eagerly out on to the course at nine o’clock with a white linen nurse and five small new golf-clubs in a white canvas bag which the nurse was carrying. When Dexter first saw her she was standing by the caddy house, rather ill at ease and trying to conceal the fact by engaging her nurse in an obviously unnatural conversation graced by startling and irrelevant grimaces from herself.

“Well, it’s certainly a nice day, Hilda,” Dexter heard her say. She drew down the corners of her mouth, smiled, and glanced furtively around, her eyes in transit falling for an instant on Dexter.

Then to the nurse:

“Well, I guess there aren’t very many people out here this morning, are there?”

The smile again—radiant, blatantly artificial—convincing.

“I don’t know what we’re supposed to do now,” said the nurse, looking nowhere in particular.

“Oh, that’s all right. I’ll fix it up.

Dexter stood perfectly still, his mouth slightly ajar. He knew that if he moved forward a step his stare would be in her line of vision—if he moved backward he would lose his full view of her face. For a moment he had not realized how young she was. Now he remembered having seen her several times the year before in bloomers.

Suddenly, involuntarily, he laughed, a short abrupt laugh—then, startled by himself, he turned and began to walk quickly away.

“Boy!”

Dexter stopped.

“Boy—”

Beyond question he was addressed. Not only that, but he was treated to that absurd smile, that preposterous smile—the memory of which at least a dozen men were to carry into middle age.

“Boy, do you know where the golf teacher is?”



“He’s giving a lesson.”

“Well, do you know where the caddy-master is?”

“He isn’t here yet this morning.”

“Oh.” For a moment this baffled her. She stood alternately on her right and left foot.

“We’d like to get a caddy,” said the nurse. “Mrs. Mortimer Jones sent us out to play golf, and we don’t know how without we get a caddy.”

Here she was stopped by an ominous glance from Miss Jones, followed immediately by the smile.

“There aren’t any caddies here except me,” said Dexter to the nurse, “and I got to stay here in charge until the caddy-master gets here.”

“Oh.”

Miss Jones and her retinue now withdrew, and at a proper distance from Dexter became involved in a heated conversation, which was concluded by Miss Jones taking one of the clubs and hitting it on the ground with violence. For further emphasis she raised it again and was about to bring it down smartly upon the nurse’s bosom, when the nurse seized the club and twisted it from her hands.

“You damn little mean old thing!” cried Miss Jones wildly.

Another argument ensued. Realizing that the elements of the comedy were implied in the scene, Dexter several times began to laugh, but each time restrained the laugh before it reached audibility. He could not resist the monstrous conviction that the little girl was justified in beating the nurse.

The situation was resolved by the fortuitous appearance of the caddymaster, who was appealed to immediately by the nurse.

“Miss Jones is to have a little caddy, and this one says he can’t go.”

“Mr. McKenna said I was to wait here till you came,” said Dexter quickly.

“Well, he’s here now.” Miss Jones smiled cheerfully at the caddy-master. Then she dropped her bag and set off at a haughty mince toward the first tee.

“Well?” The caddy-master turned to Dexter. “What you standing there like a dummy for? Go pick up the young lady’s clubs.”

“I don’t think I’ll go out to-day,” said Dexter.

“You don’t—”

“I think I’ll quit.”

The enormity of his decision frightened him. He was a favorite caddy, and the thirty dollars a month he earned through the summer were not to be made elsewhere around the lake. But he

had received a strong emotional shock, and his perturbation required a violent and immediate outlet.

It is not so simple as that, either. As so frequently would be the case in the future, Dexter was unconsciously dictated to by his winter dreams.

## II

Now, of course, the quality and the seasonability of these winter dreams varied, but the stuff of them remained. They persuaded Dexter several years later to pass up a business course at the State university—his father, prospering now, would have paid his way—for the precarious advantage of attending an older and more famous university in the East, where he was bothered by his scanty funds. But do not get the impression, because his winter dreams happened to be concerned at first with musings on the rich, that there was anything merely snobbish in the boy. He wanted not association with glittering things and glittering people—he wanted the glittering things themselves. Often he reached out for the best without knowing why he wanted it—and sometimes he ran up against the mysterious denials and prohibitions in which life indulges. It is with one of those denials and not with his career as a whole that this story deals.

He made money. It was rather amazing. After college he went to the city from which Black Bear Lake draws its wealthy patrons. When he was only twenty-three and had been there not quite two years, there were already people who liked to say: “Now there’s a boy—” All about him rich men’s sons were peddling bonds precariously, or investing patrimonies precariously, or plodding through the two dozen volumes of the “George Washington Commercial Course,” but Dexter borrowed a thousand dollars on his college degree and his confident mouth, and bought a partnership in a laundry.

It was a small laundry when he went into it but Dexter made a specialty of learning how the English washed fine woollen golf-stockings without shrinking them, and within a year he was catering to the trade that wore knickerbockers. Men were insisting that their Shetland hose and sweaters go to his laundry just as they had insisted on a caddy who could find golfballs. A little later he was doing their wives’ lingerie as well—and running five branches in different parts of the city. Before he was twenty-seven he owned the largest string of laundries in his section of the country. It was then that he sold out and went to New York. But the part of his story that concerns us goes back to the days when he was making his first big success.

When he was twenty-three Mr. Hart—one of the gray-haired men who like to say “Now there’s a boy”—gave him a guest card to the Sherry Island Golf Club for a week-end. So he signed his name one day on the register, and that afternoon played golf in a foursome with Mr. Hart and

Mr. Sandwood and Mr. T. A. Hedrick. He did not consider it necessary to remark that he had once carried Mr. Hart's bag over this same links, and that he knew every trap and gully with his eyes shut—but he found himself glancing at the four caddies who trailed them, trying to catch a gleam or gesture that would remind him of himself, that would lessen the gap which lay between his present and his past.

It was a curious day, slashed abruptly with fleeting, familiar impressions. One minute he had the sense of being a trespasser—in the next he was impressed by the tremendous superiority he felt toward Mr. T. A. Hedrick, who was a bore and not even a good golfer any more.

Then, because of a ball Mr. Hart lost near the fifteenth green, an enormous thing happened. While they were searching the stiff grasses of the rough there was a clear call of "Fore!" from behind a hill in their rear. And as they all turned abruptly from their search a bright new ball sliced abruptly over the hill and caught Mr. T. A. Hedrick in the abdomen.

"By Gad!" cried Mr. T. A. Hedrick, "they ought to put some of these crazy women off the course. It's getting to be outrageous."

A head and a voice came up together over the hill:

"Do you mind if we go through?"

"You hit me in the stomach!" declared Mr. Hedrick wildly.

"Did I?" The girl approached the group of men. "I'm sorry. I yelled 'Fore!'"

Her glance fell casually on each of the men—then scanned the fairway for her ball.

"Did I bounce into the rough?"

It was impossible to determine whether this question was ingenuous or malicious. In a moment, however, she left no doubt, for as her partner came up over the hill she called cheerfully:

"Here I am! I'd have gone on the green except that I hit something."

As she took her stance for a short mashie shot, Dexter looked at her closely. She wore a blue gingham dress, rimmed at throat and shoulders with a white edging that accentuated her tan. The quality of exaggeration, of thinness, which had made her passionate eyes and down-turning mouth absurd at eleven, was gone now. She was arrestingly beautiful. The color in her cheeks was centered like the color in a picture—it was not a "high" color, but a sort of fluctuating and feverish warmth, so shaded that it seemed at any moment it would recede and disappear. This color and the mobility of her mouth gave a continual impression of flux, of intense life, of passionate vitality—balanced only partially by the sad luxury of her eyes.

She swung her mashie impatiently and without interest, pitching the ball into a sand-pit on the other side of the green. With a quick, insincere smile and a careless "Thank you!" she went on after it.

“That Judy Jones!” remarked Mr. Hedrick on the next tee, as they waited—some moments—for her to play on ahead. “All she needs is to be turned up and spanked for six months and then to be married off to an oldfashioned cavalry captain.”

“My God, she’s good-looking!” said Mr. Sandwood, who was just over thirty.

“Good-looking!” cried Mr. Hedrick contemptuously, “she always looks as if she wanted to be kissed! Turning those big cow-eyes on every calf in town!”

It was doubtful if Mr. Hedrick intended a reference to the maternal instinct.

“She’d play pretty good golf if she’d try,” said Mr. Sandwood.

“She has no form,” said Mr. Hedrick solemnly.

“She has a nice figure,” said Mr. Sandwood.

“Better thank the Lord she doesn’t drive a swifter ball,” said Mr. Hart, winking at Dexter.

Later in the afternoon the sun went down with a riotous swirl of gold and varying blues and scarlets, and left the dry, rustling night of Western summer. Dexter watched from the veranda of the Golf Club, watched the even overlap of the waters in the little wind, silver molasses under the harvest-moon. Then the moon held a finger to her lips and the lake became a clear pool, pale and quiet. Dexter put on his bathing-suit and swam out to the farthest raft, where he stretched dripping on the wet canvas of the springboard.

There was a fish jumping and a star shining and the lights around the lake were gleaming. Over on a dark peninsula a piano was playing the songs of last summer and of summers before that—songs from “Chin-Chin” and “The Count of Luxemburg” and “The Chocolate Soldier”—and because the sound of a piano over a stretch of water had always seemed beautiful to Dexter he lay perfectly quiet and listened.

The tune the piano was playing at that moment had been gay and new five years before when Dexter was a sophomore at college. They had played it at a prom once when he could not afford the luxury of proms, and he had stood outside the gymnasium and listened. The sound of the tune precipitated in him a sort of ecstasy and it was with that ecstasy he viewed what happened to him now. It was a mood of intense appreciation, a sense that, for once, he was magnificently attune to life and that everything about him was radiating a brightness and a glamour he might never know again.

A low, pale oblong detached itself suddenly from the darkness of the Island, spitting forth the reverberate sound of a racing motor-boat. Two white streamers of cleft water rolled themselves out behind it and almost immediately the boat was beside him, drowning out the hot tinkle of the piano in the drone of its spray. Dexter raising himself on his arms was aware of a figure standing at the wheel, of two dark eyes regarding him over the lengthening space of water—then the boat

had gone by and was sweeping in an immense and purposeless circle of spray round and round in the middle of the lake. With equal eccentricity one of the circles flattened out and headed back toward the raft.

“Who’s that?” she called, shutting off her motor. She was so near now that Dexter could see her bathing-suit, which consisted apparently of pink rompers.

The nose of the boat bumped the raft, and as the latter tilted rakishly he was precipitated toward her. With different degrees of interest they recognized each other.

“Aren’t you one of those men we played through this afternoon?” she demanded.

He was.

“Well, do you know how to drive a motor-boat? Because if you do I wish you’d drive this one so I can ride on the surf-board behind. My name is Judy Jones”—she favored him with an absurd smirk—rather, what tried to be a smirk, for, twist her mouth as she might, it was not grotesque, it was merely beautiful—and I live in a house over there on the Island, and in that house there is a man waiting for me. When he drove up at the door I drove out of the dock because he says I’m his ideal.”

There was a fish jumping and a star shining and the lights around the lake were gleaming. Dexter sat beside Judy Jones and she explained how her boat was driven. Then she was in the water, swimming to the floating surfboard with a sinuous crawl. Watching her was without effort to the eye, watching a branch waving or a sea-gull flying. Her arms, burned to butternut, moved sinuously among the dull platinum ripples, elbow appearing first, casting the forearm back with a cadence of falling water, then reaching out and down, stabbing a path ahead.

They moved out into the lake; turning, Dexter saw that she was kneeling on the low rear of the now uptilted surf-board.

“Go faster,” she called, “fast as it’ll go.”

Obediently he jammed the lever forward and the white spray mounted at the bow. When he looked around again the girl was standing up on the rushing board, her arms spread wide, her eyes lifted toward the moon.

“It’s awful cold,” she shouted. “What’s your name?”

He told her.

“Well, why don’t you come to dinner to-morrow night?”

His heart turned over like the fly-wheel of the boat, and, for the second time, her casual whim gave a new direction to his life.

Next evening while he waited for her to come down-stairs, Dexter peopled the soft deep summer room and the sun-porch that opened from it with the men who had already loved Judy Jones. He knew the sort of men they were—the men who when he first went to college had entered from the great prep schools with graceful clothes and the deep tan of healthy summers. He had seen that, in one sense, he was better than these men. He was newer and stronger. Yet in acknowledging to himself that he wished his children to be like them he was admitting that he was but the rough, strong stuff from which they eternally sprang.

When the time had come for him to wear good clothes, he had known who were the best tailors in America, and the best tailors in America had made him the suit he wore this evening. He had acquired that particular reserve peculiar to his university, that set it off from other universities. He recognized the value to him of such a mannerism and he had adopted it; he knew that to be careless in dress and manner required more confidence than to be careful. But carelessness was for his children. His mother's name had been Krimslieh. She was a Bohemian of the peasant class and she had talked broken English to the end of her days. Her son must keep to the set patterns.

At a little after seven Judy Jones came down-stairs. She wore a blue silk afternoon dress, and he was disappointed at first that she had not put on something more elaborate. This feeling was accentuated when, after a brief greeting, she went to the door of a butler's pantry and pushing it open called: "You can serve dinner, Martha." He had rather expected that a butler would announce dinner, that there would be a cocktail. Then he put these thoughts behind him as they sat down side by side on a lounge and looked at each other.

"Father and mother won't be here," she said thoughtfully.

He remembered the last time he had seen her father, and he was glad the parents were not to be here to-night—they might wonder who he was. He had been born in Keeble, a Minnesota village fifty miles farther north, and he always gave Keeble as his home instead of Black Bear Village. Country towns were well enough to come from if they weren't inconveniently in sight and used as footstools by fashionable lakes.

They talked of his university, which she had visited frequently during the past two years, and of the near-by city which supplied Sherry Island with its patrons, and whither Dexter would return next day to his prospering laundries.

During dinner she slipped into a moody depression which gave Dexter a feeling of uneasiness. Whatever petulance she uttered in her throaty voice worried him. Whatever she smiled at—at him, at a chicken liver, at nothing—it disturbed him that her smile could have no root

in mirth, or even in amusement. When the scarlet corners of her lips curved down, it was less a smile than an invitation to a kiss.

Then, after dinner, she led him out on the dark sun-porch and deliberately changed the atmosphere.

“Do you mind if I weep a little?” she said.

“I’m afraid I’m boring you,” he responded quickly.

“You’re not. I like you. But I’ve just had a terrible afternoon. There was a man I cared about, and this afternoon he told me out of a clear sky that he was poor as a church-mouse. He’d never even hinted it before. Does this sound horribly mundane?”

“Perhaps he was afraid to tell you.”

“Suppose he was,” she answered. “He didn’t start right. You see, if I’d thought of him as poor—well, I’ve been mad about loads of poor men, and fully intended to marry them all. But in this case, I hadn’t thought of him that way, and my interest in him wasn’t strong enough to survive the shock. As if a girl calmly informed her fiancé that she was a widow. He might not object to widows, but—

“Let’s start right,” she interrupted herself suddenly. “Who are you, anyhow?”

For a moment Dexter hesitated. Then:

“I’m nobody,” he announced. “My career is largely a matter of futures.”

“Are you poor?”

“No,” he said frankly, “I’m probably making more money than any man my age in the Northwest. I know that’s an obnoxious remark, but you advised me to start right.”

There was a pause. Then she smiled and the corners of her mouth drooped and an almost imperceptible sway brought her closer to him, looking up into his eyes. A lump rose in Dexter’s throat, and he waited breathless for the experiment, facing the unpredictable compound that would form mysteriously from the elements of their lips. Then he saw—she communicated her excitement to him, lavishly, deeply, with kisses that were not a promise but a fulfillment. They aroused in him not hunger demanding renewal but surfeit that would demand more surfeit . . . kisses that were like charity, creating want by holding back nothing at all.

It did not take him many hours to decide that he had wanted Judy Jones ever since he was a proud, desirous little boy.

#### IV

It began like that—and continued, with varying shades of intensity, on such a note right up to the dénouement. Dexter surrendered a part of himself to the most direct and unprincipled

personality with which he had ever come in contact. Whatever Judy wanted, she went after with the full pressure of her charm. There was no divergence of method, no jockeying for position or premeditation of effects—there was a very little mental side to any of her affairs. She simply made men conscious to the highest degree of her physical loveliness. Dexter had no desire to change her. Her deficiencies were knit up with a passionate energy that transcended and justified them.

When, as Judy's head lay against his shoulder that first night, she whispered, "I don't know what's the matter with me. Last night I thought I was in love with a man and to-night I think I'm in love with you—"—it seemed to him a beautiful and romantic thing to say. It was the exquisite excitability that for the moment he controlled and owned. But a week later he was compelled to view this same quality in a different light. She took him in her roadster to a picnic supper, and after supper she disappeared, likewise in her roadster, with another man. Dexter became enormously upset and was scarcely able to be decently civil to the other people present. When she assured him that she had not kissed the other man, he knew she was lying—yet he was glad that she had taken the trouble to lie to him.

He was, as he found before the summer ended, one of a varying dozen who circulated about her. Each of them had at one time been favored above all others— about half of them still basked in the solace of occasional sentimental revivals. Whenever one showed signs of dropping out through long neglect, she granted him a brief honeyed hour, which encouraged him to tag along for a year or so longer. Judy made these forays upon the helpless and defeated without malice, indeed half unconscious that there was anything mischievous in what she did.

When a new man came to town every one dropped out—dates were automatically cancelled.

The helpless part of trying to do anything about it was that she did it all herself. She was not a girl who could be "won" in the kinetic sense—she was proof against cleverness, she was proof against charm; if any of these assailed her too strongly she would immediately resolve the affair to a physical basis, and under the magic of her physical splendor the strong as well as the brilliant played her game and not their own. She was entertained only by the gratification of her desires and by the direct exercise of her own charm. Perhaps from so much youthful love, so many youthful lovers, she had come, in self-defense, to nourish herself wholly from within.

Succeeding Dexter's first exhilaration came restlessness and dissatisfaction. The helpless ecstasy of losing himself in her was opiate rather than tonic. It was fortunate for his work during the winter that those moments of ecstasy came infrequently. Early in their acquaintance it had seemed for a while that there was a deep and spontaneous mutual attraction that first August, for example—three days of long evenings on her dusky veranda, of strange wan kisses through the



late afternoon, in shadowy alcoves or behind the protecting trellises of the garden arbors, of mornings when she was fresh as a dream and almost shy at meeting him in the clarity of the rising day. There was all the ecstasy of an engagement about it, sharpened by his realization that there was no engagement. It was during those three days that, for the first time, he had asked her to marry him. She said "maybe some day," she said "kiss me," she said "I'd like to marry you," she said "I love you"—she said—nothing.

The three days were interrupted by the arrival of a New York man who visited at her house for half September. To Dexter's agony, rumor engaged them. The man was the son of the president of a great trust company. But at the end of a month it was reported that Judy was yawning. At a dance one night she sat all evening in a motor-boat with a local beau, while the New Yorker searched the club for her frantically. She told the local beau that she was bored with her visitor, and two days later he left. She was seen with him at the station, and it was reported that he looked very mournful indeed.

On this note the summer ended. Dexter was twenty-four, and he found himself increasingly in a position to do as he wished. He joined two clubs in the city and lived at one of them. Though he was by no means an integral part of the stag-lines at these clubs, he managed to be on hand at dances where Judy Jones was likely to appear. He could have gone out socially as much as he liked—he was an eligible young man, now, and popular with down-town fathers. His confessed devotion to Judy Jones had rather solidified his position. But he had no social aspirations and rather despised the dancing men who were always on tap for the Thursday or Saturday parties and who filled in at dinners with the younger married set. Already he was playing with the idea of going East to New York. He wanted to take Judy Jones with him. No disillusion as to the world in which she had grown up could cure his illusion as to her desirability.

Remember that—for only in the light of it can what he did for her be understood.

Eighteen months after he first met Judy Jones he became engaged to another girl. Her name was Irene Scheerer, and her father was one of the men who had always believed in Dexter. Irene was light-haired and sweet and honorable, and a little stout, and she had two suitors whom she pleasantly relinquished when Dexter formally asked her to marry him.

Summer, fall, winter, spring, another summer, another fall—so much he had given of his active life to the incorrigible lips of Judy Jones. She had treated him with interest, with encouragement, with malice, with indifference, with contempt. She had inflicted on him the innumerable little slights and indignities possible in such a case—as if in revenge for having ever cared for him at all. She had beckoned him and yawned at him and beckoned him again and he had responded often with bitterness and narrowed eyes. She had brought him ecstatic happiness and

intolerable agony of spirit. She had caused him untold inconvenience and not a little trouble. She had insulted him, and she had ridden over him, and she had played his interest in her against his interest in his work—for fun. She had done everything to him except to criticise him—this she had not done—it seemed to him only because it might have sullied the utter indifference she manifested and sincerely felt toward him.

When autumn had come and gone again it occurred to him that he could not have Judy Jones. He had to beat this into his mind but he convinced himself at last. He lay awake at night for a while and argued it over. He told himself the trouble and the pain she had caused him, he enumerated her glaring deficiencies as a wife. Then he said to himself that he loved her, and after a while he fell asleep. For a week, lest he imagined her husky voice over the telephone or her eyes opposite him at lunch, he worked hard and late, and at night he went to his office and plotted out his years.

At the end of a week he went to a dance and cut in on her once. For almost the first time since they had met he did not ask her to sit out with him or tell her that she was lovely. It hurt him that she did not miss these things—that was all. He was not jealous when he saw that there was a new man to-night. He had been hardened against jealousy long before.

He stayed late at the dance. He sat for an hour with Irene Scheerer and talked about books and about music. He knew very little about either. But he was beginning to be master of his own time now, and he had a rather priggish notion that he—the young and already fabulously successful Dexter Green—should know more about such things.

That was in October, when he was twenty-five. In January, Dexter and Irene became engaged. It was to be announced in June, and they were to be married three months later.

The Minnesota winter prolonged itself interminably, and it was almost May when the winds came soft and the snow ran down into Black Bear Lake at last. For the first time in over a year Dexter was enjoying a certain tranquility of spirit. Judy Jones had been in Florida, and afterward in Hot Springs, and somewhere she had been engaged, and somewhere she had broken it off. At first, when Dexter had definitely given her up, it had made him sad that people still linked them together and asked for news of her, but when he began to be placed at dinner next to Irene Scheerer people didn't ask him about her any more—they told him about her. He ceased to be an authority on her.

May at last. Dexter walked the streets at night when the darkness was damp as rain, wondering that so soon, with so little done, so much of ecstasy had gone from him. May one year back had been marked by Judy's poignant, unforgivable, yet forgiven turbulence—it had been one

of those rare times when he fancied she had grown to care for him. That old penny's worth of happiness he had spent for this bushel of content. He knew that Irene would be no more than a curtain spread behind him, a hand moving among gleaming tea-cups, a voice calling to children . . . fire and loveliness were gone, the magic of nights and the wonder of the varying hours and seasons . . . slender lips, down-turning, dropping to his lips and bearing him up into a heaven of eyes. The thing was deep in him. He was too strong and alive for it to die lightly.

In the middle of May when the weather balanced for a few days on the thin bridge that led to deep summer he turned in one night at Irene's house. Their engagement was to be announced in a week now—no one would be surprised at it. And to-night they would sit together on the lounge at the University Club and look on for an hour at the dancers. It gave him a sense of solidity to go with her—she was so sturdily popular, so intensely "great."

He mounted the steps of the brownstone house and stepped inside.

"Irene," he called.

Mrs. Scheerer came out of the living-room to meet him.

"Dexter," she said, "Irene's gone up-stairs with a splitting headache. She wanted to go with you but I made her go to bed."

"Nothing serious, I—"

"Oh, no. She's going to play golf with you in the morning. You can spare her for just one night, can't you, Dexter?"

Her smile was kind. She and Dexter liked each other. In the living-room he talked for a moment before he said good-night.

Returning to the University Club, where he had rooms, he stood in the doorway for a moment and watched the dancers. He leaned against the door-post, nodded at a man or two—yawned.

"Hello, darling."

The familiar voice at his elbow startled him. Judy Jones had left a man and crossed the room to him—Judy Jones, a slender enamelled doll in cloth of gold: gold in a band at her head, gold in two slipper points at her dress's hem. The fragile glow of her face seemed to blossom as she smiled at him. A breeze of warmth and light blew through the room. His hands in the pockets of his dinner-jacket tightened spasmodically. He was filled with a sudden excitement.

"When did you get back?" he asked casually.

"Come here and I'll tell you about it."

She turned and he followed her. She had been away—he could have wept at the wonder of her return. She had passed through enchanted streets, doing things that were like provocative

music. All mysterious happenings, all fresh and quickening hopes, had gone away with her, come back with her now.

She turned in the doorway.

“Have you a car here? If you haven’t, I have.”

“I have a coup\_.”

In then, with a rustle of golden cloth. He slammed the door. Into so many cars she had stepped—like this—like that—her back against the leather, so—her elbow resting on the door—waiting. She would have been soiled long since had there been anything to soil her—except herself—but this was her own self outpouring.

With an effort he forced himself to start the car and back into the street. This was nothing, he must remember. She had done this before, and he had put her behind him, as he would have crossed a bad account from his books.

He drove slowly down-town and, affecting abstraction, traversed the deserted streets of the business section, peopled here and there where a movie was giving out its crowd or where consumptive or pugilistic youth lounged in front of pool halls. The clink of glasses and the slap of hands on the bars issued from saloons, cloisters of glazed glass and dirty yellow light.

She was watching him closely and the silence was embarrassing, yet in this crisis he could find no casual word with which to profane the hour. At a convenient turning he began to zigzag back toward the University Club.

“Have you missed me?” she asked suddenly.

“Everybody missed you.”

He wondered if she knew of Irene Scheerer. She had been back only a day—her absence had been almost contemporaneous with his engagement.

“What a remark!” Judy laughed sadly—without sadness. She looked at him searchingly. He became absorbed in the dashboard.

“You’re handsomer than you used to be,” she said thoughtfully. “Dexter, you have the most rememberable eyes.”

He could have laughed at this, but he did not laugh. It was the sort of thing that was said to sophomores. Yet it stabbed at him.

“I’m awfully tired of everything, darling.” She called every one darling, endowing the endearment with careless, individual comradery. “I wish you’d marry me.”

The directness of this confused him. He should have told her now that he was going to marry another girl, but he could not tell her. He could as easily have sworn that he had never loved her.

“I think we’d get along,” she continued, on the same note, “unless probably you’ve forgotten me and fallen in love with another girl.”

Her confidence was obviously enormous. She had said, in effect, that she found such a thing impossible to believe, that if it were true he had merely committed a childish indiscretion—and probably to show off. She would forgive him, because it was not a matter of any moment but rather something to be brushed aside lightly.

“Of course you could never love anybody but me,” she continued. “I like the way you love me. Oh, Dexter, have you forgotten last year?”

“No, I haven’t forgotten.”

“Neither have I! “

Was she sincerely moved—or was she carried along by the wave of her own acting?

“I wish we could be like that again,” she said, and he forced himself to answer:

“I don’t think we can.”

“I suppose not. . . . I hear you’re giving Irene Scheerer a violent rush.”

There was not the faintest emphasis on the name, yet Dexter was suddenly ashamed.

“Oh, take me home,” cried Judy suddenly; “I don’t want to go back to that idiotic dance—with those children.”

Then, as he turned up the street that led to the residence district, Judy began to cry quietly to herself. He had never seen her cry before.

The dark street lightened, the dwellings of the rich loomed up around them, he stopped his coup\_ in front of the great white bulk of the Mortimer Joneses house, somnolent, gorgeous, drenched with the splendor of the damp moonlight. Its solidity startled him. The strong walls, the steel of the girders, the breadth and beam and pomp of it were there only to bring out the contrast with the young beauty beside him. It was sturdy to accentuate her slightness—as if to show what a breeze could be generated by a butterfly’s wing.

He sat perfectly quiet, his nerves in wild clamor, afraid that if he moved he would find her irresistibly in his arms. Two tears had rolled down her wet face and trembled on her upper lip.

“I’m more beautiful than anybody else,” she said brokenly, “why can’t I be happy?” Her moist eyes tore at his stability—her mouth turned slowly downward with an exquisite sadness: “I’d like to marry you if you’ll have me, Dexter. I suppose you think I’m not worth having, but I’ll be so beautiful for you, Dexter.”

A million phrases of anger, pride, passion, hatred, tenderness fought on his lips. Then a perfect wave of emotion washed over him, carrying off with it a sediment of wisdom, of

convention, of doubt, of honor. This was his girl who was speaking, his own, his beautiful, his pride.

“Won’t you come in?” He heard her draw in her breath sharply.

Waiting.

“All right,” his voice was trembling, “I’ll come in.

## V

It was strange that neither when it was over nor a long time afterward did he regret that night. Looking at it from the perspective of ten years, the fact that Judy’s flare for him endured just one month seemed of little importance. Nor did it matter that by his yielding he subjected himself to a deeper agony in the end and gave serious hurt to Irene Scheerer and to Irene’s parents, who had befriended him. There was nothing sufficiently pictorial about Irene’s grief to stamp itself on his mind.

Dexter was at bottom hard-minded. The attitude of the city on his action was of no importance to him, not because he was going to leave the city, but because any outside attitude on the situation seemed superficial. He was completely indifferent to popular opinion. Nor, when he had seen that it was no use, that he did not possess in himself the power to move fundamentally or to hold Judy Jones, did he bear any malice toward her. He loved her, and he would love her until the day he was too old for loving—but he could not have her. So he tasted the deep pain that is reserved only for the strong, just as he had tasted for a little while the deep happiness.

Even the ultimate falsity of the grounds upon which Judy terminated the engagement that she did not want to “take him away” from Irene—Judy, who had wanted nothing else—did not revolt him. He was beyond any revulsion or any amusement.

He went East in February with the intention of selling out his laundries and settling in New York—but the war came to America in March and changed his plans. He returned to the West, handed over the management of the business to his partner, and went into the first officers’ training-camp in late April. He was one of those young thousands who greeted the war with a certain amount of relief, welcoming the liberation from webs of tangled emotion.

## VI

This story is not his biography, remember, although things creep into it which have nothing to do with those dreams he had when he was young. We are almost done with them and with him now. There is only one more incident to be related here, and it happens seven years farther on.

It took place in New York, where he had done well—so well that there were no barriers too high for him. He was thirty-two years old, and, except for one flying trip immediately after the war, he had not been West in seven years. A man named Devlin from Detroit came into his office to see him in a business way, and then and there this incident occurred, and closed out, so to speak, this particular side of his life.

“So you’re from the Middle West,” said the man Devlin with careless curiosity. “That’s funny—I thought men like you were probably born and raised on Wall Street. You know—wife of one of my best friends in Detroit came from your city. I was an usher at the wedding.”

Dexter waited with no apprehension of what was coming.

“Judy Simms,” said Devlin with no particular interest; “Judy Jones she was once.”

“Yes, I knew her.” A dull impatience spread over him. He had heard, of course, that she was married—perhaps deliberately he had heard no more.

“Awfully nice girl,” brooded Devlin meaninglessly, “I’m sort of sorry for her.”

“Why?” Something in Dexter was alert, receptive, at once.

“Oh, Lud Simms has gone to pieces in a way. I don’t mean he ill-uses her, but he drinks and runs around “

“Doesn’t she run around?”

“No. Stays at home with her kids.”

“Oh.”

“She’s a little too old for him,” said Devlin.

“Too old!” cried Dexter. “Why, man, she’s only twenty-seven.”

He was possessed with a wild notion of rushing out into the streets and taking a train to Detroit. He rose to his feet spasmodically.

“I guess you’re busy,” Devlin apologized quickly. “I didn’t realize—”

“No, I’m not busy,” said Dexter, steadying his voice. “I’m not busy at all. Not busy at all. Did you say she was—twenty-seven? No, I said she was twenty-seven.”

“Yes, you did,” agreed Devlin dryly.

“Go on, then. Go on.”

“What do you mean?”

“About Judy Jones.”

Devlin looked at him helplessly.

“Well, that’s, I told you all there is to it. He treats her like the devil. Oh, they’re not going to get divorced or anything. When he’s particularly outrageous she forgives him. In fact, I’m inclined to think she loves him. She was a pretty girl when she first came to Detroit.”

A pretty girl! The phrase struck Dexter as ludicrous.

“Isn’t she—a pretty girl, any more?”

“Oh, she’s all right.”

“Look here,” said Dexter, sitting down suddenly, “I don’t understand. You say she was a ‘pretty girl’ and now you say she’s ‘all right.’ I don’t understand what you mean—Judy Jones wasn’t a pretty girl, at all. She was a great beauty. Why, I knew her, I knew her. She was—”

Devlin laughed pleasantly.

“I’m not trying to start a row,” he said. “I think Judy’s a nice girl and I like her. I can’t understand how a man like Lud Simms could fall madly in love with her, but he did.” Then he added: “Most of the women like her.”

Dexter looked closely at Devlin, thinking wildly that there must be a reason for this, some insensitivity in the man or some private malice.

“Lots of women fade just like that,” Devlin snapped his fingers. “You must have seen it happen. Perhaps I’ve forgotten how pretty she was at her wedding. I’ve seen her so much since then, you see. She has nice eyes.”

A sort of dulness settled down upon Dexter. For the first time in his life he felt like getting very drunk. He knew that he was laughing loudly at something Devlin had said, but he did not know what it was or why it was funny. When, in a few minutes, Devlin went he lay down on his lounge and looked out the window at the New York sky-line into which the sun was sinking in dull lovely shades of pink and gold.

He had thought that having nothing else to lose he was invulnerable at last— but he knew that he had just lost something more, as surely as if he had married Judy Jones and seen her fade away before his eyes.

The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the waters lapping on Sherry Island and the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf-links and the dry sun and the gold color of her neck’s soft down. And her mouth damp to his kisses and her eyes plaintive with melancholy and her freshness like new fine linen in the morning. Why, these things were no longer in the world! They had existed and they existed no longer.

For the first time in years the tears were streaming down his face. But they were for himself now. He did not care about mouth and eyes and moving hands. He wanted to care, and he could not care. For he had gone away and he could never go back any more. The gates were closed, the sun was gone down, and there was no beauty but the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time.



Even the grief he could have borne was left behind in the country of illusion, of youth, of the richness of life, where his winter dreams had flourished.

“Long ago,” he said, “long ago, there was something in me, but now that thing is gone. Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come back no more.”

### **5.11.2 “The Diamond as Big as the Ritz”**

1

John T. Unger came from a family that had been well known in Hades—a small town on the Mississippi River—for several generations. John’s father had held the amateur golf championship through many a heated contest; Mrs. Unger was known “from hot-box to hot-bed,” as the local phrase went, for her political addresses; and young John T. Unger, who had just turned sixteen, had danced all the latest dances from New York before he put on long trousers. And now, for a certain time, he was to be away from home. That respect for a New England education which is the bane of all provincial places, which drains them yearly of their most promising young men, had seized upon his parents. Nothing would suit them but that he should go to St. Midas’s School near Boston—Hades was too small to hold their darling and gifted son.

Now in Hades—as you know if you ever have been there—the names of the more fashionable preparatory schools and colleges mean very little. The inhabitants have been so long out of the world that, though they make a show of keeping up-to-date in dress and manners and literature, they depend to a great extent on hearsay, and a function that in Hades would be considered elaborate would doubtless be hailed by a Chicago beef-princess as “perhaps a little tacky.”

John T. Unger was on the eve of departure. Mrs. Unger, with maternal fatuity, packed his trunks full of linen suits and electric fans, and Mr. Unger presented his son with an asbestos pocket-book stuffed with money.

“Remember, you are always welcome here,” he said. “You can be sure, boy, that we’ll keep the home fires burning.”

“I know,” answered John huskily.

“Don’t forget who you are and where you come from,” continued his father proudly, “and you can do nothing to harm you. You are an Unger—from Hades.”

So the old man and the young shook hands, and John walked away with tears streaming from his eyes. Ten minutes later he had passed outside the city limits and he stopped to glance back for the last time. Over the gates the old-fashioned Victorian motto seemed strangely

attractive to him. His father had tried time and time again to have it changed to something with a little more push and verve about it, such as “Hades—Your Opportunity,” or else a plain “Welcome” sign set over a hearty handshake pricked out in electric lights. The old motto was a little depressing, Mr. Unger had thought—but now. . . .

So John took his look and then set his face resolutely toward his destination. And, as he turned away, the lights of Hades against the sky seemed full of a warm and passionate beauty.

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St. Midas’s School is half an hour from Boston in a Rolls-Pierce motor-car. The actual distance will never be known, for no one, except John T. Unger, had ever arrived there save in a Rolls-Pierce and probably no one ever will again. St. Midas’s is the most expensive and the most exclusive boys’ preparatory school in the world.

John’s first two years there passed pleasantly. The fathers of all the boys were money-kings, and John spent his summer visiting at fashionable resorts. While he was very fond of all the boys he visited, their fathers struck him as being much of a piece, and in his boyish way he often wondered at their exceeding sameness. When he told them where his home was they would ask jovially, “Pretty hot down there?” and John would muster a faint smile and answer, “It certainly is.” His response would have been heartier had they not all made this joke—at best varying it with, “Is it hot enough for you down there?” which he hated just as much.

In the middle of his second year at school, a quiet, handsome boy named Percy Washington had been put in John’s form. The new-comer was pleasant in his manner and exceedingly well dressed even for St. Midas’s, but for some reason he kept aloof from the other boys. The only person with whom he was intimate was John T. Unger, but even to John he was entirely uncommunicative concerning his home or his family. That he was wealthy went without saying, but beyond a few such deductions John knew little of his friend, so it promised rich confectionery for his curiosity when Percy invited him to spend the summer at his home “in the West.” He accepted, without hesitation.

It was only when they were in the train that Percy became, for the first time, rather communicative. One day while they were eating lunch in the dining-car and discussing the imperfect characters of several of the boys at school, Percy suddenly changed his tone and made an abrupt remark.

“My father,” he said, “is by far the richest man in the world.”

“Oh,” said John politely. He could think of no answer to make to this confidence. He considered “That’s very nice,” but it sounded hollow and was on the point of saying, “Really?” but

refrained since it would seem to question Percy's statement. And such an astounding statement could scarcely be questioned.

"By far the richest," repeated Percy.

"I was reading in the World Almanac," began John, "that there was one man in America with an income of over five million a year and four men with incomes of over three million a year, and—"

"Oh, they're nothing." Percy's mouth was a half-moon of scorn. "Catch-penny capitalists, financial small-fry, petty merchants and money-lenders. My father could buy them out and not know he'd done it."

"But how does he—"

"Why haven't they put down his income-tax? Because he doesn't pay any. At least he pays a little one—but he doesn't pay any on his real income."

"He must be very rich," said John simply, "I'm glad. I like very rich people."

"The richer a fella is, the better I like him." There was a look of passionate frankness upon his dark face. "I visited the Schnlitzer-Murphys last Easter. Vivian Schnlitzer-Murphy had rubies as big as hen's eggs, and sapphires that were like globes with lights inside them—"

"I love jewels," agreed Percy enthusiastically. "Of course I wouldn't want any one at school to know about it, but I've got quite a collection myself. I used to collect them instead of stamps."

"And diamonds," continued John eagerly. "The Schnlitzer-Murphys had diamonds as big as walnuts—"

"That's nothing." Percy had leaned forward and dropped his voice to a low whisper. "That's nothing at all. My father has a diamond bigger than the Ritz-Carlton Hotel."

## 2

The Montana sunset lay between two mountains like a gigantic bruise from which dark arteries spread themselves over a poisoned sky. An immense distance under the sky crouched the village of Fish, minute, dismal, and forgotten. There were twelve men, so it was said, in the village of Fish, twelve sombre and inexplicable souls who sucked a lean milk from the almost literally bare rock upon which a mysterious populatory force had begotten them. They had become a race apart, these twelve men of Fish, like some species developed by an early whim of nature, which on second thought had abandoned them to struggle and extermination.

Out of the blue-black bruise in the distance crept a long line of moving lights upon the desolation of the land, and the twelve men of Fish gathered like ghosts at the shanty depot to watch the passing of the seven o'clock train, the Transcontinental Express from Chicago. Six times

or so a year the Transcontinental Express, through some inconceivable jurisdiction, stopped at the village of Fish, and when this occurred a figure or so would disembark, mount into a buggy that always appeared from out of the dusk, and drive off toward the bruised sunset. The observation of this pointless and preposterous phenomenon had become a sort of cult among the men of Fish. To observe, that was all; there remained in them none of the vital quality of illusion which would make them wonder or speculate, else a religion might have grown up around these mysterious visitations. But the men of Fish were beyond all religion—the barest and most savage tenets of even Christianity could gain no foothold on that barren rock—so there was no altar, no priest, no sacrifice; only each night at seven the silent concourse by the shanty depot, a congregation who lifted up a prayer of dim, anaemic wonder.

On this June night, the Great Brakeman, whom, had they deified any one, they might well have chosen as their celestial protagonist, had ordained that the seven o'clock train should leave its human (or inhuman) deposit at Fish. At two minutes after seven Percy Washington and John T. Unger disembarked, hurried past the spellbound, the agape, the fearsome eyes of the twelve men of Fish, mounted into a buggy which had obviously appeared from nowhere, and drove away.

After half an hour, when the twilight had coagulated into dark, the silent negro who was driving the buggy hailed an opaque body somewhere ahead of them in the gloom. In response to his cry, it turned upon them a luminous disc which regarded them like a malignant eye out of the unfathomable night. As they came closer, John saw that it was the tail-light of an immense automobile, larger and more magnificent than any he had ever seen. Its body was of gleaming metal richer than nickel and lighter than silver, and the hubs of the wheels were studded with iridescent geometric figures of green and yellow—John did not dare to guess whether they were glass or jewel.

Two negroes, dressed in glittering livery such as one sees in pictures of royal processions in London, were standing at attention beside the car and, as the two young men dismounted from the buggy, they were greeted in some language which the guest could not understand, but which seemed to be an extreme form of the Southern negro's dialect.

“Get in,” said Percy to his friend, as their trunks were tossed to the ebony roof of the limousine. “Sorry we had to bring you this far in that buggy, but of course it wouldn't do for the people on the train or those God-forsaken fellas in Fish to see this automobile.”

“Gosh! What a car!” This ejaculation was provoked by its interior. John saw that the upholstery consisted of a thousand minute and exquisite tapestries of silk, woven with jewels and embroideries, and set upon a background of cloth of gold. The two armchair seats in which the

boys luxuriated were covered with stuff that resembled duvetyn, but seemed woven in numberless colours of the ends of ostrich feathers.

“What a car!” cried John again, in amazement.

“This thing?” Percy laughed. “Why, it’s just an old junk we use for a station wagon.”

By this time they were gliding along through the darkness toward the break between the two mountains.

“We’ll be there in an hour and a half,” said Percy, looking at the clock. “I may as well tell you it’s not going to be like anything you ever saw before.”

If the car was any indication of what John would see, he was prepared to be astonished indeed. The simple piety prevalent in Hades has the earnest worship of and respect for riches as the first article of its creed—had John felt otherwise than radiantly humble before them, his parents would have turned away in horror at the blasphemy.

They had now reached and were entering the break between the two mountains and almost immediately the way became much rougher.

“If the moon shone down here, you’d see that we’re in a big gulch,” said Percy, trying to peer out of the window. He spoke a few words into the mouthpiece and immediately the footman turned on a searchlight and swept the hillsides with an immense beam.

“Rocky, you see. An ordinary car would be knocked to pieces in half an hour. In fact, it’d take a tank to navigate it unless you knew the way. You notice we’re going uphill now.”

They were obviously ascending, and within a few minutes the car was crossing a high rise, where they caught a glimpse of a pale moon newly risen in the distance. The car stopped suddenly and several figures took shape out of the dark beside it—these were negroes also. Again the two young men were saluted in the same dimly recognisable dialect; then the negroes set to work and four immense cables dangling from overhead were attached with hooks to the hubs of the great jewelled wheels. At a resounding “Hey-yah!” John felt the car being lifted slowly from the ground—up and up—clear of the tallest rocks on both sides—then higher, until he could see a wavy, moonlit valley stretched out before him in sharp contrast to the quagmire of rocks that they had just left. Only on one side was there still rock—and then suddenly there was no rock beside them or anywhere around.

It was apparent that they had surmounted some immense knife-blade of stone, projecting perpendicularly into the air. In a moment they were going down again, and finally with a soft bump they were landed upon the smooth earth.

“The worst is over,” said Percy, squinting out the window. “It’s only five miles from here, and our own road—tapestry brick—all the way. This belongs to us. This is where the United States ends, father says.”

“Are we in Canada?”

“We are not. We’re in the middle of the Montana Rockies. But you are now on the only five square miles of land in the country that’s never been surveyed.”

“Why hasn’t it? Did they forget it?”

“No,” said Percy, grinning, “they tried to do it three times. The first time my grandfather corrupted a whole department of the State survey; the second time he had the official maps of the United States tinkered with—that held them for fifteen years. The last time was harder. My father fixed it so that their compasses were in the strongest magnetic field ever artificially set up. He had a whole set of surveying instruments made with a slight defection that would allow for this territory not to appear, and he substituted them for the ones that were to be used. Then he had a river deflected and he had what looked like a village up on its banks—so that they’d see it, and think it was a town ten miles farther up the valley. There’s only one thing my father’s afraid of,” he concluded, “only one thing in the world that could be used to find us out.”

“What’s that?”

Percy sank his voice to a whisper.

“Aeroplanes,” he breathed. “We’ve got half a dozen anti-aircraft guns and we’ve arranged it so far—but there’ve been a few deaths and a great many prisoners. Not that we mind that, you know, father and I, but it upsets mother and the girls, and there’s always the chance that some time we won’t be able to arrange it.”

Shreds and tatters of chinchilla, courtesy clouds in the green moon’s heaven, were passing the green moon like precious Eastern stuffs paraded for the inspection of some Tartar Khan. It seemed to John that it was day, and that he was looking at some lads sailing above him in the air, showering down tracts and patent medicine circulars, with their messages of hope for despairing, rock-bound hamlets. It seemed to him that he could see them look down out of the clouds and stare—and stare at whatever there was to stare at in this place whither he was bound—What then? Were they induced to land by some insidious device to be immured far from patent medicines and from tracts until the judgment day—or, should they fail to fall into the trap, did a quick puff of smoke and the sharp round of a splitting shell bring them drooping to earth—and “upset” Percy’s mother and sisters. John shook his head and the wraith of a hollow laugh issued silently from his parted lips. What desperate transaction lay hidden here? What a moral expedient of a bizarre Croesus? What terrible and golden mystery? . . .

The chinchilla clouds had drifted past now and, outside the Montana night was bright as day the tapestry brick of the road was smooth to the tread of the great tyres as they rounded a still, moonlit lake; they passed into darkness for a moment, a pine grove, pungent and cool, then they came out into a broad avenue of lawn, and John's exclamation of pleasure was simultaneous with Percy's taciturn "We're home."

Full in the light of the stars, an exquisite château rose from the borders of the lake, climbed in marble radiance half the height of an adjoining mountain, then melted in grace, in perfect symmetry, in translucent feminine languor, into the massed darkness of a forest of pine. The many towers, the slender tracery of the sloping parapets, the chiselled wonder of a thousand yellow windows with their oblongs and heptagons and triangles of golden light, the shattered softness of the intersecting planes of star-shine and blue shade, all trembled on John's spirit like a chord of music. On one of the towers, the tallest, the blackest at its base, an arrangement of exterior lights at the top made a sort of floating fairyland—and as John gazed up in warm enchantment the faint acciaccare sound of violins drifted down in a rococo harmony that was like nothing he had ever heard before. Then in a moment the car stepped before wide, high marble steps around which the night air was fragrant with a host of flowers. At the top of the steps two great doors swung silently open and amber light flooded out upon the darkness, silhouetting the figure of an exquisite lady with black, high-piled hair, who held out her arms toward them.

"Mother," Percy was saying, "this is my friend, John Unger, from Hades."

Afterward John remembered that first night as a daze of many colours, of quick sensory impressions, of music soft as a voice in love, and of the beauty of things, lights and shadows, and motions and faces. There was a white-haired man who stood drinking a many-hued cordial from a crystal thimble set on a golden stem. There was a girl with a flowery face, dressed like Titania with braided sapphires in her hair. There was a room where the solid, soft gold of the walls yielded to the pressure of his hand, and a room that was like a platonic conception of the ultimate prison—ceiling, floor, and all, it was lined with an unbroken mass of diamonds, diamonds of every size and shape, until, lit with tail violet lamps in the corners, it dazzled the eyes with a whiteness that could be compared only with itself, beyond human wish, or dream.

Through a maze of these rooms the two boys wandered. Sometimes the floor under their feet would flame in brilliant patterns from lighting below, patterns of barbaric clashing colours, of pastel delicacy, of sheer whiteness, or of subtle and intricate mosaic, surely from some mosque on the Adriatic Sea. Sometimes beneath layers of thick crystal he would see blue or green water swirling, inhabited by vivid fish and growths of rainbow foliage. Then they would be treading on

furs of every texture and colour or along corridors of palest ivory, unbroken as though carved complete from the gigantic tusks of dinosaurs extinct before the age of man . . .

Then a hazily remembered transition, and they were at dinner—where each plate was of two almost imperceptible layers of solid diamond between which was curiously worked a filigree of emerald design, a shaving sliced from green air. Music, plangent and unobtrusive, drifted down through far corridors—his chair, feathered and curved insidiously to his back, seemed to engulf and overpower him as he drank his first glass of port. He tried drowsily to answer a question that had been asked him, but the honeyed luxury that clasped his body added to the illusion of sleep—jewels, fabrics, wines, and metals blurred before his eyes into a sweet mist . . .

“Yes,” he replied with a polite effort, “it certainly is hot enough for me down there.”

He managed to add a ghostly laugh; then, without movement, without resistance, he seemed to float off and away, leaving an iced dessert that was pink as a dream . . . He fell asleep.

When he awoke he knew that several hours had passed. He was in a great quiet room with ebony walls and a dull illumination that was too faint, too subtle, to be called a light. His young host was standing over him.

“You fell asleep at dinner,” Percy was saying. “I nearly did, too—it was such a treat to be comfortable again after this year of school. Servants undressed and bathed you while you were sleeping.”

“Is this a bed or a cloud?” sighed John. “Percy, Percy—before you go, I want to apologise.”

“For what?”

“For doubting you when you said you had a diamond as big as the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.”

Percy smiled.

“I thought you didn’t believe me. It’s that mountain, you know.”

“What mountain?”

“The mountain the chateau rests on. It’s not very big, for a mountain. But except about fifty feet of sod and gravel on top it’s solid diamond. One diamond, one cubic mile without a flaw. Aren’t you listening? Say—”

But John T. Unger had again fallen asleep.

### 3

Morning. As he awoke he perceived drowsily that the room had at the same moment become dense with sunlight. The ebony panels of one wall had slid aside on a sort of track, leaving his chamber half open to the day. A large negro in a white uniform stood beside his bed.

“Good-evening,” muttered John, summoning his brains from the wild places.



“Good-morning, sir. Are you ready for your bath, sir? Oh, don’t get up—I’ll put you in, if you’ll just unbutton your pyjamas—there. Thank you, sir.”

John lay quietly as his pyjamas were removed—he was amused and delighted; he expected to be lifted like a child by this black Gargantua who was tending him, but nothing of the sort happened; instead he felt the bed tilt up slowly on its side—he began to roll, startled at first, in the direction of the wall, but when he reached the wall its drapery gave way, and sliding two yards farther down a fleecy incline he plumped gently into water the same temperature as his body.

He looked about him. The runway or rollway on which he had arrived had folded gently back into place. He had been projected into another chamber and was sitting in a sunken bath with his head just above the level of the floor. All about him, lining the walls of the room and the sides and bottom of the bath itself, was a blue aquarium, and gazing through the crystal surface on which he sat, he could see fish swimming among amber lights and even gliding without curiosity past his outstretched toes, which were separated from them only by the thickness of the crystal. From overhead, sunlight came down through sea-green glass.

“I suppose, sir, that you’d like hot rosewater and soapsuds this morning, sir—and perhaps cold salt water to finish.”

The negro was standing beside him.

“Yes,” agreed John, smiling inanely, “as you please.” Any idea of ordering this bath according to his own meagre standards of living would have been priggish and not a little wicked.

The negro pressed a button and a warm rain began to fall, apparently from overhead, but really, so John discovered after a moment, from a fountain arrangement near by. The water turned to a pale rose colour and jets of liquid soap spurted into it from four miniature walrus heads at the corners of the bath. In a moment a dozen little paddle-wheels, fixed to the sides, had churned the mixture into a radiant rainbow of pink foam which enveloped him softly with its delicious lightness, and burst in shining, rosy bubbles here and there about him.

“Shall I turn on the moving-picture machine, sir?” suggested the negro deferentially. “There’s a good one-reel comedy in this machine to-day, or I can put in a serious piece in a moment, if you prefer it.

“No, thanks,” answered John, politely but firmly. He was enjoying his bath too much to desire any distraction. But distraction came. In a moment he was listening intently to the sound of flutes from just outside, flutes dripping a melody that was like a waterfall, cool and green as the room itself, accompanying a frothy piccolo, in play more fragile than the lace of suds that covered and charmed him.

After a cold salt-water bracer and a cold fresh finish, he stepped out and into a fleecy robe, and upon a couch covered with the same material he was rubbed with oil, alcohol, and spice. Later he sat in a voluptuous while he was shaved and his hair was trimmed.

“Mr. Percy is waiting in your sitting-room,” said the negro, when these operations were finished. “My name is Gygsum, Mr. Unger, sir. I am to see to Mr. Unger every morning.”

John walked out into the brisk sunshine of his living-room, where he found breakfast waiting for him and Percy, gorgeous in white kid knickerbockers, smoking in an easy chair.

4

This is a story of the Washington family as Percy sketched it for John during breakfast.

The father of the present Mr. Washington had been a Virginian, a direct descendant of George Washington, and Lord Baltimore. At the close of the Civil War he was a twenty-five-year-old Colonel with a played-out plantation and about a thousand dollars in gold.

Fitz-Norman Culpepper Washington, for that was the young Colonel's name, decided to present the Virginia estate to his younger brother and go West. He selected two dozen of the most faithful blacks, who, of course, worshipped him, and bought twenty-five tickets to the West, where he intended to take out land in their names and start a sheep and cattle ranch.

When he had been in Montana for less than a month and things were going very poorly indeed, he stumbled on his great discovery. He had lost his way when riding in the hills, and after a day without food he began to grow hungry. As he was without his rifle, he was forced to pursue a squirrel, and in the course of the pursuit he noticed that it was carrying something shiny in its mouth. Just before it vanished into its hole—for Providence did not intend that this squirrel should alleviate his hunger—it dropped its burden. Sitting down to consider the situation Fitz-Norman's eye was caught by a gleam in the grass beside him. In ten seconds he had completely lost his appetite and gained one hundred thousand dollars. The squirrel, which had refused with annoying persistence to become food, had made him a present of a large and perfect diamond.

Late that night he found his way to camp and twelve hours later all the males among his darkies were back by the squirrel hole digging furiously at the side of the mountain. He told them he had discovered a rhinestone mine, and, as only one or two of them had ever seen even a small diamond before, they believed him, without question. When the magnitude of his discovery became apparent to him, he found himself in a quandary. The mountain was a diamond—it was literally nothing else but solid diamond. He filled four saddle bags full of glittering samples and started on horseback for St. Paul. There he managed to dispose of half a dozen small stones—when he tried a larger one a storekeeper fainted and Fitz-Norman was arrested as a public disturber.

He escaped from jail and caught the train for New York, where he sold a few medium-sized diamonds and received in exchange about two hundred thousand dollars in gold. But he did not dare to produce any exceptional gems—in fact, he left New York just in time. Tremendous excitement had been created in jewelry circles, not so much by the size of his diamonds as by their appearance in the city from mysterious sources. Wild rumors became current that a diamond mine had been discovered in the Catskills, on the Jersey coast, on Long Island, beneath Washington Square. Excursion trains, packed with men carrying picks and shovels, began to leave New York hourly, bound for various neighboring El Dorados. But by that time young Fitz-Norman was on his way back to Montana.

By the end of a fortnight he had estimated that the diamond in the mountain was approximately equal in quantity to all the rest of the diamonds known to exist in the world. There was no valuing it by any regular computation, however, for it was one solid diamond—and if it were offered for sale not only would the bottom fall out of the market, but also, if the value should vary with its size in the usual arithmetical progression, there would not be enough gold in the world to buy a tenth part of it. And what could any one do with a diamond that size?

It was an amazing predicament. He was, in one sense, the richest man that ever lived—and yet was he worth anything at all? If his secret should transpire there was no telling to what measures the Government might resort in order to prevent a panic, in gold as well as in jewels. They might take over the claim immediately and institute a monopoly.

There was no alternative—he must market his mountain in secret. He sent South for his younger brother and put him in charge of his colored following—darkies who had never realized that slavery was abolished. To make sure of this, he read them a proclamation that he had composed, which announced that General Forrest had reorganized the shattered Southern armies and defeated the North in one pitched battle. The negroes believed him implicitly. They passed a vote declaring it a good thing and held revival services immediately.

Fitz-Norman himself set out for foreign parts with one hundred thousand dollars and two trunks filled with rough diamonds of all sizes. He sailed for Russia in a Chinese junk and six months after his departure from Montana he was in St. Petersburg. He took obscure lodgings and called immediately upon the court jeweller, announcing that he had a diamond for the Czar. He remained in St. Petersburg for two weeks, in constant danger of being murdered, living from lodging to lodging, and afraid to visit his trunks more than three or four times during the whole fortnight.

On his promise to return in a year with larger and finer stones, he was allowed to leave for India. Before he left, however, the Court Treasurers had deposited to his credit, in American banks, the sum of fifteen million dollars—under four different aliases.

He returned to America in 1868, having been gone a little over two years. He had visited the capitals of twenty-two countries and talked with five emperors, eleven kings, three princes, a shah, a khan, and a sultan. At that time Fitz-Norman estimated his own wealth at one billion dollars. One fact worked consistently against the disclosure of his secret. No one of his larger diamonds remained in the public eye for a week before being invested with a history of enough fatalities, amours, revolutions, and wars to have occupied it from the days of the first Babylonian Empire.

From 1870 until his death in 1900, the history of Fitz-Norman Washington was a long epic in gold. There were side issues, of course—he evaded the surveys, he married a Virginia lady, by whom he had a single son, and he was compelled, due to a series of unfortunate complications, to murder his brother, whose unfortunate habit of drinking himself into an indiscreet stupor had several times endangered their safety. But very few other murders stained these happy years of progress and expansion.

Just before he died he changed his policy, and with all but a few million dollars of his outside wealth bought up rare minerals in bulk, which he deposited in the safety vaults of banks all over the world, marked as bric-a-brac. His son, Braddock Tarleton Washington, followed this policy on an even more tensive scale. The minerals were converted into the rarest of all elements—radium—so that the equivalent of a billion dollars in gold could be placed in a receptacle no bigger than a cigar box.

When Fitz-Norman had been dead three years his son, Braddock, decided that the business had gone far enough. The amount of wealth that he and his father had taken out of the mountain was beyond all exact computation. He kept a note-book in cipher in which he set down the approximate quantity of radium in each of the thousand banks he patronized, and recorded the alias under which it was held. Then he did a very simple thing—he sealed up the mine.

He sealed up the mine. What had been taken out of it would support all the Washingtons yet to be born in unparalleled luxury for generations. His one care must be the protection of his secret, lest in the possible panic attendant on its discovery he should be reduced with all the property-holders in the world to utter poverty.

This was the family among whom John T. Unger was staying. This was the story he heard in his silver-walled living-room the morning after his arrival.

After breakfast, John found his way out the great marble entrance, and looked curiously at the scene before him. The whole valley, from the diamond mountain to the steep granite cliff five miles away, still gave off a breath of golden haze which hovered idly above the fine sweep of lawns and lakes and gardens. Here and there clusters of elms made delicate groves of shade, contrasting strangely with the tough masses of pine forest that held the hills in a grip of dark-blue green. Even as John looked he saw three fawns in single file patter out from one clump about a half-mile away and disappear with awkward gaiety into the black-ribbed half-light of another. John would not have been surprised to see a goat-foot piping his way among the trees or to catch a glimpse of pink nymph-skin and flying yellow hair between the greenest of the green leaves.

In some such cool hope he descended the marble steps, disturbing faintly the sleep of two silky Russian wolfhounds at the bottom, and set off along a walk of white and blue brick that seemed to lead in no particular direction.

He was enjoying himself as much as he was able. It is youth's felicity as well as its insufficiency that it can never live in the present, but must always be measuring up the day against its own radiantly imagined future—flowers and gold, girls and stars, they are only prefigurations and prophecies of that incomparable, unattainable young dream.

John rounded a soft corner where the massed rosebushes filled the air with heavy scent, and struck off across a park toward a patch of moss under some trees. He had never lain upon moss, and he wanted to see whether it was really soft enough to justify the use of its name as an adjective. Then he saw a girl coming toward him over the grass. She was the most beautiful person he had ever seen.

She was dressed in a white little gown that came just below her knees, and a wreath of mignonettes clasped with blue slices of sapphire bound up her hair. Her pink bare feet scattered the dew before them as she came. She was younger than John—not more than sixteen.

"Hallo," she cried softly, "I'm Kismine."

She was much more than that to John already. He advanced toward her, scarcely moving as he drew near lest he should tread on her bare toes.

"You haven't met me," said her soft voice. Her blue eyes added, "Oh, but you've missed a great deal!"... "You met my sister, Jasmine, last night. I was sick with lettuce poisoning," went on her soft voice, and her eye continued, "and when I'm sick I'm sweet—and when I'm well."

"You have made an enormous impression on me," said John's eyes, "and I'm not so slow myself"—"How do you do?" said his voice. "I hope you're better this morning."—"You darling," added his eyes tremulously.

John observed that they had been walking along the path. On her suggestion they sat down together upon the moss, the softness of which he failed to determine.

He was critical about women. A single defect—a thick ankle, a hoarse voice, a glass eye—was enough to make him utterly indifferent. And here for the first time in his life he was beside a girl who seemed to him the incarnation of physical perfection.

“Are you from the East?” asked Kismine with charming interest.

“No,” answered John simply. “I’m from Hades.”

Either she had never heard of Hades, or she could think of no pleasant comment to make upon it, for she did not discuss it further.

“I’m going East to school this fall” she said. “D’you think I’ll like it? I’m going to New York to Miss Bulge’s. It’s very strict, but you see over the weekends I’m going to live at home with the family in our New York house, because father heard that the girls had to go walking two by two.”

“Your father wants you to be proud,” observed John.

“We are,” she answered, her eyes shining with dignity. “None of us has ever been punished. Father said we never should be. Once when my sister Jasmine was a little girl she pushed him downstairs and he just got up and limped away.

“Mother was—well, a little startled,” continued Kismine, “when she heard that you were from—from where you are from, you know. She said that when she was a young girl—but then, you see, she’s a Spaniard and old-fashioned.”

“Do you spend much time out here?” asked John, to conceal the fact that he was somewhat hurt by this remark. It seemed an unkind allusion to his provincialism.

“Percy and Jasmine and I are here every summer, but next summer Jasmine is going to Newport. She’s coming out in London a year from this fall. She’ll be presented at court.”

“Do you know,” began John hesitantly, “you’re much more sophisticated than I thought you were when I first saw you?”

“Oh, no, I’m not,” she exclaimed hurriedly. “Oh, I wouldn’t think of being. I think that sophisticated young people are terribly common, don’t you? I’m not all, really. If you say I am, I’m going to cry.”

She was so distressed that her lip was trembling. John was impelled to protest:

“I didn’t mean that; I only said it to tease you.”

“Because I wouldn’t mind if I were,” she persisted, “but I’m not. I’m very innocent and girlish. I never smoke, or drink, or read anything except poetry. I know scarcely any mathematics or chemistry. I dress very simply—in fact, I scarcely dress at all. I think sophisticated is the last thing you can say about me. I believe that girls ought to enjoy their youths in a wholesome way.”

“I do, too,” said John, heartily,

Kismine was cheerful again. She smiled at him, and a still-born tear dripped from the corner of one blue eye.

“I like you,” she whispered intimately. “Are you going to spend all your time with Percy while you’re here, or will you be nice to me? Just think—I’m absolutely fresh ground. I’ve never had a boy in love with me in all my life. I’ve never been allowed even to see boys alone—except Percy. I came all the way out here into this grove hoping to run into you, where the family wouldn’t be around.”

Deeply flattered, John bowed from the hips as he had been taught at dancing school in Hades.

“We’d better go now,” said Kismine sweetly. “I have to be with mother at eleven. You haven’t asked me to kiss you once. I thought boys always did that nowadays”

John drew himself up proudly.

“Some of them do,” he answered, “but not me. Girls don’t do that sort of thing—in Hades.”

Side by side they walked back toward the house.

## 6

John stood facing Mr. Braddock Washington in the full sunlight. The elder man was about forty, with a proud, vacuous face, intelligent eyes, and a robust figure. In the mornings he smelt of horses—the best horses. He carried a plain walking-stick of gray birch with a single large opal for a grip. He and Percy were showing John around.

“The slaves’ quarters are there.” His walking-stick indicated a cloister of marble on their left that ran in graceful Gothic along the side of the mountain. “In my youth I was distracted for a while from the business of life by a period of absurd idealism. During that time they lived in luxury. For instance, I equipped every one of their rooms with a tile bath.”

“I suppose,” ventured John, with an ingratiating laugh, “that they used the bathtubs to keep coal in. Mr. Schnlitzer-Murphy told me that once he—”

“The opinions of Mr. Schnlitzer-Murphy are of little importance, I should imagine,” interrupted Braddock Washington coldly. “My slaves did not keep coal in their bathtubs. They had orders to bathe every day, and they did. If they hadn’t I might have ordered a sulphuric acid shampoo. I discontinued the baths for quite another reason. Several of them caught cold and died. Water is not good for certain races—except as a beverage.”

John laughed, and then decided to nod his head in sober agreement. Braddock Washington made him uncomfortable.

“All these negroes are descendants of the ones my father brought North with him. There are about two hundred and fifty now. You notice that they’ve lived so long apart from the world that their original dialect has become an almost indistinguishable patois. We bring a few of them up to speak English—my secretary and two or three of the house servants.

“This is the golf course,” he continued, as they strolled along the velvet winter grass. “It’s all a green, you see—no fairway, no rough, no hazards.”

He smiled pleasantly at John.

“Many men in the cage, father?” asked Percy suddenly.

Braddock Washington stumbled, and let forth an involuntary curse.

“One less than there should be,” he ejaculated darkly—and then added after a moment, “We’ve had difficulties.”

“Mother was telling me,” exclaimed Percy, “that Italian teacher—”

“A ghastly error,” said Braddock Washington angrily. “But of course there’s a good chance that we may have got him. Perhaps he fell somewhere in the woods or stumbled over a cliff. And then there’s always the probability that if he did get away his story wouldn’t be believed. Nevertheless, I’ve had two dozen men looking for him in different towns around here.”

“And no luck?”

“Some. Fourteen of them reported to my agent they’d each killed a man answering to that description, but of course it was probably only the reward they were after—”

He broke off. They had come to a large cavity in the earth about the circumference of a merry-go-round, and covered by a strong iron grating. Braddock Washington beckoned to John, and pointed his cane down through the grating. John stepped to the edge and gazed. Immediately his ears were assailed by a wild clamor from below.

“Come on down to Hell!”

“Hallo, kiddo, how’s the air up there?”

“Hey! Throw us a rope!”

“Got an old doughnut, Buddy, or a couple of second-hand sandwiches?”

“Say, fella, if you’ll push down that guy you’re with, we’ll show you a quick disappearance scene.”

“Paste him one for me, will you?”

It was too dark to see clearly into the pit below, but John could tell from the coarse optimism and rugged vitality of the remarks and voices that they proceeded from middle-class Americans of the more spirited type. Then Mr. Washington put out his cane and touched a button in the grass, and the scene below sprang into light.



“These are some adventurous mariners who had the misfortune to discover El Dorado,” he remarked.

Below them there had appeared a large hollow in the earth shaped like the interior of a bowl. The sides were steep and apparently of polished glass, and on its slightly concave surface stood about two dozen men clad in the half costume, half uniform, of aviators. Their upturned faces, lit with wrath, with malice, with despair, with cynical humour, were covered by long growths of beard, but with the exception of a few who had pined perceptibly away, they seemed to be a well-fed, healthy lot.

Braddock Washington drew a garden chair to the edge of the pit and sat down.

“Well, how are you, boys?” he inquired genially.

A chorus of execration, in which all joined except a few too dispirited to cry out, rose up into the sunny air, but Braddock Washington heard it with unruffled composure. When its last echo had died away he spoke again.

“Have you thought up a way out of your difficulty?”

From here and there among them a remark floated up.

“We decided to stay here for love!”

“Bring us up there and we’ll find us a way!”

Braddock Washington waited until they were again quiet. Then he said:

“I’ve told you the situation. I don’t want you here, I wish to heaven I’d never seen you. Your own curiosity got you here, and any time that you can think of a way out which protects me and my interests I’ll be glad to consider it. But so long as you confine your efforts to digging tunnels—yes, I know about the new one you’ve started—you won’t get very far. This isn’t as hard on you as you make it out, with all your howling for the loved ones at home. If you were the type who worried much about the loved ones at home, you’d never have taken up aviation.”

A tall man moved apart from the others, and held up his hand to call his captor’s attention to what he was about to say.

“Let me ask you a few questions!” he cried. “You pretend to be a fair-minded man.”

“How absurd. How could a man of my position be fair-minded toward you? You might as well speak of a Spaniard being fair-minded toward a piece of steak.”

At this harsh observation the faces of the two dozen fell, but the tall man continued:

“All right!” he cried. “We’ve argued this out before. You’re not a humanitarian and you’re not fair-minded, but you’re human—at least you say you are—and you ought to be able to put yourself in our place for long enough to think how—how—how—”

“How what?” demanded Washington, coldly.

“—how unnecessary—”

“Not to me.”

“Well—how cruel—”

“We’ve covered that. Cruelty doesn’t exist where self-preservation is involved. You’ve been soldiers; you know that. Try another.”

“Well, then, how stupid.”

“There,” admitted Washington, “I grant you that. But try to think of an alternative. I’ve offered to have all or any of you painlessly executed if you wish. I’ve offered to have your wives, sweethearts, children, and mothers kidnapped and brought out here. I’ll enlarge your place down there and feed and clothe you the rest of your lives. If there was some method of producing permanent amnesia I’d have all of you operated on and released immediately, somewhere outside of my preserves. But that’s as far as my ideas go.”

“How about trusting us not to peach on you?” cried some one.

“You don’t proffer that suggestion seriously,” said Washington, with an expression of scorn. “I did take out one man to teach my daughter Italian. Last week he got away.”

A wild yell of jubilation went up suddenly from two dozen throats and a pandemonium of joy ensued. The prisoners clog-danced and cheered and yodled and wrestled with one another in a sudden uprush of animal spirits. They even ran up the glass sides of the bowl as far as they could, and slid back to the bottom upon the natural cushions of their bodies. The tall man started a song in which they all joined—

“Oh, we’ll hang the kaiser On a sour apple-tree—”

Braddock Washington sat in inscrutable silence until the song was over.

“You see,” he remarked, when he could gain a modicum of attention. “I bear you no ill-will. I like to see you enjoying yourselves. That’s why I didn’t tell you the whole story at once. The man—what was his name? Critchtichiello?—was shot by some of my agents in fourteen different places.”

Not guessing that the places referred to were cities, the tumult of rejoicing subsided immediately.

“Nevertheless,” cried Washington with a touch of anger, “he tried to run away. Do you expect me to take chances with any of you after an experience like that?”

Again a series of ejaculations went up.

“Sure!”

“Would your daughter like to learn Chinese?”

“Hey, I can speak Italian! My mother was a wop.”

“Maybe she’d like t’learn a speak N’Yawk!”

“If she’s the little one with the big blue eyes I can teach her a lot of things better than Italian.”

“I know some Irish songs—and I could hammer brass once’t.”

Mr. Washington reached forward suddenly with his cane and pushed the button in the grass so that the picture below went out instantly, and there remained only that great dark mouth covered dismally with the black teeth of the grating.

“Hey!” called a single voice from below, “you ain’t goin’ away without givin’ us your blessing?”

But Mr. Washington, followed by the two boys, was already strolling on toward the ninth hole of the golf course, as though the pit and its contents were no more than a hazard over which his facile iron had triumphed with ease.

7

July under the lee of the diamond mountain was a month of blanket nights and of warm, glowing days. John and Kismine were in love. He did not know that the little gold football (inscribed with the legend *Pro deo et patria et St. Mida*) which he had given her rested on a platinum chain next to her bosom. But it did. And she for her part was not aware that a large sapphire which had dropped one day from her simple coiffure was stowed away tenderly in John’s jewel box.

Late one afternoon when the ruby and ermine music room was quiet, they spent an hour there together. He held her hand and she gave him such a look that he whispered her name aloud. She bent toward him—then hesitated.

“Did you say ‘Kismine’?” she asked softly, “or—”

She had wanted to be sure. She thought she might have misunderstood.

Neither of them had ever kissed before, but in the course of an hour it seemed to make little difference.

The afternoon drifted away. That night, when a last breath of music drifted down from the highest tower, they each lay awake, happily dreaming over the separate minutes of the day. They had decided to be married as soon as possible.

8

Every day Mr. Washington and the two young men went hunting or fishing in the deep forests or played golf around the somnolent course—games which John diplomatically allowed

his host to win—or swam in the mountain coolness of the lake. John found Mr. Washington a somewhat exacting personality—utterly uninterested in any ideas or opinions except his own. Mrs. Washington was aloof and reserved at all times. She was apparently indifferent to her two daughters, and entirely absorbed in her son Percy, with whom she held interminable conversations in rapid Spanish at dinner.

Jasmine, the elder daughter, resembled Kismine in appearance—except that she was somewhat bow-legged, and terminated in large hands and feet—but was utterly unlike her in temperament. Her favourite books had to do with poor girls who kept house for widowed fathers. John learned from Kismine that Jasmine had never recovered from the shock and disappointment caused her by the termination of the World War, just as she was about to start for Europe as a canteen expert. She had even pined away for a time, and Braddock Washington had taken steps to promote a new war in the Balkans—but she had seen a photograph of some wounded Serbian soldiers and lost interest in the whole proceedings. But Percy and Kismine seemed to have inherited the arrogant attitude in all its harsh magnificence from their father. A chaste and consistent selfishness ran like a pattern through their every idea.

John was enchanted by the wonders of the chateau and the valley. Braddock Washington, so Percy told him, had caused to be kidnapped a landscape gardener, an architect, a designer of state settings, and a French decadent poet left over from the last century. He had put his entire force of negroes at their disposal, guaranteed to supply them with any materials that the world could offer, and left them to work out some ideas of their own. But one by one they had shown their uselessness. The decadent poet had at once begun bewailing his separation, from the boulevards in spring—he made some vague remarks about spices, apes, and ivories, but said nothing that was of any practical value. The stage designer on his part wanted to make the whole valley a series of tricks and sensational effects—a state of things that the Washingtons would soon have grown tired of. And as for the architect and the landscape gardener, they thought only in terms of convention. They must make this like this and that like that.

But they had, at least, solved the problem of what was to be done with them—they all went mad early one morning after spending the night in a single room trying to agree upon the location of a fountain, and were now confined comfortably in an insane asylum at Westport, Connecticut.

“But,” inquired John curiously, “who did plan all your wonderful reception rooms and halls, and approaches and bathrooms—?”

“Well,” answered Percy, “I blush to tell you, but it was a moving-picture fella. He was the only man we found who was used to playing with an unlimited amount of money, though he did tuck his napkin in his collar and couldn’t read or write.”

As August drew to a close John began to regret that he must soon go back to school. He and Kismine had decided to elope the following June.

"It would be nicer to be married here," Kismine confessed, "but of course I could never get father's permission to marry you at all. Next to that I'd rather elope. It's terrible for wealthy people to be married in America at present—they always have to send out bulletins to the press saying that they're going to be married in remnants, when what they mean is just a peck of old second-hand pearls and some used lace worn once by the Empress Eugenie."

"I know," agreed John fervently. "When I was visiting the Schnlitzer-Murphys, the eldest daughter, Gwendolyn, married a man whose father owns half of West Virginia. She wrote home saying what a tough struggle she was carrying on on his salary as a bank clerk—and then she ended up by saying that 'Thank God, I have four good maids anyhow, and that helps a little.'"

"It's absurd," commented Kismine—"Think of the millions and millions of people in the world, labourers and all, who get along with only two maids."

One afternoon late in August a chance remark of Kismine's changed the face of the entire situation, and threw John into a state of terror.

They were in their favourite grove, and between kisses John was indulging in some romantic forebodings which he fancied added poignancy to their relations.

"Sometimes I think we'll never marry," he said sadly. "You're too wealthy, too magnificent. No one as rich as you are can be like other girls. I should marry the daughter of some well-to-do wholesale hardware man from Omaha or Sioux City, and be content with her half-million."

"I knew the daughter of a wholesale hardware man once," remarked Kismine. "I don't think you'd have been contented with her. She was a friend of my sister's. She visited here."

"Oh, then you've had other guests?" exclaimed John in surprise.

Kismine seemed to regret her words.

"Oh, yes," she said hurriedly, "we've had a few."

"But aren't you—wasn't your father afraid they'd talk outside?"

"Oh, to some extent, to some extent," she answered, "Let's talk about something pleasanter."

But John's curiosity was aroused.

"Something pleasanter!" he demanded. "What's unpleasant about that? Weren't they nice girls?"

To his great surprise Kismine began to weep.

"Yes—th—that's the—the whole t-trouble. I grew qu-quite attached to some of them. So did Jasmine, but she kept inv-iting them anyway. I couldn't under\_stand it."

A dark suspicion was born in John's heart.

"Do you mean that they told, and your father had them—removed?"

"Worse than that," she muttered brokenly. "Father took no chances—and Jasmine kept writing them to come, and they had such a good time!"

She was overcome by a paroxysm of grief.

Stunned with the horror of this revelation, John sat there open-mouthed, feeling the nerves of his body twitter like so many sparrows perched upon his spinal column.

"Now, I've told you, and I shouldn't have," she said, calming suddenly and drying her dark blue eyes.

"Do you mean to say that your father had them murdered before they left?"

She nodded.

"In August usually—or early in September. It's only natural for us to get all the pleasure out of them that we can first."

"How abominable! How—why, I must be going crazy! Did you really admit that—"

"I did," interrupted Kismine, shrugging her shoulders. "We can't very well imprison them like those aviators, where they'd be a continual reproach to us every day. And it's always been made easier for Jasmine and me, because father had it done sooner than we expected. In that way we avoided any farewell scene—"

"So you murdered them! Uh!" cried John.

"It was done very nicely. They were drugged while they were asleep—and their families were always told that they died of scarlet fever in Butte."

"But—I fail to understand why you kept on inviting them!"

"I didn't," burst out Kismine. "I never invited one. Jasmine did. And they always had a very good time. She'd give them the nicest presents toward the last. I shall probably have visitors too—I'll harden up to it. We can't let such an inevitable thing as death stand in the way of enjoying life while we have it. Think of how lonesome it'd be out here if we never had any one. Why, father and mother have sacrificed some of their best friends just as we have."

"And so," cried John accusingly, "and so you were letting me make love to you and pretending to return it, and talking about marriage, all the time knowing perfectly well that I'd never get out of here alive—"

"No," she protested passionately. "Not any more. I did at first. You were here. I couldn't help that, and I thought your last days might as well be pleasant for both of us. But then I fell in love with you, and—and I'm honestly sorry you're going to—going to be put away—though I'd rather you'd be put away than ever kiss another girl."

“Oh, you would, would you?” cried John ferociously.

“Much rather. Besides, I’ve always heard that a girl can have more fun with a man whom she knows she can never marry. Oh, why did I tell you? I’ve probably spoiled your whole good time now, and we were really enjoying things when you didn’t know it. I knew it would make things sort of depressing for you.”

“Oh, you did, did you?” John’s voice trembled with anger. “I’ve heard about enough of this. If you haven’t any more pride and decency than to have an affair with a fellow that you know isn’t much better than a corpse, I don’t want to have any more to do with you!”

“You’re not a corpse!” she protested in horror. “You’re not a corpse! I won’t have you saying that I kissed a corpse!”

“I said nothing of the sort!”

“You did! You said I kissed a corpse!”

“I didn’t!”

Their voices had risen, but upon a sudden interruption they both subsided into immediate silence. Footsteps were coming along the path in their direction, and a moment later the rose bushes were parted displaying Braddock Washington, whose intelligent eyes set in his good-looking vacuous face were peering in at them.

“Who kissed a corpse?” he demanded in obvious disapproval.

“Nobody,” answered Kismine quickly. “We were just joking.”

“What are you two doing here, anyhow?” he demanded gruffly. “Kismine, you ought to be—to be reading or playing golf with your sister. Go read! Go play golf! Don’t let me find you here when I come back!”

Then he bowed at John and went up the path.

“See?” said Kismine crossly, when he was out of hearing. “You’ve spoiled it all. We can never meet any more. He won’t let me meet you. He’d have you poisoned if he thought we were in love.”

“We’re not, any more!” cried John fiercely, “so he can set his mind at rest upon that. Moreover, don’t fool yourself that I’m going to stay around here. Inside of six hours I’ll be over those mountains, if I have to gnaw a passage through them, and on my way East.” They had both got to their feet, and at this remark Kismine came close and put her arm through his.

“I’m going, too.”

“You must be crazy—”

“Of course I’m going,” she interrupted impatiently.

“You most certainly are not. You—”

“Very well,” she said quietly, “we’ll catch up with father and talk it over with him.”

Defeated, John mustered a sickly smile.

“Very well, dearest,” he agreed, with pale and unconvincing affection, “we’ll go together.”

His love for her returned and settled placidly on his heart. She was his—she would go with him to share his dangers. He put his arms about her and kissed her fervently. After all she loved him; she had saved him, in fact.

Discussing the matter, they walked slowly back toward the chateau. They decided that since Braddock Washington had seen them together they had best depart the next night. Nevertheless, John’s lips were unusually dry at dinner, and he nervously emptied a great spoonful of peacock soup into his left lung. He had to be carried into the turquoise and sable card-room and pounded on the back by one of the under-butlers, which Percy considered a great joke.

9

Long after midnight John’s body gave a nervous jerk, he sat suddenly upright, staring into the veils of somnolence that draped the room. Through the squares of blue darkness that were his open windows, he had heard a faint far-away sound that died upon a bed of wind before identifying itself on his memory, clouded with uneasy dreams. But the sharp noise that had succeeded it was nearer, was just outside the room—the click of a turned knob, a footstep, a whisper, he could not tell; a hard lump gathered in the pit of his stomach, and his whole body ached in the moment that he strained agonisingly to hear. Then one of the veils seemed to dissolve, and he saw a vague figure standing by the door, a figure only faintly limned and blocked in upon the darkness, mingled so with the folds of the drapery as to seem distorted, like a reflection seen in a dirty pane of glass.

With a sudden movement of fright or resolution John pressed the button by his bedside, and the next moment he was sitting in the green sunken bath of the adjoining room, waked into alertness by the shock of the cold water which half filled it.

He sprang out, and, his wet pyjamas scattering a heavy trickle of water behind him, ran for the aquamarine door which he knew led out on to the ivory landing of the second floor. The door opened noiselessly. A single crimson lamp burning in a great dome above lit the magnificent sweep of the carved stairways with a poignant beauty. For a moment John hesitated, appalled by the silent splendour massed about him, seeming to envelop in its gigantic folds and contours the solitary drenched little figure shivering upon the ivory landing. Then simultaneously two things happened. The door of his own sitting-room swung open, precipitating three naked negroes into the hall—and, as John swayed in wild terror toward the stairway, another door slid back in the



wall on the other side of the corridor, and John saw Braddock Washington standing in the lighted lift, wearing a fur coat and a pair of riding boots which reached to his knees and displayed, above, the glow of his rose-colored pyjamas.

On the instant the three negroes—John had never seen any of them before, and it flashed through his mind that they must be the professional executioners paused in their movement toward John, and turned expectantly to the man in the lift, who burst out with an imperious command:

“Get in here! All three of you! Quick as hell!”

Then, within the instant, the three negroes darted into the cage, the oblong of light was blotted out as the lift door slid shut, and John was again alone in the hall. He slumped weakly down against an ivory stair.

It was apparent that something portentous had occurred, something which, for the moment at least, had postponed his own petty disaster. What was it? Had the negroes risen in revolt? Had the aviators forced aside the iron bars of the grating? Or had the men of Fish stumbled blindly through the hills and gazed with bleak, joyless eyes upon the gaudy valley? John did not know. He heard a faint whir of air as the lift whizzed up again, and then, a moment later, as it descended. It was probable that Percy was hurrying to his father’s assistance, and it occurred to John that this was his opportunity to join Kismine and plan an immediate escape. He waited until the lift had been silent for several minutes; shivering a little with the night cool that whipped in through his wet pyjamas, he returned to his room and dressed himself quickly. Then he mounted a long flight of stairs and turned down the corridor carpeted with Russian sable which led to Kismine’s suite.

The door of her sitting-room was open and the lamps were lighted. Kismine, in an angora kimono, stood near the window Of the room in a listening attitude, and as John entered noiselessly she turned toward him.

“Oh, it’s you!” she whispered, crossing the room to him. “Did you hear them?”

I heard your father’s slaves in my—”

“No,” she interrupted excitedly. “Aeroplanes!”

“Aeroplanes? Perhaps that was the sound that woke me.”

“There’re at least a dozen. I saw one a few moments ago dead against the moon. The guard back by the cliff fired his rifle and that’s what roused father. We’re going to open on them right away.”

“Are they here on purpose?”

“Yes—it’s that Italian who got away—”

Simultaneously with her last word, a succession of sharp cracks tumbled in through the open window. Kismine uttered a little cry, took a penny with fumbling fingers from a box on her dresser, and ran to one of the electric lights. In an instant the entire chateau was in darkness—she had blown out the fuse.

“Come on!” she cried to him. “We’ll go up to the roof garden, and watch it from there!”

Drawing a cape about her, she took his hand, and they found their way out the door. It was only a step to the tower lift, and as she pressed the button that shot them upward he put his arms around her in the darkness and kissed her mouth. Romance had come to John Unger at last. A minute later they had stepped out upon the star-white platform. Above, under the misty moon, sliding in and out of the patches of cloud that eddied below it, floated a dozen dark-winged bodies in a constant circling course. From here and there in the valley flashes of fire leaped toward them, followed by sharp detonations. Kismine clapped her hands with pleasure, which, a moment later, turned to dismay as the aeroplanes, at some prearranged signal, began to release their bombs and the whole of the valley became a panorama of deep reverberate sound and lurid light.

Before long the aim of the attackers became concentrated upon the points where the anti-aircraft guns were situated, and one of them was almost immediately reduced to a giant cinder to lie smouldering in a park of rose bushes.

“Kismine,” begged John, “you’ll be glad when I tell you that this attack came on the eve of my murder. If I hadn’t heard that guard shoot off his gun back by the pass I should now be stone dead—”

“I can’t hear you!” cried Kismine, intent on the scene before her. “You’ll have to talk louder!”

“I simply said,” shouted John, “that we’d better get out before they begin to shell the chateau!”

Suddenly the whole portico of the negro quarters cracked asunder, a geyser of flame shot up from under the colonnades, and great fragments of jagged marble were hurled as far as the borders of the lake.

“There go fifty thousand dollars’ worth of slaves,” cried Kismine, “at pre-war prices. So few Americans have any respect for property.”

John renewed his efforts to compel her to leave. The aim of the aeroplanes was becoming more precise minute by minute, and only two of the anti-aircraft guns were still retaliating. It was obvious that the garrison, encircled with fire, could not hold out much longer.

“Come on!” cried John, pulling Kismine’s arm, “we’ve got to go. Do you realise that those aviators will kill you without question if they find you?”

She consented reluctantly.

“We’ll have to wake Jasmine!” she said, as they hurried toward the lift. Then she added in a sort of childish delight: “We’ll be poor, won’t we? Like people in books. And I’ll be an orphan and utterly free. Free and poor! What fun!” She stopped and raised her lips to him in a delighted kiss.

“It’s impossible to be both together,” said John grimly. “People have found that out. And I should choose to be free as preferable of the two. As an extra caution you’d better dump the contents of your jewel box into your pockets.”

Ten minutes later the two girls met John in the dark corridor and they descended to the main floor of the chateau. Passing for the last time through the magnificence of the splendid halls, they stood for a moment out on the terrace, watching the burning negro quarters and the flaming embers of two planes which had fallen on the other side of the lake. A solitary gun was still keeping up a sturdy popping, and the attackers seemed timorous about descending lower, but sent their thunderous fireworks in a circle around it, until any chance shot might annihilate its Ethiopian crew.

John and the two sisters passed down the marble steps, turned sharply to the left, and began to ascend a narrow path that wound like a garter about the diamond mountain. Kismine knew a heavily wooded spot half-way up where they could lie concealed and yet be able to observe the wild night in the valley—finally to make an escape, when it should be necessary, along a secret path laid in a rocky gully.

It was three o’clock when they attained their destination. The obliging and phlegmatic Jasmine fell off to sleep immediately, leaning against the trunk of a large tree, while John and Kismine sat, his arm around her, and watched the desperate ebb and flow of the dying battle among the ruins of a vista that had been a garden spot that morning. Shortly after four o’clock the last remaining gun gave out a clanging sound, and went out of action in a swift tongue of red smoke. Though the moon was down, they saw that the flying bodies were circling closer to the earth. When the planes had made certain that the beleaguered possessed no further resources they would land and the dark and glittering reign of the Washingtons would be over.

With the cessation of the firing the valley grew quiet. The embers of the two aeroplanes glowed like the eyes of some monster crouching in the grass. The chateau stood dark and silent, beautiful without light as it had been beautiful in the sun, while the woody rattles of Nemesis filled

the air above with a growing and receding complaint. Then John perceived that Kismine, like her sister, had fallen sound asleep.

It was long after four when he became aware of footsteps along the path they had lately followed, and he waited in breathless silence until the persons to whom they belonged had passed the vantage-point he occupied. There was a faint stir in the air now that was not of human origin, and the dew was cold; he knew that the dawn would break soon. John waited until the steps had gone a safe distance up the mountain and were inaudible. Then he followed. About half-way to the steep summit the trees fell away and a hard saddle of rock spread itself over the diamond beneath. Just before he reached this point he slowed down his pace warned by an animal sense that there was life just ahead of him. Coming to a high boulder, he lifted his head gradually above its edge. His curiosity was rewarded; this is what he saw:

Braddock Washington was standing there motionless, silhouetted against the gray sky without sound or sign of life. As the dawn came up out of the east, lending a gold green colour to the earth, it brought the solitary figure into insignificant contrast with the new day,

While John watched, his host remained for a few moments absorbed in some inscrutable contemplation; then he signalled to the two negroes who crouched at his feet to lift the burden which lay between them. As they struggled upright, the first yellow beam of the sun struck through the innumerable prisms of an immense and exquisitely chiselled diamond—and a white radiance was kindled that glowed upon the air like a fragment of the morning star. The bearers staggered beneath its weight for a moment—then their rippling muscles caught and hardened under the wet shine of the skins and the three figures were again motionless in their defiant impotency before the heavens.

After a while the white man lifted his head and slowly raised his arms in a gesture of attention, as one who would call a great crowd to hear—but there was no crowd, only the vast silence of the mountain and the sky, broken by faint bird voices down among the trees. The figure on the saddle of rock began to speak ponderously and with an inextinguishable pride.

“You—out there—!” he cried in a trembling voice.

“You—there—!” He paused, his arms still uplifted, his head held attentively as though he were expecting an answer. John strained his eyes to see whether there might be men coming down the mountain, but the mountain was bare of human life. There was only sky and a mocking flute of wind along the treetops. Could Washington be praying? For a moment John wondered. Then the illusion passed—there was something in the man’s whole attitude antithetical to prayer.

“Oh, you above there!”

The voice was become strong and confident. This was no forlorn supplication. If anything, there was in it a quality of monstrous condescension.

“You there—” Words, too quickly uttered to be understood, flowing one into the other .... John listened breathlessly, catching a phrase here and there, while the voice broke off, resumed, broke off again—now strong and argumentative, now coloured with a slow, puzzled impatience, Then a conviction commenced to dawn on the single listener, and as realisation crept over him a spray of quick blood rushed through his arteries. Braddock Washington was offering a bribe to God!

That was it—there was no doubt. The diamond in the arms of his slaves was some advance sample, a promise of more to follow.

That, John perceived after a time, was the thread running through his sentences. Prometheus Enriched was calling to witness forgotten sacrifices, forgotten rituals, prayers obsolete before the birth of Christ. For a while his discourse took the form of reminding God of this gift or that which Divinity had deigned to accept from men—great churches if he would rescue cities from the plague, gifts of myrrh and gold, of human lives and beautiful women and captive armies, of children and queens, of beasts of the forest and field, sheep and goats, harvests and cities, whole conquered lands that had been offered up in lust or blood for His appeasal, buying a meed’s worth of alleviation from the Divine wrath—and now he, Braddock Washington, Emperor of Diamonds, king and priest of the age of gold, arbiter of splendour and luxury, would offer up a treasure such as princes before him had never dreamed of, offer it up not in suppliance, but in pride.

He would give to God, he continued, getting down to specifications, the greatest diamond in the world. This diamond would be cut with many more thousand facets than there were leaves on a tree, and yet the whole diamond would be shaped with the perfection of a stone no bigger than a fly. Many men would work upon it for many years. It would be set in a great dome of beaten gold, wonderfully carved and equipped with gates of opal and crusted sapphire. In the middle would be hollowed out a chapel presided over by an altar of iridescent, decomposing, ever-changing radium which would burn out the eyes of any worshipper who lifted up his head from prayer—and on this altar there would be slain for the amusement of the Divine Benefactor any victim He should choose, even though it should be the greatest and most powerful man alive.

In return he asked only a simple thing, a thing that for God would be absurdly easy—only that matters should be as they were yesterday at this hour and that they should so remain. So very simple! Let but the heavens open, swallowing these men and their aeroplanes—and then close again. Let him have his slaves once more, restored to life and well.

There was no one else with whom he had ever needed: to treat or bargain.

He doubted only whether he had made his bribe big enough. God had His price, of course. God was made in man's image, so it had been said: He must have His price. And the price would be rare—no cathedral whose building consumed many years, no pyramid constructed by ten thousand workmen, would be like this cathedral, this pyramid.

He paused here. That was his proposition. Everything would be up to specifications, and there was nothing vulgar in his assertion that it would be cheap at the price. He implied that Providence could take it or leave it.

As he approached the end his sentences became broken, became short and uncertain, and his body seemed tense, seemed strained to catch the slightest pressure or whisper of life in the spaces around him. His hair had turned gradually white as he talked, and now he lifted his head high to the heavens like a prophet of old—magnificently mad.

Then, as John stared in giddy fascination, it seemed to him that a curious phenomenon took place somewhere around him. It was as though the sky had darkened for an instant, as though there had been a sudden murmur in a gust of wind, a sound of far-away trumpets, a sighing like the rustle of a great silken robe—for a time the whole of nature round about partook of this darkness; the birds' song ceased; the trees were still, and far over the mountain there was a mutter of dull, menacing thunder.

That was all. The wind died along the tall grasses of the valley. The dawn and the day resumed their place in a time, and the risen sun sent hot waves of yellow mist that made its path bright before it. The leaves laughed in the sun, and their laughter shook until each bough was like a girl's school in fairyland. God had refused to accept the bribe.

For another moment John, watched the triumph of the day. Then, turning, he saw a flutter of brown down by the lake, then another flutter, then another, like the dance of golden angels alighting from the clouds. The aeroplanes had come to earth.

John slid off the boulder and ran down the side of the mountain to the clump of trees, where the two girls were awake and waiting for him. Kismine sprang to her feet, the jewels in her pockets jingling, a question on her parted lips, but instinct told John that there was no time for words. They must get off the mountain without losing a moment. He seized a hand of each, and in silence they threaded the tree-trunks, washed with light now and with the rising mist. Behind them from the valley came no sound at all, except the complaint of the peacocks far away and the pleasant of morning.

When they had gone about half a mile, they avoided the park land and entered a narrow path that led over the next rise of ground. At the highest point of this they paused and turned

around. Their eyes rested upon the mountainside they had just left—oppressed by some dark sense of tragic impendency.

Clear against the sky a broken, white-haired man was slowly descending the steep slope, followed by two gigantic and emotionless negroes, who carried a burden between them which still flashed and glittered in the sun. Half-way down two other figures joined them—John could see that they were Mrs. Washington and her son, upon whose arm she leaned. The aviators had clambered from their machines to the sweeping lawn in front of the chateau, and with rifles in hand were starting up the diamond mountain in skirmishing formation.

But the little group of five which had formed farther up and was engrossing all the watchers' attention had stopped upon a ledge of rock. The negroes stooped and pulled up what appeared to be a trap-door in the side of the mountain. Into this they all disappeared, the white-haired man first, then his wife and son, finally the two negroes, the glittering tips of whose jewelled head-dresses caught the sun for a moment before the trap-door descended and engulfed them all.

Kismine clutched John's arm.

"Oh," she cried wildly, "where are they going? What are they going to do?"

"It must be some underground way of escape—"

A little scream from the two girls interrupted his sentence.

"Don't you see?" sobbed Kismine hysterically. "The mountain is wired!"

Even as she spoke John put up his hands to shield his sight. Before their eyes the whole surface of the mountain had changed suddenly to a dazzling burning yellow, which showed up through the jacket of turf as light shows through a human hand. For a moment the intolerable glow continued, and then like an extinguished filament it disappeared, revealing a black waste from which blue smoke arose slowly, carrying off with it what remained of vegetation and of human flesh. Of the aviators there was left neither blood nor bone—they were consumed as completely as the five souls who had gone inside.

Simultaneously, and with an immense concussion, the chateau literally threw itself into the air, bursting into flaming fragments as it rose, and then tumbling back upon itself in a smoking pile that lay projecting half into the water of the lake. There was no fire—what smoke there was drifted off mingling with the sunshine, and for a few minutes longer a powdery dust of marble drifted from the great featureless pile that had once been the house of jewels. There was no more sound and the three people were alone in the valley.

At sunset John and his two companions reached the huge cliff which had marked the boundaries of the Washington's dominion, and looking back found the valley tranquil and lovely in the dusk. They sat down to finish the food which Jasmine had brought with her in a basket,

"There!" she said, as she spread the table-cloth and put the sandwiches in a neat pile upon it. "Don't they look tempting? I always think that food tastes better outdoors."

"With that remark," remarked Kismine, "Jasmine enters the middle class."

"Now," said John eagerly, "turn out your pocket and let's see what jewels you brought along. If you made a good selection we three ought to live comfortably all the rest of our lives."

Obediently Kismine put her hand in her pocket and tossed two handfuls of glittering stones before him. "Not so bad," cried John enthusiastically. "They aren't very big, but—Hallo!" His expression changed as he held one of them up to the declining sun. "Why, these aren't diamonds! There's something the matter!

"By golly!" exclaimed Kismine, with a startled look. "What an idiot I am!"

"Why, these are rhinestones!" cried John.

"I know." She broke into a laugh. "I opened the wrong drawer. They belonged on the dress of a girl who visited Jasmine. I got her to give them to me in exchange for diamonds. I'd never seen anything but precious stones before."

"And this is what you brought?"

"I'm afraid so." She fingered the brilliants wistfully. "I think I like these better. I'm a little tired of diamonds."

"Very well," said John gloomily. "We'll have to live in Hades. And you will grow old telling incredulous women that you got the wrong drawer. Unfortunately, your father's bank-books were consumed with him."

"Well, what's the matter with Hades?"

"If I come home with a wife at my age my father is just as liable as not to cut me off with a hot coal, as they say down there."

Jasmine spoke up.

"I love washing," she said quietly. "I have always washed my own handkerchiefs. I'll take in laundry and support you both."

"Do they have washwomen in Hades?" asked Kismine innocently.

"Of course," answered John. "It's just like anywhere else."

"I thought—perhaps it was too hot to wear any clothes."

John laughed.

"Just try it!" he suggested. "They'll run you out before you're half started."



“Will father be there?” she asked.

John turned to her in astonishment.

“Your father is dead,” he replied sombrely. “Why should he go to Hades? You have it confused with another place that was abolished long ago.”

After supper they folded up the table-cloth and spread their blankets for the night.

“What a dream it was,” Kismine sighed, gazing up at the stars. “How strange it seems to be here with one dress and a penniless fiancée!

“Under the stars,” she repeated. “I never noticed the stars before. I always thought of them as great big diamonds that belonged to some one. Now they frighten me. They make me feel that it was all a dream, all my youth.”

“It was a dream,” said John quietly. “Everybody’s youth is a dream, a form of chemical madness.”

“How pleasant then to be insane!”

“So I’m told,” said John gloomily. “I don’t know any longer. At any rate, let us love for a while, for a year or so, you and me. That’s a form of divine drunkenness that we can all try. There are only diamonds in the whole world, diamonds and perhaps the shabby gift of disillusion. Well, I have that last and I will make the usual nothing of it.” He shivered. “Turn up your coat collar, little girl, the night’s full of chill and you’ll get pneumonia. His was a great sin who first invented consciousness. Let us lose it for a few hours.”

So wrapping himself in his blanket he fell off to sleep.

### **5.11.3 “Bernice Bobs Her Hair”**

#### **I**

After dark on Saturday night one could stand on the first tee of the golf-course and see the country-club windows as a yellow expanse over a very black and wavy ocean. The waves of this ocean, so to speak, were the heads of many curious caddies, a few of the more ingenious chauffeurs, the golf professional’s deaf sister—and there were usually several stray, diffident waves who might have rolled inside had they so desired. This was the gallery.

The balcony was inside. It consisted of the circle of wicker chairs that lined the wall of the combination clubroom and ballroom. At these Saturday-night dances it was largely feminine; a great babel of middle-aged ladies with sharp eyes and icy hearts behind lorgnettes and large bosoms. The main function of the balcony was critical, it occasionally showed grudging admiration, but never approval, for it is well known among ladies over thirty-five that when the younger set dance in the summer-time it is with the very worst intentions in the world, and if they

are not bombarded with stony eyes stray couples will dance weird barbaric interludes in the corners, and the more popular, more dangerous, girls will sometimes be kissed in the parked limousines of unsuspecting dowagers.

But, after all, this critical circle is not close enough to the stage to see the actors' faces and catch the subtler byplay. It can only frown and lean, ask questions and make satisfactory deductions from its set of postulates, such as the one which states that every young man with a large income leads the life of a hunted partridge. It never really appreciates the drama of the shifting, semi-cruel world of adolescence. No; boxes, orchestra-circle, principals, and chorus be represented by the medley of faces and voices that sway to the plaintive African rhythm of Dyer's dance orchestra.

From sixteen-year-old Otis Ormonde, who has two more years at Hill School, to G. Reece Stoddard, over whose bureau at home hangs a Harvard law diploma; from little Madeleine Hogue, whose hair still feels strange and uncomfortable on top of her head, to Bessie MacRae, who has been the life of the party a little too long—more than ten years—the medley is not only the centre of the stage but contains the only people capable of getting an unobstructed view of it.

With a flourish and a bang the music stops. The couples exchange artificial, effortless smiles, facetiously repeat "la-de-da-da dum-dum," and then the clatter of young feminine voices soars over the burst of clapping.

A few disappointed stags caught in midfloor as they had been about to cut in subsided listlessly back to the walls, because this was not like the riotous Christmas dances—these summer hops were considered just pleasantly warm and exciting, where even the younger marrieds rose and performed ancient waltzes and terrifying fox trots to the tolerant amusement of their younger brothers and sisters.

Warren McIntyre, who casually attended Yale, being one of the unfortunate stags, felt in his dinner-coat pocket for a cigarette and strolled out onto the wide, semidark veranda, where couples were scattered at tables, filling the lantern-hung night with vague words and hazy laughter. He nodded here and there at the less absorbed and as he passed each couple some half-forgotten fragment of a story played in his mind, for it was not a large city and every one was Who's Who to every one else's past. There, for example, were Jim Strain and Ethel Demorest, who had been privately engaged for three years. Every one knew that as soon as Jim managed to hold a job for more than two months she would marry him. Yet how bored they both looked, and how wearily Ethel regarded Jim sometimes, as if she wondered why she had trained the vines of her affection on such a wind-shaken poplar.

Warren was nineteen and rather pitying with those of his friends who hadn't gone East to college. But, like most boys, he bragged tremendously about the girls of his city when he was away from it. There was Genevieve Ormonde, who regularly made the rounds of dances, house-parties, and football games at Princeton, Yale, Williams, and Cornell; there was black-eyed Roberta Dillon, who was quite as famous to her own generation as Hiram Johnson or Ty Cobb; and, of course, there was Marjorie Harvey, who besides having a fairylike face and a dazzling, bewildering tongue was already justly celebrated for having turned five cart-wheels in succession during the last pump-and-slipper dance at New Haven.

Warren, who had grown up across the street from Marjorie, had long been "crazy about her." Sometimes she seemed to reciprocate his feeling with a faint gratitude, but she had tried him by her infallible test and informed him gravely that she did not love him. Her test was that when she was away from him she forgot him and had affairs with other boys. Warren found this discouraging, especially as Marjorie had been making little trips all summer, and for the first two or three days after each arrival home he saw great heaps of mail on the Harveys' hall table addressed to her in various masculine handwritings. To make matters worse, all during the month of August she had been visited by her cousin Bernice from Eau Claire, and it seemed impossible to see her alone. It was always necessary to hunt round and find some one to take care of Bernice. As August waned this was becoming more and more difficult.

Much as Warren worshipped Marjorie he had to admit that Cousin Bernice was sorta dopeless. She was pretty, with dark hair and high color, but she was no fun on a party. Every Saturday night he danced a long arduous duty dance with her to please Marjorie, but he had never been anything but bored in her company.

"Warren"—a soft voice at his elbow broke in upon his thoughts, and he turned to see Marjorie, flushed and radiant as usual. She laid a hand on his shoulder and a glow settled almost imperceptibly over him.

"Warren," she whispered "do something for me—dance with Bernice. She's been stuck with little Otis Ormonde for almost an hour."

Warren's glow faded.

"Why—sure," he answered half-heartedly.

"You don't mind, do you? I'll see that you don't get stuck."

"Sall right."

Marjorie smiled—that smile that was thanks enough.

"You're an angel, and I'm obliged loads."

With a sigh the angel glanced round the veranda, but Bernice and Otis were not in sight. He wandered back inside, and there in front of the women's dressing-room he found Otis in the centre of a group of young men who were convulsed with laughter. Otis was brandishing a piece of timber he had picked up, and discoursing volubly.

"She's gone in to fix her hair," he announced wildly. "I'm waiting to dance another hour with her."

Their laughter was renewed.

"Why don't some of you cut in?" cried Otis resentfully. "She likes more variety."

"Why, Otis," suggested a friend "you've just barely got used to her."

"Why the two-by-four, Otis?" inquired Warren, smiling.

"The two-by-four? Oh, this? This is a club. When she comes out I'll hit her on the head and knock her in again."

Warren collapsed on a settee and howled with glee.

"Never mind, Otis," he articulated finally. "I'm relieving you this time."

Otis simulated a sudden fainting attack and handed the stick to Warren.

"If you need it, old man," he said hoarsely.

No matter how beautiful or brilliant a girl may be, the reputation of not being frequently cut in on makes her position at a dance unfortunate. Perhaps boys prefer her company to that of the butterflies with whom they dance a dozen times, but youth in this jazz-nourished generation is temperamentally restless, and the idea of fox-trotting more than one full fox trot with the same girl is distasteful, not to say odious. When it comes to several dances and the intermissions between she can be quite sure that a young man, once relieved, will never tread on her wayward toes again.

Warren danced the next full dance with Bernice, and finally, thankful for the intermission, he led her to a table on the veranda. There was a moment's silence while she did unimpressive things with her fan.

"It's hotter here than in Eau Claire," she said.

Warren stifled a sigh and nodded. It might be for all he knew or cared. He wondered idly whether she was a poor conversationalist because she got no attention or got no attention because she was a poor conversationalist.

"You going to be here much longer?" he asked and then turned rather red. She might suspect his reasons for asking.

"Another week," she answered, and stared at him as if to lunge at his next remark when it left his lips.

Warren fidgeted. Then with a sudden charitable impulse he decided to try part of his line on her. He turned and looked at her eyes.

"You've got an awfully kissable mouth," he began quietly.

This was a remark that he sometimes made to girls at college proms when they were talking in just such half dark as this. Bernice distinctly jumped. She turned an ungraceful red and became clumsy with her fan. No one had ever made such a remark to her before.

"Fresh!"—the word had slipped out before she realized it, and she bit her lip. Too late she decided to be amused, and offered him a flustered smile.

Warren was annoyed. Though not accustomed to have that remark taken seriously, still it usually provoked a laugh or a paragraph of sentimental banter. And he hated to be called fresh, except in a joking way. His charitable impulse died and he switched the topic.

"Jim Strain and Ethel Demorest sitting out as usual," he commented.

This was more in Bernice's line, but a faint regret mingled with her relief as the subject changed. Men did not talk to her about kissable mouths, but she knew that they talked in some such way to other girls.

"Oh, yes," she said, and laughed. "I hear they've been mooning around for years without a red penny. Isn't it silly?"

Warren's disgust increased. Jim Strain was a close friend of his brother's, and anyway he considered it bad form to sneer at people for not having money. But Bernice had had no intention of sneering. She was merely nervous.

## II

When Marjorie and Bernice reached home at half after midnight they said good night at the top of the stairs. Though cousins, they were not intimates. As a matter of fact Marjorie had no female intimates—she considered girls stupid. Bernice on the contrary all through this parent-arranged visit had rather longed to exchange those confidences flavored with giggles and tears that she considered an indispensable factor in all feminine intercourse. But in this respect she found Marjorie rather cold; felt somehow the same difficulty in talking to her that she had in talking to men. Marjorie never giggled, was never frightened, seldom embarrassed, and in fact had very few of the qualities which Bernice considered appropriately and blessedly feminine.

As Bernice busied herself with tooth-brush and paste this night she wondered for the hundredth time why she never had any attention when she was away from home. That her family were the wealthiest in Eau Claire; that her mother entertained tremendously, gave little dinners for her daughter before all dances and bought her a car of her own to drive round in, never

occurred to her as factors in her home-town social success. Like most girls she had been brought up on the warm milk prepared by Annie Fellows Johnston and on novels in which the female was beloved because of certain mysterious womanly qualities, always mentioned but never displayed.

Bernice felt a vague pain that she was not at present engaged in being popular. She did not know that had it not been for Marjorie's campaigning she would have danced the entire evening with one man; but she knew that even in Eau Claire other girls with less position and less pulchritude were given a much bigger rush. She attributed this to something subtly unscrupulous in those girls. It had never worried her, and if it had her mother would have assured her that the other girls cheapened themselves and that men really respected girls like Bernice.

She turned out the light in her bathroom, and on an impulse decided to go in and chat for a moment with her aunt Josephine, whose light was still on. Her soft slippers bore her noiselessly down the carpeted hall, but hearing voices inside she stopped near the partly opened door. Then she caught her own name, and without any definite intention of eavesdropping lingered—and the thread of the conversation going on inside pierced her consciousness sharply as if it had been drawn through with a needle.

"She's absolutely hopeless!" It was Marjorie's voice. "Oh, I know what you're going to say! So many people have told you how pretty and sweet she is, and how she can cook! What of it? She has a bum time. Men don't like her."

"What's a little cheap popularity?"

Mrs. Harvey sounded annoyed.

"It's everything when you're eighteen," said Marjorie emphatically. "I've done my best. I've been polite and I've made men dance with her, but they just won't stand being bored. When I think of that gorgeous coloring wasted on such a ninny, and think what Martha Carey could do with it—oh!"

"There's no courtesy these days."

Mrs. Harvey's voice implied that modern situations were too much for her. When she was a girl all young ladies who belonged to nice families had glorious times.

"Well," said Marjorie, "no girl can permanently bolster up a lame-duck visitor, because these days it's every girl for herself. I've even tried to drop hints about clothes and things, and she's been furious—given me the funniest looks. She's sensitive enough to know she's not getting away with much, but I'll bet she consoles herself by thinking that she's very virtuous and that I'm too gay and fickle and will come to a bad end. All unpopular girls think that way. Sour grapes! Sarah Hopkins refers to Genevieve and Roberta and me as gardenia girls! I'll bet she'd give ten

years of her life and her European education to be a gardenia girl and have three or four men in love with her and be cut in on every few feet at dances.”

“It seems to me,” interrupted Mrs. Harvey rather wearily, “that you ought to be able to do something for Bernice. I know she’s not very vivacious.”

Marjorie groaned.

“Vivacious! Good grief! I’ve never heard her say anything to a boy except that it’s hot or the floor’s crowded or that she’s going to school in New York next year. Sometimes she asks them what kind of car they have and tells them the kind she has. Thrilling!”

There was a short silence and then Mrs. Harvey took up her refrain:

“All I know is that other girls not half so sweet and attractive get partners. Martha Carey, for instance, is stout and loud, and her mother is distinctly common. Roberta Dillon is so thin this year that she looks as though Arizona were the place for her. She’s dancing herself to death.”

“But, mother,” objected Marjorie impatiently, “Martha is cheerful and awfully witty and an awfully slick girl, and Roberta’s a marvellous dancer. She’s been popular for ages!”

Mrs. Harvey yawned.

“I think it’s that crazy Indian blood in Bernice,” continued Marjorie. “Maybe she’s a reversion to type. Indian women all just sat round and never said anything.”

“Go to bed, you silly child,” laughed Mrs. Harvey. “I wouldn’t have told you that if I’d thought you were going to remember it. And I think most of your ideas are perfectly idiotic,” she finished sleepily.

There was another silence, while Marjorie considered whether or not convincing her mother was worth the trouble. People over forty can seldom be permanently convinced of anything. At eighteen our convictions are hills from which we look; at forty-five they are caves in which we hide.

Having decided this, Marjorie said good night. When she came out into the hall it was quite empty.

### III

While Marjorie was breakfasting late next day Bernice came into the room with a rather formal good morning, sat down opposite, stared intently over and slightly moistened her lips.

“What’s on your mind?” inquired Marjorie, rather puzzled.

Bernice paused before she threw her hand-grenade.

“I heard what you said about me to your mother last night.”

Marjorie was startled, but she showed only a faintly heightened color and her voice was quite even when she spoke.

“Where were you?”

“In the hall. I didn’t mean to listen—at first.”

After an involuntary look of contempt Marjorie dropped her eyes and became very interested in balancing a stray corn-flake on her finger.

“I guess I’d better go back to Eau Claire—if I’m such a nuisance.” Bernice’s lower lip was trembling violently and she continued on a wavering note: “I’ve tried to be nice, and—and I’ve been first neglected and then insulted. No one ever visited me and got such treatment.”

Marjorie was silent.

“But I’m in the way, I see. I’m a drag on you. Your friends don’t like me.” She paused, and then remembered another one of her grievances. “Of course I was furious last week when you tried to hint to me that that dress was unbecoming. Don’t you think I know how to dress myself?”

“No,” murmured less than half-aloud.

“What?”

“I didn’t hint anything,” said Marjorie succinctly. “I said, as I remember, that it was better to wear a becoming dress three times straight than to alternate it with two frights.”

“Do you think that was a very nice thing to say?”

“I wasn’t trying to be nice.” Then after a pause: “When do you want to go?”

Bernice drew in her breath sharply.

“Oh!” It was a little half-cry.

Marjorie looked up in surprise.

“Didn’t you say you were going?”

“Yes, but—”

“Oh, you were only bluffing!”

They stared at each other across the breakfast-table for a moment. Misty waves were passing before Bernice’s eyes, while Marjorie’s face wore that rather hard expression that she used when slightly intoxicated undergraduate’s were making love to her.

“So you were bluffing,” she repeated as if it were what she might have expected.

Bernice admitted it by bursting into tears. Marjorie’s eyes showed boredom.

“You’re my cousin,” sobbed Bernice. “I’m v-v-visiting you. I was to stay a month, and if I go home my mother will know and she’ll wah-wonder—”

Marjorie waited until the shower of broken words collapsed into little sniffles.



“I’ll give you my month’s allowance,” she said coldly, “and you can spend this last week anywhere you want. There’s a very nice hotel——”

Bernice’s sobs rose to a flute note, and rising of a sudden she fled from the room.

An hour later, while Marjorie was in the library absorbed in composing one of those non-committal marvelously elusive letters that only a young girl can write, Bernice reappeared, very red-eyed, and consciously calm. She cast no glance at Marjorie but took a book at random from the shelf and sat down as if to read. Marjorie seemed absorbed in her letter and continued writing. When the clock showed noon Bernice closed her book with a snap.

“I suppose I’d better get my railroad ticket.”

This was not the beginning of the speech she had rehearsed up-stairs, but as Marjorie was not getting her cues—wasn’t urging her to be reasonable; it’s an a mistake—it was the best opening she could muster.

“Just wait till I finish this letter,” said Marjorie without looking round. “I want to get it off in the next mail.”

After another minute, during which her pen scratched busily, she turned round and relaxed with an air of “at your service.” Again Bernice had to speak.

“Do you want me to go home?”

“Well,” said Marjorie, considering, “I suppose if you’re not having a good time you’d better go. No use being miserable.”

“Don’t you think common kindness——”

“Oh, please don’t quote ‘Little Women’!” cried Marjorie impatiently. “That’s out of style.”

“You think so?”

“Heavens, yes! What modern girl could live like those inane females?”

“They were the models for our mothers.”

Marjorie laughed.

“Yes, they were—not! Besides, our mothers were all very well in their way, but they know very little about their daughters’ problems.”

Bernice drew herself up.

“Please don’t talk about my mother.”

Marjorie laughed.

“I don’t think I mentioned her.”

Bernice felt that she was being led away from her subject.

“Do you think you’ve treated me very well?”

“I’ve done my best. You’re rather hard material to work with.”

The lids of Bernice's eyes reddened.

"I think you're hard and selfish, and you haven't a feminine quality in you."

"Oh, my Lord!" cried Marjorie in desperation "You little nut! Girls like you are responsible for all the tiresome colorless marriages; all those ghastly inefficiencies that pass as feminine qualities. What a blow it must be when a man with imagination marries the beautiful bundle of clothes that he's been building ideals round, and finds that she's just a weak, whining, cowardly mass of affectations!"

Bernice's mouth had slipped half open.

"The womanly woman!" continued Marjorie. "Her whole early life is occupied in whining criticisms of girls like me who really do have a good time."

Bernice's jaw descended farther as Marjorie's voice rose.

"There's some excuse for an ugly girl whining. If I'd been irretrievably ugly I'd never have forgiven my parents for bringing me into the world. But you're starting life without any handicap—" Marjorie's little fist clinched, "If you expect me to weep with you you'll be disappointed. Go or stay, just as you like." And picking up her letters she left the room.

Bernice claimed a headache and failed to appear at luncheon. They had a *matinée* date for the afternoon, but the headache persisting, Marjorie made explanation to a not very downcast boy. But when she returned late in the afternoon she found Bernice with a strangely set face waiting for her in her bedroom.

"I've decided," began Bernice without preliminaries, "that maybe you're right about things—possibly not. But if you'll tell me why your friends aren't—aren't interested in me I'll see if I can do what you want me to."

Marjorie was at the mirror shaking down her hair.

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes."

"Without reservations? Will you do exactly what I say?"

"Well, I——"

"Well nothing! Will you do exactly as I say?"

"If they're sensible things."

"They're not! You're no case for sensible things."

"Are you going to make—to recommend——"

"Yes, everything. If I tell you to take boxing-lessons you'll have to do it. Write home and tell your mother you're going to stay another two weeks."

"If you'll tell me——"

“All right—I’ll just give you a few examples now. First you have no ease of manner. Why? Because you’re never sure about your personal appearance. When a girl feels that she’s perfectly groomed and dressed she can forget that part of her. That’s charm. The more parts of yourself you can afford to forget the more charm you have.”

“Don’t I look all right?”

“No; for instance you never take care of your eyebrows. They’re black and lustrous, but by leaving them straggly they’re a blemish. They’d be beautiful if you’d take care of them in one-tenth the time you take doing nothing. You’re going to brush them so that they’ll grow straight.”

Bernice raised the brows in question.

“Do you mean to say that men notice eyebrows?”

“Yes—subconsciously. And when you go home you ought to have your teeth straightened a little. It’s almost imperceptible, still——”

“But I thought,” interrupted Bernice in bewilderment, “that you despised little dainty feminine things like that.”

“I hate dainty minds,” answered Marjorie. “But a girl has to be dainty in person. If she looks like a million dollars she can talk about Russia, ping-pong, or the League of Nations and get away with it.”

“What else?”

“Oh, I’m just beginning! There’s your dancing.”

“Don’t I dance all right?”

“No, you don’t—you lean on a man; yes, you do—ever so slightly. I noticed it when we were dancing together yesterday. And you dance standing up straight instead of bending over a little. Probably some old lady on the side-line once told you that you looked so dignified that way. But except with a very small girl it’s much harder on the man, and he’s the one that counts.”

“Go on.” Bernice’s brain was reeling.

“Well, you’ve got to learn to be nice to men who are sad birds. You look as if you’d been insulted whenever you’re thrown with any except the most popular boys. Why, Bernice, I’m cut in on every few feet—and who does most of it? Why, those very sad birds. No girl can afford to neglect them. They’re the big part of any crowd. Young boys too shy to talk are the very best conversational practice. Clumsy boys are the best dancing practice. If you can follow them and yet look graceful you can follow a baby tank across a barb-wire sky-scraper.”

Bernice sighed profoundly, but Marjorie was not through.

“If you go to a dance and really amuse, say, three sad birds that dance with you; if you talk so well to them that they forget they’re stuck with you, you’ve done something. They’ll come back

next time, and gradually so many sad birds will dance with you that the attractive boys will see there's no danger of being stuck—then they'll dance with you."

"Yes," agreed Bernice faintly. "I think I begin to see."

"And finally," concluded Marjorie, "poise and charm will just come. You'll wake up some morning knowing you've attained it and men will know it too."

Bernice rose.

"It's been awfully kind of you—but nobody's ever talked to me like this before, and I feel sort of startled."

Marjorie made no answer but gazed pensively at her own image in the mirror.

"You're a peach to help me," continued Bernice.

Still Marjorie did not answer, and Bernice thought she had seemed too grateful.

"I know you don't like sentiment," she said timidly.

Marjorie turned to her quickly.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking about that. I was considering whether we hadn't better bob your hair."

Bernice collapsed backward upon the bed.

#### IV

On the following Wednesday evening there was a dinner-dance at the country club. When the guests strolled in Bernice found her place-card with a slight feeling of irritation. Though at her right sat G. Reece Stoddard, a most desirable and distinguished young bachelor, the all-important left held only Charley Paulson. Charley lacked height, beauty, and social shrewdness, and in her new enlightenment Bernice decided that his only qualification to be her partner was that he had never been stuck with her. But this feeling of irritation left with the last of the soup-plates, and Marjorie's specific instruction came to her. Swallowing her pride she turned to Charley Paulson and plunged.

"Do you think I ought to bob my hair, Mr. Charley Paulson?"

Charley looked up in surprise.

"Why?"

"Because I'm considering it. It's such a sure and easy way of attracting attention."

Charley smiled pleasantly. He could not know this had been rehearsed. He replied that he didn't know much about bobbed hair. But Bernice was there to tell him.

"I want to be a society vampire, you see," she announced coolly, and went on to inform him that bobbed hair was the necessary prelude. She added that she wanted to ask his advice, because she had heard he was so critical about girls.

Charley, who knew as much about the psychology of women as he did of the mental states of Buddhist contemplatives, felt vaguely flattered.

"So I've decided," she continued, her voice rising slightly, "that early next week I'm going down to the Sevier Hotel barber-shop, sit in the first chair, and get my hair bobbed." She faltered noticing that the people near her had paused in their conversation and were listening; but after a confused second Marjorie's coaching told, and she finished her paragraph to the vicinity at large. "Of course I'm charging admission, but if you'll all come down and encourage me I'll issue passes for the inside seats."

There was a ripple of appreciative laughter, and under cover of it G. Reece Stoddard leaned over quickly and said close to her ear: "I'll take a box right now."

She met his eyes and smiled as if he had said something surprisingly brilliant.

"Do you believe in bobbed hair?" asked G. Reece in the same undertone.

"I think it's unmoral," affirmed Bernice gravely. "But, of course, you've either got to amuse people or feed 'em or shock 'em." Marjorie had culled this from Oscar Wilde. It was greeted with a ripple of laughter from the men and a series of quick, intent looks from the girls. And then as though she had said nothing of wit or moment Bernice turned again to Charley and spoke confidentially in his ear.

"I want to ask you your opinion of several people. I imagine you're a wonderful judge of character."

Charley thrilled faintly—paid her a subtle compliment by overturning her water.

Two hours later, while Warren McIntyre was standing passively in the stag line abstractedly watching the dancers and wondering whither and with whom Marjorie had disappeared, an unrelated perception began to creep slowly upon him—a perception that Bernice, cousin to Marjorie, had been cut in on several times in the past five minutes. He closed his eyes, opened them and looked again. Several minutes back she had been dancing with a visiting boy, a matter easily accounted for; a visiting boy would know no better. But now she was dancing with some one else, and there was Charley Paulson headed for her with enthusiastic determination in his eye. Funny—Charley seldom danced with more than three girls an evening.

Warren was distinctly surprised when—the exchange having been effected—the man relieved proved to be none other than G. Reece Stoddard himself. And G. Reece seemed not at all jubilant at being relieved. Next time Bernice danced near, Warren regarded her intently. Yes, she

was pretty, distinctly pretty; and to-night her face seemed really vivacious. She had that look that no woman, however histrionically proficient, can successfully counterfeit—she looked as if she were having a good time. He liked the way she had her hair arranged, wondered if it was brilliantine that made it glisten so. And that dress was becoming—a dark red that set off her shadowy eyes and high coloring. He remembered that he had thought her pretty when she first came to town, before he had realized that she was dull. Too bad she was dull—dull girls unbearable—certainly pretty though.

His thoughts zigzagged back to Marjorie. This disappearance would be like other disappearances. When she reappeared he would demand where she had been—would be told emphatically that it was none of his business. What a pity she was so sure of him! She basked in the knowledge that no other girl in town interested him; she defied him to fall in love with Genevieve or Roberta.

Warren sighed. The way to Marjorie's affections was a labyrinth indeed. He looked up. Bernice was again dancing with the visiting boy. Half unconsciously he took a step out from the stag line in her direction, and hesitated. Then he said to himself that it was charity. He walked toward her—collided suddenly with G. Reece Stoddard.

"Pardon me," said Warren.

But G. Reece had not stopped to apologize. He had again cut in on Bernice.

That night at one o'clock Marjorie, with one hand on the electric-light switch in the hall, turned to take a last look at Bernice's sparkling eyes.

"So it worked?"

"Oh, Marjorie, yes!" cried Bernice.

"I saw you were having a gay time."

"I did! The only trouble was that about midnight I ran short of talk. I had to repeat myself—with different men of course. I hope they won't compare notes."

"Men don't," said Marjorie, yawning, "and it wouldn't matter if they did—they'd think you were even trickier."

She snapped out the light, and as they started up the stairs Bernice grasped the banister thankfully. For the first time in her life she had been danced tired.

"You see," said Marjorie at the top of the stairs, "one man sees another man cut in and he thinks there must be something there. Well, we'll fix up some new stuff to-morrow. Good night."

"Good night."

As Bernice took down her hair she passed the evening before her in review. She had followed instructions exactly. Even when Charley Paulson cut in for the eighth time she had

simulated delight and had apparently been both interested and flattered. She had not talked about the weather or Eau Claire or automobiles or her school, but had confined her conversation to me, you, and us.

But a few minutes before she fell asleep a rebellious thought was churning drowsily in her brain—after all, it was she who had done it. Marjorie, to be sure, had given her her conversation, but then Marjorie got much of her conversation out of things she read. Bernice had bought the red dress, though she had never valued it highly before Marjorie dug it out of her trunk—and her own voice had said the words, her own lips had smiled, her own feet had danced. Marjorie nice girl—vain, though—nice evening—nice boys—like Warren—Warren—Warren—what’s his name—Warren——

She fell asleep.

## V

To Bernice the next week was a revelation. With the feeling that people really enjoyed looking at her and listening to her came the foundation of self-confidence. Of course there were numerous mistakes at first. She did not know, for instance, that Draycott Deyo was studying for the ministry; she was unaware that he had cut in on her because he thought she was a quiet, reserved girl. Had she known these things she would not have treated him to the line which began “Hello, Shell Shock!” and continued with the bathtub story—“It takes a frightful lot of energy to fix my hair in the summer—there’s so much of it—so I always fix it first and powder my face and put on my hat; then I get into the bathtub, and dress afterward. Don’t you think that’s the best plan?”

Though Draycott Deyo was in the throes of difficulties concerning baptism by immersion and might possibly have seen a connection, it must be admitted that he did not. He considered feminine bathing an immoral subject, and gave her some of his ideas on the depravity of modern society.

But to offset that unfortunate occurrence Bernice had several signal successes to her credit. Little Otis Ormonde pleaded off from a trip East and elected instead to follow her with a puppylike devotion, to the amusement of his crowd and to the irritation of G. Reece Stoddard, several of whose afternoon calls Otis completely ruined by the disgusting tenderness of the glances he bent on Bernice. He even told her the story of the two-by-four and the dressing-room to show her how frightfully mistaken he and every one else had been in their first judgment of her. Bernice laughed off that incident with a slight sinking sensation.

Of all Bernice's conversation perhaps the best known and most universally approved was the line about the bobbing of her hair.

"Oh, Bernice, when you goin' to get the hair bobbed?"

"Day after to-morrow maybe," she would reply, laughing. "Will you come and see me? Because I'm counting on you, you know."

"Will we? You know! But you better hurry up."

Bernice, whose tonsorial intentions were strictly dishonorable, would laugh again.

"Pretty soon now. You'd be surprised."

But perhaps the most significant symbol of her success was the gray car of the hypercritical Warren McIntyre, parked daily in front of the Harvey house. At first the parlor-maid was distinctly startled when he asked for Bernice instead of Marjorie; after a week of it she told the cook that Miss Bernice had gotta holda Miss Marjorie's best fella.

And Miss Bernice had. Perhaps it began with Warren's desire to rouse jealousy in Marjorie; perhaps it was the familiar though unrecognized strain of Marjorie in Bernice's conversation; perhaps it was both of these and something of sincere attraction besides. But somehow the collective mind of the younger set knew within a week that Marjorie's most reliable beau had made an amazing face-about and was giving an indisputable rush to Marjorie's guest. The question of the moment was how Marjorie would take it. Warren called Bernice on the 'phone twice a day, sent her notes, and they were frequently seen together in his roadster, obviously engrossed in one of those tense, significant conversations as to whether or not he was sincere.

Marjorie on being twitted only laughed. She said she was mighty glad that Warren had at last found some one who appreciated him. So the younger set laughed, too, and guessed that Marjorie didn't care and let it go at that.

One afternoon when there were only three days left of her visit Bernice was waiting in the hall for Warren, with whom she was going to a bridge party. She was in rather a blissful mood, and when Marjorie—also bound for the party—appeared beside her and began casually to adjust her hat in the mirror, Bernice was utterly unprepared for anything in the nature of a clash. Marjorie did her work very coldly and succinctly in three sentences.

"You may as well get Warren out of your head," she said coldly.

"What?" Bernice was utterly astounded.

"You may as well stop making a fool of yourself over Warren McIntyre. He doesn't care a snap of his fingers about you."



For a tense moment they regarded each other—Marjorie scornful, aloof; Bernice astounded, half-angry, half-afraid. Then two cars drove up in front of the house and there was a riotous honking. Both of them gasped faintly, turned, and side by side hurried out.

All through the bridge party Bernice strove in vain to master a rising uneasiness. She had offended Marjorie, the sphinx of sphinxes. With the most wholesome and innocent intentions in the world she had stolen Marjorie's property. She felt suddenly and horribly guilty. After the bridge game, when they sat in an informal circle and the conversation became general, the storm gradually broke. Little Otis Ormonde inadvertently precipitated it.

"When you going back to kindergarten, Otis?" some one had asked.

"Me? Day Bernice gets her hair bobbed."

"Then your education's over," said Marjorie quickly. "That's only a bluff of hers. I should think you'd have realized."

"That a fact?" demanded Otis, giving Bernice a reproachful glance.

Bernice's ears burned as she tried to think up an effectual come-back. In the face of this direct attack her imagination was paralyzed.

"There's a lot of bluffs in the world," continued Marjorie quite pleasantly. "I should think you'd be young enough to know that, Otis."

"Well," said Otis, "maybe so. But gee! With a line like Bernice's——"

"Really?" yawned Marjorie. "What's her latest bon mot?"

No one seemed to know. In fact, Bernice, having trifled with her muse's beau, had said nothing memorable of late.

"Was that really all a line?" asked Roberta curiously.

Bernice hesitated. She felt that wit in some form was demanded of her, but under her cousin's suddenly frigid eyes she was completely incapacitated.

"I don't know," she stalled.

"Splush!" said Marjorie. "Admit it!"

Bernice saw that Warren's eyes had left a ukulele he had been tinkering with and were fixed on her questioningly.

"Oh, I don't know!" she repeated steadily. Her cheeks were glowing.

"Splush!" remarked Marjorie again.

"Come through, Bernice," urged Otis. "Tell her where to get off." Bernice looked round again—she seemed unable to get away from Warren's eyes.

"I like bobbed hair," she said hurriedly, as if he had asked her a question, "and I intend to bob mine."

“When?” demanded Marjorie.

“Any time.”

“No time like the present,” suggested Roberta.

Otis jumped to his feet.

“Good stuff!” he cried. “We’ll have a summer bobbing party. Sevier Hotel barber-shop, I think you said.”

In an instant all were on their feet. Bernice’s heart throbbed violently.

“What?” she gasped.

Out of the group came Marjorie’s voice, very clear and contemptuous.

“Don’t worry—she’ll back out!”

“Come on, Bernice!” cried Otis, starting toward the door.

Four eyes—Warren’s and Marjorie’s—stared at her, challenged her, defied her. For another second she wavered wildly.

“All right,” she said swiftly “I don’t care if I do.”

An eternity of minutes later, riding down-town through the late afternoon beside Warren, the others following in Roberta’s car close behind, Bernice had all the sensations of Marie Antoinette bound for the guillotine in a tumbrel. Vaguely she wondered why she did not cry out that it was all a mistake. It was all she could do to keep from clutching her hair with both hands to protect it from the suddenly hostile world. Yet she did neither. Even the thought of her mother was no deterrent now. This was the test supreme of her sportsmanship; her right to walk unchallenged in the starry heaven of popular girls.

Warren was moodily silent, and when they came to the hotel he drew up at the curb and nodded to Bernice to precede him out. Roberta’s car emptied a laughing crowd into the shop, which presented two bold plate-glass windows to the street.

Bernice stood on the curb and looked at the sign, Sevier Barber-Shop. It was a guillotine indeed, and the hangman was the first barber, who, attired in a white coat and smoking a cigarette, leaned nonchalantly against the first chair. He must have heard of her; he must have been waiting all week, smoking eternal cigarettes beside that portentous, too-often-mentioned first chair. Would they blind-fold her? No, but they would tie a white cloth round her neck lest any of her blood—nonsense—hair—should get on her clothes.

“All right, Bernice,” said Warren quickly.

With her chin in the air she crossed the sidewalk, pushed open the swinging screen-door, and giving not a glance to the uproarious, riotous row that occupied the waiting bench, went up to the fat barber.

“I want you to bob my hair.”

The first barber’s mouth slid somewhat open. His cigarette dropped to the floor.

“Huh?”

“My hair—bob it!”

Refusing further preliminaries, Bernice took her seat on high. A man in the chair next to her turned on his side and gave her a glance, half lather, half amazement. One barber started and spoiled little Willy Schuneman’s monthly haircut. Mr. O’Reilly in the last chair grunted and swore musically in ancient Gaelic as a razor bit into his cheek. Two bootblacks became wide-eyed and rushed for her feet. No, Bernice didn’t care for a shine.

Outside a passer-by stopped and stared; a couple joined him; half a dozen small boys’ noses sprang into life, flattened against the glass; and snatches of conversation borne on the summer breeze drifted in through the screen-door.

“Lookada long hair on a kid!”

“Where’d yuh get ‘at stuff? ‘At’s a bearded lady he just finished shavin’.”

But Bernice saw nothing, heard nothing. Her only living sense told her that this man in the white coat had removed one tortoise-shell comb and then another; that his fingers were fumbling clumsily with unfamiliar hairpins; that this hair, this wonderful hair of hers, was going—she would never again feel its long voluptuous pull as it hung in a dark-brown glory down her back. For a second she was near breaking down, and then the picture before her swam mechanically into her vision—Marjorie’s mouth curling in a faint ironic smile as if to say:

“Give up and get down! You tried to buck me and I called your bluff. You see you haven’t got a prayer.”

And some last energy rose up in Bernice, for she clinched her hands under the white cloth, and there was a curious narrowing of her eyes that Marjorie remarked on to some one long afterward.

Twenty minutes later the barber swung her round to face the mirror, and she flinched at the full extent of the damage that had been wrought. Her hair was not curls and now it lay in lank lifeless blocks on both sides of her suddenly pale face. It was ugly as sin—she had known it would be ugly as sin. Her face’s chief charm had been a Madonna-like simplicity. Now that was gone and she was—well frightfully mediocre—not stagy; only ridiculous, like a Greenwich Villager who had left her spectacles at home.

As she climbed down from the chair she tried to smile—failed miserably. She saw two of the girls exchange glances; noticed Marjorie’s mouth curved in attenuated mockery—and that Warren’s eyes were suddenly very cold.

"You see,"—her words fell into an awkward pause—"I've done it."

"Yes, you've—done it," admitted Warren.

"Do you like it?"

There was a half-hearted "Sure" from two or three voices, another awkward pause, and then Marjorie turned swiftly and with serpentlike intensity to Warren.

"Would you mind running me down to the cleaners?" she asked. "I've simply got to get a dress there before supper. Roberta's driving right home and she can take the others."

Warren stared abstractedly at some infinite speck out the window. Then for an instant his eyes rested coldly on Bernice before they turned to Marjorie.

"Be glad to," he said slowly.

## VI

Bernice did not fully realize the outrageous trap that had been set for her until she met her aunt's amazed glance just before dinner.

"Why Bernice!"

"I've bobbed it, Aunt Josephine."

"Why, child!"

"Do you like it?"

"Why Bernice!"

"I suppose I've shocked you."

"No, but what'll Mrs. Deyo think tomorrow night? Bernice, you should have waited until after the Deyo's dance—you should have waited if you wanted to do that."

"It was sudden, Aunt Josephine. Anyway, why does it matter to Mrs. Deyo particularly?"

"Why child," cried Mrs. Harvey, "in her paper on 'The Foibles of the Younger Generation' that she read at the last meeting of the Thursday Club she devoted fifteen minutes to bobbed hair. It's her pet abomination. And the dance is for you and Marjorie!"

"I'm sorry."

"Oh, Bernice, what'll your mother say? She'll think I let you do it."

"I'm sorry."

Dinner was an agony. She had made a hasty attempt with a curling-iron, and burned her finger and much hair. She could see that her aunt was both worried and grieved, and her uncle kept saying, "Well, I'll be darned!" over and over in a hurt and faintly hostile tone. And Marjorie sat very quietly, intrenched behind a faint smile, a faintly mocking smile.

Somehow she got through the evening. Three boy's called; Marjorie disappeared with one of them, and Bernice made a listless unsuccessful attempt to entertain the two others—sighed thankfully as she climbed the stairs to her room at half past ten. What a day!

When she had undressed for the night the door opened and Marjorie came in.

"Bernice," she said "I'm awfully sorry about the Deyo dance. I'll give you my word of honor I'd forgotten all about it."

"Sall right," said Bernice shortly. Standing before the mirror she passed her comb slowly through her short hair.

"I'll take you down-town to-morrow," continued Marjorie, "and the hairdresser'll fix it so you'll look slick. I didn't imagine you'd go through with it. I'm really mighty sorry."

"Oh, 'sall right!"

"Still it's your last night, so I suppose it won't matter much."

Then Bernice winced as Marjorie tossed her own hair over her shoulders and began to twist it slowly into two long blond braids until in her cream-colored negligée she looked like a delicate painting of some Saxon princess. Fascinated, Bernice watched the braids grow. Heavy and luxurious they were moving under the supple fingers like restive snakes—and to Bernice remained this relic and the curling-iron and a to-morrow full of eyes. She could see G. Reece Stoddard, who liked her, assuming his Harvard manner and telling his dinner partner that Bernice shouldn't have been allowed to go to the movies so much; she could see Draycott Deyo exchanging glances with his mother and then being conscientiously charitable to her. But then perhaps by to-morrow Mrs. Deyo would have heard the news; would send round an icy little note requesting that she fail to appear—and behind her back they would all laugh and know that Marjorie had made a fool of her; that her chance at beauty had been sacrificed to the jealous whim of a selfish girl. She sat down suddenly before the mirror, biting the inside of her cheek.

"I like it," she said with an effort. "I think it'll be becoming."

Marjorie smiled.

"It looks all right. For heaven's sake, don't let it worry you!"

"I won't."

"Good night Bernice."

But as the door closed something snapped within Bernice. She sprang dynamically to her feet, clinching her hands, then swiftly and noiseless crossed over to her bed and from underneath it dragged out her suitcase. Into it she tossed toilet articles and a change of clothing, Then she turned to her trunk and quickly dumped in two drawerfulls of lingerie and stammer dresses. She moved quietly, but deadly efficiency, and in three-quarters of an hour her trunk was locked and

strapped and she was fully dressed in a becoming new travelling suit that Marjorie had helped her pick out.

Sitting down at her desk she wrote a short note to Mrs. Harvey, in which she briefly outlined her reasons for going. She sealed it, addressed it, and laid it on her pillow. She glanced at her watch. The train left at one, and she knew that if she walked down to the Marlborough Hotel two blocks away she could easily get a taxicab.

Suddenly she drew in her breath sharply and an expression flashed into her eyes that a practiced character reader might have connected vaguely with the set look she had worn in the barber's chair—somehow a development of it. It was quite a new look for Bernice—and it carried consequences.

She went stealthily to the bureau, picked up an article that lay there, and turning out all the lights stood quietly until her eyes became accustomed to the darkness. Softly she pushed open the door to Marjorie's room. She heard the quiet, even breathing of an untroubled conscience asleep.

She was by the bedside now, very deliberate and calm. She acted swiftly. Bending over she found one of the braids of Marjorie's hair, followed it up with her hand to the point nearest the head, and then holding it a little slack so that the sleeper would feel no pull, she reached down with the shears and severed it. With the pigtail in her hand she held her breath. Marjorie had muttered something in her sleep. Bernice deftly amputated the other braid, paused for an instant, and then flitted swiftly and silently back to her own room.

Down-stairs she opened the big front door, closed it carefully behind her, and feeling oddly happy and exuberant stepped off the porch into the moonlight, swinging her heavy grip like a shopping-bag. After a minute's brisk walk she discovered that her left hand still held the two blond braids. She laughed unexpectedly—had to shut her mouth hard to keep from emitting an absolute peal. She was passing Warren's house now, and on the impulse she set down her baggage, and swinging the braids like piece of rope flung them at the wooden porch, where they landed with a slight thud. She laughed again, no longer restraining herself.

"Huh," she giggled wildly. "Scalp the selfish thing!"

Then picking up her staircase she set off at a half-run down the moonlit street.

#### **5.11.4 Reading and Review Questions**

1. Each of these stories presents a certain type of woman, commonly known as a "flapper." What are the common characteristics of Fitzgerald's female characters?

What do those characters tell us about gender roles and expectations in Fitzgerald's fiction?

2. What do Fitzgerald's stories tell us about the American dream?
3. What role does money play in Fitzgerald's stories?
4. How does Fitzgerald treat matters of geography? What is Fitzgerald's attitude toward the eastern, midwestern, and western parts of the United States?

## 5.12 ERNEST HEMINGWAY (1899-1961)



**Image 5.10 | Ernest Hemingway, 1923**

Photographer | Unknown

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Ernest Hemingway was born and raised in Oak Park, Illinois, an affluent suburb of Chicago. His father, who was prone to depression and would later commit suicide, was a physician and his mother was a singer turned music teacher. Because Hemingway's father was an avid outdoorsman, the family spent many of their summers in northern Michigan, which is where Hemingway set many of his short fiction, including the Nick Adams stories.

In 1917, Hemingway, at that time a writer for *The Kansas City Star*, was eager to join the Armed Forces to fight in the Great War (World War I) but was medically disqualified. Undiscouraged, he joined the ambulance corps and served on the Italian front. During shelling,

Hemingway received a shrapnel injury but still carried a comrade to safety and was decorated as a hero.

When Hemingway returned to the States, living ultimately in Chicago, he fell under the mentorship of fellow modernist, Sherwood Anderson, who encouraged Hemingway to move to Paris. In 1920, Hemingway married Hadley Richardson; soon afterwards, the couple left for Paris. Surrounded by other writers of the period, such as Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Hemingway used these connections to help develop his own writing career. With F. Scott Fitzgerald's help, Hemingway published his first novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) to great acclaim. The novel established Hemingway's simplistic writing style while expressing the frustration that many felt about World War I. His second novel, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), another critical success, once again, captured the disillusionment of the modernist period.

While Hemingway had a turbulent personal life, filled with divorces and failed relationships, he continued to write successful works including several collections of short fiction, for which he was well known, as well as novels and non-fiction. Some of his many works are *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), bringing bullfighting to a larger audience; *To Have and Have Not* (1937); and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), a classic novel on the Spanish Civil War. In 1952, Hemingway wrote what many consider to be his finest work, *Old Man and the Sea*, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and led to his Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. In 1961, after struggling with depression for years, Ernest Hemingway took his own life in Ketchum, Idaho. In 1964, Scribners published his posthumous memoir, *A Moveable Feast*, which details both Hemingway and Hadley's expatriate life in Paris during the modernist period.

Hemingway's writing was well known stylistically for its short declarative sentences and lack of detail. Hemingway often said this style based on his iceberg approach to narrative, where, like an iceberg, ten percent of the story was on the surface and ninety percent was under the water. Hemingway attributes this style to his time spent as a journalist. Due to his distinctive style, Hemingway remained an immensely popular writer and his novels were not only critically acclaimed but also best sellers. In both "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Hemingway writes about couples on safari in Africa and both stories feature couples with troubled relationships. These two stories are great examples of Hemingway's technique since it is clear to the reader that the narrator is leaving out many details about the characters' history.

#### **5.12.1 "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber"**

Please click the link below to access this selection:



<http://m.learning.hccs.edu/faculty/selena.anderson/engl2328/readings/theshort-happy-life-of-francis-macomber-by-ernest-hemingway>

### 5.12.2 “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”

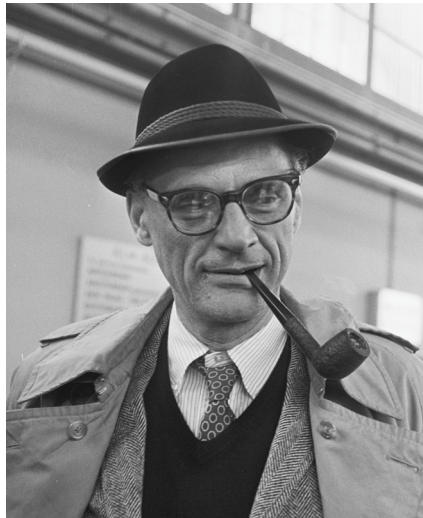
Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/heming.html>

### 5.12.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. Looking at the two stories, side by side, what similarities do you notice between Macomber and Harry? What message is Hemingway trying to send to readers?
2. Do you notice any similarities between Margaret Macomber and Helen as well?
3. Hemingway is often accused of being a chauvinistic writer, after reading these two stories—do you think this is a fair critique? Does he have a preference for his male characters? Are his female characters fully formed and believable?

## 5.13 ARTHUR MILLER (1915-2005)



**Image 5.11 | Arthur Miller, 1966**

Photographer | Eric Koch

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Known best for his ironic commentaries on the American dream, Arthur Miller's plays capture the disillusionment, the emptiness, and the ambivalence of individual Americans in the twentieth century. His most famous plays, *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and *The Crucible* (1953), are staples in American literature courses from high school through university, and his precise excoriation of the American experience of freedom continues to captivate audiences.

Miller believed that playgoers responded to drama because they experienced examples of acting throughout their daily lives. In his remarks upon receiving the 2001 National Endowment for the Humanities Jefferson Medal, Miller observed:

The fact is that acting is inevitable as soon as we walk out our front doors into society. . . and in fact we are ruled more by the arts of performance, by acting in other words, than anybody wants to think about for very long.

But in our time television has created a quantitative change in all this; one of the oddest things about millions of lives now is that ordinary individuals, as never before in human history, are so surrounded by acting. Twenty-four hours a day everything seen on the tube is either acted or conducted by actors in the shape of news anchor men and women, including their hairdos. It may be that the most impressionable form of experience now, for many if not most people, consists of their emotional transactions with actors which happen far more of the time than with real people.<sup>3</sup>

In this way, Miller may be said to democratize theatre. Building on the work of the Scandinavian playwrights of the nineteenth century, Miller, along with his contemporaries Eugene O'Neill and Tennessee Williams, wrote plays that featured ordinary persons who were tortured to the point of madness by ordinary life. In doing so, Miller, O'Neill, and Williams captured the confusion, despair, and hopelessness of modern life and assured themselves a place in the American national conversation.

In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller presents a tragedy for the common man. Willy Loman, a marginally successful traveling salesman of women's undergarments, is, as many students learned in high school, a low man, the most common of a type of road warrior who today fills the nation's airports instead of its highways. Frustrated by the unbearable sameness of his travels, Willy lives within his own fantasies, and those fantasies ultimately include Willy's dreams for his sons, Biff and Happy, while excluding Willy's devoted wife, Linda. Willy Loman is Everyman for the

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<sup>3</sup> "Arthur Miller Lecture." *NEH.gov*. National Endowment for the Humanities, 26 Mar. 2001. Web. 10 Dec. 2015

twentieth century, a character whose work produces nothing and generates little in the way of material comfort. Living from paycheck to paycheck, Willy merely survives. When, ultimately, he can be neither a role model to his family nor their provider, he chooses to die rather than face exile into a state of irrelevance. *Death of a Salesman* is a Greek tragedy for the twentieth century in which a man who does not know who he is chooses death when he realizes his mistakes.

### **5.13.1 *Death of a Salesman***

Please click the link below to access this selection:

[http://www.pelister.org/literature/ArthurMiller/Miller\\_Salesman.pdf](http://www.pelister.org/literature/ArthurMiller/Miller_Salesman.pdf)

### **5.13.2 Reading and Review Questions**

1. Why does Willy consistently fail to communicate with Happy and Biff?
2. What impact does Linda have on her husband and sons? Is she a positive influence in their lives?
3. Willy Loman is often referred to as representative of the “common man.”
4. What does this term mean for Willy and those like him?
5. How does Miller use natural and man-made elements in the play? What does the juxtaposition of the city and country tell us about Willy’s life?
6. What does the play suggest about the responsibilities of fathers?

## **5.14 SOUTHERN RENAISSANCE - FIRST WAVE (1920-1940)**

After the Civil War, Southern literature had been mostly of the Local Color variety, as Thomas Nelson Page became one of the most prolific Southern writers in postbellum America with his plantation myth stories. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, a number of Southern writers, educated, well-traveled, and well-read, began to break from the “moonlight and magnolias” tradition of Page that evinced nostalgia for the Old South. James Lane Allen from Kentucky, Kate Chopin and Grace King from Louisiana, Ellen Glasgow, Amélie Rives, and Mary Johnston from Virginia took on a wide variety of edgy topics in their works, including a critique of traditional social roles for women and an exploration of sexual desire repressed by rigid cultural norms. Ellen Glasgow, in particular, led the way toward a new Southern literature in her call for more “blood and

irony” in Southern fiction.<sup>4</sup> She calls for an invigorated literature that rejects the false veneer of Southern culture and probes the reality of life that is limited or repressed by rigid social norms and develops characters who exhibit fortitude and endurance in spite of such limitations. She is the first voice of the Southern Renaissance, which bloomed fully in the 1920s and 30s within the Modernist temperament of the early twentieth century.

Another seminal “call” for a new Southern literature came in 1917 when cultural critic H. L. Mencken published his famous essay, “The Sahara of the Bozart,” in the New York *Evening Mail*. Mencken’s acerbic wit was biting, as he likened Southern culture to the sterility of the Sahara Desert. After World War I, writers such as William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, Eudora Welty, Katherine Anne Porter, John Crowe Ransom, and Robert Penn Warren responded to this call by producing a body of literary work that won national and international acclaim as part of a revival of Southern letters and culture. William Faulkner, in particular, who went on to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1949, created a body of work against which future Southern writers would be measured.

The first wave of writers in the Southern Renaissance probed a number of themes, but for the most part the writers had to come to terms with the South’s past, particularly slavery. Racial tensions, racial inequality, white guilt associated with slavery, and the haunting specter of slavery became themes and motifs throughout the literature. Writers also attempted to define the South as a distinct and unique place rather than as simply a region of the United States, especially within the context of social and economic changes that were beginning to erase the distinctive features of the South. Narrative techniques in the literature from this time period are often borrowed from oral storytelling or from other oral traditions in Southern culture, traditions such as preaching, conversing, and memorializing. First Wave writers, like their Local Color predecessors, attempted to capture in print the distinctive features of Southern dialects that were beginning to disappear. Religion and religious images infused much of Southern writing during this time. A particular sub-genre of Southern writing emerged: the Southern gothic story or novel. Southern gothic writing borrowed from elements of eighteenth-century British works written in the style of Gothic, or “Dark Romanticism.” In these stories the fantastic and the macabre were central. In the Southern gothic, writers focused less on supernatural events and more on ways in which the seemingly pretty, orderly surface veneer of the Southern social order hid deep, dark, disturbing secrets or distorted the dark nature of reality behind the curtain of respectability and gentility. Most Southern gothic works also contain some aspect of the grotesque as well. This sub-genre of Southern literature, often termed the Southern grotesque, features images of physical

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<sup>4</sup> Glasgow, Ellen. *A Certain Measure: An Interpretation of Prose Fiction*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1938.

disfigurement, physical decay, mental disability, incest, deviance, extreme violence, illness, suffering, and death. The grotesque motif features prominently in most Southern gothic stories and comment, usually, on some aspects of a disintegrating people and culture.

## 5.15 ELLEN GLASGOW (1873-1945)



**Image 5.12 | Ellen Glasgow, n.d.**

Photographer | Unknown

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Ellen Glasgow was born in 1873 to a wealthy Virginia family. Her father was a successful owner of an ironworks company in Richmond, Virginia. Glasgow's mother, who bore ten children, became an invalid, suffering from a variety of nervous disorders. Glasgow was educated at home, and she exhibited intellectual independence from a young age. She read widely in her father's library, tackling subjects from literature to philosophy and political theory. Glasgow began her own foray into fiction writing and was immediately successful. In novels such as *The Descendant* (1897), *The Deliverance* (1904), *Virginia* (1913), and *Barren Ground* (1925), Glasgow predicted the first wave of the Southern Renaissance as she rigorously chronicled the death of the Old South, as well as rebelled against the contemporary artifice and restrictions of Victorian gentility. *Barren Ground*, in particular, established her reputation as a writer who moved beyond the styles of the Realist and Naturalist in the 1890s more fully into the temperament of the Modernist and

feminist writer. Glasgow continued writing until her death, publishing later works such as *The Sheltered Life* (1932), *Vein of Iron* (1935), and *In This Our Life* (1941), which won the Pulitzer Prize for the novel in 1942. While she had love interests during her life, Glasgow remained single, valuing her independence. During her life, Glasgow suffered from a variety of illnesses and ailments, including heart disease. She died in her sleep at home in 1945.

Ellen Glasgow changed the course of Southern literature in the 1890s in her striking departure from traditional Southern literary fare dominated by Thomas Nelson Page's fictional accounts of the plantation myth. Like literary Naturalists such as Frank Norris and Jack London, Glasgow absorbed ideas from Charles Darwin's works and became one of the first Southern writers of substance to incorporate Darwinian themes in her fiction. She was influenced by Darwin's views on heredity and environment as factors that strongly determined human behavior. As a young writer, she fearlessly confronted uncomfortable truths about human nature, eschewing the ever popular "moonlight and magnolias" fictional representation of life in the South and calling for more "blood and irony" in Southern fiction. She heeded her own call, producing a strong body of work that dealt with a variety of realistic, naturalistic, and even modernist, themes: women confronting their own biological impulses, social classes in conflict, women deconstructing social codes as artificial barriers to self-determination, rural farming families at odds with new industrialization and urbanization, and the transition of the Old South into the New South. Throughout her fiction, illusions about the present are shattered under the intense light of reality, and nostalgia for the past is revealed as a form of "evasive idealism," a way of thinking that Glasgow deplored. In "Dare's Gift," one of many stories that Glasgow wrote about seemingly haunted dwellings, Glasgow explores the residual "haunting" of the present by the past, particularly by a past infected with the actions of a woman whose loyalty to an abstraction or dogmatic creed supersede her loyalty to her fiancé.

#### **5.15.1 "Dare's Gift"**

A year has passed, and I am beginning to ask myself if the thing actually happened? The whole episode, seen in clear perspective, is obviously incredible. There are, of course, no haunted houses in this age of science; there are merely hallucinations, neurotic symptoms, and optical illusions. Any one of these practical diagnoses would, no doubt, cover the impossible occurrence, from my first view of that dusky sunset on James River to the erratic behavior of Mildred during the spring we spent in Virginia. There is—I admit it readily!—a perfectly rational explanation of every mystery. Yet, while I assure myself that the supernatural has been banished, in the evil company of devils, black plagues, and witches, from this sanitary century, a vision of Dare's Gift,

amid its clustering cedars under the shadowy arch of the sunset, rises before me, and my feeble scepticism surrenders to that invincible spirit of darkness. For once in my life—the ordinary life of a corporation lawyer in Washington—the impossible really happened. It was the year after Mildred's first nervous breakdown, and Drayton, the great specialist in whose care she had been for some months, advised me to take her away from Washington until she recovered her health. As a busy man I couldn't spend the whole week out of town; but if we could find a place near enough—somewhere in Virginia! we both exclaimed, I remember—it would be easy for me to run down once a fortnight. The thought was with me when Harrison asked me to join him for a week's hunting on James River; and it was still in my mind, though less distinctly, on the evening when I stumbled alone, and for the first time, on Dare's Gift.

I had hunted all day—a divine day in October—and at sunset, with a bag full of partridges, I was returning for the night to Chericoke, where Harrison kept his bachelor's house. The sunset had been wonderful; and I had paused for a moment with my back to the bronze sweep of the land, when I had a swift impression that the memories of the old river gathered around me. It was at this instant—I recall even the trivial detail that my foot caught in a brier as I wheeled quickly about—that I looked past the sunken wharf on my right, and saw the garden of Dare's Gift falling gently from its almost obliterated terraces to the scalloped edge of the river. Following the steep road, which ran in curves through a stretch of pines and across an abandoned pasture or two, I came at last to an iron gate and a grassy walk leading, between walls of box, to the open lawn planted in elms. With that first glimpse the Old World charm of the scene held me captive. From the warm red of its brick walls to the pure Colonial lines of its doorway, and its curving wings mantled in roses and ivy, the house stood there, splendid and solitary. The rows of darkened windows sucked in without giving back the last flare of daylight; the heavy cedars crowding thick up the short avenue did not stir as the wind blew from the river; and above the carved pineapple on the roof, a lonely bat was wheeling high against the red disc of the sun. While I had climbed the rough road and passed more slowly between the marvelous walls of the box, I had told myself that the place must be Mildred's and mine at any cost. On the upper terrace, before several crude modern additions to the wings, my enthusiasm gradually ebbed, though I still asked myself incredulously, "Why have I never heard of it? To whom does it belong? Has it a name as well known in Virginia as Shirley or Brandon?" The house was of great age, I knew, and yet from obvious signs I discovered that it was not too old to be lived in. Nowhere could I detect a hint of decay or dilapidation. The sound of cattle bells floated up from a pasture somewhere in the distance. Through the long grass on the lawn little twisted paths, like sheep tracks, wound back and forth under the fine old elms, from which a rain of bronze leaves fell slowly and ceaselessly in

the wind. Nearer at hand, on the upper terrace, a few roses were blooming; and when I passed between two marble urns on the right of the house, my feet crushed a garden of “simples” such as our grandmothers used to grow.

As I stepped on the porch I heard a child’s voice on the lawn, and a moment afterwards a small boy, driving a cow, appeared under the two cedars at the end of the avenue. At sight of me he flicked the cow with the hickory switch he held and bawled, “Ma! thar’s a stranger out here, an’ I don’t know what he wants.”

At his call the front door opened, and a woman in a calico dress, with a sunbonnet pushed back from her forehead, came out on the porch.

“Hush yo’ fuss, Eddy!” she remarked authoritatively. “He don’t want nothint.” Then, turning to me, she added civilly, “Good evenin’, suh. You must be the gentleman who is visitin’ over at Chericoke?”

“Yes, I am staying with Mr. Harrison. You know him, of course?” “Oh, Lordy, yes. Everybody aroun’ here knows Mr. Harrison. His folks have been here goin’ on mighty near forever. I don’t know what me and my children would come to it if wa’n’t for him. He is gettin’ me my divorce now. It’s been three years and mo’ sence Tom deserted me.”

“Divorce?” I had not expected to find this innovation on James River.

“Of course it ain’t the sort of thing anybody would want to come to. But if a woman in the State ought to have one easy, I reckon it’s me. Tom went off with another woman—and she my own sister—from this very house—”

“From this house—and, by the way, what is the name of it?” “Name of what? This place? Why, it’s Dare’s Gift. Didn’t you know it? Yes, suh, it happened right here in this very house, and that, too, when we hadn’t been livin’ over here mo’ than three months. After Mr. Duncan got tired and went away he left us as caretakers, Tom and me, and I asked Tilly to come and stay with us and help me look after the children. It came like a lightning stroke to me, for Tom and Tilly had known each other all their lives, and he’d never taken any particular notice of her till they moved over here and began to tend the cows together. She wa’n’t much for beauty, either. I was always the handsome one of the family—though you mightn’t think it now, to look at me—and Tom was the sort that never could abide red hair—”

“And you’ve lived at Dare’s Gift ever since?” I was more interested in the house than in the tenant.

“I didn’t have nowhere else to go, and the house has got to have a caretaker till it is sold. It ain’t likely that anybody will want to rent an out-of-the-way place like this—though now that automobiles have come to stay that don’t make so much difference.”



“Does it still belong to the Dares?”

“Now, suh; they had to sell it at auction right after the war on account of mortgages and debts—old Colonel Dare died the very year Lee surrendered, and Miss Lucy she went off somewhere to strange parts. Sence their day it has belonged to so many different folks that you can’t keep account of it. Right now it’s owned by a Mr. Duncan, who lives out in California. I don’t know that he’ll ever come back here he couldn’t get on with the neighbors—and he is trying to sell it. No wonder, too, a great big place like this, and he ain’t even a Virginian—”

“I wonder if he would let it for a season?” It was then, while I stood there in the brooding dusk of the doorway, that the idea of the spring at Dare’s Gift first occurred to me.

“If you want it, you can have it for ‘most nothing, I reckon. Would you like to step inside and go over the rooms?”

That evening at supper I asked Harrison about Dare’s Gift, and gleaned the salient facts of its history.

“Strange to say, the place, charming as it is, has never been well known in Virginia. There’s historical luck, you know, as well as other kinds, and the Dares—after that first Sir Roderick, who came over in time to take a stirring part in Bacon’s Rebellion, and, tradition says, to betray his leader—have never distinguished themselves in the records of the State. The place itself, by the way, is about a fifth of the original plantation of three thousand acres, which was given—though I imagine there was more in that than appears in history—by some Indian chief of forgotten name to this notorious Sir Roderick. The old chap—Sir Roderick, I mean—seems to have been something of a fascinator in his day. Even Governor Berkeley, who hanged half the colony, relented, I believe, in the case of Sir Roderick, and that unusual clemency gave rise, I suppose, to the legend of the betrayal. But, however that may be, Sir Roderick had more miraculous escapes than John Smith himself, and died at last in his bed at the age of eighty from overeating cherry pie.” “And now the place has passed away from the family?”

“Oh, long ago—though not so long, after all, when one comes to think of it. When the old Colonel died the year after the war, it was discovered that he had mortgaged the farm up to the last acre. At that time real estate on James River wasn’t regarded as a particularly profit—able investment, and under the hammer Dare’s Gift went for a song.”

“Was the Colonel the last of his name?” “He left a daughter—a belle, too, in her youth, my mother says—but she died—at least I think she did—only a few months after her father.”

Coffee was served on the veranda, and while I smoked my cigar and sipped my brandy—Harrison had an excellent wine cellar—I watched the full moon shining like a yellow lantern through the diaphanous mist on the river. Downshore, in the sparkling reach of the water, an

immense cloud hung low over the horizon, and between the cloud and the river a band of silver light quivered faintly, as if it would go out in an instant.

“It is over there, isn’t it?”—I pointed to the silver light—“Dare’s Gift, I mean.”

“Yes, it’s somewhere over yonder—five miles away by the river, and nearly seven by the road.”

“It is the dream of a house, Harrison, and there isn’t too much history attached to it—nothing that would make a modern beggar ashamed to live in it.”

“By Jove! so you are thinking of buying it?” Harrison was beaming. “It is downright ridiculous, I declare, the attraction that place has for strangers. I never knew a Virginian who wanted it; but you are the third Yankee of my acquaintance—and I don’t know many—who has fallen in love with it. I searched the title and drew up the deed for John Duncan exactly six years ago—though I’d better not boast of that transaction, I reckon.”

“He still owns it, doesn’t he?”

“He still owns it, and it looks as if he would continue to own it unless you can be persuaded to buy it. It is hard to find purchasers for these old places, especially when the roads are uncertain and they happen to be situated on the James River. We live too rapidly in these days to want to depend on a river, even on a placid old fellow like the James.”

“Duncan never really lived here, did he?”

“At first he did. He began on quite a royal scale; but, somehow, from the very start things appeared to go wrong with him. At the outset he prejudiced the neighbors against him—I never knew exactly why—by putting on airs, I imagine, and boasting about his money. There is something in the Virginia blood that resents boasting about money. How—ever that may be, he hadn’t been here six months before he was at odds with every living thing in the county, white, black, and spotted—for even the dogs snarled at him. Then his secretary—a chap he had picked up starving in London, and had trusted absolutely for years—made off with a lot of cash and securities, and that seemed the last straw in poor Duncan’s ill luck. I believe he didn’t mind the loss half so much—he refused to prosecute the fellow—as he minded the betrayal of confidence. He told me, I remember, before he went away, that it had spoiled Dare’s Gift for him. He said he had a feeling that the place had come too high; it had cost him his belief in human nature.”

“Then I imagine he’d be disposed to consider an offer?”

“Oh, there isn’t a doubt of it. But, if I were you, I shouldn’t be too hasty. Why not rent the place for the spring months? It’s beautiful here in the spring, and Duncan has left furniture enough to make the house fairly comfortable.”

“Well, I’ll ask Mildred. Of course Mildred must have the final word in the matter.”

“As if Mildred’s final word would be anything but a repetition of yours!” Harrison laughed slyly—for the perfect harmony in which we lived had been for ten years a pleasant jest among our friends. Harrison had once classified wives as belonging to two distinct groups—the group of those who talked and knew nothing about their husbands’ affairs, and the group of those who knew everything and kept silent. Mildred, he had added politely, had chosen to belong to the latter division.

The next day I went back to Washington, and Mildred’s first words to me in the station were,

“Why, Harold, you look as if you had bagged all the game in Virginia!”

“I look as if I had found just the place for you!”

When I told her about my discovery, her charming face sparkled with interest. Never once, not even during her illness, had she failed to share a single one of my enthusiasms; never once, in all the years of our marriage, had there been so much as a shadow between us. To understand the story of Dare’s Gift, it is necessary to realize at the beginning all that Mildred meant and means in my life.

Well, to hasten my slow narrative, the negotiations dragged through most of the winter. At first, Harrison wrote me, Duncan couldn’t be found, and a little later that he was found, but that he was opposed, from some inscrutable motive, to the plan of renting Dare’s Gift. He wanted to sell it outright, and he’d be hanged if he’d do anything less than get the place clean off his hands. “As sure as I let it”—Harrison sent me his letter—“there is going to be trouble, and somebody will come down on me for damages. The damned place has cost me already twice as much as I paid for it.”

In the end, however—Harrison has a persuasive way—the arrangements were concluded. “Of course,” Duncan wrote after a long silence, “Dare’s Gift may be as healthy as heaven. I may quite as easily have contracted this confounded rheumatism, which makes life a burden, either in Italy or from too many cocktails. I’ve no reason whatever for my dislike for the place; none, that is, except the incivility of my neighbors—where, by the way, did you Virginians manufacture your reputation for manners?—and my unfortunate episode with Paul Grymes. That, as you remark, might, no doubt, have occurred anywhere else, and if a man is going to steal he could have found all the opportunities he wanted in New York or London. But the fact remains that one can’t help harboring associations, pleasant or unpleasant, with the house in which one has lived, and from start to finish my associations with Dare’s Gift are frankly unpleasant. If, after all, however, your friend wants the place, and can afford to pay for his whims—let him have it! I hope to Heaven he’ll be ready to buy it when his lease has run out. Since he wants it for a hobby, I suppose one place is

as good as another; and I can assure him that by the time he has owned it for a few years—especially if he under—takes to improve the motor road up to Richmond—he will regard a taste for Chinese porcelain as an inexpensive diversion.” Then, as if impelled by a twist of ironic humor, he added, “He will find the shooting good anyhow.”

By early spring Dare’s Gift was turned over to us—Mildred was satisfied, if Duncan wasn’t—and on a showery day in April, when drifting clouds cast faint gauzy shadows over the river, our boat touched at the old wharf, where carpenters were working, and rested a minute before steaming on the Chericoke Landing five miles away. The spring was early that year—or perhaps the spring is always early on James River. I remember the song of birds in the trees; the veil of bright green over the distant forests; the broad reach of the river scalloped with silver; the dappled sunlight on the steep road which climbed from the wharf to the iron gates; the roving fragrance from lilacs on the lower terrace; and, sur—mounting all, the two giant cedars which rose like black crags against the changeable blue of the sky—I remember these things as distinctly as if I had seen them this morning.

We entered the wall of box through a living door, and strolled up the grassy walk from the lawn to the terraced garden. Within the garden the air was perfumed with a thousand scents—with lilacs, with young box, with flags and violets and lilies, with aromatic odors from the garden of “simples,” and with the sharp sweetness of sheep—mint from the mown grass on the lawn.

“This spring is fine, isn’t it?” As I turned to Mildred with the question, I saw for the first time that she looked pale and tired—or was it merely the green light from the box wall that fell over her features? “The trip has been too much for you. Next time we’ll come by motor.”

“Oh, no, I had a sudden feeling of faintness. It will pass in a minute. What an adorable place, Harold!”

She was smiling again with her usual brightness, and as we passed from the box wall to the clear sunshine on the terrace her face quickly resumed its natural color. To this day—for Mildred has been strangely reticent about Dare’s Gift—I do not know whether her pallor was due to the shade in which we walked or whether, at the instant when I turned to her, she was visited by some intuitive warning against the house we were approaching. Even after a year the events of Dare’s Gift are not things I can talk over with Mildred; and, for my part, the occurrence remains, like the house in its grove of cedars, wrapped in an impenetrable mystery. I don’t in the least pretend to know how or why the thing happened. I only know that it did happen—that it happened, word for word as I record it. Mildred’s share in it will, I think, never become clear to me. What she felt, what she imagined, what she believed, I have never asked her. Whether the doctor’s explanation is history or fiction, I do not attempt to decide. He is an old man, and old

men, since Biblical times, have seen visions. There were places in his story where it seemed to me that he got historical data a little mixed—or it may be that his memory failed him. Yet, in spite of his liking for romance and his French education, he is without constructive imagination—at least he says that he is without it—and the secret of Dare’s Gift, if it is not fact, could have sprung only from the ultimate chaos of imagination.

But I think of these things a year afterwards, and on that April morning the house stood there in the sunlight, presiding over its grassy terraces with an air of gracious and intimate hospitality. From the symbolic pineapple on its sloping roof to the twittering sparrows that flew in and out of its ivied wings, it reaffirmed that first flawless impression. Flaws, of course, there were in the fact, yet the recollection of it to—day—the garnered impression of age, of formal beauty, of clustering memories—is one of exquisite harmony. We found later, as Mildred pointed out, architectural absurdities—wanton excrescences in the mod—ern additions, which had been designed apparently with the purpose of providing space at the least possible cost of material and labor. The rooms, when we passed through the fine old doorway, appeared cramped and poorly lighted; broken pieces of the queer mullioned window, where the tracery was of wood, not stone, had been badly repaired, and much of the original detail work of the mantels and cornices had been blurred by recent disfigurements. But these discoveries came afterwards. The first view of the place worked like a magic spell—like an intoxicating perfume—on our senses.

“It is just as if we had stepped into another world,” said Mildred, looking up at the row of windows, from which the ivy had been carefully clipped. “I feel as if I had ceased to be myself since I left Washington.” Then she turned to meet Harrison, who had ridden over to welcome us. We spent a charming fortnight together at Dare’s Gift—Mildred happy as a child in her garden, and I satisfied to lie in the shadow of the box wall and watch her bloom back to health. At the end of the fortnight I was summoned to an urgent conference in Washington. Some philanthropic busybody, employed to nose out corruption, had scented legal game in the affairs of the Atlantic & Eastern Railroad, and I had been retained as special counsel by that corporation. The fight would be long, I knew—I had already thought of it as one of my great cases—and the evidence was giving me no little anxiety. “It is my last big battle,” I told Mildred, as I kissed her good—bye on the steps. “If I win, Dare’s Gift shall be your share of the spoils; if I lose—well, I’ll be like any other general who has met a better man in the field.”

“Don’t hurry back, and don’t worry about me. I am quite happy here.”

“I shan’t worry, but all the same I don’t like leaving you. Remember, if you need advice or help about anything, Harrison is always at hand.”

“Yes, I’ll remember.”

With this assurance I left her standing in the sunshine, with the windows of the house staring vacantly down on her.

When I try now to recall the next month, I can bring back merely a turmoil of legal wrangles. I contrived in the midst of it all to spend two Sundays with Mildred, but I remember nothing of them except the blessed wave of rest that swept over me as I lay on the grass under the elms. On my second visit I saw that she was looking badly, though when I commented on her pallor and the darkened circles under her eyes, she laughed and put my anxious questions aside.

“Oh, I’ve lost sleep, that’s all,” she answered, vaguely, with a swift glance at the house. “Did you ever think how many sounds there are in the country that keep one awake?”

As the day went on I noticed, too, that she had grown restless, and once or twice while I was going over my case with her—I always talked over my cases with Mildred because it helped to clarify my opinions—she returned with irritation to some obscure legal point I had passed over. The flutter of her movements—so unlike my calm Mildred—disturbed me more than I confessed to her, and I made up my mind before night that I would consult Drayton when I went back to Washington. Though she had always been sensitive and impressionable, I had never seen her until that second Sunday in a condition of feverish excitability.

In the morning she was so much better that by the time I reached Washington I forgot my determination to call on her physician. My work was heavy that week—the case was developing into a direct attack upon the management of the road and in seeking evidence to rebut the charges of illegal rebates to the American Steel Company, I stumbled by accident upon a mass of damaging records. It was a clear case of some—body having blundered—or the records would not have been left for me to discover—and with disturbed thoughts I went down for my third visit to Dare’s Gift. It was in my mind to draw out of the case, if an honorable way could be found, and I could barely wait until dinner was over before I unburdened my conscience to Mildred.

“The question has come to one of personal honesty.” I remember that I was emphatic. “I’ve nosed out something real enough this time. There is material for a dozen investigations in Dowling’s transactions alone.”

The exposure of the Atlantic & Eastern Railroad is public property by this time, and I needn’t resurrect the dry bones of that deplorable scandal. I lost the case, as everyone knows; but all that concerns me in it today is the talk I had with Mildred on the darkening terrace at Dare’s Gift. It was a reckless talk, when one comes to think of it. I said, I know, a great deal that I ought to have kept to myself; but, after all, she is my wife; I had learned in ten years that I could trust her discretion, and there was more than a river between us and the Atlantic & Eastern Railroad.

Well, the sum of it is that I talked foolishly, and went to bed feeling justified in my folly. Afterwards I recalled that Mildred had been very quiet, though whenever I paused she questioned me closely, with a flash of irritation as if she were impatient of my slowness or my lack of lucidity. At the end she flared out for a moment into the excitement I had noticed the week before; but at the time I was so engrossed in my own affairs that this scarcely struck me as unnatural. Not until the blow fell did I recall the hectic flush in her face and the quivering sound of her voice, as if she were trying not to break down and weep.

It was long before either of us got to sleep that night, and Mildred moaned a little under her breath as she sank into unconsciousness. She was not well, I knew, and I resolved again that I would see Drayton as soon as I reached Washington. Then, just before falling asleep, I became acutely aware of all the noises of the country which Mildred said had kept her awake—of the chirping of the crickets in the fireplace, of the fluttering of swallows in the chimney, of the sawing of innumerable insects in the night outside, of the croaking of frogs in the marshes, of the distant solitary hooting of an owl, of the whispering sound of wind in the leaves, of the stealthy movement of a myriad creeping lives in the ivy. Through the open window the moonlight fell in a milk-white flood, and in the darkness the old house seemed to speak with a thousand voices. As I dropped off I had a confused sensation—less a perception than an apprehension—that all these voices were urging me to something—somewhere—

The next day I was busy with a mass of evidence—dull stuff, I remember. Harrison rode over for luncheon, and not until late afternoon, when I strolled out, with my hands full of papers, for a cup of tea on the terrace, did I have a chance to see Mildred alone. Then I noticed that she was breathing quickly, as if from a hurried walk. “Did you go to meet the boat, Mildred?”

“No, I’ve been nowhere—nowhere. I’ve been on the lawn all day,” she answered sharply—so sharply that I looked at her in surprise.

In the ten years that I had lived with her I had never before seen her irritated without cause—Mildred’s disposition, I had once said, was as flawless as her profile—and I had for the first time in my life that baffled sensation which comes to men whose perfectly normal wives reveal flashes of abnormal psychology. Mildred wasn’t Mildred, that was the upshot of my conclusions; and, hang it all! I didn’t know any more than Adam what was the matter with her. There were lines around her eyes, and her sweet mouth had taken an edge of bitterness.

“Aren’t you well, dear?” I asked.

“Oh, I’m perfectly well,” she replied, in a shaking voice, “only I wish you would leave me alone!” And then she burst into tears.

While I was trying to comfort her the servant came with the tea things, and she kept him about some trivial orders until the big touring car of one of our neighbors rushed up the drive and halted under the terrace.

In the morning Harrison motored up to Richmond with me, and on the way he spoke gravely of Mildred.

“Your wife isn’t looking well, Beckwith. I shouldn’t wonder if she were a bit seedy—and if I were you I’d get a doctor to look at her. There is a good man down at Chericoke Landing—old Palham Lakeby. I don’t care if he did get his training in France half a century ago; he knows more than your half—baked modern scientists.”

“I’ll speak to Drayton this very day,” I answered, ignoring his suggestion of the physician. “You have seen more of Mildred this last month than I have. How long have you noticed that she isn’t herself?”

“A couple of weeks. She is usually so jolly, you know.” Harrison had played with Mildred in his childhood. “Yes, I shouldn’t lose any time over the doctor. Though, of course, it may be only the spring,” he added, reassuringly.

“I’ll drop by Drayton’s office on my way uptown,” I replied, more alarmed by Harrison’s manner than I had been by Mildred’s condition.

But Drayton was not in his office, and his assistant told me that the great specialist would not return to town until the end of the week. It was impossible for me to discuss Mildred with the earnest young man who discoursed so eloquently of the experiments in the Neurological Institute, and I left without mentioning her, after making an appointment for Saturday morning. Even if the consultation delayed my return to Dare’s Gift until the afternoon, I was determined to see Drayton, and, if possible, take him back with me. Mildred’s last nervous breakdown had been too serious for me to neglect this warning.

I was still worrying over that case—wondering if I could find a way to draw out of it—when the catastrophe overtook me. It was on Saturday morning, I remember, and after a reassuring talk with Drayton, who had promised to run down to Dare’s Gift for the coming weekend, I was hurrying to catch the noon train for Richmond. As I passed through the station, one of the Observer’s sensational “war extras” caught my eye, and I stopped for an instant to buy the paper before I hastened through the gate to the train. Not until we had started, and I had gone back to the dining car, did I unfold the pink sheets and spread them out on the table before me. Then, while the waiter hung over me for the order, I felt the headlines on the front page slowly burn themselves into my brain—for, instead of the news of the great French drive I was expecting, there flashed back at me, in large type, the name of the opposing counsel in the case against the Atlantic



& Eastern. The Observer's "extra" batted not on the war this time, but on the gross scandal of the railroad; and the front page of the paper was devoted to a personal interview with Herbert Tremain, the great Tremain, that philanthropic busybody who had first scented corruption. It was all there, every ugly detail—every secret proof of the illegal transactions on which I had stumbled. It was all there, phrase for phrase, as I alone could have told it—as I alone, in my folly, had told it to Mildred. The Atlantic & Eastern had been betrayed, not privately, not secretly, but in large type in the public print of a sensational newspaper. And not only the road! I also had been betrayed—betrayed so wantonly, so irrationally, that it was like an incident out of melodrama.

It was conceivable that the simple facts might have leaked out through other channels, but the phrases, the very words of Tremain's interview, were mine.

The train had started; I couldn't have turned back even if I had wanted to do so. I was bound to go on, and some intuition told me that the mystery lay at the end of my journey. Mildred had talked indiscreetly to someone, but to whom? Not to Harrison, surely! Harrison, I knew, I could count on, and yet whom had she seen except Harrison? After my first shock the absurdity of the thing made me laugh aloud. It was all as ridiculous, I realized, as it was disastrous! It might so easily not have happened. If only I hadn't stumbled on those accursed records! If only I had kept my mouth shut about them! If only Mildred had not talked unwisely to someone! But I wonder if there was ever a tragedy so inevitable that the victim, in looking back, could not see a hundred ways, great or small, of avoiding or preventing it?—a hundred trivial incidents which, falling differently, might have transformed the event into pure comedy?

The journey was unmitigated torment. In Richmond the car did not meet me, and I wasted half an hour in looking for a motor to take me to Dare's Gift. When at last I got off, the road was rougher than ever, plowed into heavy furrows after the recent rains, and filled with mud—holes from which it seemed we should never emerge. By the time we puffed exhaustedly up the rocky road from the river's edge, and ran into the avenue, I had worked myself into a state of nervous apprehension bordering on panic. I don't know what I expected, but I think I shouldn't have been surprised if Dare's Gift had lain in ruins before me. Had I found the house leveled to ashes by a divine visitation, I believe I should have accepted the occurrence as within the bounds of natural phenomena.

But everything—even the young peacocks on the lawn—was just as I had left it. The sun, setting in a golden ball over the pineapple on the roof, appeared as unchangeable, while it hung there in the glittering sky, as if it were made of metal. From the somber dusk of the wings, where the ivy lay like a black shadow, the clear front of the house, with its formal doorway and its mullioned windows, shone with an intense brightness, the last beams of sunshine lingering there

before they faded into the profound gloom of the cedars. The same scents of roses and sage and mown grass and sheep—mint hung about me; the same sounds—the croaking of frogs and the sawing of katydids—floated up from the low grounds; the very books I had been reading lay on one of the tables on the terrace, and the front door still stood ajar as if it had not closed since I passed through it.

I dashed up the steps, and in the hall Mildred's maid met me. "Mrs. Beckwith was so bad that we sent for the doctor—the one Mr. Harrison recommended. I don't know what it is, sir, but she doesn't seem like herself. She talks as if she were quite out of her head."

"What does the doctor say?"

"He didn't tell me. Mr. Harrison saw him. He—the doctor, I mean—has sent a nurse, and he is coming again in the morning. But she isn't herself, Mr. Beckwith. She says she doesn't want you to come to her—"

"Mildred!" I had already sprung past the woman, calling the beloved name aloud as I ran up the stairs.

In her chamber, standing very straight, with hard eyes, Mildred met me. "I had to do it, Harold," she said coldly—so coldly that my outstretched arms fell to my sides. "I had to tell all I knew."

"You mean you told Tremaine—you wrote to him—you, Mildred?"

"I wrote to him—I had to write. I couldn't keep it back any longer. No, don't touch me. You must not touch me. I had to do it. I would do it again."

Then it was, while she stood there, straight and hard, and rejoiced because she had betrayed me—then it was that I knew that Mildred's mind was unhinged.

"I had to do it. I would do it again," she repeated, pushing me from her.

## II

All night I sat by Mildred's bedside, and in the morning, without having slept, I went downstairs to meet Harrison and the doctor.

"You must get her away, Beckwith," began Harrison with a curious, suppressed excitement. "Dr. Lakeby says she will be all right again as soon as she gets back to Washington."

"But I brought her away from Washington because Drayton said it was not good for her."

"I know, I know." His tone was sharp, "But it's different now Dr. Lakeby wants you to take her back as soon as you can."

The old doctor was silent while Harrison spoke, and it was only after I had agreed to take Mildred away tomorrow that he murmured something about "bromide and chloral," and vanished

up the staircase. He impressed me then as a very old man—old not so much in years as in experience, as if, living there in that flat and remote country, he had exhausted all human desires. A leg was missing, I saw, and Harrison explained that the doctor had been dangerously wounded in the battle of Seven Pines, and had been obliged after that to leave the army and take up again the practice of medicine.

“You had better get some rest,” Harrison said, as he parted from me. “It is all right about Mildred, and nothing else matters. The doctor will see you in the afternoon, when you have had some sleep, and have a talk with you. He can explain things better than I can.”

Some hours later, after a profound slumber, which lasted well into the afternoon, I waited for the doctor by the tea table, which had been laid out on the upper terrace. It was a perfect afternoon—a serene and cloudless afternoon in early summer. All the brightness of the day gathered on the white porch and the red walls, while the clustering shadows slipped slowly over the box garden to the lawn and the river.

I was sitting there, with a book I had not even attempted to read, when the doctor joined me; and while I rose to shake hands with him I received again the impression of weariness, of pathos and disappointment, which his face had given me in the morning. He was like sun—dried fruit, I thought, fruit that has ripened and dried under the open sky, not withered in tissue paper.

Declining my offer of tea, he sat down in one of the wicker chairs, selecting, I noticed, the least comfortable among them, and filled his pipe from a worn leather pouch.

“She will sleep all night,” he said; “I am giving her bromide every three hours, and tomorrow you will be able to take her away. In a week she will be herself again. These nervous natures yield quickest to the influence, but they recover quickest also. In a little while this illness, as you choose to call it, will have left no mark upon her. She may even have forgotten it. I have known this to happen.”

“You have known this to happen?” I edged my chair nearer.

“They all succumb to it—the neurotic temperament soonest, the phlegmatic one later—but they all succumb to it in the end. The spirit of the place is too strong for them. The surrender to the thought of the house—to the psychic force of its memories—”

“There are memories, then? Things have happened here?”

“All old houses have memories, I suppose. Did you ever stop to wonder about the thoughts that must have gathered within walls like these?—to wonder about the impressions that must have lodged in the bricks, in the crevices, in the timber and the masonry? Have you ever stopped to think that these multiplied impressions might create a current of thought—a mental atmosphere—an inscrutable power of suggestion?”

“Even when one is ignorant? When one does not know the story?”

“She may have heard scraps of it from the servants—who knows? One can never tell how traditions are kept alive. Many things have been whispered about Dare’s Gift; some of these whispers may have reached her. Even without her knowledge she may have absorbed the suggestion; and some day, with that suggestion in her mind, she may have gazed too long at the sunshine on these marble urns before she turned back into the haunted rooms where she lived. After all, we know so little, so pitifully little about these things. We have only touched, we physicians, the outer edges of psychology. The rest lies in darkness—”

I jerked him up sharply. “The house, then, is haunted?”

For a moment he hesitated. “The house is saturated with a thought. It is haunted by treachery.”

“You mean something happened here?”

“I mean—” He bent forward, groping for the right word, while his gaze sought the river, where a golden web of mist hung midway between sky and water. “I am an old man, and I have lived long enough to see every act merely as the husk of an idea. The act dies; it decays like the body, but the idea is immortal. The thing that happened at Dare’s Gift was over fifty years ago, but the thought of it still lives—still utters its profound and terrible message. The house is a shell, and if one listens long enough one can hear in its heart the low murmur of the past—of that past which is but a single wave of the great sea of human experience —”

“But the story?” I was becoming impatient with his theories. After all, if Mildred was the victim of some phantasmal hypnosis, I was anxious to meet the ghost who had hypnotized her. Even Drayton, I reflected, keen as he was about the fact of mental suggestion, would never have regarded seriously the suggestion of a phantom. And the house looked so peaceful—so hospitable in the afternoon light.

“The story? Oh, I am coming to that—but of late the story has meant so little to me beside the idea. I like to stop by the way. I am getting old, and an amble suits me better than too brisk a trot—particularly in this weather —”

Yes, he was getting old. I lit a fresh cigarette and waited impatiently. After all, this ghost that he rambled about was real enough to destroy me, and my nerves were quivering like harp strings.

“Well, I came into the story—I was in the very thick of it, by accident, if there is such a thing as accident in this world of incomprehensible laws. The Incomprehensible! That has always seemed to me the supreme fact of life, the one truth overshadowing all others—the truth that we know nothing. We nibble at the edges of the mystery, and the great Reality—the

Incomprehensible—is still untouched, undiscovered. It unfolds hour by hour, day by day, creating, enslaving, killing us, while we painfully gnaw off—what? A crumb or two, a grain from that vastness which envelops us, which remains impenetrable—”

Again he broke off, and again I jerked him back from his reverie.

“As I have said, I was placed, by an act of Providence, or of chance, in the very heart of the tragedy. I was with Lucy Dare on the day, the unforgettable day, when she made her choice—her heroic or devilish choice, according to the way one has been educated. In Europe a thousand years ago such an act committed for the sake of religion would have made her a saint; in New England, a few centuries past, it would have entitled her to a respectable position in history—the little history of New England. But Lucy Dare was a Virginian, and in Virginia—except in the brief, exalted Virginia of the Confederacy—the personal loyalties have always been esteemed beyond the impersonal. I cannot imagine us as a people canonizing a woman who sacrificed the human ties for the superhuman—even for the divine. I cannot imagine it, I repeat; and so Lucy Dare—though she rose to greatness in that one instant of sacrifice—has not even a name among us today. I doubt if you can find a child in the State who has ever heard of her—or a grown man, outside of this neighborhood, who could give you a single fact of her history. She is as completely forgotten as Sir Roderick, who betrayed Bacon—she is forgotten because the thing she did, though it might have made a Greek tragedy, was alien to the temperament of the people among whom she lived. Her tremendous sacrifice failed to arrest the imagination of her time. After all, the sublime cannot touch us unless it is akin to our ideal; and though Lucy Dare was sublime, according to the moral code of the Romans, she was a stranger to the racial soul of the South. Her memory died because it was the bloom of an hour—because there was nothing in the soil of her age for it to thrive on. She missed her time; she is one of the mute inglorious heroines of history; and yet, born in another century, she might have stood side by side with Antigone—” For an instant he paused. “But she has always seemed to me diabolical,” he added.

“What she did, then, was so terrible that it has haunted the house ever since?” I asked again, for, wrapped in memories, he had lost the thread of his story.

“What she did was so terrible that the house has never forgotten. The thought in Lucy Dare’s mind during those hours while she made her choice has left an ineffaceable impression on the things that surrounded her. She created in the horror of that hour an unseen environment more real, because more spiritual, than the material fact of the house. You won’t believe this, of course—if people believed in the unseen as in the seen, would life be what it is?”

The afternoon light slept on the river; the birds were mute in the elm trees; from the garden of herbs at the end of the terrace an aromatic fragrance rose like invisible incense.

“To understand it all, you must remember that the South was dominated, was possessed by an idea—the idea of the Confederacy. It was an exalted idea supremely vivid, supremely romantic—but, after all, it was only an idea. It existed nowhere within the bounds of the actual unless the souls of its devoted people may be regarded as actual. But it is the dream, not the actuality, that commands the noblest devotion, the completest self—sacrifice. It is the dream, the ideal, that has ruled mankind from the beginning.

“I saw a great deal of the Dares that year. It was a lonely life I led after I lost my leg at Seven Pines and dropped out of the army, and, as you may imagine, a country doctor’s practice in wartimes was far from lucrative. Our one comfort was that we were all poor, that we were all starving together; and the Dares—there were only two of them, father and daughter—were as poor as the rest of us. They had given their last coin to the government had poured their last bushel of meal into the sacks of the army. I can imagine the superb gesture with which Lucy Dare flung her dearest heirloom—her one remaining brooch or pin— into the bare coffers of the Confederacy. She was a small woman, pretty rather than beautiful—not the least heroic in build—yet I wager that she was heroic enough on that occasion. She was a strange soul, though I never so much as suspected her strangeness while I knew her—while she moved among us with her small oval face, her gentle blue eyes, her smoothly banded hair, which shone like satin in the sunlight. Beauty she must have had in a way, though I confess a natural preference for queenly women; I dare say I should have preferred Octavia to Cleopatra, who, they tell me, was small and slight. But Lucy Dare wasn’t the sort to blind your eyes when you first looked at her. Her charm was like a fragrance rather than a color—a subtle fragrance that steals into the senses and is the last thing a man ever forgets. I knew half a dozen men who would have died for her—and yet she gave them nothing, nothing, barely a smile. She appeared cold—she who was destined to flame to life in an act. I can see her distinctly as she looked then, in that last year—grave, still, with the curious, unearthly loveliness that comes to pretty women who are underfed—who are slowly starving for bread and meat, for bodily nourishment. She had the look of one dedicated—as ethereal as a saint, and yet I never saw it at the time; I only remember it now, after fifty years, when I think of her. Starvation, when it is slow, not quick—when it means, not acute hunger, but merely lack of the right food, of the blood—making, nerve—building elements—starvation like this often plays strange pranks with one. The visions of the saints, the glories of martyrdom, come to the underfed, the anemic. Can you recall one of the saints—the genuine sort—whose regular diet was roast beef and ale?

“Well, I have said that Lucy Dare was a strange soul, and she was, though to this day I don’t know how much of her strangeness was the result of improper nourishment, of too little blood to the brain. Be that as it may, she seems to me when I look back on her to have been one

of those women whose characters are shaped entirely by external events—who are the playthings of circumstance. There are many such women. They move among us in obscurity—reserved, passive, commonplace—and we never suspect the spark of fire in their natures until it flares up at the touch of the unexpected. In ordinary circumstances Lucy Dare would have been ordinary, submissive, feminine, domestic; she adored children. That she possessed a stronger will than the average Southern girl, brought up in the conventional manner, none of us—least of all I, myself—ever imagined. She was, of course, intoxicated, obsessed, with the idea of the Confederacy; but, then, so were all of us. There wasn't anything unusual or abnormal in that exalted illusion. It was the common property of our generation. . . .

“Like most noncombatants, the Dares were extremists, and I, who had got rid of a little of my bad blood when I lost my leg, used to regret sometimes that the Colonel—I never knew where he got his title—was too old to do a share of the actual fighting. There is nothing that takes the fever out of one so quickly as a fight; and in the army I had never met a hint of this concentrated, vitriolic bitterness towards the enemy. Why, I've seen the Colonel, sitting here on this terrace, and crippled to the knees with gout, grow purple in the face if I spoke so much as a good word for the climate of the North. For him, and for the girl, too, the Lord had drawn a divine circle round the Confederacy. Everything inside of that circle was perfection; everything outside of it was evil. Well, that was fifty years ago, and his hate is all dust now; yet I can sit here, where he used to brood on this terrace, sipping his blackberry wine—I can sit here and remember it all as if it were yesterday. The place has changed so little, except for Duncan's grotesque additions to the wings, that one can scarcely believe all these years have passed over it. Many an afternoon just like this I've sat here, while the Colonel nodded and Lucy knitted for the soldiers, and watched these same shadows creep down the terrace and that mist of light—it looks just as it used to—hang there over the James. Even the smell from those herbs hasn't changed. Lucy used to keep her little garden at the end of the terrace, for she was fond of making essences and beauty lotions. I used to give her all the prescriptions I could find in old books I read—and I've heard people say that she owed her wonderful white skin to the concoctions she brewed from shrubs and herbs. I couldn't convince them that lack of meat, not lotions, was responsible for the pallor—pallor was all the fashion then—that they admired and envied.”

He stopped a minute, just long enough to refill his pipe, while I glanced with fresh interest at the garden of herbs.

“It was a March day when it happened,” he went on presently; “cloudless, mild, with the taste and smell of spring in the air. I had been at Dare's Gift almost every day for a year. We had

suffered together, hoped, feared, and wept together, hungered and sacrificed together. We had felt together the divine, invincible sway of an idea.

“Stop for a minute and picture to yourself what it is to be of a war and yet not in it; to live in imagination until the mind becomes inflamed with the vision; to have no outlet for the passion that consumes one except the outlet of thought. Add to this the fact that we really knew nothing. We were as far away from the truth, stranded here on our river, as if we had been anchored in a canal on Mars. Two men—one crippled, one too old to fight—and a girl—and the three living for a country which in a few weeks would be nothing—would be nowhere—not on any map of the world.

...

“When I look back now it seems to me incredible that at that time any persons in the Confederacy should have been ignorant of its want of resources. Yet remember we lived apart, remote, unvisited, out of touch with realities, thinking the one thought. We believed in the ultimate triumph of the South with that indomitable belief which is rooted not in reason, but in emotion. To believe had become an act of religion; to doubt was rank infidelity. So we sat there in our little world, the world of unrealities, bounded by the river and the garden, and talked from noon till sunset about our illusion—not daring to look a single naked fact in the face—talking of plenty when there were no crops in the ground and no flour in the storeroom, prophesying victory while the Confederacy was in her death struggle. Folly! All folly, and yet I am sure even now that we were sincere, that we believed the nonsense we were uttering. We believed, I have said, because to doubt would have been far too horrible. Hemmed in by the river and the garden, there wasn’t anything left for us to do since we couldn’t fight—but believe. Someone has said, or ought to have said, that faith is the last refuge of the inefficient. The twin devils of famine and despair were at work in the country, and we sat there—we three, on this damned terrace—and prophesied about the second president of the Confederacy. We agreed, I remember, that Lee would be the next president. And all the time, a few miles away, the demoralization of defeat was abroad, was around us, was in the air...

“It was a March afternoon when Lucy sent for me, and while I walked up the drive—there was not a horse left among us, and I made all my rounds on foot—I noticed that patches of spring flowers were blooming in the long grass on the lawn. The air was as soft as May, and in the woods at the back of the house buds of maple trees ran like a flame. There were, I remember, leaves—dead leaves, last year’s leaves—everywhere, as if, in the demoralization of panic, the place had been forgotten, had been untouched since autumn. I remember rotting leaves that gave like moss underfoot; dried leaves that stirred and murmured as one walked over them; black leaves, brown leaves, wine-colored leaves, and the still glossy leaves of the evergreens. But they were



everywhere—in the road, over the grass on the lawn, beside the steps, piled in wind drifts against the walls of the house.

“On the terrace, wrapped in shawls, the old Colonel was sitting; and he called out excitedly, ‘Are you bringing news of a victory?’ Victory! when the whole country had been scraped with a fine—tooth comb for provisions.

“No, I bring no news except that Mrs. Morson has just heard of the death of her youngest son in Petersburg. Gangrene, they say. The truth is the men are so ill—nourished that the smallest scratch turns to gangrene—’

“Well, it won’t be for long—not for long. Let Lee and Johnston get together and things will go our way with a rush. A victory or two, and the enemy will be asking for terms of peace before the summer is over.’

“A lock of his silver—white hair had fallen over his forehead, and pushing it back with his clawlike hand, he peered up at me with his little nearsighted eyes, which were of a peculiar burning blackness, like the eyes of some small enraged animal. I can see him now as vividly as if I had left him only an hour ago, and yet it is fifty years since then—fifty years filled with memories and with forgetfulness. Behind him the warm red of the bricks glowed as the sunshine fell, sprinkled with shadows, through the elm boughs. Even the soft wind was too much for him, for he shivered occasionally in his blanket shawls, and coughed the dry, hacking cough which had troubled him for a year. He was a shell of a man—a shell vitalized and animated by an immense, an indestructible illusion. While he sat there, sipping his blackberry wine, with his little fiery dark eyes searching the river in hope of something that would end his interminable expectancy, there was about him a fitful somber gleam of romance. For him the external world, the actual truth of things, had vanished all of it, that is, except the shawl that wrapped him and the glass of blackberry wine he sipped. He had died already to the material fact, but he lived intensely, vividly, profoundly, in the idea. It was the idea that nourished him, that gave him his one hold on reality.

“‘It was Lucy who sent for you,’ said the old man presently. ‘She has been on the upper veranda all day overlooking something—the sunning of winter clothes, I think. She wants to see you about one of the servants—a sick child, Nancy’s child, in the quarters.’

“‘Then I’ll find her,’ I answered readily, for I had, I confess, a mild curiosity to find out why Lucy had sent for me.

“She was alone on the upper veranda, and I noticed that she closed her Bible and laid it aside as I stepped through the long window that opened from the end of the hall. Her face, usually so pale, glowed now with a wan illumination, like ivory before the flame of a lamp. In this illumination her eyes, beneath delicately penciled eyebrows, looked unnaturally large and

brilliant, and so deeply, so angelically blue that they made me think of the Biblical heaven of my childhood. Her beauty, which had never struck me sharply before, pierced through me. But it was her fate—her misfortune perhaps—to appear commonplace, to pass unrecognized, until the fire shot from her soul.

“No, I want to see you about myself, not about one of the servants.’ “At my first question she had risen and held out her hand—a white, thin hand, small and frail as a child’s.

“You are not well, then?’ I had known from the first that her starved look meant something.

“It isn’t that; I am quite well.’ She paused a moment, and then looked at me with a clear shining gaze. ‘I have had a letter,’ she said.

“A letter?’ I have realized since how dull I must have seemed to her in that moment of excitement, of exaltation.

“You didn’t know. I forgot that you didn’t know that I was once engaged long ago—before the beginning of the war. I cared a great deal—we both cared a great deal, but he was not one of us; he was on the other side—and when the war came, of course there was no question. We broke if off; we had to break it off. How could it have been possible to do otherwise?’

“How, indeed!’ I murmured; and I had a vision of the old man downstairs on the terrace, of the intrepid and absurd old man.

“My first duty is to my country,’ she went on after a minute, and the words might have been spoken by her father. ‘There has been no thought of anything else in my mind since the beginning of the war. Even if peace comes I can never feel the same again I can never forget that he has been a part of all we have suffered—of the thing that has made us suffer. I could never forget—I can never forgive.’

“Her words sound strange now, you think, after fifty years; but on that day, in this house surrounded by dead leaves, inhabited by an inextinguishable ideal—in this country, where the spirit had fed on the body until the impoverished brain reacted to transcendent visions—in this place, at that time, they were natural enough. Scarcely a woman of the South but would have uttered them from her soul. In every age one ideal enthalls the imagination of mankind; it is in the air; it subjugates the will; it enchants the emotions. Well, in the South fifty years ago this ideal was patriotism; and the passion of patriotism, which bloomed like some red flower, the flower of carnage, over the land, had grown in Lucy Dare’s soul into an exotic blossom.

“Yet even today, after fifty years, I cannot get over the impression she made upon me of a woman who was, in the essence of her nature, thin and colorless. I may have been wrong. Perhaps I never knew her. It is not easy to judge people, especially women, who wear a mask by instinct.

What I thought lack of character, of personality, may have been merely reticence; but again and again there comes back to me the thought that she never said or did a thing—except the one terrible thing—that one could remember. There was nothing remarkable that one could point to about her. I cannot recall either her smile or her voice, though both were sweet, no doubt, as the smile and the voice of a Southern woman would be. Until that morning on the upper veranda I had not noticed that her eyes were wonderful. She was like a shadow, a phantom, that attains in one supreme instant, by one immortal gesture, union with reality. Even I remember her only by that one lurid flash.

“And you say you have had a letter?”

“It was brought by one of the old servants—Jacob, the one who used to wait on him when he stayed here. He was a prisoner. A few days ago he escaped. He asked me to see him—and I told him to come. He wishes to see me once again before he goes North—forever—’ She spoke in gasps in a dry voice. Never once did she mention his name. Long afterwards I remembered that I had never heard his name spoken. Even today I do not know it. He also was a shadow, a phantom—a part of the encompassing unreality.

“And he will come here?”

“For a moment she hesitated; then she spoke quite simply, knowing that she could trust me.

“‘He is here. He is in the chamber beyond.’ She pointed to one of the long windows that gave on the veranda. ‘The blue chamber at the front.’

“‘I remember that I made a step towards the window when her voice arrested me. ‘Don’t go in. He is resting. He is very tired and hungry.’

“‘You didn’t send for me, then, to see him?’

“‘I sent for you to be with father. I knew you would help me—that you would keep him from suspecting. He must not know, of course. He must be kept quiet.’

“‘I will stay with him,’ I answered, and then, ‘Is that all you wish to say to me?’

“‘That is all. It is only for a day or two. He will go on in a little while, and I can never see him again. I do not wish to see him again.’

“I turned away, across the veranda, entered the hall, walked the length of it, and descended the staircase. The sun was going down in a ball—just as it will begin to go down in a few minutes—and as I descended the stairs I saw it through the mullioned window over the door—huge and red and round above the black cloud of the cedars.

“The old man was still on the terrace. I wondered vaguely why the servants had not brought him indoors; and then, as I stepped over the threshold, I saw that a company of soldiers—

Confederates—had crossed the lawn and were already gathering about the house. The commanding officer—I was shaking hands with him presently—was a Dare, a distant cousin of the Colonel's, one of those excitable, nervous, and slightly theatrical natures who become utterly demoralized under the spell of any violent emotion. He had been wounded at least a dozen times, and his lean, sallow, still handsome features had the greenish look which I had learned to associate with chronic malaria.

“When I look back now I can see it all as a part of the general disorganization—of the fever, the malnutrition, the complete demoralization of panic. I know now that each man of us was facing in his soul defeat and despair; and that we—each one of us—had gone mad with the thought of it. In a little while, after the certainty of failure had come to us, we met it quietly—we braced our souls for the issue; but in those last weeks defeat had all the horror, all the insane terror of a nightmare, and all the vividness. The thought was like a delusion from which we fled, and which no flight could put farther away from us.

“Have you ever lived, I wonder, from day to day in that ever—present and unchanging sense of unreality, as if the moment before you were but an imaginary experience which must dissolve and evaporate before the touch of an actual event? Well, that was the sensation I had felt for days, weeks, months, and it swept over me again while I stood there, shaking hands with the Colonel's cousin, on the terrace. The soldiers, in their ragged uniforms, appeared as visionary as the world in which we had been living. I think now that they were as ignorant as we were of the things that had happened—that were happening day by day to the army. The truth is that it was impossible for a single one of us to believe that our heroic army could be beaten even by unseen powers—even by hunger and death.

“‘And you say he was a prisoner?’ It was the old man's quavering voice, and it sounded avid for news, for certainty.

‘Caught in disguise. Then he slipped through our fingers.’ The cousin's tone was querulous, as if he were irritated by loss of sleep or of food. ‘Nobody knows how it happened. Nobody ever knows. But he has found out things that will ruin us. He has plans. He has learned things that mean the fall of Richmond if he escapes.’

“Since then I have wondered how much they sincerely believed—how much was simply the hallucination of fever, of desperation? Were they trying to bully themselves by violence into hoping? Or had they honestly convinced themselves that victory was still possible? If one only repeats a phrase often and emphatically enough one comes in time to believe it; and they had talked so long of that coming triumph, of the established Confederacy, that it had ceased to be, for

them at least, merely a phrase. It wasn't the first occasion in life when I had seen words bullied—yes, literally bullied into beliefs.

“Well, looking back now after fifty years, you see, of course, the weakness of it all, the futility. At that instant, when all was lost, how could any plans, any plotting have ruined us? It seems irrational enough now—a dream, a shadow, that belief—and yet not one of us but would have given our lives for it. In order to understand you must remember that we were, one and all, victims of an idea—of a divine frenzy.

“And we are lost—the Confederacy is lost, you say, if he escapes?”

“It was Lucy's voice; and turning quickly, I saw that she was standing in the doorway. She must have followed me closely. It was possible that she had overheard every word of the conversation.

“If Lucy knows anything, she will tell you. There is no need to search the house,” quavered the old man, ‘she is my daughter.’

“Of course we wouldn't search the house—not Dare's Gift,” said the cousin. He was excited, famished, malarial, but he was a gentleman, every inch of him.

“He talked on rapidly, giving details of the capture, the escape, the pursuit. It was all rather confused. I think he must have frightfully exaggerated the incident. Nothing could have been more unreal than it sounded. And he was just out of a hospital—was suffering still, I could see, from malaria. While he drank his blackberry wine—the best the house had to offer—I remember wishing that I had a good dose of quinine and whiskey to give him.

“The narrative lasted a long time; I think he was glad of a rest and of the blackberry wine and biscuits. Lucy had gone to fetch food for the soldiers; but after she had brought it she sat down in her accustomed chair by the old man's side and bent her head over her knitting. She was a wonderful knitter. During all the years of the war I seldom saw her without her ball of yarn and her needles—the long wooden kind that the women used at the time. Even after the dusk fell in the evenings the click of her needles sounded in the darkness.

“And if he escapes it will mean the capture of Richmond?” she asked once again when the story was finished. There was no hint of excitement in her manner. Her voice was perfectly toneless. To this day I have no idea what she felt—what she was thinking.

“If he gets away it is the ruin of us—but he won't get away. We'll find him before morning.”

“Rising from his chair, he turned to shake hands with the old man before descending the steps. ‘We've got to go on now. I shouldn't have stopped if we hadn't been half starved. You've done us a world of good, Cousin Lucy. I reckon you'd give your last crust to the soldiers?’

“‘She’d give more than that,’ quavered the old man. ‘You’d give more than that, wouldn’t you, Lucy?’

“‘Yes, I’d give more than that,’ repeated the girl quietly, so quietly that it came as a shock to me—like a throb of actual pain in the midst of a nightmare—when she rose to her feet and added, without a movement, without a gesture, ‘You must not go, Cousin George. He is upstairs in the blue chamber at the front of the house.’

“For an instant surprise held me speechless, transfixed, incredulous; and in that instant I saw a face—a white face of horror and disbelief—look down on us from one of the side windows of the blue chamber. Then, in a rush it seemed to me the soldiers were everywhere, swarming over the terrace, into the hall, surrounding the house. I had never imagined that a small body of men in uniforms, even ragged uniforms, could so possess and obscure one’s surroundings. The three of us waited there—Lucy had sat down again and taken up her knitting—for what seemed hours, or an eternity. We were still waiting—though, for once, I noticed, the needles did not click in her fingers—when a single shot, followed by a volley, rang out from the rear of the house, from the veranda that looked down on the grove of oaks and the kitchen.

“Rising, I left them—the old man and the girl—and passed from the terrace down the little walk which led to the back. As I reached the lower veranda one of the soldiers ran into me.

“‘I was coming after you,’ he said, and I observed that his excitement had left him. ‘We brought him down while he was trying to jump from the veranda. He is there now on the grass.’

“The man on the grass was quite dead, shot through the heart; and while I bent over to wipe the blood from his lips, I saw him for the first time distinctly. A young face, hardly more than a boy—twenty—five at the most. Handsome, too, in a poetic and dreamy way; just the face, I thought, that a woman might have fallen in love with. He had dark hair, I remember, though his features have long ago faded from my memory. What will never fade, what I shall never forget, is the look he wore—the look he was still wearing when we laid him in the old graveyard next day—a look of mingled surprise, disbelief, terror, and indignation.

“I had done all that I could, which was nothing, and rising to my feet, I saw for the first time that Lucy had joined me. She was standing perfectly motionless. Her knitting was still in her hands, but the light had gone from her face, and she looked old—old and gray—beside the glowing youth of her lover. For a moment her eyes held me while she spoke as quietly as she had spoken to the soldiers on the terrace.

“‘I had to do it,’ she said. ‘I would do it again.’”

Suddenly, like the cessation of running water, or of wind in the treetops, the doctor's voice ceased. For a long pause we stared in silence at the sunset; then, without looking at me, he added slowly:

"Three weeks later Lee surrendered and the Confederacy was over."

### III

The sun had slipped, as if by magic, behind the tops of the cedars, and dusk fell quickly, like a heavy shadow, over the terrace. In the dimness a piercing sweetness floated up from the garden of herbs, and it seemed to me that in a minute the twilight was saturated with fragrance. Then I heard the cry of a solitary whippoorwill in the graveyard, and it sounded so near that I started.

"So she died of the futility, and her unhappy ghost haunts the house?"

"No, she is not dead. It is not her ghost; it is the memory of her act that has haunted the house. Lucy Dare is still living. I saw her a few months ago."

"You saw her? You spoke to her after all these years?"

He had refilled his pipe, and the smell of it gave me a comfortable assurance that I was living here, now, in the present. A moment ago I had shivered as if the hand of the past, reaching from the open door at my back, had touched my shoulder.

"I was in Richmond. My friend Beverly, an old classmate, had asked me up for a weekend, and on Saturday afternoon, before motoring into the country for supper, we started out to make a few calls which had been left over from the morning. For a doctor, a busy doctor, he had always seemed to me to possess unlimited leisure, so I was not surprised when a single visit sometimes stretched over twenty—five minutes. We had stopped several times, and I confess that I was getting a little impatient when he remarked abruptly while he turned his car into a shady street,

"'There is only one more. If you don't mind, I'd like you to see her. She is a friend of yours, I believe.'

"Before us, as the car stopped, I saw a red—brick house, very large, with green shutters, and over the wide door, which stood open, a sign reading 'St. Luke's Church Home.' Several old ladies sat, half asleep, on the long veranda; a clergyman, with a prayer book in his hand, was just leaving; a few pots of red geraniums stood on little green wicker stands; and from the hall, through which floated the smell of freshly baked bread, there came the music of a Victrola—sacred music, I remember. Not one of these details escaped me. It was as if every trivial impression was stamped indelibly in my memory by the shock of the next instant.

“In the center of the large, smoothly shaven lawn an old woman was sitting on a wooden bench under an ailanthus tree which was in blossom. As we approached her, I saw that her figure was shapeless, and that her eyes, of a faded blue, had the vacant and listless expression of the old who have ceased to think, who have ceased even to wonder or regret. So unlike was she to anything I had ever imagined Lucy Dare could become, that not until my friend called her name and she glanced up from the muffler she was knitting—the omnipresent dun—colored muffler for the war relief associations—not until then did I recognize her.

“‘I have brought an old friend to see you, Miss Lucy.’

“She looked up, smiled slightly, and after greeting me pleasantly, relapsed into silence. I remembered that the Lucy Dare I had known was never much of a talker.

“Dropping on the bench at her side, my friend began asking her about her sciatica, and, to my surprise, she became almost animated. Yes, the pain in her hip was better—far better than it had been for weeks. The new medicine had done her a great deal of good; but her fingers were getting rheumatic. She found trouble holding her needles. She couldn’t knit as fast as she used to.

“Unfolding the end of the muffler, she held it out to us. ‘I have managed to do twenty of these since Christmas. I’ve promised fifty to the War Relief Association by autumn, and if my finger don’t get stiff I can easily do them.’

“The sunshine falling through the ailanthus tree powdered with dusty gold her shapeless, relaxed figure and the dun—colored wool of the muffler. While she talked her fingers flew with the click of the needles—older fingers than they had been at Dare’s Gift, heavier, stiffer, and little knotted in the joints. As I watched her the old familiar sense of strangeness, of encompassing and hostile mystery, stole over me.

“When we rose to go she looked up, and, without pausing for an instant in her knitting, said, gravely, ‘It gives me something to do, this work for the Allies. It helps to pass the time, and in an Old Ladies’ Hoe one has so much time on one’s hands.’

“Then, as we parted from her, she dropped her eyes again to her needles. Looking back at the gate, I saw that she still sat there in the faint sunshine—knitting—knitting—”

“And you think she has forgotten?”

He hesitated, as if gathering his thoughts. “I was with her when she came back from the shock—from the illness that followed—and she had forgotten. Yes, she has forgotten, but the house has remembered.”

Pushing back from his chair, he rose unsteadily on his crutch, and stood staring across that twilight which was spangled with fireflies. While I waited I heard again the loud cry of the whippoorwill.

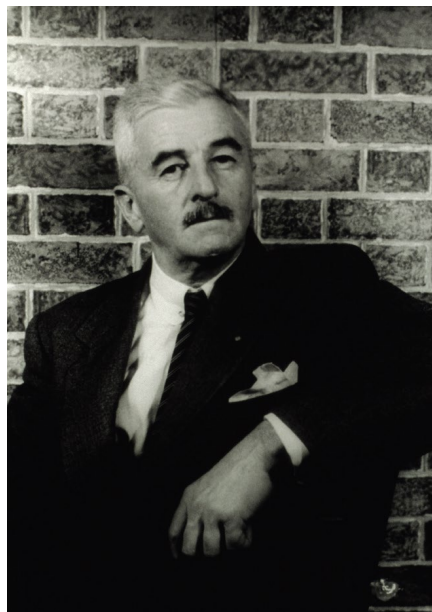


“Well, what could one expect?” he asked, presently. “She had drained the whole experience in an instant, and there was left to her only the empty and withered husks of the hours. She had felt too much ever to feel again. After all,” he added slowly, “it is the high moments that make a life, and the flat ones that fill the years.”

### 5.15.2 Reading and Review Questions

1. What does the title “Dare’s Gift” mean?
2. How is Mildred affected by past events in the house, according to Dr. Lakeby? How does Dr. Lakeby present the events in the house as scientific rather than supernatural? Does he believe his own explanations?
3. Examine the theme of betrayal in the story.
4. How are Mildred’s and Lucy’s decisions and actions similar or different?
5. Why does Lucy have no memory of her decision to turn in her fiancé?
6. What role does the past play in the story, especially the past as represented by the Old South?

## 5.16 WILLIAM FAULKNER (1897-1962)



**Image 5.13 | William Faulkner, 1954**

Photographer | Carl Van Vechten

William Faulkner is the most important writer of the Southern Renaissance. Flannery O'Connor once compared the overpowering force of his influence to a thundering train, remarking that “nobody wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track the **Dixie Limited** is roaring down.” Faulkner was born in Mississippi and raised on tales of his legendary great-great grandfather—the “Old Colonel,” who led a group of raiders in the civil war, built his own railroad, served in the state legislature, and was murdered by a political rival—and prominent great-grandfather, the “Young Colonel,” who was an assistant United States attorney and banker. Dropping out of high school, Faulkner left Mississippi to pursue his interests in drawing and poetry. During World War I, Faulkner pretended to be English and enlisted in the Royal Air Force, although he never saw combat. He picked up his poetic career after the war, ultimately publishing his first book in 1924, a collection of poetry called *The Marble Faun*. Turning his attention to fiction writing, Faulkner then wrote two timely novels. His first novel, *Soldier's Pay* (1926), explores the states of mind of those who did and did not fight in World War I. His second novel, *Mosquitos* (1927), exposes the triviality of the New Orleans art community of which Faulkner was briefly a part. However, it is with his third novel, *Sartoris* (1929), that Faulkner made what he called his “great discovery”: the fictional possibilities contained within his home state of Mississippi. Returning to Oxford, MI, with his new wife, Faulkner moved into an antebellum mansion and began turning the tales he heard growing up about his hometown and surrounding area into one of the greatest inventions in American literary history: Yoknapatawpha County.

Faulkner eventually wrote thirteen novels set in Yoknapatawpha County. Beginning with his fourth novel, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Faulkner began to incorporate modernist literary techniques such as stream-of-consciousness narration and non-linear plotting into his already lofty style. *The Sound and the Fury* describes the fall of the Compson family through four distinct psychological points of view, one of which is that of a young man who commits suicide, and another belonging to an illiterate who is severely mentally handicapped. *As I Lay Dying* (1930) describes the death and burial of a matriarch from the perspective of fifteen different characters in fifty-seven sections of often stream-of-consciousness prose. In *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), four narrators relate the same story yet also change it to arrive at four very different meanings. Modernist techniques such as these enabled Faulkner to show how the particulars of everyday life in the rural American South dramatize what he saw as the universal truths of humanity as a whole. While stylistically modernist, Faulkner's collective epic of Yoknapatawpha County ultimately explores not so much the future of narrative as the human condition itself as

lensed through generation-spanning histories of great and low families. Two of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha stories are included here: "Barn Burning," an early story of the Snopes family about whom Faulkner would eventually write a trilogy of novels; and "A Rose for Emily," one of his many tales about the decline of formerly-great Southern families. These short stories are good representatives of both the range of Faulkner's style and his ambition as a storyteller. In deeply regional tales that are at once grotesque, tragic, brilliant, profound, loving, and hilarious, Faulkner leads us to the source, as he once put it, from which drama flows: "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself."

### **5.16.1 "A Rose for emily"**

Please click the link below to access this selection:

[http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/wf\\_rose.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/wf_rose.html)

### **5.16.2 "Barn Burning"**

Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://www.griffinhighschool.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Barn-Burning-by-William-Faulkner-1.pdf>

### **5.16.3 Reading and Review Questions**

1. At the end of "Barn Burning," what is young Sarty running from? Why does he not look back?
2. Why does Abner Snopes burn barns?
3. Why is the discovery of the single grey hair at the end of "A Rose for Emily" significant?
4. Faulkner received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. In his award speech, he lamented that many of America's young authors had forgotten "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing." Discuss how "Barn Burning" and "A Rose for Emily" show the human heart in conflict with itself.
5. How does Faulkner represent the relationship between parents and children in "Barn Burning"?

## 5.17 EUDORA ALICE WELTY (1909-2001)



**Image 5.14 | Eudora Alice Welty, 1988**

Photographer | Mildred Nungester Wolfe

Source | National Portrait Gallery

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Eudora Alice Welty was born in Jackson, Mississippi, the daughter of an insurance agent father and a retired teacher mother. Her family had moved to Mississippi from the Ohio Valley region, and Welty enjoyed an idyllic childhood spent in Mississippi with summers visiting relatives in the Midwest. While in high school, Welty published works in a national magazine before attending Mississippi State College for Women for an Associate degree, then transferring to the University of Wisconsin in order to finish her Bachelor's degree in English. After earning that degree (1929), Welty enrolled at Columbia University but could not find full time work in New York City during the depression; due to finances, she returned home to Jackson (1931) where she would reside for the rest of her life.

Once home, Welty held a series of jobs to help support her mother, including working as a publicity agent for the Works Progress Administration (WPA). In 1936, Welty published her first short story, "Death of a Traveling Salesman," in *Manuscript* magazine. After this success, she continued to publish in many prominent journals and magazines, including *Harper's Bazaar* and *Atlantic Monthly*. Her first collection of short stories, *A Curtain of Green and Other Stories* (1941), was largely well-received. Her follow-up novella, *The Robber Bridegroom* (1942), brought her national attention. Soon, Welty was receiving encouragement from fellow Mississippi native William Faulkner.

In both 1943 and 1944, Welty won the O. Henry Award, a prestigious award given for outstanding short fiction. Soon after, Welty would go on to write her classic, *The Golden Apples* (1949). After publishing *The Bride of the Innisfallen* (1955), Welty took a fifteen-year hiatus from writing fiction before returning with her novel, *The Optimist Daughter* (1972), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. In 1980, Welty was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom before publishing her best-selling autobiography, *One Writer's Beginnings*. Welty died in Jackson, Mississippi in 2001.

Although she won a Pulitzer Prize for her novel, *The Optimist's Daughter*, Welty is largely known as a master of short fiction. Her work engages Southern themes, often dealing with the problems of post-Reconstruction South. "A Worn Path," originally published in *Atlantic Monthly*, is one of Welty's most famous and most anthologized short stories. It transposes the hero's journey (tales in which a hero sets off on an adventure and is changed at the end) on to a seemingly simple tale of an elderly African-American grandmother, Phoenix Jackson, retrieving medication for her sick grandson.

#### **5.17.1 "A Worn Path"**

Please click the link below to access this selection:

[http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/ew\\_path.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~drbr/ew_path.html)

#### **5.17.2 Reading and Review Questions**

1. Do you think Phoenix Jackson's grandson is still alive? Why, or why not?
2. What is the significance of her name, Phoenix? Why is this important in the context of the story?
3. How does Welty take the details of the mundane and transform them into the mystical?

### **5.18 THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE**

The early years of the twentieth century transformed the United States from a nation of agrarian settlers into a nation of industrial immigrants. With the collapse of the plantation economy and the closing of the western frontier, the United States suddenly became a nation of city-dwellers. The urban economies of the north thrived during this period, and internal migration brought about significant changes in cultural production. While these migratory patterns often

reinforced regional identities, they also provided the conditions for the creation of new identities. For African-Americans of the early twentieth century, the Harlem Renaissance was the most significant period of cultural formation since the end of the Civil War.

The Harlem Renaissance is commonly defined as a period of cultural activity by African-American artists that began in Harlem, a New York City neighborhood in northern Manhattan, in the 1920s and ended in the years leading up to World War II. Yet that short span of approximately fifteen years neither accurately describes the period, nor indicates the lasting influence that the Harlem Renaissance continues to have on American literature. In order to locate the roots of the Harlem Renaissance, we need to go back at least as far as 1910 and the founding of *The Crisis*, the journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Many members of the Harlem Renaissance, including early luminaries such as Countee Cullen and Jessie Redmon Fauset, were closely associated with *The Crisis* and with the high ideals of its editorial page “[to] stand for the right of men, irrespective of color or race, for the highest ideals of American democracy” (Du Bois, November 1910). This dedication to the idealized principles of American democracy and a celebration of the achievements of African-Americans had a direct influence on the early members of the Harlem Renaissance. Many, like Cullen and Fauset, were highly and traditionally educated, and their poetry and fiction descend directly from the English literary traditions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While other African-American writers of the time embraced folklore traditions, Cullen and many others celebrated their association with the highest forms of English literature.

From the very beginnings of the Harlem Renaissance, the movement lacked unity. Although some members embraced the high language of Du Bois and those closest to him, others argued for a literature that responded to the writers’ African heritage instead of their European connection. Alain Locke’s *The New Negro* (1925) is often regarded as the manifesto of this pan-Africanism. Writers like Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston, are often considered to be part of this second branch of the Harlem Renaissance.

By the 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance no longer signified a unified artistic ideal, and its many voices and members were scattered around the globe by evolving racial tensions in the United States. Beyond Harlem, African-American communities were thriving in cities like Chicago, Memphis, Detroit, Baltimore, Washington, and Pittsburgh; furthermore, the wars in Europe were redrawing political boundaries worldwide. Almost as quickly as it began, the Harlem Renaissance faded, but it left behind a legacy of independence in literature, music, and art that can be traced directly to jazz, the blues, Motown, rock, rap, and hip-hop.

## 5.19 JESSIE REDMON FAUSET (1882-1961)



**Image 5.15 | Jessie Redmon Fauset, n.d.**

Photographer | Unknown

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Jessie Redmon Fauset, like her younger contemporary Countee Cullen, belongs to the first generation of Harlem Renaissance writers who used traditional literary forms to explore issues important to the African-American community. In this way, the growth of these writers can be likened to the path traced by nineteenth-century British women writers and outlined in Elaine Showalter's book *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). In her study of women writers, Showalter traced three stages of literary development. In the first stage, underrepresented authors use traditional forms and adopt traditional viewpoints in order to gain wider acceptance. In the second stage, authors begin to use traditional forms to advance new viewpoints while, in the third stage, authors adopt new forms to advance progressive viewpoints. In many ways, these same three stages that Showalter assigned to British women writers of the nineteenth century can be applied to the writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Both Fauset and Cullen can be classified as second stage writers: those who used traditional forms to celebrate new ideas.

For much of the early twentieth century, Fauset was the literary editor of *The Crisis*, and her selections, as well as her own writing, adhered to W. E. B. Du Bois's mission statement for the magazine:

The object of this publication is to set forth those facts and arguments which show the danger of race prejudice, particularly as manifested today toward colored people. The

policy of *The Crisis* will be simple and well defined: It will first and foremost be a newspaper, Secondly it will be a review of opinion and literature, . . . Thirdly it will publish a few short articles, Finally, its editorial page will stand for the right of men, irrespective of color or race, for the highest ideals of American democracy, and for reasonable but earnest and persistent attempt to gain these rights and realize these ideals. The Magazine will be the organ of no clique or party and will avoid personal rancor of all sorts. In the absence of proof to the contrary it will assume honesty of purpose on the part of all men, North and South, white and black.<sup>5</sup>

As the first African-American elected to the Phi Beta Kappa honor society at Cornell University (1905) and as a master's graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Fauset was well positioned to advance Du Bois's goals. Like Cullen and other early members of the Harlem Renaissance, Fauset was an articulate voice for a certain segment of the African-American community.

While Fauset's relatively privileged position granted her access to mainstream literary circles of her time, this same privilege ultimately alienated her from other members of the Harlem Renaissance. Many of Fauset's works concern the struggles of light-skinned, middle-class African-Americans to assimilate and succeed over the limitations of their racial identities, and this largely positive portrayal of assimilation and passing angered other members of the movement like Langston Hughes who argued for a full embrace of African-American racial identity.

The selection from Fauset, "The Sleeper Wakes" (1920), challenges both our preconceptions about Fauset and the attacks on her by Hughes. Although the story directly concerns the life of a light-skinned African-American who is married to a white husband, Fauset's heroine, Amy, is ultimately unsettled by her success at passing. Stirred to action by her husband's mistreatment of an African-American servant, Amy recognizes her racial identity and awakens as the title suggests. Awakened to her racial identity, Amy leaves her husband and his money behind in order to live a more direct representation of her identity. Although Fauset and Cullen both embrace traditional literary forms, their presentation of race demonstrates their active engagement with issues of identity, politics, and the promises of the American experiment that are more progressive than their forms suggest.

### **5.19.1 "The Sleeper Wakes"**

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<sup>5</sup> "The Crisis." Editorial. *The Crisis*. ed. Nov. 1910. Web. 10 Dec. 2015.



Amy recognized the incident as the beginning of one of her phases. Always from a child she had been able to tell when “something was going to happen.” She had been standing in Marshall’s store, her young, eager gaze intent on the lovely little sample dress which was not from Paris, but quite as dainty as anything that Paris could produce. It was not the lines or even the texture that fascinated Amy so much, it was the grouping of colors—of shades. She knew the combination was just right for her.

Let me slip it on, Miss,” said the saleswoman suddenly. She had nothing to do just then, and the girl was so evidently charmed and so pretty—it was a pleasure to wait on her.

“Oh no,” Amy had stammered. “I haven’t time.” She had already wasted two hours at the movies, and she knew at home they were waiting for her.

The saleswoman slipped the dress over the girl’s pink blouse, and tucked the linen collar under so as to bring the edge of the dress next to her pretty neck. The dress was apricot-color shading into a shell pink and the shell pink shaded off again into the pearl and pink whiteness of Amy’s skin. The saleswoman beamed as Amy, entranced, surveyed herself naively in the tall looking-glass.

Then it was that the incident befell. Two men walking idly through the dress-salon stopped and looked—she made an unbelievably pretty picture. One of them with a short, soft brown beard,—“fuzzy” Amy thought to herself as she caught his glance in the mirror—spoke to his companion.

“Jove, how I’d like to paint her!” But it was the look on the other man’s face that caught her and thrilled her. “My God! Can’t a girl be beautiful!” he said half to himself. The pair passed on.

Amy stepped out of the dress and thanked the saleswoman half absently. She wanted to get home and think, think to herself about that look. She had seen it before in men’s eyes, it had been in the eyes of the men in the moving-picture which she had seen that afternoon. But she had not thought *she* could cause it. Shut up in her little room, she pondered over it. Her beauty,—she was really good-looking then—she could stir people—men! A girl of seventeen has no psychology, she does not go beneath the surface, she accepts. But she knew she was entering on one of her phases.

She was always living in some sort of story. She had started it when as a child of five she had driven with the tall, proud, white woman to Mrs. Boldin’s home. Mrs. Boldin was a bride of one year’s standing then. She was slender and very, very comely, with her rich brown skin and her hair that crinkled thick and soft above a low forehead. The house was still redolent of new

furniture; Mr. Boldin was spick and span—he, unlike the furniture, remained so for that matter. The white woman had told Amy that this henceforth was to be her home.

Amy was curious, fond of adventure; she did not cry. She did not, of course, realize that she was to stay here indefinitely, but if she had, even at that age she would hardly have shed tears, she was always too eager, too curious to know, to taste what was going to happen next. Still since she had had almost no dealings with colored people and knew absolutely none of the class to which Mrs. Boldin belonged, she did venture one question.

“Am I going to be colored now?”

The tall white woman had flushed and paled. “You—” she began, but the words choked her. “Yes, you are going to be colored now,” she ended finally. She was a proud woman, in a moment she had recovered her usual poise. Amy carried with her for many years the memory of that proud head. She never saw her again.

When she was sixteen she asked Mrs. Boldin the question which in the light of that memory had puzzled her always. “Mrs. Boldin, tell me—am I white or colored?”

And Mrs. Boldin had told her and told her truly that she did not know.

“A—a—mee!” Mrs. Boldin’s voice mounted on the last syllable in a shrill crescendo. Amy rose and went downstairs.

Down in the comfortable, but rather shabby dining-room which the Boldins used after meals to sit in, Mr. Boldin, a tall black man, with aristocratic features, sat reading; little Cornelius Boldin sat practicing on a cornet, and Mrs. Boldin sat rocking. In all of their eyes was the manifestation of the light that Amy loved, but how truly she loved it, she was not to guess till years later.

“Amy,” Mr. Boldin paused in her rocking, “did you get the braid?” Of course she had not, though that was the thing she had gone to Marshall’s for. Amy always went willingly, it was for the pure joy of going. Who knew what angels might meet one unawares? Not that Amy thought in biblical or in literary phrases. She was in the High School, it is true, but she was simply passing through, “getting by” she would have said carelessly. The only reading that had ever made any impression on her had been fairy tales read to her in those long remote days when she had lived with the tall, proud woman; and descriptions in novels or histories of beautiful stately palaces tenanted by beautiful, stately women. She could pore over such pages for hours, her face flushed, her eyes eager.

At present she cast about for an excuse. She had so meant to get the braid. “There was a dress—” she began lamely, she was never deliberately dishonest.

Mr. Boldin cleared his throat and nervously fingered his paper. Cornelius ceased his awful playing and blinked at her shortsightedly through his thick glasses. Both of these, the man and the little boy, loved the beautiful, inconsequential creature with her airy, irresponsible ways. But Mrs. Boldin loved her too, and because she loved her she could not scold.

“Of course you forgot,” she began chidingly. Then she smiled. “There was a dress that you looked at *perhaps*. But confess, didn’t you go to the movies first?”

Yes, Amy confessed she had done just that. “And oh, Mrd. Boldin, it was the most wonderful picture—a girl—such a pretty one—and she was poor, awfully. And somehow se met the most wonderful people and they were so kind to her. And she married a man who was just tremendously rich and he gave her everything. I did so want Cornelius to see it.”

“Huh!” said Cornelius who had been listening not because he was interested, but because he wanted to call Amy’s attention to his playing as soon as possible. “Huh! I don’t want to look at no pretty girl. Did they have anybody looping the loop in an airship?”

“You’d better stop seeing pretty girl pictures, Amy,” said Mr. Boldin kindly. “They’re not always true to life. Besides, I know where you can see all the pretty girls you want without bothering to pay twenty-five cents for it.”

Amy smiled at the implied compliment and went on happily studying her lessons. They were all happy in their own way. Amy because she was sure of their love and admiration, Mr. and Mrs. Boldin because of her beauty and innocence and Cornelius because he knew he had in his foster-sister a listener whom his terrible practicing could never bore. He played brokenly a piece he had found in an old music-book. “*There’s an aching void in every heart, brother.*”

“Where *do* you pick up those old things, Neely?” said his mother fretfully. But Amy could not have her favorite’s feelings injured.

“I think it’s lovely,” she announced defensively. “Cornelius, I’ll ask Sadie Murray to lend me her brother’s book. He’s learning the cornet, too, and you can get some new pieces. Of, isn’t it awful to have to go to bed? Good-night, everybody.” She smiled her charming, ever ready smile, the mere reflex of youth and beauty and content.

“You do spoil her, Mattie,” said Mr. Boldin after she had left the room. “She’s only seventeen—here, Cornelius, you go to bed—but it seems to me she ought to be more dependable about errands. Though she is splendid about some things,” he defended her. “Look how willingly she goes off to bed. She’ll be asleep before she knows it when most girls of her age would want to be in the street.”

But upstairs Amy was far from sleep. She lit on gas-jet and pulled down the shades. Then she stuffed tissue paper in the keyhole and under the doors, and lit the remaining gas-jets. The

light thus thrown on the mirror of the ugly oak dresser was perfect. She slipped off the pink blouse and found two scarfs, a soft yellow and soft pink,— she had had them in a scarf-dance for a school entertainment. She wound them and draped them about her pretty shoulders and loosened her hair. In the mirror she apostrophized the beautiful, glowing vision of herself.

“There,” she said, “I’m like the girl in the picture. She had nothing but her beautiful face—and she did so want to be happy.” She sat down on the side of the rather lumpy bed and stretched out her arms. “I want to be happy, too.” She intoned it earnestly, almost like an incantation. “I want wonderful clothes, and people around me, men adoring me, and the world before me. I want—everything! It will come, it will all come because I want it so.” She sat frowning intently as she was apt to do when very much engrossed. “And we’d all be so happy. I’d give Mr. and Mrs. Boldin money! And Cornelius—he’d go to college and learn all about his old airships. Oh, if I only knew how to begin!”

Smiling, she turned off the lights and crept to bed.

## II

Quite suddenly she knew she was going to run away. That was in October. By December she had accomplished her purpose. Not that she was to least bit unhappy but because she must get out in the world,—she felt caged, imprisoned. “Trenton is stifling me,” she would have told you, in her unconsciously adopted “movie” diction. New York she knew was the place for her. She had her plans all made. She had sewed steadily after school for two months—as she frequently did when she wanted to buy her season’s wardrobe, so besides her carfare she had \$25. She went immediately to a white Y. W. C. A., stayed there two nights, found and answered an advertisement for clerk and waitress in a small confectionery and bakery-shop, was accepted and there she was launched.

Perhaps it was because of her early experience when as a tiny child she was taken from that so different home and left at Mrs. Boldin’s, perhaps it was some fault in her own disposition, concentrated and egotistic as she was, but certainly she felt no pangs of separation, no fear of her future. She was cold too,—unfired though so to speak rather than icy,—and fastidious. This last quality kept her safe where morality or religion, of neither of which had she any conscious endowment, would have availed her nothing. Unbelievably then she lived two years in New York, unspoiled, untouched going to her work on the edge of Greenwich Village early and coming back late, knowing almost no one and yet altogether happy in the expectation of something wonderful, which she knew some day must happen.

It was at the end of the second year that she met Zora Harrisson. Zora used to come into lunch with a group of habitués of the place—all of them artists and writers Amy gathered. Mrs. Harrisson (for she was married as Amy later learned) appealed to the girl because she knew so well how to afford the contrast to her blonde, golden beauty. Purple, dark and regal, developed in velvets and heavy silks, and strange marine blues she wore, and thus made Amy absolutely happy. Singularly enough, the girl intent as she was on her own life and experiences, had felt up to this time no yearning to know these strange, happy beings who surrounded her. She did miss Cornelius, but otherwise she was never lonely, or if she was she hardly knew it, for she had always lived an inner life to herself. But Mrs. Harrisson magnetized her—she could not keep her eyes from her face, from her wonderful clothes. She made conjectures about her.

The wonderful lady came in late one afternoon—an unusual thing for her. She smiled at Amy invitingly, asked some banal questions and their first conversation began. The acquaintance once struck up progressed rapidly—after a few weeks Mrs. Harrisson invited the girl to come to see her. Amy accepted quietly, unaware that anything extraordinary was happening. Zora noticed this and liked it. She had an apartment in 12th Street in a house inhabited only by artists—she was no mean one herself. Amy was fascinated by the new world into which she found herself ushered; Zora's surroundings were very beautiful and Zora herself was a study. She opened to the girl's amazed vision fields of thought and conjecture, phases of whose existence Amy, who was a builder of phases, had never dreamed. Zora had been a poor girl of good family. She had wanted to study art, she had deliberately married a rich man and as deliberately obtained in the course of four years a divorce, and she was now living in New York studying by means of her alimony and enjoying to its fullest the life she loved. She took Amy on a footing with herself—the girl's refinement, her beauty, her interest in colors (though this in Amy at the time was purely sporadic, never consciously encouraged), all this gave Zora a figure about which to plan and build a romance. Amy had told her to truth, but not all about her coming to New York. She had grown tired of Trenton—her people were all dead—the folks with whom she lived were kind and good but not “inspiring” (she had borrowed the term from Zora and it was true, the Boldins, when one came to think of it, were not “inspiring”), so she had run away.

Zora had gone into raptures. “What an adventure! My dear, the world is yours. Why, with your looks and your birth, for I suppose you really belong to the Kildares who used to live in Philadelphia, I think there was a son who ran off and married an actress or someone—they disowned him I remember,—you can reach any height. You must marry a wealthy man—perhaps someone who is interested in art and who will let you pursue your studies.” She insisted always that Amy had run away in order to study art. “But luck like that comes to few,” she sighed,

remembering her own plight, for Mr. Harrison had been decidedly unwilling to let her pursue her studies, at least to the extent she wished. "Anyway you must marry wealth,—one can always get a divorce," she ended sagely.

Amy—she came to Zora's every night now—used to listen dazedly at first. She had accepted willingly enough Zora's conjecture about her birth, came to believe it in fact—but she drew back somewhat at such wholesale exploitation of people to suit one's own convenience, still she did not probe too far into this thought—nor did she grasp at all the infamy of exploitation of self. She ventured one or two objections, however, but Zora brushed everything aside.

"Everybody is looking out for himself," she said airily. "I am interested in you, for instance, not for philanthropy's sake, but because I am lonely, and you are charming and pretty and don't get tired of hearing me talk. You'd better come and live with me awhile, my dear, six months or a year. It doesn't cost any more for two than for one, and you can always leave when we get tired of each other. A girl like you can always get a job. If you are worried about being dependent you can pose for me and design my frocks, and oversee Julianne"—her maid-of-all-work—"I'm sure she's a stupendous robber."

Amy came, not at all overwhelmed by the good luck of it—good luck was around the corner more or less for everyone, she supposed. Moreover, she was beginning to absorb some of Zora's doctrine—she, too, must look out for herself. Zora was lonely, she did need companionship; Julianne was careless about change and odd blouses and left-over dainties. Amy had her own sense of honor. She carried out faithfully her share of the bargain, cut down waste, renovated Zora's clothes, posed for her, listened to her endlessly and bore with her fitfulness. Zora was truly grateful for this last. She was temperamental but Amy had good nerves and her strong natural inclination to let people do as they wanted stood her in good stead. She was a little stolid, a little unfeeling under her lovely exterior. Her looks at this time belied her—her perfect ivory-pink face, her deep luminous eyes,—very brown they were with purple depths that made one think of pansies—her charming, rather wide mouth, her whole face set in a frame of very soft, very live, brown hair which grew in wisps and tendrils and curls and waves back from her smooth, young forehead. All this made one look for softness and ingenuousness. The ingenuousness was there, but not the softness—except of her fresh, vibrant loveliness.

On the whole then she progressed famously with Zora. Sometimes the latter's callousness shocked her, as when they would go strolling through the streets south of Washing Square. The children, the people all foreign, all dirty, often very artistic, always immensely human, disgusted Zora except for "local color"—she really could reproduce them wonderfully. But she almost hated them for being what they were.

“Br-r-r, dirty little brats!” she would say to Amy. “Don’t let them touch me.” She was frequently amazed at her protégée’s utter indifference to their appearance, for Amy herself was the pink of daintiness. They were turning from MacDougall into Bleeker Street one day and Amy had patted a child—dirty, but lovely—on the head.

“They are all people just like anybody else, just like you and me, Zora,” she said in answer to her friend’s protest.

“You are the true democrat,” Zora returned with a shrug. But Amy did not understand her.

Not the least of Amy’s services was to come between and the too pressing attention of the men who thronged about her.

“Oh, go and talk to Amy,” Zora would say, standing slim and gorgeous in some wonderful evening gown. She was extraordinarily attractive creature, very white and pink, with great ropes of dazzling gold hair, and that look of no-age which only American women possess. As a matter of fact she was thirty-nine, immensely sophisticated and selfish, even Amy thought, a little cruel. Her present mode of living just suited her; she could not stand any condition that bound her, anything at all exigent. It was useless for anyone to try to influence her. If she did not want to talk, she would not.

The men used to obey her orders and seek Amy sulkily at first, but afterwards with considerably more interest. She was so lovely to look at. But they really, as Zora knew, preferred to talk to the older woman, for while with Zora indifference was a role, second nature by now but still a role—with Amy it was natural and she was also trifle shallow. She had the admiration she craved, she was comfortable, she asked no more. Moreover she thought the men, with the exception of Stuart James Wynne, rather uninteresting—they were faddists for the most part, crazy not about art or music, but merely about some phase such as cubism or syncopation.

Wynne, who was much older than the other half-dozen men who weekly paid Zora homage—impressed her by his suggestion of power. He was a retired broker, immensely wealthy (Zora, who had known him since childhood, informed her), very set and purposeful and very polished. He was perhaps fifty-five, widely traveled, of medium height, very white skin and clear frosty blue eyes, with sharp, proud features. He liked Amy from the beginning, her childishness touched him. In particular he admired her pliability—not knowing it was really indifference. He had been married twice; one wife had divorced him, the other had died. Both marriages were unsuccessful owing to his dominant, rather unsympathetic nature. But he had softened considerably with years, though he still had decided views, was glad to see that Amy, in spite of Zora’s influence, neither smoked nor drank. He liked her shallowness—she fascinated him.

### III

From the very beginning *he* was different from what she had supposed. To start with he was far, far wealthier, and he had, too, a tradition, a family-pride which to Amy was inexplicable. Still more inexplicably he had a race-pride. To his wife this was not only strange but foolish. She was as Zora had once suggested, the true democrat. Not that she preferred the company of her maids, though the reason for this did not lie *per se* in the fact that they were maids. There was simply no common ground. But she was uniformly kind, a trait which had she been older would have irritated her husband. As it was, he saw in it only an additional indication of her freshness, her lack of worldliness which seemed to him the attributes of an inherent refinement and goodness untouched by experience.

He, himself, was intolerant of all people of inferior birth or standing and looked with contempt on foreigners, except the French and English. All the rest were variously “guineries,” “niggers,” and “wops,” and all of them he genuinely despised and hated, and talked of them with the huge intolerant carelessness characteristic of occidental civilization. Amy was never able to understand it. People were always first and last, just people to her. Growing up as the average colored American girl does grow up, surrounded by types of every hue, color and facial configuration she had had no absolute ideal. She was not even aware that there was one. Wynne, who in his grim way had a keen sense of humor, used to be vastly amused at the artlessness with which she let him know that she did not consider him good-looking. She never wanted him to wear anything but dark blue, or somber mixtures always.

“They take away from that awful whiteness of your skin,” she used to tell him, “and deepen the blue of your eyes.”

In the main she made no attempt to understand him, as indeed she made no attempt to understand anything. The result, of course, was that such ideas as seeped into her mind stayed there, took growth and later bore fruit. But just at this period she was like a well-cared for, sleek, house-pet, delicately nurtured, velvety, content to let her days pass by. She thought almost nothing of her art just now, except as her sensibilities were jarred by an occasional disharmony. Likewise, even to herself, she never criticized Wynne, except when some act or attitude of his stung. She could never understand why he, so fastidious, so versed in elegance of word and speech, so careful in his surroundings, even down to the last detail of glass and napery, should take such evident pleasure in literature of a certain prurient type. He would get her to read to him, partly because he liked to be read to, mostly because he enjoyed the realism and in a slighter degree because he enjoyed seeing her shocked. Her point of view amused him.



“What funny people,” she would say naively, “to do such things.” She could not understand the liaisons and intrigues of women in the society novels, such infamy was stupid and silly. If one starved, it was conceivable that one might steal; if one were intentionally injured, one might hit back, even murder; but deliberate nastiness she could not en visage. The stories, after she had read them to him, passed out of her mind as completely as though they had never existed.

Picture the two of them spending three years together with practically no friction. To his dominance and intolerance she opposed a soft and unobtrusive indifference. What she wanted she had, ease, wealth, adoration, love, too, passionate and imperious, but she had never known any other kind. She was growing cleverer also, her knowledge of French was increasing, she was acquiring a knowledge of politics, of commerce and of the big social questions, for Wynne's interests were exhaustive and she did most of his reading for him. Another woman might have yearned for a more youthful companion, but her native coldness kept her content. She did not love him, she had never really loved anybody, but little Cornelius Boldin—he had been such an enchanting, such a darling baby, she remembered,—her heart contracted painfully when she thought as she did very often of his warm softness.

“He must be a big boy now,” she would think almost maternally, wondering—once she had been so sure!—if she would ever see him again. But she was very fond of Wynne, and he was crazy over her just as Zora had predicted. He loaded her with gifts, dresses, flowers, jewels—she amused him because none but colored stones appealed to her.

“Diamonds are so hard, so cold, and pearls are dead,” she told him.

Nothing ever came between them, but his ugliness, his hatefulness to dependents. It hurt her so, for she was naturally kind in her careless, uncomprehending way. True, she had left Mrs. Boldin without a word, but she did not guess how completely Mrs. Boldin loved her. She would have been aghast had she realized how stricken her flight had left them. At twenty-two, Amy was still as good, as unspoiled, as pure as a child. Of course with all this she was too unquestioning, too selfish, too vain, but they were all faults of her lovely, lovely flesh. Wynne's intolerance finally got on her nerves. She used to blush for his unkindness. All the servants were colored, but she had long since ceased to think that perhaps she, too, was colored, except when he, by insult toward an employee, overt or at least implied, made her realize his contemptuous dislike and disregard for a dark skin or Negro blood.

“Stuart, how can you say such things?” she would expostulate. “You can't expect a man to stand such language as that.” And Wynne would sneer, “A man—you don't consider a nigger a man, do you? Oh, Amy, don't be such a fool. You've got to keep them in their places.”

Some innate sense of the fitness of things kept her from condoling outspokenly with the servants, but they knew she was ashamed of her husband's ways. Of course, they left—it seemed to Amy that Peter, the butler, was always getting new “help”,—but most of the upper servants stayed, for Wynne paid handsomely and although his orders were meticulous and insistent, the retinue of employees was so large that the individual's work was light.

Most of the servants who did stay on in spite of Wynne's occasional insults had a purpose in view. Callie, the cook, Amy found out, had two children at Howard University—of course she never came in contact with Wynne—the chauffeur had a crippled sister. Rose, Amy's maid and purveyor of much outside information, was the chief support of her family. About Peter, Amy knew nothing; he was a striking, taciturn man, very competent, who had left the Wynnes' service years before and had returned in Amy's third year. Wynne treated him with comparative respect. But Stephen, the new valet, met with entirely different treatment. Amy's heart yearned toward him, he was like Cornelius, with short-sighted, patient eyes, always willing, a little over-eager. Amy recognized him for what he was; a boy of respectable, ambitious parentage, striving for the means for an education; naturally far above his present calling, yet willing to pass through all this as a means to an end. She questioned Rosa about him.

“Oh ,Stephen,” Rosa told her, “yes'm, he's workin' for fair. He's got a brother at the Howard's and a sister at Smith's. Yes'm, it do seem a little hard on him, but Stephen, he say, they're both goin' to turn roun' and help him when they get through . That blue silk has a rip in it, Miss Amy, if you was thinkin' of wearin' that. Yes'm, somehow I don't think Steve's very strong, kinda worries like. I guess he's sorta nervous.”

Amy told Wynne. “He's such a nice boy, Stuart, she pleaded, “it hurts me to have you so cross with him. Anyway don't call him names.” She was both surprised and frightened at the feeling in her that prompted her to interfere. She had held so aloof from other people's interests all these years.

“I am colored,” she told herself that night. “I feel it inside of me. I must be or I couldn't care so about Stephen. Poor boy, I suppose Cornelius is just like him. I wish Stuart would let him alone. I wonder if all white people are like that. Zora was hard, too, on unfortunate people.” She pondered over it a bit. “I wonder what Stuart would say if he knew I was colored?” She lay perfectly still, her smooth brow knitted, thinking hard. “But he loves me,” she said to herself still silently. “He'll always love my looks,” and she fell to thinking that all the wonderful happenings in her sheltered, pampered life had come to her through her beauty. She reached out an exquisite arm, switched on a light, and picking up a hand-mirror from a dressing-table, fell to studying her face. She was right. It was her chiefest asset. She forgot Stephen and fell asleep.

But in the morning her husband's voice issuing from his dressing-room across the hall, awakened her. She listened drowsily. Stephen, leaving the house the day before, had been met by a boy with a telegram. He had taken it, slipped it in to his pocket, (he was just going to the mail-box) and had forgotten to deliver it until now, nearly twenty-four hours later. She could hear Stuart's storm of abuse—it was terrible, made up as it was of oaths and insults to the boy's ancestry. There was a moment's lull. Then she heard him again.

“If your brains are a fair sample of that black wench of a sister of yours— “

She sprang up then thrusting her arms as she ran into her pink dressing-gown. She got there just in time. Stephen, his face quivering, was standing looking straight in to Wynne's smoldering eyes. In spite of herself, Amy was glad to see the boy's bearing. But he did not notice her.

“You devil!” he was saying. “You white-faced devil! I'll make you pay for that!” He raised his arm. Wynne did not blench.

With a scream she was between them. “Go, Stephen, go,—get out of the house. Where do you think you are? Don't you know you'll be hanged, lynched, tortured?” Her voice shrilled at him.

Wynne tried to thrust aside her arms that clung and twisted. But she held fast till the door slammed behind the fleeing boy.

“God, let me by, Amy!” As suddenly as she had clasped him she let him go, ran to the door, fastened it and threw the key out the window.

He took her by the arm and shook her. “Are you mad? Didn't you hear him threaten me, me,—a nigger threaten me?” His voice broke with anger, “And you're letting him get away! Why, I'll get him. I'll set bloodhounds on him, I'll have every white man in this town after him! He'll be hanging so high by midnight—he made for the other door, cursing, half-insane.

How, how could she keep him back! She hated her weak arms with their futile beauty! She sprang toward him. ‘Stuart, wait,’ she was breathless and sobbing. She said the first thing that came into her head. Wait, Stuart, you cannot do this thing.” She thought of Cornelius—suppose it had been he—“Stephen,—that boy,—he is my brother.”

He turned on her. “What!” he said fiercely, then laughed a short laugh of disdain. “You are crazy,” he said roughly, “My God, Amy! How can you even in jest associate yourself with these people? Don't you suppose I know a white girl when I see one? There's no use in telling a lie like that.”

Well, there was no help for it. There was only one way. He had turned back for a moment, but she must keep him many moments—an hour. Stephen must get out of town.

She caught his arm again. "Yes," she told him, "I did lie. Stephen is not my brother, I never saw him before." The light of relief that crept into his eyes did not escape her, it only nerved her. "But I am colored," she ended.

Before he could stop her she had told him all about the tall white woman. "She took me to Mrs. Boldin's and gave me to her to keep. She would never have taken me to her if I had been white. If you lynch this boy, I'll let the world, your world, know that your wife is a colored woman."

He sat down like a man suddenly stricken old, his face ashen. "Tell me about it again," he commanded. And she obeyed, going mercilessly into every damning detail.

#### IV

Amazingly her beauty availed her nothing. If she had been an older woman, if she had had Zora's age and experience, she would have been able to gauge exactly her influence over Wynne. Through even then in similar circumstances she would have taken the risk and acted in just the same manner. But she was a little bewildered at her utter miscalculation. She had thought he might not wasn't his friends—his world by which he set such store—to know that she was colored, but she had not dreamed it could make any real difference to him. He had chosen her, poor and ignorant, out of a host of women, and had told her countless times of his love. To herself Amy Wynne was in comparison with Zora for instance, stupid and uninteresting. But his constant, unsolicited iterations had made her accept his idea.

She was just the same woman she told herself, she had not changed, she was still beautiful, still charming, still "different." Perhaps that very difference had its being in the fact of her mixed blood. She had been his wife—there were memories—she could not see how he could give her up. The suddenness of the divorce carried her off her feet. Dazedly she left him—thought almost without a pang for she had only like him. She had been perfectly honest about this, and he, although consumed by the fierceness of his emotion toward her, had gradually forced himself to be content, for at least she had never made him jealous.

She was to live in a small house of his in New York, uptown in the 80's. Peter was in charge and there were a new maid and a cook. The servants, of course, knew of the separation, but nobody guess why/ She was living on a much smaller basis than the one to which she had become so accustomed in the last three years. But she was very comfortable. She felt, at any rate she manifested, no qualms at receiving alimony from Wynne. That was the way things happened, she supposed when she thought of it at all. Moreover, it seemed to her perfectly in keeping with Wynne's former attitude toward her; she did not see how he could do less. She expected people to be consistent. That was why she was so amazed that he in spite of his oft iterated love, could let

her go. If she had felt half the love for him which he had professed for her, she would not have sent him away if she had been a leper.

“Why I’d stay with him,” she told herself, “If he were one, even as I feel now.”

She was lonely in New York. Perhaps it was the first time in her life that she had felt so. Zora had gone to Paris the first of the year of her marriage and had not come back.

The days dragged on emptily. One thing helped her. She had gone one day to the modiste from whom she had bought her trousseau. The woman remembered her perfectly—“The lady with the exquisite taste for colors—ah, madame, but you have the rare gift.” Amy was grateful to be taken out of her thoughts. She bought one of two daring but altogether lovely creations and let fall a few suggestions:

“That brown frock, Madame,—you say it has been on your hands a long time? Yes? But no wonder. See, instead of that dead white you should have a shade of ivory, that white cheapens it.” Deftly she caught up a bit of ivory satin and worked out her idea. Madame was ravished.

“But yes, Madame Wen is correct,—as always. Oh, what a pity that the Madame is so wealthy. If she were only a poor girl—Mlle. Antoine with the best eye for color in the place has just left, gone back to France to nurse her brother—this World War is of such horror! If someone like Madame, now, could be found, to take the little Antoine’s place!”

Some obscure impulse drove Amy to accept the half proposal: “Oh! I don’t know, I have nothing to do just now. My husband is abroad.” Wynne had left her with that impression. “I could contribute the money to the Red Cross or to charity.”

The work was the best thing in the world for her. It kept her from becoming too introspective, though even then she did more serious, connected thinking than she had done in all the years of her varied life.

She missed Wynne definitely, chiefly as a guiding influence for she had rarely planned even her own amusements. Her dependence on him had been absolute. She used to picture him to herself as he was before the trouble—and his changing expressions as he looked at her, of amusement, interest, pride, a certain little teasing quality that used to come into his eyes, which always made her adopt her “spoiled child air,” as he used to call it. It was the way he liked her best. Then last, there was that look he had given her the morning she had told him she was colored—it had depicted so many emotions, various and yet distinct. There were dismay, disbelief, coldness, a final aloofness.

There was another expression, too, that she thought of sometimes—the look on the face of Mr. Packard, Wynne’s lawyer. She, herself, had attempted no defense.

“For God’s sake why did you tell him, Mrs. Wynne?” Packard asked her. His curiosity got the better of him. “You couldn’t have been in love with that yellow rascal,” he blurted out. “She’s too cold really, to love anybody,” he told himself. “If you didn’t care about the boy why should you have told?”

She defended herself feebly. “He looked so like little Cornelius Boldin,” she replied vaguely, “and he couldn’t help being colored.” A clerk came in then and Packard said no more. But into his eyes had crept a certain reluctant respect. She remembered the look, but could not define it.

She was so sorry about the trouble now, she wished it had never happened. Still if she had it to repeat she would act in the same way again. “There was nothing else for me to do,” she used to tell herself.

But she missed Wynne unbelievably.

If it had not been for Peter, her life would have been almost that of a nun. But Peter, who read the papers and kept abreast of the times, constantly called her attention with all due respect, to the meetings, the plays, the sights which she ought to attend or see. She was truly grateful to him. She was very kind to all three of the servants. They had the easiest “places” in New York, the maids used to tell their friends. As she never entertained, and frequently dined out, they had a great deal of time off.

She had been separated from Wynne for ten months before she began to make any definite plans for her future. Of course, she could not go on like this always. It came to her suddenly that probably she would go to Paris and live there—why or how she did not know. Only Zora was there and lately she had begun to think that her life was to be like Zora’s. They had been amazingly parallel up to this time. Of course she would have to wait until after the war.

She sat musing about it one day in the big sitting-room which she had had fitted over into a luxurious studio. There was a sewing-room off to the side from which Peter used to wheel into the room waxen figures of all colorings and contours so that she could drape the various fabrics about them to be sure of the best results. But today she was working out a scheme for one of Madame’s customers, who was of her own color and size and she was her own lay-figure. She sat in front of the huge pier glass, a wonderful soft yellow silk draped about her radiant loveliness.

“I could do some serious work in Paris,” she said half aloud to herself. “I suppose if I really wanted to, I could be very successful along this line.”

Somewhere downstairs an electric bell buzzed, at first softly then after a slight pause, louder, and more insistently.

“If Madame send me that lace today,” she was thinking, idly, “I could finish this and start on the pink. I wonder why Peter doesn’t answer the bell.”

She remembered then that Peter had gone to New Rochelle on business and she had sent Ellen to Altman’s to find a certain rare velvet and had allowed Mary to go with her. She would dine out, she told them, so they need not hurry. Evidently she was alone in the house.

Well she could answer the bell. She had done it often enough in the old days at Mrs. Boldin’s. Of course it was the lace. She smiled a bit as she went down stairs thinking how surprised the delivery-boy would be to see her arrayed thus early in the afternoon. She hoped he wouldn’t go. She could see him through the long, thick panels of glass in the vestibule and front door. He was just turning about as she opened the door.

This was no delivery-boy, this man whose gaze fell on her hungry and avid. This was Wynne. She stood for a second leaning against the door-lamb, a strange figure surely in the sharp November weather/ Some leaves—brown, skeleton shapes—rose and swirled unnoticed about her head. A passing letter-carrier looked at them curiously.

“What are you doing answering the door?” Wynne asked her roughly. “Where is Peter? Go in, you’ll catch cold.”

She was glad to see him. She took him into the drawing room—a wonderful study in browns—and looked at him and looked at him.

“Well,” he asked her, his voice eager in spite of the commonplace words, “are you glad to see me? Tell me what do you do with yourself.”

She could not talk fast enough, her eyes clinging to his face. Once it struck her that he had changed in some indefinable way. Was it a slight coarsening of that refined aristocratic aspect? Even in her sub-consciousness she denied it.

He had come back to her.

“So I design for Madame when I feel like it, and send the money to the Red Cross and wonder when you are coming back to me.” For the first time in their acquaintanceship she was conscious deliberately of trying to attract, to hold him. She put on her spoiled child air which had once been so successful.

“It took you long enough to get here,” she pouted. She was certain of him now. His mere presence assured her.

They sat silent a moment, the later November sun bathing her head in an austere glow of chilly gold. As she sat there in the big brown chair she was, in her yellow dress, like some mysterious emanation, some wraith-like aura developed from the tone of her surroundings.

He rose and came toward her, still silent. She grew nervous, and talked incessantly with sudden unusual gestures. "Oh, Stuart, let me give you tea. It's right there in the pantry off the dining-room. I can wheel the table in." She rose, a lovely creature in her yellow robe. He watched her intently.

"Wait," he bade her.

She paused almost on tiptoe, a dainty golden butterfly.

"You are coming back to live with me?" he asked her hoarsely.

For the first time in her life she loved him.

"Of course I am coming back," she told him softly. "Aren't you glad? Haven't you missed me? I didn't see how you could stay away. Oh! Stuart, what a wonderful ring!"

For he had slipped on her finger a heavy dull gold band, with an immense sapphire in an oval setting—a beautiful thing of Italian workmanship.

"It is so like you to remember," she told him gratefully. "I love colored stones." She admired it, turning it around and around on her slender finger.

How silent he was, standing there watching her with his somber yet eager gaze. It made her troubled, uneasy. She cast about for something to say.

"You can't think how I've improved since I saw you, Stuart. I've read all sorts of books—Oh! I'm learned," she smiled at him. "And Stuart," she went a little closer to him, twisting the button on his perfect coat, "I'm so sorry about it all,—about Stephen, that boy you know. I just couldn't help interfering. But when we're married again, if you'll just remember how it hurts me to have you so cross—"

He interrupted her. "I wasn't aware that I spoke of our marrying again," he told her, his voice steady, his blue eyes cold.

She thought he was teasing. "Why you just asked me to. You said 'aren't you coming back to live with me—'"

"Yes," he acquiesced, "I said just that—'to live with me'."

Still she didn't comprehend. "But what do you mean?" she asked bewildered.

"What do you suppose a man means," he returned deliberately, "when he asks a woman to live with him, but not to marry him?"

She sat down heavily in the brown chair, all glowing ivory and yellow against its somber depths.

"Like the women in those awful novels?" she whispered. "Not like those women!—Oh Stuart! you don't mean it!" Her heart was numb.



“But you must care a little—” she was amazed at her own depth of feeling. “Why I care—there are all those me memories back of us—you must want me really—”

“I do want you,” he told her tensely. “I want you damnably. But—well—I might as well out with it—A white man like me simply doesn’t marry a colored woman. After all what difference need it make to you? We’ll live abroad—you’ll travel, have all the things you love. Many a white woman would envy you.” He stretched out an eager hand.

She evaded it, holding herself aloof as though his touch were contaminating. Her movement angered him.

Like a rending veil suddenly the veneer of his high polish cracked and the man stood revealed.

“Oh, hell!” he snarled at her roughly. “Why don’t you stop posing? What do you think you are anyway? Do you suppose I’d take you for my wife—what do you think can happen to you? What man of your own race could give you what you want? You don’t suppose I am going to support you this way forever, do you? The court imposed no alimony. You’ve got to come to it sooner or later—you’re bound to fall to some white man. What’s the matter—I’m not rich enough?”

Her face flamed at that—“As though it were *that* that mattered!”

He gave her a deadly look. “Well, isn’t it? Ah, my girl, you forget you told me you didn’t love me when you married me. You sold yourself to me then. Haven’t I reason to suppose you are waiting for a higher bidder?”

At these words something in her died forever, her youth, her happy, happy blindness. She saw life leering mercilessly in her face. It seemed to her that she would give all her future to stamp out, to kill the contempt in his frosty insolent eyes. In a sudden rush of savagery she struck him, struck him across his hateful sneering mouth with the hand which wore his ring.

As *she* fell, reeling under the fearful impact of his brutal but involuntary blow, her mind caught at, registered two things. A little thin stream of blood was trickling across his chin. She had cut him with the ring, she realized with a certain savage satisfaction. And there was something else which she must remember, which she *would* remember if only she could fight her way out of this dreadful clinging blackness, which was bearing down upon her—closing her in.

When she came to she sat up holding her bruised, aching head in her palms, trying to recall what it was that had impressed her so.

Oh, yes, her very mind ached with the realization. She lay back again on the floor, prone, anything to relieve that intolerable pain. But her memory, her thoughts went on.

“Nigger,” he had called her as she fell, “nigger, nigger,” and again, “nigger.”

“He despised me absolutely,” she said to herself wonderingly, “Because I was colored. And yet he wanted me.”

## V

Somehow she reached her room. Long after the servants had come in, she lay face downward across her bed, thinking. How she hated Wynne, how she hated herself! And for ten months she had been living off his money although in no way had she a claim on him. Her whole body burned with the shame of it.

In the morning she rang for Peter. She faced him, white and haggard, but if the man noticed her condition, he made no sign. He was, if possible, more imperturbable than ever.

“Peter,” she told him, her eyes and voice very steady, “I am leaving this house today and shall never come back.”

“Yes, Miss.”

“I shall want you to see to the packing and storing of the goods and to send the keys and the receipts for the jewelry and valuables to Mr. Packard in Baltimore.”

“Yes, Miss.”

“And, Peter, I am very poor now and shall have no money besides what I can make for myself.”

“Yes, Miss.”

Would nothing surprise him, she wondered dully. She went on “I don’t know whether you knew it or not, Peter, but I am colored, and hereafter I mean to live among my own people. Do you think you could find me a little house or a little cottage not too far from New York?”

He had a little place in New Rochelle, he told her, his manner altering not one whit, or better yet his sister had a four-room house in Orange, with a garden, if he remembered correctly. Yes, he was sure there was a garden. It would be just the thing for Mrs. Wynne.

She had four hundred dollars of her very own which she had earned by designing for Madame. She paid the maids a month in advance—they were to stay as long as Peter needed them. She, herself, went to a small hotel in Twenty-eighth Street, and here Peter came for her at the end of ten days, with the acknowledgement of the keys and receipts from Mr. Packard. Then he accompanied her to Orange and installed her in her new home.

“I wish I could afford to keep you, Peter,” she said a little wistfully, “but I am very poor. I am heavily in debt and I must get that off my shoulders at once.”

Mrs. Wynne was very kind, he was sure; he could think of no one with whom he would prefer to work. Furthermore, he often ran down from New Rochelle to see his sister; he would come in from time to time, and in the spring would plant the garden if she wished.

She hated to see him go, but she did not dwell long on that. Her only thought was to work and work and work and save until she could pay Wynne back. She had not lived very extravagantly during those ten months and Peter was a perfect manager—in spite of her remonstrances he had given her every month an account of his expenses. She had made arrangements with Madame to be her regular designer.

The French woman guessing that more than whim was behind this move drove a very shrewd bargain, but even then the pay was excellent. With care, she told herself, she could be free within two years, three at most.

She lived a dull enough existence now, going to work steadily every morning and getting home late at night. Almost it was like those early days when she had first left Mrs. Boldin, except that now she had no high sense of adventure, no expectation of great things to come, which might buoy her up. She no longer thought of phases and the proper setting for her beauty. Once indeed catching sight of her face late one night in the mirror in her tiny work-room in Orange, she stopped and scanned herself, loathing what she saw there.

“You thing!” she said to the image in the glass, “if you hadn't been so vain, so shallow!” And she had struck herself violently again and again across the face until her head ached.

But such fits of passion were rare. She had a curious sense of freedom in these days, a feeling that at last her brain, her senses were liberated from some hateful clinging thralldom. Her thoughts were always busy. She used to go over that last scene with Wynne again and again trying to probe the inscrutable mystery which she felt was at the bottom of the affair. She groped her way toward a solution, but always something stopped her. Her impulse to strike, she realized, and his brutal rejoinder had been actuated by something more than mere sex antagonism, there was race antagonism there—two elements clashing. That much she could fathom. But that he despising her, hating her for not being white should yet desire her! It seemed to her that his attitude toward her—hate and yet desire, was the attitude in microcosm of the whole white world toward her own, toward that world to which those few possible strains of black blood so tenuously and yet so tenaciously linked her.

Once she got hold of a big thought. Perhaps there was some root, some racial distinction woven in with the stuff of which she was formed which made her persistently kind and unexact. And perhaps in the same way this difference, helplessly, inevitably operated in making Wynne and his kind, cruel or at best indifferent. Her reading for Wynne reacted to her thought—she remembered the grating insolence of white exploiters in foreign lands, the wrecking of African

villages, the destruction of homes in Tasmania. She couldn't imagine where Tasmania was, but wherever it was, it had been the realest thing in the world to its crude inhabitants.

Gradually she reached a decision. There were two divisions of people in the world—on the one hand insatiable desire for power; keenness, mentality; a vast and cruel pride. On the other there was ambition, it is true, but modified, a certain humble sweetness, too much inclination to trust, an unthinking, unswerving loyalty. All the advantages in the world accrued to the first division. But without bitterness she chose the second. She wanted to be colored, she hoped she was colored. She wished even that she did not have to take advantage of her appearance to earn her living. But that was to meet an end. After all she had contracted her debt with a white man, she would pay him with a white man's money.

The years slipped by— four of them. One day a letter came from Mr. Packard. Mrs. Wynne had sent him the last penny of the sum received from Mr. Wynne from February to November, 1914. Mr. Wynne had refused to touch the money, it was and would be indefinitely at Mrs. Wynne's disposal.

She never even answered the letter. Instead she dismissed the whole incident,—Wynne and all,—from her mind and began to plan for her future. She was free, free ! She had paid back her sorry debt with labor, money and anguish. From now on she could do as she pleased. Almost she caught herself saying “something is going to happen.” But she checked herself, she hated her old attitude.

But something was happening. Insensibly from the moment she knew of her deliverance, her thoughts turned back to a stifled hidden longing, which had lain, it seemed to her, an eternity in her heart. Those days with Mrs. Boldin! At night,—on her way to New York,—in the work-rooms,—her mind was busy with little intimate pictures of that happy, wholesome, unpretentious life. She could see Mrs. Boldin, clean and portly, in a lilac chambray dress, upbraiding her for some trifling, yet exasperating fault. And Mr. Boldin, immaculate and slender, with his noticeably polished air—how kind he had always been, she remembered. And lastly, Cornelius; Cornelius in a thousand attitudes and engaged in a thousand occupations, brown and near-sighted and sweet—devoted to his pretty sister, as he used to call her; Cornelius, who used to come to her as a baby as willingly as to his mother; Cornelius spelling out colored letters on his blocks, pointing to them stickily with a brown, perfect finger; Cornelius singing like an angel in his breathy, sexless voice and later murdering everything possible on his terrible cornet. How had she ever been able to leave them all and the dear shabbiness of that home! Nothing, she realized, in all these years had touched her inmost being, had penetrated to the core of her cold heart like the memories of those early, misty scenes.

One day she wrote a letter to Mrs. Boldin. She, the writer, Madame A. Wynne, had come across a young woman, Amy Kildare, who said that as a girl she had run away from home and now she would like to come back. But she was ashamed to write. Madame Wynne had questioned the girl closely and she was quite sure that this Miss Kildare had in no way incurred shame or disgrace. It had been some time since Madame Wynne had seen the girl but if Mrs. Boldin wished, she would try to find her again—perhaps Mrs. Boldin would like to get in touch with her. The letter ended on a tentative note.

The answer came at once.

My dear Madame Wynne:

My mother told me to write you this letter. She says even if Amy Kildare had done something terrible, she would want her to come home again. My father says so too. My mother says, please find her as soon as you can and tell her to come back. She still misses her. We all miss her. I was a little boy when she left, but though I am in the High School now and play in the school orchestra, I would rather see her than do anything I know. If you see her, be sure to tell her to come right away. My mother says thank you.

Yours respectfully,

CORNELIUS BOLDIN.

The letter came to the modiste's establishment in New York. Amy read it and went with it to Madame. "I have had wonderful news," she told her, "I must go away immediately, I can't come back—you may have these last two weeks for nothing." Madame, who had surmised long since the separation, looked curiously at the girl's flushed cheeks, and decided that "Monsieur Ween" had returned. She gave her fatalistic shrug. All Americans were crazy.

"But, yes, Madame,—if you must go—absolument."

When she reached the ferry, Amy looked about her searchingly. "I hope I'm seeing you for the last time—I'm going home, home!" Oh, the unbelievable kindness! She had left them without a word and they still wanted her back!

Eventually she got to Orange and to the little house. She sent a message to Peter's sister and set about her packing. But first she sat down in the little house and looked about her. She would go home, home—how she loved the word, she would stay there a while, but always there was life, still beckoning. It would beckon forever she realized to her adventurousness. Afterwards she would set up an establishment of her own,—she reviewed possibilities—in a rich suburb,

where white women would pay and pay for her expertness, caring nothing for realities, only for externals.

“As I myself used to care,” she sighed. Her thoughts flashed on. “Then some day I’ll work and help with colored people—the only ones who have really cared for and wanted me.” Her eyes blurred.

She would never make any attempt to find out who or what she was. If she were white, there would always be people urging her to keep up the silliness of racial prestige. How she hated it all!

“Citizen of the world, that’s what I’ll be. And now I’ll go home.”

Peter’s sister’s little girl came over to be with the pretty lady whom she adored. “You sit here, Angel, and watch me pack,” Amy said, placing her in a little arm-chair. And the baby sat there in silent observation, one tiny leg crossed over the other, surely the quaintest, gravest bit of bronze, Amy thought, that ever lived.

“Miss Amy cried,” the child told her mother afterwards.

Perhaps Amy did cry, but if so she was unaware. Certainly she laughed more happily, more spontaneously than she had done for years. Once she got down on her knees in front of the little arm-chair and buried her face in the baby’s tiny bosom.

“Oh Angel, Angel,” she whispered, “do you suppose Cornelius still plays on that cornet?”

### **5.19.2 Reading and Review Questions**

1. The story opens with Amy in a dressmaker’s shop trying on a new and expensive gown. What does the story’s fascination with costume suggest about Amy’s racial identity?
2. How does Fauset’s treatment of Amy’s “awakening” compare to the presentation of race in the work of Nella Larsen and Zora Neale Hurston?
3. Compare and contrast Amy’s relationships with other women in the story.

## **5.20 ZORA NEALE HURSTON (1891-1960)**



**Image 5.16 | Zora Neale Hurston, circa 1935**

Photographer | Unknown

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Zora Neale Hurston was born in 1891 in Alabama, moving with her family when she was a young child to Eatonville, Florida, one of the nation's first all-black towns. Hurston enjoyed a happy childhood in Eatonville. In 1904, however, Hurston's idyllic young life came to an end when her mother died. Hurston's father soon remarried, and family life for Hurston became complicated. She moved frequently, living with relatives and working to support herself. Eventually, she attended Howard University where she nurtured her writing talent. She later attended Barnard College where she studied anthropology, earning her bachelor's degree in 1928. In the 1920s, Hurston became one of the most important figures of the Harlem Renaissance, producing a number of literary pieces and working with Langston Hughes to launch a literary magazine that promoted the talents of young African-American writers. In the 1930s, Hurston enjoyed one of her most productive decades. She conducted anthropological fieldwork across the South, studying African-American folklore, and she traveled in Haiti and Jamaica, where she conducted research on spiritual practices including hoodoo and voodoo. Her book *Mules and Men*, published in 1935, remains an important work on African-American folklore. In 1937, she published her most well-known novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, an early African-American feminist work that inspired later writers such as Alice Walker. During the next twenty years, Hurston continued to work as a journalist and a freelance writer. She married twice, but each marriage ended. By the time of her death, she was living in Florida in relative obscurity and poverty, dying of a stroke in 1960.

Unlike her contemporaries, Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, Hurston in her fiction did not take on overtly political or racial themes. Like many artists in the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, Hurston's art was essentially apolitical. Hurston's work celebrated racial pride and African-American culture without any filtering, and characters' power came from their own self-discoveries and their own inner resources. In her most critically acclaimed novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the main character Janie Crawford comes of age, moving from a young girl taught by her grandmother that she must be cared for by a man to a young woman trapped in an abusive marriage to a self-actualized woman who loves herself and lives life on her own terms, including freely expressing her sexuality. In "Sweat," Hurston explores a similar theme of self-liberation. Delia Jones, trapped in an abusive marriage to Sykes, a brutal man who beats her and uses her for material gain, finds within herself the power to stand up to him and order him from the home and business she has built through her own sweat. When he plans retribution by exposing Delia to a rattlesnake in her home, she beats him at his own game. Sykes, at the end of the story, sweats for a change.

### **5.20.1 "Sweat"**

Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://www.mcpherson.edu/~claryb/en255/handouts/sweat.pdf>

### **5.20.2 Reading and Review Questions**

1. Analyze the title of the story "Sweat." How does the title comment upon the theme of the story?
2. Why does Delia continue to stay with a husband who abuses her?
3. How do the community members react to Sykes's treatment of Delia?
4. How does Delia's discovery of Sykes's bullwhip foreshadow what is to come later in the story?
5. When Delia finally stands up to Sykes and tells him to leave her house, how does he react? Why doesn't he carry through with his threats to hurt her?
6. Why does Delia not attempt to save Sykes? Do you think she will later have regrets?

## **5.21 NELLA LARSEN (1891-1964)**





**Image 5.17 | Nella Larsen, 1928**

Photographer | James Allen

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Nella Larsen is a groundbreaking figure in American history. Trained professionally as both a nurse and a librarian, Larsen is the first African-American to receive a degree from a school of library science in the United States and the first African-American woman to receive a prestigious **Guggenheim Fellowship**. She is also the first African-American author to publish a short story—"Sanctuary," included here—in the esteemed literary magazine, *The Forum*. In the two novels and single short story she published over the course of her brief writing career, Larsen drew upon her personal history of living as a woman on both sides of the color line to explore nothing less than the experience of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the early twentieth century. Larsen was born in Chicago to a Danish immigrant mother and a Caribbean father. After her father abandoned the family, her mother remarried a fellow Dane, leaving Larsen as the only black member of a white household, attending separate schools than her white half-sister, and also living for years in Denmark with her white relatives. Leaving Chicago during her teens, Larsen enrolled in the racially segregated high school associated with Fisk University and then worked as head nurse of the Tuskegee Institute's School of Nursing. However, she chafed at what she saw as the limited mission and puritanical culture of these black institutions, even criticizing them in her loosely autobiographical novel, *Quicksand* (1928).

Moving to Harlem with her husband in 1920 and taking a job at the New York Public Library on 135th Street, Larsen found a more satisfactory model for black American culture in the historic neighborhood's music and literary scene. In her first novel, *Quicksand*, Larsen uses her

experiences growing up in a mixed-race home, working in fabled black institutions, and living in Denmark and Harlem to represent the often cruel vagaries of racial identification and class division. In her second novel, *Passing* (1929), Larsen writes about two light-skinned African-immigrant mother and a Caribbean father. After her father abandoned the family, her mother remarried a fellow Dane, leaving Larsen as the only black member of a white household, attending separate schools than her white half-sister, and also living for years in Denmark with her white relatives. Leaving Chicago during her teens, Larsen enrolled in the racially segregated high school associated with Fisk University and then worked as head nurse of the Tuskegee Institute's School of Nursing. However, she chafed at what she saw as the limited mission and puritanical culture of these black institutions, even criticizing them in her loosely autobiographical novel, *Quicksand* (1928).

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After publishing two successful novels and winning a Guggenheim, the publication of "Sanctuary" in *The Forum* should have been another step upwards in Larsen's career. Instead, it embroiled Larsen in controversy and was the last thing she ever published. Readers of Larsen's tale pointed out great similarities between it and a story published eight years earlier by Sheila Kaye-Smith, "Mrs. Adis." Both stories have the same plot, similar dialogue, and the same ironic ending. However, Kaye-Smith's story takes place in Sussex, England, and features two white working-class characters. Larsen's similarly-plotted tale takes place in the American South and features two black working-class characters. While both Larsen and the editors of *The Forum* defended the story, Larsen could not find a publisher for the novel she wrote during her Guggenheim fellowship. She divorced her husband for infidelity in 1933 and returned to her first career of nursing for the remainder of her life.

### 5.21.1 “Sanctuary”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

[http://eiffel.ilt.columbia.edu/teachers/cluster\\_teachers/Dick\\_Parsons/Cluster\\_2/Amy's%20web%20Quest/larsen\\_sanctuary.htm](http://eiffel.ilt.columbia.edu/teachers/cluster_teachers/Dick_Parsons/Cluster_2/Amy's%20web%20Quest/larsen_sanctuary.htm)

### 5.21.2 Reading and Review Questions

1. Discuss why, after criticizing Jim Hammer for being “no ‘count trash,” Annie Poole still protects him.

## 5.22 LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)



**Image 5.18 | Langston Hughes, 1936**

Photographer | Carl Van Vechten

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“We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame,” Langston Hughes writes in his 1926 manifesto for the younger generation of Harlem Renaissance artists, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain.” He continues, “If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn’t matter. We know we

are beautiful.” Celebrated as “the poet laureate of Harlem,” Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, and traveled extensively before settling in the neighborhood he came to call home. When growing up, Hughes lived variously with his grandmother in Lawrence, Kansas, his father in Mexico, and his mother in Washington, D.C. After just one year at Columbia University, Hughes left college to explore the world, working as a cabin boy on ships bound for Africa and as a cook in a Paris kitchen. Throughout these early years, Hughes published poems in the African-American magazines *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*; these poems soon earned him recognition as a rising star of the Harlem Renaissance who excelled at the lyrical use of the music, speech, and experiences of urban, working-class African-Americans. Hughes published his first book of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, at the age of twenty-four while still a student at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Over the course of his long and influential literary career, Hughes worked extensively in all areas of African-American literature, writing novels, short stories, plays, essays, and works of history; translating work by black authors; and editing numerous anthologies of African-American history and culture, such as *The First Book of Jazz* (1955) and *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers* (1969).

Hughes’s poems embody one of the major projects of the Harlem Renaissance: to create distinctively African-American art. By the turn of the twentieth century, African-Americans had awakened to the realization that two hundred years of slavery had simultaneously erased their connections to their African heritage and created, in its wake, new, vital forms of distinctively African-American culture. Accordingly, politicians, authors, and artists associated with the Harlem Renaissance reconstructed that lost history and championed art rooted in the black American experience. Hughes’s poems from the 1920s are particularly notable for celebrating black culture while also honestly representing the deprivations of working-class African-American life. In “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” Hughes connects African-American culture to the birth of civilization in Africa and the Middle East. In “Mother to Son,” Hughes draws upon the music of the blues and black dialect to celebrate the indomitable heart of working black America. Hughes grew increasingly radicalized in the 1930s following such high-profile examples of American racism as the 1931 Scottsboro trial in Alabama. He travelled to the Soviet Union in 1932 to work on an unfinished film about race in the American South and published in leftist publications associated with the **American Communist Party**, the only political party at the time to oppose segregation. “Christ in Alabama” is a good example of Hughes’s more pointed political style, in which the poet criticizes the immorality of racism by equating the suffering of African-Americans in Alabama with the suffering of Christ. Poems such as “I, too,” and “Theme for English B,” in turn, combine Hughes’s provocative politics with his cultural lyricism to articulate a theme that runs throughout his life’s work: that the American experience is as black as it is white.

### **5.22.1 “Christ in Alabama”**

Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma05/dulis/poetry/Hughes/hughes2.html>

### **5.22.2 “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”**

I’ve known rivers

I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I’ve  
seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I’ve known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

### **5.22.3 “Theme for English b”**

Please click the link below to access this selection:

[http://www.eecs.harvard.edu/~keith/poems/English\\_B.html](http://www.eecs.harvard.edu/~keith/poems/English_B.html)

### **5.22.4 Reading and Review Questions**

1. What is significant about the rivers—the Euphrates, the Congo, the Nile, and the Mississippi—that Hughes names in “The Negro Speaks of Rivers”?
2. Jesus Christ is often represented as being white in Western art. What does Hughes’s identification of Christ as “a nigger” say about the Christians of the segregated American South of the early twentieth century?
3. The semi-autobiographical poem “Theme for English B” was first published in 1946, decades after Hughes attended his one year of college at Columbia “on the hill above Harlem.” However, Hughes writes the poem not in the past tense but in the present tense. How does Hughes’s use of the present tense affect the meaning of the poem?

## 5.23 COUNTEE CULLEN (1903-1946)



**Image 5.19 | Countee Cullen, 1941**

Photographer | Carl Van Vechten

Source | Wikimedia Commons

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Countee Cullen, one of the most successful writers of the early Harlem Renaissance, was himself a poetic creation. Born sometime around the turn of the twentieth century and raised until his middle teens by a woman who may have been his paternal grandmother, Cullen’s academic skills gained him early recognition and entry into New York University, where he graduated with Phi Beta Kappa honors in 1925. Nurtured in the university environment, Cullen published poetry throughout his time at NYU and during his graduate studies at Harvard. While other members of the Harlem Renaissance, like Alain Locke, author of *The New Negro* (1925), advocated for artistic

production that embraced distinctly African themes and styles, Cullen was a traditionalist who believed that African-American writers were entitled to the forms of English literature. In the forward to his 1927 collection *Caroling Dusk*, Cullen made his case succinctly: “Negro poets, dependent as they are on the English language, may have more to gain from the rich background of English and American poetry than from any nebulous atavistic yearnings toward an African influence.”<sup>6</sup> While Cullen’s contemporaries like Langston Hughes argued for a more clearly and uniquely defined African-American literature, Cullen focused on traditional forms in his poetry and drew inspiration from the works of John Keats and A. E. Houseman.

Our two selections from Cullen’s poetry, “Yet Do I Marvel” and “Heritage,” demonstrate both Cullen’s command of the historical traditions of English and American poetry and a deep sense of irony regarding his own role as an African-American poet. Both poems were published in 1925 and showcase Cullen’s technical skill and his ambivalence. “Yet Do I Marvel,” an Italian sonnet in iambic pentameter, uses Cullen’s technical skills to remind his audience of the audacity of being a young, well-educated, African-American poet in the early twentieth century. Throughout the poem Cullen creates a sense of irony through the skill with which he interweaves classical references with nods to both John Milton and Percy Bysshe and Mary Shelley only to close with a sense of curiosity that this black poet has been made to sing in classical tones.

“Heritage,” also from 1925, uses a longer form to ask essential questions about the relationship between African-American poets and African cultural heritage. From the earliest lines of the poem, Cullen expresses distance from the African heritage embraced by other authors of the Harlem Renaissance. Building on the question, “What is Africa to me?” (10), the poem becomes a meditation on the divided self of the young African-American poet. In “Heritage,” Cullen reflects on the tensions inherent in the Harlem Renaissance: that the very education that allows a poet like Cullen to achieve widespread notoriety also exposes cultural barriers among the members of the Harlem Renaissance.

### **5.23.1 “Heritage”**

Please click the link below to access this selection:

[http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~jenglish/Courses/Spring02/104/Cullen\\_Heritage.html](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~jenglish/Courses/Spring02/104/Cullen_Heritage.html)

### **5.23.2 “Yet Do I Marvel”**

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<sup>6</sup> “Excerpts from Countee Cullen’s Forward to *Caroling Dusk*.” *Modern American Poetry Site*. Ed. Cary Nelson and Bartholomew Brinkman. Department of English, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, n.d. Web. 10 July 2015.



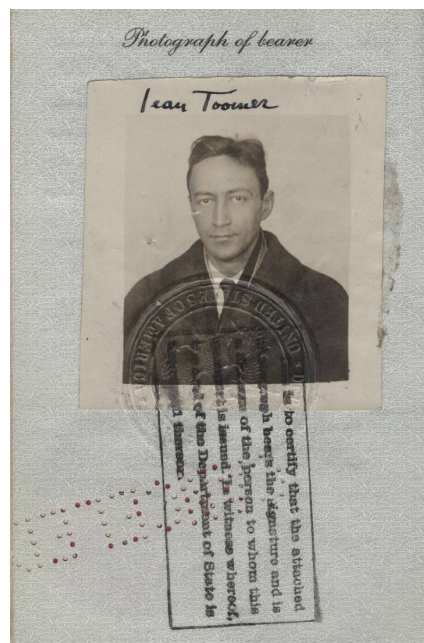
Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://allpoetry.com/Yet-Do-I-Marvel>

### 5.23.3 Reading and Review Questions

1. Compare and contrast Cullen's views on poetry to those of Langston Hughes.
2. How does Cullen use traditional literary forms to critique the position of African-American poets?
3. Analyze Cullen's portrayal of African, American, and European cultures as those cultures collided during the Harlem Renaissance. How does Cullen's poetry explore these cultural intersections?

## 5.24 JEAN TOOMER (1894-1967)



**Image 5.20 | Jean Toomer, 1926**

Photographer | U.S. State Dept.

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Nathan Eugene Toomer, known as Jean, was born in Washington D.C. to a bi-racial father, Nathan Toomer from Georgia, and a bi-racial mother, Nina Pinchback, the daughter of P. B. S.



Pinchback, who was the first person of African descent to serve as Governor of Louisiana. Toomer never knew his father, who left the family shortly after Toomer's birth due to conflicts with his father-in-law, and was raised by the Pinchbacks, a well-respected family who had moved from New Orleans to Washington D.C. in order to escape Jim Crow laws. Since Toomer could "pass" as white and lived in an affluent neighborhood, his racial identity was of little consequence for most of his young life. It was not until he was fourteen, when Toomer moved in with his Uncle Bismark in a working-class African-American neighborhood, that Toomer began to experience racial tension of the period. After graduating high school, Toomer left for the University of Wisconsin to study agriculture, where, according to his own unpublished autobiography, he fully realized the stark racial conflicts between blacks and whites. Toomer dropped out of the University of Wisconsin, briefly studied biology at the University of Chicago, and later attended New York University. During this time, Toomer struggled with his own self-identity since he had always been able to pass as white, yet he began to self-identify as African-American.

Toomer held odd jobs in Chicago and New York, while becoming active politically in the Socialist movement and gaining a growing reputation as a writer. However, it was Toomer's year as the principle of an industrial and agricultural school for African-Americans in Sparta, Georgia that became the inspiration for many of the stories in his groundbreaking work, *Cane* (1923). As Toomer developed a growing reputation, publishing in notable places and working with W. E. B. Du Bois as part of the "**talented tenth**" in the Harlem Renaissance, *Cane* became a critical success. However, just as *Cane* began to raise his profile, Toomer began to feel hesitant about identifying as African-American and started withdrawing from public life, abandoning fiction and eventually writing philosophical treatises. *Cane* fell out of favor and was almost nearly a lost work, until it was re-discovered in the 1960s and has been highly acclaimed ever since.

Originally published with Boni & Liveright, an avante-garde press of the time, *Cane* is today considered a modernist classic, but it is the only work associated with Toomer. It is hailed not only for its historical significance within the Harlem Renaissance, but also for its experimental form. *Cane* combines poetry, prose, short fiction, and even a play in the three-part book. In the short story "Blood Burning Moon" Toomer combines both poetry and prose. Hence, the book resists genre classification as a novel, a short story collection, or a book of poetry.

Toomer's own racial background became a major theme of his work, especially the conflict between races appearing in short stories such as "Blood Burning Moon." Other themes include the great migration of African-Americans from the rural South to urbanized areas, as well as the juxtaposition of the beautiful imagery of rural America ("Portrait in Georgia") and the containment of the city (or slavery) which appear in works such as "Box Seat" and "Kabnis."

### 5.24.1 Selections from *Cane*

“Blood Burning Moon”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

<http://english204-dcc.blogspot.com/2011/04/blood-burning-moon-toomer.html>

“Portrait in Georgia”

Please click the link below to access this selection:

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/portrait-georgia>

### 5.24.2 Reading and Review Questions

1. Why does Toomer include the verses in between sections of “Blood Burning Moon”? What effect does this have on readers? Does it change the meaning of the story?
2. In the short poem “Portrait in Georgia,” how does Toomer’s conciseness affect readers? What type of images is he using in this poem? Why?

## 5.25 KEY TERMS

- American Communist Party
- Armistice
- Arthur Miller
- Countee Cullen
- Cubism
- Dixie Limited
- Dramatic Monologue
- Dust Bowl
- e. e. cummings
- Edna St. Vincent Millay
- Ellen Glasgow
- Epigraph
- Ernest Hemingway

- Eudora Welty
- Jean Toomer
- Jessie Redmon Fauset
- Langston Hughes
- Low Modernism
- “Make It New!”
- Marianne Moore
- Modernism
- Modernist
- Nella Larsen
- Nobel Prize
- Prose
- Pulitzer Prize
- Racial Inequality
- Robert Frost