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.¹

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:

> 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

¹https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Literature_and_Literacy/Book%3A_Writing_the_Nation_-_A_Concise_Introduction_t… Updated: Wed, 17 Mar 2021 02:00:09 GMT Powered by
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.²

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.

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 arresting Beauty. 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 old-fashioned 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 surfboard 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 upilted 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.

III

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 Krimslich. 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.

“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 comraderie. “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”
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.

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.

“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 years 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.”

“By far the richest,” repeated Percy.

“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.

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“By far the richest,” repeated Percy.

“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 ”

“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.”
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 hexagons 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.
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.

IV

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 jewellery circles, not so much by the size of his diamonds as by their appearance in the city from mysterious sources. Wild rumours 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 neighbouring 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 coloured following, darkies who had never realised that slavery was abolished. To make sure of this, he read them a proclamation that he had composed, which announced that General Forrest had reorganised 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 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 intensive 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 patronised, 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.

V

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.

VI

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”

“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’learna 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.

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VII

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.

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VIII

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 swim 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 château 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-Murphy’s, 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-viting
them anyway. I couldn't understand 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 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 château. 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.

IX

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.

X

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 château 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 halfway 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 supplication, 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 château 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.

XI

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.”


“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.
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 won-dered
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 an 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 diners 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 openers 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.
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.

“What 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 soupplates, 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 ether 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 it 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.

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 "

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“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 bands 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 non-chalantly 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’ nose 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 serpentiike 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 dammed!” over and over in a hurt and faintly hostile torte. 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 Marborough 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?
2. Ibid.