# Galloping Dawns

Arthur Tuckerman

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# GALLOPING DAWNS

BY
**ARTHUR TUCKERMAN**

Ride on, Youth, with galloping dawns and dappled days;
For I am unhorsed, and outventured.
*From the Chinese. Po-Chu-I. A. D. 772.*

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# GALLOPING DAWNS

## CHAPTER I

### Park Avenue

#### I

This is the story of Beryl Dulac and, more particularly, of her father, Lawrence. A rare enough candidate for the rôle of hero—a mere father—in these days when youth and feminism are so rampantly to the fore. Of recent years our printed pages have been gay with the antics of freshmen and flappers, youthful revoltists and ardent, clever young women with exaggerated egos—all of them more or less unconventional in their behaviour for the reason perhaps, that to appear unconventional has become among the young so fashionable as to be conventional. And simultaneously with this phenomenon in literature those staid characters known as parents have slowly but surely been thrust into an obscure background. In several instances, indeed, that creature whom we designate as father has been relegated to the position of some unornamental household necessity such as, let us say, the furnace or the refrigerator. And yet, strangely enough, fathers survive; continue to assert themselves. In the story which follows one discovers that Lawrence Dulac has somehow persisted in maintaining the central rôle. Exactly why, it is hard to tell. Perhaps it is because of the simple, biological fact that without him, and his faithful Janet, there would have been no Beryl.

Now, a writer addresses an unseen audience. How can he know whether his reader be young or old, grave or gay? If you happen to be on the youthful side of, say thirty, you will no doubt recognize in Beryl Dulac the exclusive product of your own times—an understandable little person, whether or not you approve of her every action; and if you count yourself as her contemporary you are possibly destined to experience a certain mild surprise at the polite calmness of Lawrence's days as a young man. He had, as may be seen, sundry adventures in his own peculiar way, and one can only suppose that those evenings of punctilious pleasure were to him as enjoyable as the more violent amusements of our own age. They are the record of a tranquil generation, those early half dozen chapters until Beryl once more dances across these pages.

If, on the other hand, you have attained the wisdom of an absolute maturity the shoe is on the other foot. It is Beryl who may at times surprise you. She is essentially the result of environment; of her own times and fashions. In the long run she will, like all her kind, reveal the same basic qualities which Lawrence Dulac himself inherited and transmitted to her—only, her manner of demonstrating these will differ from his. Here, I venture to suggest, is where the generations actually differ: in manner rather than in fundamentals. And hence this story of varying manners and moods.

## II

In the year nineteen hundred and twenty-three an apartment on Park Avenue, consisting of several adjoining cells in an enormous honeycomb of terra-cotta brickwork and steel, was the only place on earth which Lawrence Dulac and his younger daughter might legitimately refer to as home. Yet to call it a home was perhaps a euphemism, since as soon as one entered it one was instantly aware that it had no definite touch of individuality, no welcoming spirit of warmth other than that provided by its cunningly concealed steam radiators. The drawing room, for instance, with its wide sweep of reseda carpet; its gray walls relieved only at rare intervals by the most formal of French engravings; its serene Adam furniture, dark and lustrous, each piece exactly in its proper place. This was a chamber far too immaculate to offer a clue as to its ownership. A handsome room, nevertheless, but possessing the soul of some exceedingly chaste, unimaginative woman. Unbending, secure, in its sheer, cold perfection. A closer inspection revealed a victrola in one corner, in harmony, of course, with the rest of the suite, and a grand piano on the top of which lay casually scattered the bright covers of a few popular songs—here, at last, encouraging evidence of imminent humanity.

In her own room, a few yards down a narrow hall from the drawing room, Beryl Dulac sat on her bed one December evening examining a pair of elaborate silk stockings upon which she had recently expended what she considered a fabulous sum. The left stocking had developed a ladder, in a highly spectacular position just above the instep. She tossed it aside, with a little grimace of disgust, and, seating herself before a cheval mirror, began to comb her russet hair. Frequently she shook her head with a swift backward jerk, to free her vision from the curling, tangled locks. She observed, with some relief, that nearly all traces of its once bobbed state had vanished; that it now reached to her shoulders. Bobbed hair, she knew, was almost a thing of the past—in her immediate circle at least; appeared to be dying a quite natural death, along with eccentric dancing, the casual revelation of knees,

and other symptoms of a period she had privately considered wholly delightful. She prided herself in this—the ability to seize upon the tendencies of the moment and to capitalize them, a trait which she knew was a high asset to any modern girl, and more particularly amongst her local contemporaries.

Once she paused to appraise herself almost critically in the mirror; to gaze at the narrow, oval face—features that were endowed, she realized objectively, with a certain elfish and elusive charm; the slightly predominant but not too determined little chin; the mouth, small and geranium-tinted, drawn down in a bowlike curve indicating a discontent that did not actually exist in her mind. She had long ago discovered that she looked prettier sad than smiling. An appearance of gentle wistfulness was, by its very contrast to the beaming features of most of her competitors, piquant, arresting. Such discoveries were important. . . .

In the mirror she became aware of Hannah's austere presence behind her, and raised her hand in a flippant salute.

"You'll catch your death of cold," Hannah remarked in a resigned tone, precisely as if she foresaw that the observation would have no effect. Her cold Vermont eyes surveyed Beryl's negligible costume, a mere slip of azure silk supported by the frailest of shoulder ribbons. Hannah sighed. Perhaps her drab soul experienced an infinitesimal moment of poetry at the sight of Beryl; a fleeting vision of youth's beautiful immaturity. A thought of dryads, maybe, dancing at the margin of some mirrored pool. Beryl appeared so acutely young, virginal. And yet so vividly alive.

"Half past seven," she pronounced, coming abruptly to earth, as was her fashion. "And Mr. Dulac's waiting. Considering that this is the first time you've dined at home in two weeks you might manage to be on time."

The floor of the room, she suddenly perceived, was littered with stockings. Stockings of varying shade and texture. Beige and fawn and rose. Gold and silver and black. And a few thick, fuzzy, manly pairs for week-ends in the country. Gathering these she put them into a drawer, and handed to Beryl her evening dress, a fragile thing of flounced black lace with an abbreviated bodice of white moire. Her lips, as she tendered it, were a trifle grimmer than usual.

"So you don't like it?" Beryl demanded, pirouetting before the mirror. "You ought to, considering the positive fortune I sank in it."

"It's theatrical," Hannah said. "And you look half naked. Has your father seen it yet?"

Beryl shook her head; preened an instant longer before the mirror; then darted from the room.

"All her money going into that kind of thing," Hannah sighed. "It's Babylonian—that's what it is. If only her mother were alive——"

In the drawing room Lawrence Dulac, his lean, attenuated figure clad in evening clothes and a stiff-bosomed shirt with large, old-fashioned studs of onyx, was finishing a hand of patience. Beryl could never help being a little surprised when she found him doing that. It appeared to be such an utterly dull pastime. Amusement, to her, was synonymous with some form of action. To be amused one had to keep moving. People like her father, she decided, had altogether curious ideas about pleasure. For a moment she stood still in the doorway gazing rather affectionately, rather wistfully, at his pale, serious face frowning over the cards. Then she crossed the room; alighted on the arm of his chair; and pecked lightly at his forehead.

He smiled up at her. And, presently, from a near-by table he took up a tiny leather volume, its corners worn and battered with age.

"A Geneva edition," he informed her, "of the *Imitatio*. I picked it up this afternoon at the Hamlin auction. Exquisite, isn't it?"

"Lovely," she agreed; and bent over the yellowed pages for a moment or two, trying hard to appear enthusiastic. (What a funny little old thing to want to own!) Then: "Let's go in to dinner shall we? I'm dying of hunger."

He arose and accompanied her into the dining room, observing for the first time her new dress and the unprecedented display of a still immature and almost curveless bosom. He carefully refrained, however, from offering comment. But she was waiting for it, he felt—poised. At last, over the oysters, pride deserted her and she demanded his opinion in slightly disappointed tones.

He surveyed her over the top of his pince-nez.

"Dear Beryl, don't ask for my useless verdict. It's just like everything else these days—startling. Unsubtle. You know best what your own age requires. I don't want to interfere. I'm an outsider. A survivor," he concluded with faint humour, "of a rapidly vanishing era."

She held her oyster fork arrested in midair, eyeing him with one of those wide stares of absurd, youthful gravity that never failed to warm his heart.

"I wish you wouldn't say such things," she told him, frowning. "It makes us far apart. Dad, darling, do you hate these times? I love them so. They're glorious. Hardly a moment to breathe or think. I just thrive on excitement."

He gave a little sigh; nodded, as the maid appeared at his side with sherry in a cut-glass decanter.

"No. I don't hate anything. I'm merely bewildered, I suppose." He appeared, to her, all at once pathetic. "That dress, Beryl. In my young days, frankly, people would have considered you at once as belonging to—well, some highly frivolous profession."

She giggled with delight at this.

"Gracious goodness. It's not really immodest. Besides, in spite of the general fashion I've still kept to corsets—of a kind."

He changed the subject hastily by asking about her plans for the evening.

"Ella Willems and her brother, and another boy and I, are going to a play. Then probably we'll go on to the Moorland's dance at the Plaza. And perhaps supper somewhere else."

"Willems," he pondered, seemingly puzzled.

"Jan Willems's son," she explained.

"Surely——?" He paused. Then said a trifle acidly: "I didn't realize that the Willemses had attained your young set."

"Don't be snobbish, Dad," she told him cheerfully. "Their father's career was perfectly wonderful when you come to think of it. Arrived in an emigrant ship with ten dollars in his pocket. . . . And Ella's a perfect dear."

"The Moorlands, of course, have an established position in New York," he mused. "And have had for generations. But if you'd seen Jan Willems, as I have, in his first little restaurant off Union Square——" He emitted a resigned sigh. "Oh, well. There's no use reciting ancient history to this generation. I daresay the children are nice enough. I'm sorry I spoke, if they're really your friends."

There was silence for a while until, observing a cluster of orchids with a mauve bow at her waist, he asked:

"Which of your bond salesmen sent you those?" All her male friends, he reflected amusedly, sold or tried to sell securities. It appeared to be the inevitable destiny of those Harvard, Yale, and Princeton graduates who happened to be born New Yorkers and the sons of recognized families.

She felt herself flushing. Sentiment, she would have declared violently, played no part whatever in her life. Her eyes were open to the nonsense of such things. Yet a half dozen orchids, at probably six or seven dollars a head, were undeniably a form of romantic manifestation.

“Was it young Moorland?” her father persisted, almost gladly she thought.

“Heavens, no! He ditched me months ago. My dear, if I tried to keep the same beau as long as that nowadays I’d have to drug him! I don’t mind in the least, though, telling you who sent me these. An awfully nice boy—young Frank Hauben. He’s taking all of us to the theatre to-night.”

“Hauben—Frank Hauben?”

She was quick to observe his discomposure; the sudden flush to his usually colourless cheeks.

“Why, what’s the matter?”

He attempted a smile.

“Oh, nothing. It’s all so utterly preposterous. Frank Hauben’s son sending my daughter orchids. Good Lord!” he exploded into almost angry laughter. Then, sharply: “This boy—do you like him?”

A sense of self-protection caused her to choose cautiously her answer. She said, with a well assumed casualness:

“He calls me up fairly often. He’s amusing, a good dancer, and seems to have plenty of money to spend. I suppose I amuse him in return. It’s a fair deal all around. But as for any sentiment, that’s out of the question.”

His sigh of relief was audible. And he resumed once more his neglected dinner.

In the drawing room later she lighted a Russian cigarette and, legs crossed, prepared to pass a dutiful quarter of an hour with him until the Willemses called for her.

“Are you really happy?” he demanded out of a clear sky.

“Of course. Why shouldn’t I be?” She was patently puzzled.

“This life of yours. Out until three or four every morning. Up at eight. Slum work—because it’s the fashion—for a few hours. Girls’ luncheons. Bridge and cigarettes in an airless apartment all the afternoon. Mind you, I’m not protesting. But what about your health? Your mother, you know, was extremely delicate. She could never have stood it.”

She was instantly and properly sad at the mention of her mother.

“I was thinking,” he went on, “how happy we were, when you were about ten or eleven and we all lived in Rome, the four of us together. So close. . . . We sort of understood each other, too, in those days. This New York! It draws individuals, whole families, apart. Everyone off on his or her

own selfish tangent. I don't think I've seen Amy more than once this whole winter——"

She looked up at him with mingled surprise and tenderness, wondering, as she often had wondered, why fathers so rarely were self-sufficient, why parents found so much satisfaction in their children's company. The returns for this devotion, she had to admit, were usually negligible. In her own case, she secretly felt, they were perhaps a grade better than the average.

"Oh, Dad! You're lonely. Dreadfully lonely——"

She had risen and was going over to his chair when the telephone rang. She hurried to it. He watched her; saw her eyes glisten with a certain assured triumph as, to an enquiry inaudible to him, she responded with a toss of her russet head:

"To-night! That's impossible. My dear Tommy, you seem to think I've nothing to do but sit at home and bite my fingernails till you call me up. No—not to-morrow either. Sorry. Full up till—let me see—" She consulted a miniature leather book on the telephone table "—till Wednesday. Tea, if you like, then. . . . Righto! So long, old thing."

She slammed up the receiver, and stared for a moment, contemptuously, at the instrument.

"Always gives me a ring at the last moment," she said. "The nit-wit!"

Even their language, her father reflected, was becoming daily more unintelligible.

"If you feel that way about your ardent friend," he asked mildly, "why make any appointment with him?"

"Pure matter of diplomacy," she told him. "He always gets the best seats for the Yale-Harvard football game."

She left the room presently. The Willems boy, it appeared, was downstairs waiting for her. Lawrence Dulac picked up the evening newspaper and, with a little sigh, attempted to concentrate his mind upon the printed page.

## III

"How's Mr. Dulac?" Johnny Willems asked, as he helped Beryl into a taxicab. He was a polite youth. This was indeed his chief novelty. In an age of careless fraternity and bald frankness he managed to preserve a touch of old-fashioned courtesy that constantly surprised his friends.

Beryl smiled, then frowned, her mood pensive.

“I don’t know, Johnny. He’s very sort of sad. You know he lived, in fact we all did, abroad for years and years, until I was twelve years old, when Mother died. I don’t think he’s at all happy here. Or would be anywhere, for that matter. There’s something we don’t know back of it all. It’s as if—as if he’d missed something in life that meant very much to him. That’s the feeling I sometimes have about him.”

“He’s a fine man,” Johnny interrupted inadequately. “The regular old school. Few of them about nowadays. Secure; that’s the word. I admire him. I understand him, somehow. Now Frank Hauben wouldn’t understand him at all. Frank has no use for old-fashioned ideas and ways.”

She frowned again; asked him: “Do most men, your friends for instance, like Frank?”

He was sufficiently versed in the feminine mind to recognize this as one of the standard questions propounded by a girl who was more than ordinarily interested in some particular man.

“Oh, he gets along all right. Always will. Frank can take care of himself. A little—um—patronizing at times. Calls you ‘my boy,’ and that kind of thing. You must know what I mean.”

Valiantly she went to Hauben’s defence by remarking:

“You must remember that he’s been wonderfully successful, at twenty-five.”

“He wouldn’t give any one a chance to forget that,” Johnny retorted. Then, regretting his sharpness, he had the tact to revert to their original subject of conversation.

“Yes, Mr. Dulac is a fine character. You know, you’ve got a feeling, when his cool gray eyes are looking you over, that if he does disapprove of anything about you he must be right and you wrong.”

“But he never does disapprove!” she cried.

They seemed to themselves, at that moment, to be infinitely older than their parents; and discovered a keen pleasure in the sensation.

“He doesn’t disapprove in actual words. But you can tell. That night Roy Carden was tight when he came to your apartment to play bridge. Remember? Your father passed through the drawing room once. He said nothing. Just looked at Roy. But, good Lord, if I’d been Roy I’d never have dared face him again.”

“He hasn’t,” she told him. And after that, as if by mutual consent, they drifted to lighter and less taxing topics.

At the door of the theatre Frank Hauben and tall, flaxen Ella Willems were waiting for them—Frank Hauben, dark-haired, ruddy, stockily built, a shade too perfectly turned out. He shook hands with them vigorously; bustled them into the theatre, and found their seats with his usual brisk efficiency. He was at once their leader. A spirit of submission seemed to descend upon them; they were utterly in his hands. That was Frank's way. Beryl realized suddenly that she enjoyed the feeling; decided that Frank Hauben was the only person in the world, young or old, who could give her the piquant and novel sensation of being—well—managed. During the interval that followed the first act she went out into the foyer with him while he smoked a cigarette. He knew many people there that night; had a cheerful word to say to them all. The girls whom he greeted invariably bestowed on him their most alluring smiles. His dark eyes were bright with pleasure. He was at ease with the world. He radiated success. . . . He had at his side one of the most attractive young girls in the whole of New York, smiling up at him, absorbing his every word. And at the thought of this his sturdy young chest, under its impeccable white frontage, expanded. He was, like most men, oblivious of the fact that at the passing of a pretty woman few men trouble to glance at her escort.

Just before the last act of the play was over Frank Hauben whispered to Johnny Willems; "Johnny, you're nearest the exit. Better run out and get a taxi, like a good fellow."

Johnny muttered: "Well, I'll be damned." Nevertheless, he went for the taxi.

## IV

Lawrence Dulac, completing his perusal of the evening paper, lighted a long cigar after carefully removing the ornate band, and pushed his chair a trifle nearer to the concealed radiator. There existed in the drawing room a narrow green-tiled fireplace, but its chimney was, he knew, an absurd deception. Modernism! So certain in its assumption that it offered improvements over the past. His lips curved in faint irony.

His mind turned, inevitably, to Beryl. Long ago he had relinquished his efforts at controlling her life to any perceptible degree. He had feared, rather, that such a course on his part would be tantamount to nominating an inexperienced landsman as pilot of a small ship embarking for uncharted seas. Amy, the elder of his two daughters, was no longer cause for anxiety, luckily. She was safely married. But as for Beryl, he couldn't help detesting the idea of her dancing nightly in public resorts until the small hours of the

morning, in a catholic assembly of college striplings, easy-going bachelors, “society women” who owned studios, and a sprinkling of discreet courtesans, to the teasing wails of a sweating mulatto band. A mad world, indeed. And how different from the well-classified, easily understood universe of his own youth.

His memory, he went on to discover, was peculiarly vivid that night. He found the past taking shape pictorially before him, in a species of slow and stately review, unhurriedly contemplated through the curling blue haze of his cigar. A procession of memories, varying from sad to gay, and all of them precious because they were his own.

# CHAPTER II

## Play-Ladies

### I

It was at the age of twelve, he recalled, settling himself comfortably in his armchair, that life presented to him the first of its rapidly increasing complications. As early as twelve—while he, and his younger brother Perry, and his father and mother, were living most happily in a square yellow house with green shutters upon a hill that overlooked Irvington and the Hudson. And how, exactly, had that incident of Cousin Rufus so sharply entered his young life? Let's see. . . . He, Lawrence, had first noticed the disreputable Rufus on a train. Ah, yes. That was it. On a train slipping through the twilight along the river's edge. He had it now, clearly . . .

He and Perry had spent the day in New York, one of those gorgeous, carefree days to which they were treated once or twice a year. A day devoted sheerly to amusement, and unhampered by formal visits to religious maiden aunts, to dentists, and like evils. On this particular occasion their nurse Norah had developed highly convenient chilblains in the morning just as they were about to start from Irvington; and Dawson, their father's valet, had been chosen to accompany them instead. They had left Irvington on the ten-fifteen; and Dawson, as obliging as they hoped he would be, had permitted them to ride in the front car, the smoker. Thus they had been able to witness the uncoupling and side-tracking of the locomotive while the train was in motion just outside Grand Central Depot, an amazing process which allowed the train to roll like some headless dragon into the station, while a man on the front platform worked heroically at the hand brakes. The day had been crisp and bright, but in New York the banks of snow which had made Irvington so entrancing had, to their disappointment, changed to dreary masses of an ugly brown, nor were any sleighs visible. They had lunched on high, twirling stools at one of the circular counters in Purcell's and had devoured fried oysters and giant éclairs, because Dawson's ideas on juvenile diet were happily unprejudiced. Lawrence recollected that their mother, kissing them good-bye that morning, had suggested the traditional Fifth Avenue Hotel for luncheon, but Perry had persuaded the amiable Dawson to the more exciting resort. Of course, it had been Perry's suggestion. Not Lawrence's.

Lawrence had even lagged visibly at Purcell's door.

"Mother said the Fifth Avenue Hotel," he had reminded his brother dutifully.

And Perry's reply: "You're always scared to do something different," was superbly scathing.

After luncheon, to be certain of not missing anything, they had hurried Dawson to the theatre at least half an hour before the performance was timed to begin. Once seated in the orchestra Lawrence experienced a state of happiness, a nervous tension, that bordered on ecstasy. Everything, he decided, was perfect that afternoon. Even his new cigar-coloured suit which he was wearing for the first time had proved, unlike other new suits, soft and comfortable; and the large plaid bow, which his mother had so carefully tied for him that morning, did not rub against his chin as much as he had feared. Then the orchestra seats to which he and Perry and Dawson had been ushered, handsome and roomy affairs of yellow plush, were actually in the very first row. Altogether it promised to be a memorable afternoon.

The top of his head extended well above the back of the seat, and he discovered that by twisting his body he could observe a fat young man in the row behind him, who was whistling—most cleverly—through his teeth. The fat young man instantly winked at him, but Lawrence decided not to return the wink. Mother had said, upon some remote and similar occasion, that one should never become friendly with strangers. He wanted very much to return the wink, though.

On his right knee was perilously balanced a paper cornucopia manufactured by a splendid person called Mr. Ridley, which contained broken sticks of striped candy. Lawrence secretly compared them to miniature barbers' poles. There were still two pieces left, one large and one small. With a suppressed sigh he offered the cornucopia to his brother beside him, convinced that Perry would take the larger fragment. But Perry seized the two pieces, avidly, and crammed them into his small mouth. Dawson, who was seated beyond Perry, permitted this primitive exhibition without so much as a murmur. That was the best thing about Dawson; he was uncritical. Even Lawrence, at twelve, realized this. To be in New York with Dawson as an escort instead of the usual Norah, or some member of the family, gave one an exhilarating sense of liberty. Dawson with his long, lanky body in black clothes, and his long, dark face, was sphinx-like; rarely spoke. Father often said that as a valet he was exemplary—whatever that might mean. Anyway, Dawson was far better than Norah, whom the brothers had outgrown, or any woman for that matter—except Mother. Lawrence

concluded an exceptionally long period of consecutive thinking by deciding gravely that men were infinitely preferable, as company, to women. Always excepting his mother, of course.

Some mysterious person behind the florid curtain of nymphs and fawns gave it an accidental jolt, so that it swayed toward the audience. Lawrence remained calm—"grown up," he called it—but Perry shivered with an intense, premonitory excitement and gave vent to a loud "Ha!"

"Do be quiet," Lawrence admonished him. "There's people, everywhere, looking at you."

Perry darted at him one of those extraordinarily swift little glances of indignation of which his black eyes were so capable. He tossed his head. His glossy, smooth hair, precisely parted at one side, fell in a single generous sweep over his brow.

"You're a stodgy old man, Lawrence."

Dawson, then, to the surprise of both brothers, asserted himself.

"Master Perry! Come now. Should a young gentleman speak like that of his brother?"

Perry's lean brown face was brightly eager as he watched the trembling curtain.

"But he *is* stodgy," he insisted. And added in a defiant tone: "And so are you, Dawson. If I'm having an awful lot of fun, why can't I show it?"

A burst of music from the orchestra pit drowned Dawson's mumbled reply. Lawrence settled back in his seat, in an eager yet wholly sober anticipation. He would enjoy the play just as much as Perry, he assured himself, only—well, it would be more *inside* than Perry's enjoyment. But then Perry was only nine years and two months old; nearly ten, as he foolishly chose to call it. When he reached the maturity of twelve he would have more sense, Lawrence hoped.

## II

In the train going home Perry evinced a growing irritability, a tendency to swift tears, that was the inevitable aftermath of a day replete with excitement. Lawrence, his nose flattened against the car window, gazed out upon the wide sweep of the Hudson, purple in the winter twilight, and reviewed the day's happenings with a sense of luxury. He remained, throughout the journey, silent, a faint smile upon his pale and amiable little countenance. Dawson was seated across the aisle, absorbed in the boxing column of an evening newspaper. At Spuyten Duyvil a brakeman, armed

with a curving rod of brass, came through the car to turn on the Pintsch gas jets one by one; and an icy gust followed his entrance through the narrow door. Lawrence's attention was presently attracted by the traveller in the seat ahead of him, a thickset little man of perhaps fifty years of age, dressed in an ostentatious yet shabby check suit, a fawn-coloured derby hat worn at an exaggerated angle. His neck bulged in a thick crease of red flesh over the back of his collar. Once the man turned toward him a heavy scarlet face, pale blue eyes, heavy-lidded and weary. Lawrence suffered a distinct shock. It was as if, he thought desperately, he had seen his father's eyes looking at him—only his father's eyes grown old and tired and sad. He confided the unpleasing thought to Perry and asked him if he, too, saw a vague resemblance. But Perry made some wholly idiotic reply, accentuating once more the tremendous difference in their ages.

"He looks," Lawrence mused aloud, "as if he'd once been nice like Father. Nice and thin and pink-and-white. And now he's all gone to pieces."

Perry refused to comment, having made an astonishing discovery of a sticky fragment of candy in his pocket. He was busy trying to detach it from the lining. Dawson, when consulted, merely stated that it was impolite to remark upon the appearance of strangers within their hearing. Nevertheless, the man in the seat ahead continued to disturb Lawrence profoundly. He still felt that it was like seeing father grown stouter and older and hideously disguised.

At Irvington, Dawson buttoned up their overcoats and hurried them out of the train into a biting dusk. Matthew was at the station with the cutter and the roan mare. There was a pleasant tinkle of sleigh bells, a gleam of moving lanterns, the dull thud of horses' hoofs on well packed snow. It was amusing, Lawrence found, to create large and visible clouds of steam by breathing violently. He and his brother were bundled in rugs. Matthew donned a fascinating pair of plush earmuffs; cracked his whip; and they glided out into the tingling darkness.

At the brow of a long hill the Dulac home loomed up, oblong panels of light from its bay windows casting bars of gold upon the white snow. The spacious verandas were dark and deserted, but as they turned into the drive Lawrence saw that the door under the portico was wide open. His mother was silhouetted against the light of the hallway, a waiting and anxious figure.

## III

"Seven o'clock. The Larrimores are late."

Ellen Dulac, in a high-necked dinner gown of rust-coloured silk, made the comment in a protesting tone as her husband joined her in the parlour, a sombre chamber of walnut furniture and autumnal landscapes executed in conventional moods. Her husband regarded her gravely and with a sense of approval. A frail spirit of a woman, her fine hair delicately gray, her complexion was of a lustreless transparency that preserved, like her slender body, an illusion of permanent youth. As she sat there before the fire, motionless, gazing into the flames, she appeared agreeably in harmony with the soberness of the room, with its spirit of insistent, well-ordered tradition.

Benjamin Dulac, extending his thin hands toward the warmth of the flames, declared: “They are never punctual. It would almost seem as if they were trying to establish tardiness as a fashionable custom.”

He coughed drily. Almost a chuckle. He began to pace the floor, hands clasped behind him, with measured tread—a tall and fragile figure, pink-complexioned, a single layer of white hair carefully parted upon a well-shaped head.

Lawrence presently entered the room, on tiptoe, for the nightly ritual of bedtime kissing. Perry, he explained, had been sent directly to bed without the privilege because he had discarded his goloshes before going to New York that morning; and because Norah had unfortunately discovered them later in the day, hidden craftily beneath the veranda.

“Perry thinks that goloshes are unmanly,” his father remarked. And, to Lawrence’s surprise, laughed aloud. Lawrence considered this unfair. He had always accepted overshoes philosophically, as was his way.

He perched himself on the arm of his mother’s chair; and in response to a question plunged into a detailed account of the play he had seen. As he talked his brow assumed a worried little frown.

“I didn’t understand it all,” he admitted bravely. “There was a young man in it, and the play-lady was very pretty. They were the principal people. He was awfully kind to her. Perry said that they were brother and sister—but of course I knew better than that. Dawson said that the man was sweet on the girl——” His mother winced. “Do people, when they’re sweet on each other, forget about anything and everything else in the world, Mother?”

His father smiled. His mother, however, said unsatisfactorily:

“There are a lot of things you will understand when you’re older, dear. Meanwhile, you mustn’t worry your little brain.” Then, curiosity evidently prevailing, she added: “What happened in the play, dear?”

Lawrence drew a deep breath.

"It's sort of hard to explain. Their two families hadn't liked each other for years and years. And so the young people had to run away. And they didn't have any money. And they had no friends left—but they were very, very happy all the same. . . ." His voice trailed off remotely; he became submerged in prodigious thought. He asked, suddenly: "Do people really do things like that, Mother? And would they be really happy?"

She replied, gently, that once in a while very foolish young people did such things. She doubted whether they could ever be happy, defying public opinion and the wisdom of their parents. Lawrence, who did not know what public opinion was, saw that the conversation was getting beyond his depth, and began to discourse brightly about the antics of the locomotive outside Grand Central Depot. Just then the front-door bell jangled, and a moment later a maid appeared on the threshold.

"There is a gentleman at the door, calling," she announced.

"Well," Benjamin asked, testily, "if it's Mr. Larrimore why don't you show him in?"

The maid was unaccountably nervous.

"No, sir. It is not Mr. Larrimore. He says he's Mr. Rufus Dulac."

"Good God!" said Lawrence's father. His wife, uttering a mild protest at this vehemence, bade Lawrence hurry to bed. But he contrived to linger, sensing the presence of something rare and dramatic that promised to disturb the even spirit of the household.

"Who is Rufus Dulac, Father?" he demanded shrilly.

His father, unusually perturbed, said: "Never mind, my boy. Run along to bed." He then told the maid: "I am not at home."

Ellen Dulac raised her hand protestingly. "Benjamin. Stop and think a moment. Mightn't it be—something important. Shouldn't you see him for just a minute?"

Lawrence, watching—his parents, to his relief, had apparently forgotten his presence in their surprising agitation—noticed that his father's face had grown queerly bloodless; the lines of his mouth suddenly and almost terrifyingly hard.

"He says he must see you, sir," the maid put in.

Benjamin Dulac turned again to his wife.

"I foresaw this, Ellen. I should have taken steps—to save you this annoyance. But I preferred to ignore my cousin's letter." He swung, abruptly, upon the maid. "I have given you my answer, Laurel."

She departed reluctantly. Ellen Dulac was on the verge of tears.

"After fifteen years," she murmured. "It seems hard . . ."

Her husband, pacing the room again, stopped and surveyed her sharply.

"On the day of his marriage you were the first to censure him. I must ask you to be consistent, Ellen."

Outside in the hall Lawrence could hear the maid murmuring; then the gentle closing of the front door. He slipped from the drawing room; ascended, slowly and thoughtfully, to the nursery.

"Norah," he asked, as she was tucking him in bed. "Did I have a relative called Rufus?"

Norah said: "Indeed so, Master Lawrence. Though I'll not discuss him with you at this hour of the night."

"Who did he marry, Norah?"

She did not answer him, as she reached upward to extinguish the gas. He clutched her sleeve.

"Tell me," he begged.

She sat down, heavily, at the end of his bed.

"What a boy it is! Well, well. And if you must know, 'twas a little actress he married, much to the disapproval of the family. But you see, being a Dulac, it wasn't expected that he should marry her. The blow was a terrible one to your grandfather, as I've heard people say; what with it appearing in the newspapers and being the subject of general comment in social circles, and a savoury bit for malicious tongues. Mr. Benjamin, indeed, took it hard, and vowed then and there not to speak to Mr. Rufus again. Well do I remember it all, seeing that it was the anniversary of my own fiftieth birthday. And now to sleep, Master Lawrence, and clear your head of such things, my darling."

She rose and turned out the gas. Lawrence watched her ponderous shadow veer across the nursery. The staircase creaked as she mounted to the mysterious chamber where she lived; an abode of waxen saints and rosaries and photographs of complacent-looking relatives. Lawrence tried hard to sleep, but couldn't. He resorted to the inevitable sheep and the inevitable fence. But so great were the problems lingering in his mind that two hundred and twelve sheep had leapt over the barrier before he slept.

The following morning, having completed an irksome hour of English history, he descended in his sober, leisurely fashion to the snow-covered lawn before the house, his mind preoccupied with the strange problem of Uncle Rufus. He discovered Perry and Janet Craig, their ten-year-old

neighbour, constructing a snowman; and recognized, incidentally, one of his father's discarded silk hats perched upon the effigy's forehead. They were working feverishly against the increasing power of the sun.

He regarded them in silence for several minutes; then, in order to create a sensation, since neither of them paid any attention whatever to him, he blurted out:

"Janet, my Cousin Rufus was here last night." And he added, with some pride: "It was very late—but I saw him."

The statement produced the desired effect. Janet, who rarely permitted herself to become excited, deserted the snowman and joined him, her gray eyes very wide in her pale, sharp, freckled little face.

"Good gracious! Your father didn't see him, did he?"

"No. He sent him away. Norah says Cousin Rufus married a play-lady, and so that's why nobody bothers about him."

Janet gave an unladylike snort.

"I knew that years ago! He saw her at Niblo's Theatre—and became enamoured of her."

"You talk like a silly book," he told her.

She ignored the remark; and continued to supply information.

"There was an awful shindy when your old grandfather heard of it. He was alive then."

"But if Cousin Rufus really was fond of the lady——" Lawrence mused.

"People can't do just whatever they like," she explained impatiently. "There are a lot of rules you've got to follow. They're called Convention, I think. One of them says you can't marry actresses. At least, that's how my mother explained it."

"Then don't actresses ever get married?" he demanded.

She stamped her foot.

"You're stupid, Lawrence. I meant people like our fathers and mothers and relations. The older and finer your family is the more rules you've got. Now, Matthew, f'r instance, could marry any one he wanted, because he's just a coachman."

Lawrence considered this thoughtfully.

"Aren't these rules hard to keep?" he asked after a while.

"I don't think so."

He breathed a sigh of relief.

“Anyway, Perry won’t like ’em,” he added inconsequently.

“He’ll have to.”

Perry joined them at that moment, his dark face flushed with effort, his eyes bright.

“I hate rules,” he shouted cheerfully. “If I wanted to marry an acting lady I’d marry her, no matter what any one said to me.” His voice rose to a shrill, penetrating defiance.

“Isn’t he just awful?” Janet whispered to Lawrence, but there was a hint of the fascinated feminine in her tone.

# CHAPTER III
## Young Men

### I

At that point the memories of Lawrence Dulac's childhood faded, became lost in a shadowy obscurity. Relighting his cigar, which was now smouldering, he permitted his mind to leap an intervening passage of years, and found himself recalling a certain afternoon in the year 1893—the afternoon of his twenty-fourth birthday, to be exact—when he and his mother had gone driving in her yellow-wheeled coupé. Central Park had been cheerless that December day, a deserted region of brown grass and gaunt trees and empty benches, while the sky held an opaque and heavy brightness that presaged an early fall of snow. As the coupé veered toward the Fifty-ninth Street gateway after its methodical circuit of the Park, Ellen Dulac picked up a snakelike coil of black rope and proceeded, through it, to communicate with Matthew.

"To Mrs. Craig's," Lawrence heard her state in her usual colourless tone. Never quickly resentful, he felt, none the less, a mild sense of pique that she had not informed him of her plans. And as they rolled across the wide, smooth space of Fifth Avenue he decided suddenly to terminate the polite game of evasion that had been in progress for some weeks now between himself and his mother. He would do it tactfully, he promised himself, and without undue stressing of the fact in question. But he would ascertain exactly what was in her mind; and whether it coincided with his own recent suspicions.

"Do you realize," he asked her, "that this will be about the fifth time in two weeks that you and I have called on Mrs. Craig—and Janet?"

Not without a sense of triumph he saw that she was taken aback by the directness of the attack. No. "Attack" was too strong a word. It was, rather, a questioning of her motives; in itself a rare thing for him to do.

"I realize it perfectly well," she replied quietly. "Do you object, Lawrence?"

A smile, somehow pitiful, was at her lips. Her eyes remained sad. He was, of a sudden, excessively sorry for her. The conventional widow's weeds accentuated her paleness, her wan fragility: lustreless black, and a

stiffly hideous affair of traditional white crêpe about her head. He hated it. In a moment of revelation it was made evident to him that she had become, in the very few months since his father's death, an old woman.

"I don't object—exactly," he told her. "But, you see, people are going to put their own construction on all this. It's curious that when father died and we moved into town from Irvington, the Craigs moved into town too. Janet is now twenty-three. We've been friends since childhood. Up till eighteen, when I left for college, I suppose I saw her and played with her every day of my life. That was all right—then. But this resumption of the thread . . . you understand what will be thought?"

His mother's answer astounded him.

"And would the thought be so wrong, after all? Think over it, Lawrence. It isn't to be dismissed lightly. She is a fine, good girl."

He had, immediately, a sensation of being trapped. The smallness of the coupé with its stuffy plum-coloured upholstery, its slow and methodical progress, heightened the feeling. Good heavens! Why hadn't she explained her idea before; come out with it? So that, if he had wanted, he could have retired in time from a position which was perilously near to becoming untenable. Was, in fact, already so. The enormity of the whole thing struck him with a kind of brutal clarity. He must be allowed to think. He must get away and consider. Already they were stopping before the Craigs' expressionless, high-stooped dwelling of brownstone, with its superimposed bay windows and florid iron railings. He assisted his mother to the sidewalk; then, lifting his silk hat—worn out of courtesy to her during the weekly pilgrimage to the Park—he said:

"I think, if you don't mind, I'll go home. I have a slight headache. I couldn't face Mrs. Craig just now, and the accompanying flood of gossip."

She nodded, concealing in her own admirable way any clue to her reception of his decision and proceeded to mount the stoop; a slow-moving and sombre figure. The death of a loved one, he realized, watching her, was a far more aging factor than any mere passage of years. As he sheered away, began to move down the street, he wondered whether his retreat had been ignominious. Still, it had been necessary. Vitally so. He lighted a cigar. But, remembering that this conventionally barred him from Fifth Avenue, he threw it away as he turned westward.

Lost in thought, he walked briskly with the fine, firm freedom of youth. A woman or two, passing him, glanced discreetly from behind the voluminous furs of the season and saw a tall, dignified young man, erect and healthy, neatly dressed, his imported Chesterfield coat with its silken facings

agreeably symbolic of what the press was wont to term the favoured class. A long and serious face, yet definitely attractive. Altogether a well-bred and prepossessing example of a young New Yorker. But Lawrence Dulac, unaware of creating the slightest attention, pursued his way, sorely troubled.

This business of Janet. He liked her—well enough. They were the best of friends. But he always thought of her—that is to say, he always pictured her in his mind—primarily as a little girl. Somehow, he preferred to think of her in that way. She had been, in those days, a frank and sincere companion—and not the somewhat shy, reserved creature that he had lately found her. A person given to verbal fencing, to the concealment of motives. People—girls particularly—grew up so different. As a little boy he had gone to her frequently in the most confiding moods. But that, of course, was now impossible.

Still, they remained on friendly terms. Suppose, after all, his mother had her way? His mind took a flying leap, covering a number of progressive and conventional intervals. Married to Janet. . . . Eminently suitable. Everyone would assert that. But did he want to marry any one, just yet? He concluded a long period of introspection by deciding that he was not actually opposed to matrimony; but that it appeared to be moving upon some vague and mechanical platform toward him, propelled by sundry obscure figures. And his own mother, he had to admit regretfully, held a central position in the fantasy.

Then, having reached this conclusion, he proceeded to wonder as to her motives. These were grasped without effort; principally a sincere desire to have the future settled nicely. Yes. "Nicely" was the word she would use. She had, throughout her life been methodical; existed to conformed patterns. If only he had taken the trouble (he blamed himself genuinely) to get *nearer* to her, since his father's death. He should have done that. He was twenty-four now. A man. He could argue reasonably well. Match his intellect against hers, if necessary.

"Damn!" said Lawrence, and unconsciously gave his silk hat an absurdly jaunty angle, a little trick of his when supremely agitated. At the Shelbourne he decided he would drop in for a few minutes in the vague hope of encountering a few amusing and irresponsible acquaintances whose careless chatter would carry his thoughts to some less sombre level. Yes. He took things too seriously. Always had and always would. It occurred to him that he was compelled to rely on external influences—just as now—to enjoy any of the lighter moods of existence; and these were not always effective. In a room facing Fifth Avenue he discovered Perry, as he had half expected,

looking very young and scrubbed and handsome, lounging elegantly in a Russian leather armchair.

"Hullo, Lawrence," Perry said, and lazily elevated a graceful hand. Then, eyeing Lawrence's formal attire, he became slightly contemptuous.

"My God! You've been calling again. The Craigs, I'll bet."

Lawrence flushed—annoyed—and nodded.

"I merely took Mother to the door."

"Janet's grown into rather a prig," Perry said. There was a challenging gleam in his eyes. But Lawrence preferred to avoid battle. He was altogether too mentally weary.

"What's yours?" Perry enquired amiably, and attracted the attention of a servant who had been standing like a waxen effigy at the door.

They were joined presently by two or three others of their immediate circle, among them Milton Renfrew, a worthy, pinkish young man who had recently become engaged to a cousin of Janet Craig. Renfrew was already a trifle bald. He was supposed to be doing wonders in real estate, as far uptown as Sixtieth Street.

"Well, Lawrence," he observed. "I hear you're engaged to Janet Craig."

Lawrence replied with a cold smile:

"Mere rumour. Matchmaking is the happiest trade of our New York women, Renfrew."

"It would be eminently suitable," Renfrew pursued.

Through the haze of tobacco smoke his face appeared to be grinning, fiendishly . . . a conspiring gargoyle. Lawrence, jerking his thoughts up sharply, wondered whether a single highball could go to his head. To his surprise he heard Perry expostulating almost angrily on his behalf:

"I believe some of Janet's innumerable, confounded aunts told you to say that, Renfrew. For heaven's sake, leave Lawrence out of these female plots."

Renfrew chuckled and ordered another round of drinks.

"It's curious," Perry continued, warming to his subject, "what slaves we are to this social system. A benevolent tyranny. You're watched from the day you're born. You've got to go to just such a school and just such a college. And then when you're a man your very wife is selected for you."

"Nonsense," said Lawrence sharply, and rose. "Come, Perry, let's go home to dinner."

Perry shook his head.

"No. I'm off to the theatre and supper with the Beldens. Tell Mother not to expect me."

He turned his back on his brother, not intentionally but merely because he had already dismissed him from his mind in anticipation of the evening's pleasures. Other young men were joining him, forming an ever-growing circle about his chair. His popularity he accepted with an easy, unconscious grace. Lawrence sighed; left the room, musing as to whether Perry would ever look on life as a serious affair rather than a chain of successive pleasures. As he donned his coat in the hall he heard Perry's voice, loudly, from within:

"My brother's really a damn fine fellow. Worth all of us put together, as a matter of fact. It's a source of eternal wonder to me how I ever came to be so closely related to him." (Chorus of laughter.) "Oh, waiter! Take these orders, please."

## II

The studying of law, preparatory to assuming the profession of his father, was accepted by Lawrence, as he accepted most things, without protest. And yet, now, after nearly two years of it he was compelled to face the fact that the whole thing profoundly bored him. That he breathed no word of this discontent was, perhaps, typical of him.

On leaving the Law School at Columbia one January day at noon he recalled a luncheon appointment with Perry, at Delmonico's, and hurried with a pleasant sense of anticipation down town. Perry had recently graduated from Harvard and was now floating in that delectable cloudland that separated briefly the collegiate from the sterner life; a species of elastic vacation, a concession made to young men before they were forced to face realities. As yet there were no signs whatever of Perry "settling down," unless it was the impulsive rental of a studio in the artists' colony which was establishing itself west of Washington Square. Here he was presumed to dabble occasionally in painting. Perry was, of course, delightful company, and Lawrence on reaching Delmonico's was prepared to be thoroughly entertained. As he entered the Broadway door two messages were handed to him. These he opened hurriedly.

Sorry. Can't join you. Just awake.

PERRY.

The implication of this caused him at first to smile; then to frown with annoyance. He tore up the absurd thing, threw it away, and turned his attention to the second message.

> Please come in to see me this afternoon at my office on a very serious matter.
>
> Edward Featherstone.

This, he felt, was even more disquieting than the brief evidence of his brother's irresponsibility. It occurred to him that during Featherstone's long standing as legal adviser to the Dulacs he had rarely, if ever, communicated in such an informal, hurried fashion. Speculating upon the cause of the ominous summons he entered the restaurant, chose one of the tables at the margin of the room, and ordered luncheon.

The waiter had just brought him his Blue Points when a dark, thickset young man, whose attitude was at once alert and imperious, sat down at the vacant table next to his; summoned the head waiter loudly. Then, catching sight of Lawrence, he waved a long amber cigarette holder in his direction.

"Hullo there, Lawrie, old man."

Lawrence found himself resenting the familiarity. He had never, he knew, called the man by his first name. He even considered that Frank Hauben was somewhat presuming upon their intermittent and slender acquaintance at Law School. Deciding, however, that an occasional and purely diplomatic amiability on his part was the simplest course, he formally returned the greeting.

Hauben picked up the elaborate menu and proceeded to order his own luncheon.

"—And a quart of Pommard '81," he concluded; adding crisply to the waiter: "See that the chill's taken off. Last time it was undrinkable."

An aggressive fellow, Lawrence thought, watching him; yet capable of ordering for himself distinctly a gentleman's luncheon.

Hauben said to him suddenly:

"I ran across your family lawyer, Featherstone, on Broadway an hour or two ago. He seemed damned anxious to get hold of you. I told him that a note might find you here at the lunch hour. You look worried, Lawrie. Anything wrong?"

"Nothing at all," Lawrence assured him, perhaps a shade stiffly. Hauben's heavy eyelids flickered, almost imperceptibly.

“As the head of your branch of the Dulac family,” he remarked, “you can’t expect life to run altogether smoothly. And I don’t imagine that young Perry shares your responsibilities to any great degree.”

“Perry’s all right,” Lawrence said, with a quick loyalty. “He’s young, please remember.”

Hauben laughed—too loudly, in Lawrence’s opinion.

“You talk like a senile. Gad! I like you, Lawrie Dulac. I watched you in class long before I spoke to you. You’re an admirable young man, but why in hell take life so seriously?”

Lawrence, about to voice some conventional reply, was saved from the necessity by the arrival of the waiter with Hauben’s consommé. A strange affair, that meal. There existed between these two a certain underlying incompatibility which both strove to conceal, and, at moments, flashes of mutual admiration. Hauben talked ably, pungently, of a growing country, of contemporary politics, of business. He did not suffer, as Lawrence realized years later, from any of the complacent illusions of his day. In spite of Lawrence’s disagreement with him, he predicted a future for America divested of glamour. He pictured the United States a leader among commercial nations pure and simple, the home of a hundred mingled races, a country with a merchant’s soul, growing yearly remoter from its original and dominating Anglo-Saxon influence. He admitted that he had, for his own personal pleasure, educated himself to a fair appreciation of the arts and those things which constitute what is called good taste, but he averred that these were useless where a man’s career was concerned, and better forgotten. At twenty-six he retained no vestige of ideals, but considered himself a sound, sane, well-equipped man.

“I rose from the gutter,” he asserted proudly, a form of boast at once new and astonishing to Lawrence Dulac. “You can’t stifle ambition, provided it is deep-rooted. Just now you see me studying law because I want to protect this clothing business I’m building up. I’m thorough, if anything.”

“This is a hard country,” he added. “A damned hard country. It makes you fight . . . the whole way.”

“You love the United States,” Lawrence reminded him. “Don’t deny that.”

“A hard country,” Hauben repeated. “I love it for what I get out of it, by fighting every inch of my way. I loved my native Bavaria for what she gave me graciously and with a full heart. That is the way of the foreign-born.”

As Lawrence rose to leave, he said:

"We must meet again soon, Lawrie. I want to talk to you about your career."

Lawrence could not resist a smile.

"My career! I don't see how——"

Hauben placed a hand upon his arm; fingers of soft, reddish flesh compressed by two or three heavy rings.

"I mean it in all friendliness. You must admit that I know more of the world than you. I might be of help. You grew up in a silken cradle; I, on the pavements. There is the difference."

To this Lawrence could find no reply. Bidding him good-bye he put on his coat and hat; left the restaurant. Outside, in the keen wintry wind that swept down Broadway, he reread Featherstone's curt note, and became immediately grave and worried at the possibilities it hinted at.

## III

It was, after all, a relief to have broken the news to his mother. She had not taken it as hardly as he had anticipated. He even suspected that she had not grasped its full import, although he had most carefully gone over the facts and figures with her several times. She was, of course, not a woman with a business head. Yet despite this he considered that she might have offered some suggestion; some idea as to which way she expected him to turn.

"I rely entirely on you, Lawrence," she had said, as they sat before the littered desk bearing the mute witness of his father's business incapabilities. "You do whatever you think wisest." Then she added, in a tone of complete incredulity: "But money! It's preposterous. We've never had to worry about that. Why should we now? There must be something wrong that we haven't found out. Someone's probably cheated us."

Again he had attempted to convince her that Benjamin Dulac's surreptitious change of investment from the well known and secure Midland & Northern Railroad to a now defunct New Jersey paper mill which had offered nine per cent. had been responsible for the decrease in their capital.

"To put it plainly, Mother, we've got just about half the income we used to have. And even if Perry won't get thoroughly to work, I must."

He wondered, simultaneously, whether she believed that the same aristocratically inclined Providence which guarded their spiritual fortune was at the same time amiably filling the family coffers with an unending stream of gold.

"If you really think it will be too long before you get a legal practice you are at perfect liberty to choose another career," she agreed. "As long as"—with a characteristic movement of her pallid hands—"as long as it is in keeping with your position. I'll write to your Uncle Frederick downtown. He might know of something suitable in the way of banking."

"But banking——" he had protested. "I know nothing about it whatever."

"The family," she had reminded him with a gentle smile, "and Uncle Frederick's influence are much more important in Wall Street than any little experience you might have gained at your age."

They had, at that point, agreed to postpone the discussion.

And now, dining in their Madison Avenue home, he believed he at last understood the cause of her apparent indifference to their change of fortune. It flashed upon him that his mother merely clung to life on account of himself and Perry; that since Benjamin's death her own personal existence had been a mere void, an endlessly protracted problem of how to pass the hours and days. He had an opportunity to study her, furtively, under the flickering glow from the tall candelabra of burnished silver. The placid features maintained their outward serenity; were still surprisingly unwrinkled. Yet there was absent a necessary and wholly intangible aura that had in former days made her a quietly vital figure—a very definite personality, too. . . . She looked peaked, he decided; and he observed that she merely toyed with her dessert, as she had done with the previous courses, now and then nibbling in bird-like fashion at some ridiculous fragment of food.

She rose with a sound of rustling silk and at his chair paused.

"Don't trouble Perry about this. He's too young. Let him enjoy his pleasures while they last."

"He'll have to assume responsibilities eventually," Lawrence declared. "I don't grudge him his good times—but this news alters the situation."

He changed the subject, visibly annoyed.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I think I'll run over to the club for a while."

She nodded her approval; then asked:

"Have you seen Perry lately?"

He crossed the room to the ponderous mahogany sideboard; extracted from a monogrammed silver box a long cigar.

"Not since luncheon four days ago."

She sighed, and resumed her chair at the dining table; a maid came in, bringing finger bowls of frosted glass. Ellen Dulac waited with evident impatience until she departed before resuming the conversation.

"I am afraid for Perry—somehow," she said at last.

Lawrence perceived that the admission must have cost her an effort.

"He'll survive his gaieties," he assured her lightly.

"There's a girl—a woman?"

He was glad that he could say to her:

"That affair's finished. Perry's affections are short-lived." He chuckled softly. "Short-lived, even if intense." Then his brow was suddenly furrowed as he paused to tip the ash off his cigar. "That's what is so strange, Mother. The tremendous difference between our two characters. Concerning women, for instance. Every pretty face, every well-shaped ankle, nearly, turns his head. He seems to live in a species of trance for days on end. His flower bills at Klunder's are prodigious, for a while. Then, all at once, it's over. As for me, I don't believe my heart's ever been stirred out of a single normal beat."

Ellen Dulac smiled at that.

"It's the Dulac in Perry," she explained. "You inherit far more from my side—the Weirs. The Gallic strain is not nearly so evident in your case. It runs in that fashion. Skips some of them completely. Your father, for example. Some people even said that he was austere. Yes, I think that was the word they used. And yet his first cousin, Rufus . . ." Her voice subsided in a soundless protest, her lips compressed to a thin, straight line.

"I suppose I am exactly like Father," he admitted. "And I want to be. All my life"—(At the phrase his mother smiled again tolerantly, and interposed: "Only twenty-four.")—"All my life I've never seen a man I admired as much. They called him austere. I've heard that too. Even cold-blooded because of his treatment of Cousin Rufus that night when I was a little boy; and because Rufus was unfortunate enough to die a week later, a drunkard. Yet Father lived up to his code, his standards, and surely no man can do more than that."

He consulted his watch; kissed his mother; and left the room. In the hall the maid assisted him reverently into his Chesterfield coat; handed him the lustrous silk hat, the gold-headed malacca. From the drawing room window Ellen Dulac watched him, strolling down the steps into the deserted, moon-bathed street. So like his father. . . . Precise as to his appointments; rigid and inflexible in his decisions. She saw him hail a drifting hansom with a

gracefully imperious swing of his cane; and found herself wondering whether he was happier in the following of his traditional code than Perry, who was at the moment feverishly undergoing the gamut of pleasures and emotions, asserting his numerous privileges as a well-born and attractive young man.

## IV

Encountering Frank Hauben on Fifth Avenue that night on his way home after a somewhat dull hour at the club, Lawrence yielded to the latter's persuasion and accompanied him to his apartment, near by on Twenty-ninth Street. It was Hauben's earnest desire that Lawrence sample a new and excellent brand of Java coffee, a case of which had recently been sent him by a friend living in Batavia. Hauben, who palpably considered himself a connoisseur in the little luxuries of life, happened to be peculiarly adept at conveying his enthusiasms to others.

On entering Hauben's door Lawrence's sensation of mild adventure was tempered with a species of regret at his folly in accepting the man's invitation. It was all very well, he assured himself, to indulge in a spasmodic acquaintance with a clever young member of his own law class, a fellow as undeniably entertaining as he was ostentatious. One invariably left him after a chat with a sense of mental exhilaration, of having exercised the intellect. But this incursion into Hauben's home was, he realized, a deliberate step beyond the confines of an ordinary acquaintance. It seemed to him just then that an inherited and traditional consciousness of position was constantly at war with his own general interest in humanity. He wondered, vaguely, which of the two would dictate his actions as he grew older.

On their way down a dimly lighted hall they passed a bedroom, the door of which happened to be partly ajar, and Lawrence, unintentionally glancing within, saw, under the bed, a diminutive pair of black silk slippers decorated with scarlet rosettes. Recovering from a distinct sense of surprise, he smiled to himself. He was conscious of no puritanical mood of censure. That, he reflected, was like Hauben. The thing done so nicely. Why, even the slippers were perfect in their way. It merely proved that Hauben was still a European, with a European's innate flair for contriving such matters delicately and quietly. He could not even recall ever having heard Hauben's name connected with that of a lady—certainly not with a lady who would wear just such black silk slippers with scarlet flowers—whereas his American contemporaries, his own immediate friends within the club, had, with few exceptions, no talent for such adventures. They were, in such a mood,

inclined to crudities. They made loud, crass jokes. They became involved, some of them, in newspaper notoriety, in blackmail. They regarded an alcoholic frame of mind as a needed preliminary, and the results were dire. He recalled, disgustedly, a mad night excursion which he had once been persuaded to join. An experience that left, for months, nauseating memories of furtive entries into gaslit halls, of tinny pianos, and shrill, hard voices. Of rotten wine and still rottener sights and songs. . . . He had been, too, terribly young. That perhaps, was why, he, Lawrence, had since been able to sever completely such ideas from his life. But—and he was frank enough to himself to admit it—if he had been in Hauben's position, with Hauben's knowledge, the temptation would have been far, far stronger. He was, in fact, vaguely envious at the glimpse of the slippers.

Hauben took him into what he termed his den, a chamber of Chinese antiquities, of lacquered furniture, containing an elaborate screen upon which exotic storks were embroidered in heavy golden thread. The room was in semi-darkness, faintly fragrant with incense, its walls hung with tapestry and a varied collection of ancient, complicated weapons. They sat down on a divan, and a young manservant appeared with coffee upon a mahogany stand inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

"You look tired, Lawrie—troubled."

Lawrence was aware, as usual, of the familiarity, but resolutely preserved his own more formal manner of address to the other. Hauben did not seem to mind though, he noted.

"I had a hard day at the Law School," he admitted. "One might as well be frank. Unless you are mad about it, the law is a tedious affair."

Hauben shrugged his shoulders.

"What did you expect?" he demanded, pouring out the coffee. "I can only surmise that your family selected your so-called career for you. Now, you belong to that chosen minority in America that calls itself, rightly or wrongly, an aristocracy despite the pretences of a certain famous document that claimed complete equality for all. And that minority, for some futile reason, limits itself to a handful of possible professions. Your grandfather happened to be a lawyer, your father one. And so you are to become the same. It is all highly conventional; and highly illogical, as convention always is. Just think of it! To be brought up in comfort, in a country of fabulous opportunities for the young man, and then not to be permitted to partake of them."

Lawrence attempted a gentle movement of protest, but Hauben at once silenced him with a wave of his hand.

"Let me finish, Lawrie. Now take my case—the reverse of yours. My father, a small tailor of peasant parentage, grew tired of the restrictions of his own country; came to these United States when I was a child of five. We were immigrants and suffered all the miseries of such. He never got rich because he had the European mind; it restricted him; it worked too slowly; it took no chances. He started a little store, and it remained a little store until, at twenty-one, after I had worked my own way through college, I took hold of the thing. It wasn't big enough for me. I had acquired the American spirit, and in two years I quadrupled the business. Now I'm up at the Law School just so that I'll know, in every contingency, how to protect myself. That's my story. And remember this—it's far, far easier to rise in the United States than to maintain your original level."

He was as usual talking elliptically, Lawrence realized. With a little sigh he declared:

"Your phrasing is always clever, Hauben. But to get down to facts: you mean that you disapprove of my selection of the Law as a career?"

"Pardon," said Hauben, "your parents' selection. Not yours. No. I never offer an opinion on the value of another man's work to the community at large. That is an essentially American trait, and I'm still foreign enough to mind my own business. What I meant was: you are attempting to become a lawyer to satisfy other people—public opinion—because you wouldn't like them saying: 'There goes Lawrence Dulac, the gentleman. He doesn't do a damn thing.' Isn't that so?"

"It is," Lawrence admitted with some bitterness. "But then there's Perry. What's he doing? Painting nude women in an attic studio. That's what he calls work. Two hours a day. Pah!"

Hauben laughed.

"Mind you, in those two hours he probably accomplishes more real work than you do in ten. You work to appease your conscience; he, because he likes it. Most men with money work for your motives rather than his."

Lawrence said calmly:

"Let's change the subject. I understood you had something particular to tell me to-night—some suggestion?"

Hauben lighted a cigar, with a deliberation that Lawrence found subtly annoying.

"The Dulacs," he began, in a musing, almost whimsical tone. "The Dulacs of Irvington-on-Hudson! Direct descendants of Marquis Léon Dulac who was, so conspicuously, the aide-de-camp of illustrious Lafayette; a

bright meteor in the heavenly heights of American history. A swashbuckler; a valiant soldier; a great lover; a worthy enemy—one of those internationally heroic figures that go far to establish an absolutely illogical and sentimental bond of friendship between an Anglo-Saxon and a Latin nation. And, good God, Lawrence, to look at you with your pale and calm and serious face; your correct and passionless existence? Who would imagine that you had the same Gallic blood in you—the blood of Marquis Dulac? I suppose it's this hard country that's responsible. It freezes men's souls."

Lawrence asked, not without a quiver of humour:

"What is the precise object of this recital of my ancestry?"

Hauben jumped up; began walking swiftly up and down the room, hands deep in his pockets, cigar sharply aslant in the corner of his mouth.

"I like you, Lawrence Dulac," he exclaimed. "You're so delightfully all that a gentleman should be. Reserved. Well-dressed without being an exquisite. Unemotional. A piquant contrast to my own volatile nature. Well, here it is. I'll out with it: I'm going to make you an offer, baldly and without beating about the bush, to go into business with me."

"An offer?" Lawrence repeated.

"Listen to me. I want your partnership. The firm of Hauben is moving into Fifth Avenue shortly. The building's ready now."

"I don't understand——" Lawrence began.

Hauben laughed.

"You're going to dissimulate. To pretend. You've been discreet about your recent family misfortunes, but others haven't. Perry blurted out the whole thing over a magnum of Clicquot at Delmonico's. It seems"—he smiled—"that your father was not a clever business man. Now you'll probably tell me that you have had no business experience; that you wouldn't be worth a damn to me. I realize that side of it. What I want is your name—not you, nor any of your money. With our smart Fifth Avenue store opening under the firm name of Hauben and Dulac we'd build up a new and exclusive type of trade—the trade that ultimately counts in New York. A good name is everything——"

His voice broke off as Lawrence abruptly rose from the divan; strode toward the door.

"What do you think of it, Lawrence?" His tone was gentle—puzzled.

Lawrence swung round; faced him.

“Think?” he repeated. “I think, Frank Hauben, that you are either mad, or the most damnably impertinent fellow I’ve ever run across.”

He was aware of Hauben surveying him with his steady, inevitable smile. A queer thing—Hauben’s smile. It conveyed no element of mirth, of humour. Its quality was, rather, one of cynicism; of a politely veiled contempt for his fellow creatures.

“Dulac,” he said, still smiling, “you’re imbued to the bones with a blind, wilful conservatism. And—mark my words—it’s going to prove to be the greatest enemy to your happiness throughout your life.”

Lawrence seized his hat and coat.

“That,” he retorted, “is my affair. Not yours.”

He left the apartment; descended the stairs in a frigid trance of anger. Mad, he repeated to himself. Mad! He concluded, regretfully, that the whole preposterous affair had been but the result of his own indiscretion; of his having allowed the inception of an intimacy to arise between them. The name of Dulac, emblazoned starkly above the portals of a retail store! Frantic efforts to sell goods—cheap clothing—to his friends; to entice money out of their pockets with crude, over-the-counter bargaining. He grew slowly scarlet at the vision. . . . He then discovered that he had left his cane at Hauben’s; hesitated; resumed his way toward Madison Avenue. He could picture Hauben’s calm and ironical smile as he handed over the malacca. He was, at the same time, infuriated with Perry for his loose and irresponsible chatter concerning family affairs.

# CHAPTER IV

## Bohemia—and Janet

### I

In the Craigs' high-ceilinged drawing room Lawrence sat on an uncomfortable sofa of carved walnut, and politely listened while Janet implored her mother to be allowed to accompany her to Leo Borzel's evening entertainment. Mrs. Craig, always disturbed at the unexpected, once more read the engraved invitation in her hand and said in a scared kind of way:

"I can't think who gave him my name and address."

Lawrence saw that she was, however, pleased that the invitation had been sent her. As for Janet, she was insistent, almost vehement, that afternoon. It was astonishing, he thought, how in her rare moments of enthusiasm Janet was transfigured; became an animate and even vital personage. He regarded her thoughtfully. A tall, thin girl with pale and definite yet uninteresting features—hair that one classified as brown, after a moment's reflection. He wondered whether Mrs. Craig, fully appreciative of her daughter's domestic virtues, was equally aware of her physical shortcomings. Mrs. Craig, he knew, had been in her day a belle; a ravishing, elusive figure. . . . He supposed that Janet's placid content, her pallid unassertiveness, must have remained for ever a source of slightly mournful speculation to her mother.

"He's socially accepted," Janet pursued.

Mrs. Craig could not contradict this. Leo Borzel had one foot, if not both, planted securely enough upon the social ladder. He was a frank, out-and-out bohemian—but in the better sense of the word, society considered, since he possessed money and clung to bohemianism as a hobby rather than a necessity. New York was becoming indulgent to his whims. His studio evenings were, in fact, already renowned. Pleasant functions where dignified matrons went to rub shoulders (without being contaminated) with *artistes*; to drink delicate foreign liqueurs; to smoke daringly a Russian cigarette with a cardboard mouthpiece; and to come away happily convinced that they knew bohemia, and were properly equipped to discuss Art on a higher plane than before.

“Do you think,” Mrs. Craig drawled, “that it would be suitable for a young girl?”

Janet did not appear to resent the classification, nor its insinuation of a flawless innocence. Years later the same term, employed by Lawrence, evoked shrieks of derision from his own daughters.

“Marigold Whitely’s been there,” Janet argued. “And if she’s allowed to ____”

“Oh, well,” said her mother indeterminately; and turned again to Lawrence. “If you’ll meet us there, at Borzel’s door, at ten-thirty, I should think it would be all right.”

As he had intimated earlier in the afternoon that he was not going to miss the entertainment for worlds, he agreed immediately to the arrangement.

“You’re so satisfactory, in every way,” Mrs. Craig said comfortably. She was almost purring, Lawrence reflected. There might have been a purpose in her manœuvre, but of this he could not be at all certain. Glancing at Janet he saw that she had already resumed her habitual mask of vague yet wistful indifference. Janet always appeared to be lost in thought—about what, exactly, no one had ever ascertained.

When he said good-bye she preserved the same aloofness. But Mrs. Craig, holding his hand between hers, gave it a little pat—as she invariably did.

## II

“Where’s your mother?” Lawrence asked when he discovered Janet Craig descending from the coupé behind his own at Borzel’s door on Friday evening. She was accompanied, he observed quickly, by a diminutive, shrivelled mulatto maid who looked both perturbed and angry. Janet’s eyes were unduly bright, her cheeks aglow, as she ran hurriedly up the high stoop, her slight figure wrapped in an ermine cloak.

“Oh, Lawrence,” she said, a little under-current of suppressed excitement in an even, colourless voice, “I hope you don’t mind. Mother’s got a wretched cold and couldn’t come. She allowed me to come alone, though. Anna was to take me to the door. And I’m to join my aunt, Mrs. Wrenn, who should be here by now.”

He was momentarily surprised; taken aback. Really, he considered, Mrs. Craig was getting pretty lax in her control of Janet. A pleasant woman; but

self-centred. Thoughtless. . . . Still, he must, as matters stood, make the best of the situation. He turned to the disgruntled maid.

"I'll look after Miss Janet," he told her. "And—oh—be back by midnight, won't you? It ought to be over by then."

Obviously the unconventional turn the evening had taken agreed thoroughly with Janet. She possessed a new animation, a lightness of spirit he had rarely observed in her before.

"You see," she explained, perhaps because of his somewhat grave manner as they climbed the narrow gaslit stairs, "it'll be perfectly all right. My aunt's sure to be here. And, after all, Lawrence," with the friendliest of smiles, "we've known each other such years."

"Of course, of course," he assented, a little nettled that she had penetrated to his dismay. The faint tinkling of a piano reached his ears, rendering a rhythmic fragment of a Waldteufel waltz; the subdued babel of a multitude of voices. They reached the first-floor landing where a massive Negro with cotton-gloved palms took charge of Janet's wrap, Lawrence's opera hat, coat, and cane. He thrust open a door, suddenly, bending forward at the same time, a hand cupping his ear. Lawrence gave both their names, and, almost instantly, regretted the necessity as the door swung open, revealing a blaze of light, a surging mass of humanity.

"Miss Craig—and Mis-tah Dulac!"

Borzel, hovering at the door, received them with the flushed, preoccupied enthusiasm of a successful host.

"So glad, Dulac. And this is Miss—Craig?"

His face was red, his crest of gray hair rumpled. His shirt front, broad and pearl-studded, bulged; he was almost pigeon-breasted with his athlete's torso; yet his legs were spindly. His bright, oblique little eyes beamed upon Janet, and his gloved hands imprisoned both of hers. She was at once bewildered and amused; unequipped to respond to the wholly foreign warmth of his reception.

"Is my aunt Mrs. Wrenn already here?" she asked nervously.

He appeared preoccupied, distrait. Said: "Not yet, I believe," and turned to greet a forgotten human tide behind them. Lawrence knew that it would be futile to expect coherence from him that night.

They had arrived late, and he discovered with some relief, from the gilt-edged programme, that the entertainment was already half over. He began to search for chairs, wondering at the same time—as he invariably did at such functions—why he had come. Borzel's studio was an oblong room of

considerable height, its bare walls tinted to a faint mauve, the floor strewn with khorassans. In one corner at an ebony piano, a long-haired Slavic young man was superciliously playing "Les Patineurs." The several ottomans were cheerfully crammed with people. In an oasis of parquet flooring in the centre of the rugs a dumpy young woman was nervously scanning the words of Tosti's "Good-bye" and Lawrence, prepared for something less banal, suddenly remembered that Borzel liked to pose as a charitable figure and occasionally permitted an audition of home-grown talent. He followed Janet to a pair of spidery gold chairs in a corner of the room. As he sat down he became conscious that the eyes of the whole room were upon them. And this he became aware of, not through the distinct and concrete act of some individual but rather through a vast, subdued rustling of gowns, turning of heads, an accelerated note in the gentle buzz of general conversation. With an elaborate assumption of indifference he surveyed the sea of faces about him. Janet manipulated her fan genteelly, a delicate, gold-laced affair centred with a silken panel on which was sketched a Fragonard idyll. He scarcely heard what she was saying, but knew that her customary friendliness toward him was intangibly increased, more intimate. There was a curious, poised nervousness about her, too, as if she were somehow expectant.

"My aunt," she announced slowly, "isn't here." She had completed a careful inspection of the room.

He said, "Oh," noncommittally, and began the search himself. When his gaze had travelled halfway round the audience it occurred to him that not only her aunt, Mrs. Wrenn, was absent, but also a dozen other familiar figures who had rigorously graced every one of Borzel's functions—in fact, the very women who had given his entertainments the altogether desirable cachet of their approval. Ada Armstrong, patroness-in-chief of all the arts, was not visible; nor even Ben Harwich, who never missed a Borzel Friday night and who probably knew as much of music and painting and family trees as any man on this side of the Atlantic. Nor could Lawrence discover any of the DeRuytens, or the Lethrops, nor, in fact, the slightest indication of a traditional Knickerbocker background. The present company, he reflected, was theatrical, pure and simple. Some minutes later he discovered, with a sense of relief, Sinclair Mallet lounging gracefully at the entrance to a curtained alcove; no doubt a carefully chosen strategic position whence he might retire the instant he became bored. Ordinarily he fought shy of Mallet's harmless poses and affectations, yet to-night a friendly sentiment toward the man invaded him, the fellow feeling of one member of a clan

toward another in an alien and unattractive land. Excusing himself to Janet for a moment, he joined Mallet.

"The crowd's changed," he said in frank puzzlement, his voice lowered. "All the leading lights absent. Has anything happened?"

Mallet eyed him in mild surprise, his eyebrows delicately arched.

"Good Lord, man, didn't you see it in *The Tatler*?" With the visible joy of a newsbearer, he slipped into the curtained alcove, motioning to Lawrence to follow. Here they discovered a brocaded sofa, a sideboard bearing cut-glass decanters and plates piled high with delicacies. Mallet proceeded to explain, nibbling gently at a sandwich, his smile vaguely satirical.

"It's all very simple. Borzel, you see, has been more indiscreet than ever in his latest unofficial alliance. An importation from the Milan Scala, I've heard. . . . Charming. But it doesn't do to flaunt such originality, does it, Lawrence, my boy?"

Lawrence drew a long, deep breath; thought at once of Janet, but before he could reply adequately Mallet went on:

"I must say I think you were a consummate ass to bring Janet Craig here. Borzel will, of course, continue to be accepted, but by men only. Evidently he realizes already that he's lost the women, but doesn't care. New York, I'm afraid, isn't yet sufficiently unprovincial to be able to applaud a man's public life and wink at his private one. Now in Paris——"

Lawrence rose from the sofa and sheered away. Merely because Mallet had passed two fruitless years at the Beaux Arts there was no necessity for him perpetually to inflict his foreign views on others. But Mallet, lighting a huge cigar, staggered him by saying:

"I see what you're driving at—naturally. Being engaged, or on the verge of an engagement, you feel that you can take Janet anywhere under your protecting masculine wing. A laudable idea, Lawrence, but you're a trifle ahead of your times. And, besides, have you studied the last item on to-night's programme?"

Lawrence's countenance suffused to a darkening red. On the verge of a reply, he was interrupted by a harsh, premonitory clash of cymbals and the thin wail of a reed instrument—sounds which impelled him, with a rising and uneasy curiosity, toward the studio. An unobtrusive door in a corner of the alcove which he had not before noticed just then opened, at his very elbow, and framed a sudden apparition that transfixed him; held him powerless to move or speak.

The girl was an Oriental; a dancer. Her firmly knit body was silhouetted against the dressing-room light behind her, a dull, lustreless bronze. She wore, Lawrence realized rather than noted, an attenuated skirt of patterned beads; plates of elaborately jewelled brass which served to cover, and also to accentuate, the healthy fullness of her young breasts. Already her hips were swaying methodically, gently, to the distant and plaintive rhythm of the flute. She seemed to be awaiting, poised there on tiptoe, some unseen and imminent cue. He was aware of a pair of narrowed, calculating eyes, stained with kohl—coldly bright. . . . He hurried into the studio, to a crescendo wailing from the flute, and groped his way in darkness along the edge of the room, colliding with a tangle of obscure figures and stumbling over outstretched feet projecting from the divans. He at last, thankfully, reached Janet.

"We might as well leave," he suggested, as casually as he was able. "Now is a good time to slip out unobserved."

He could not see her expression, but her tone when she spoke conveyed a sheer astonishment.

"But, my dear Lawrence, I heard you tell Eliza to return at midnight, and it's barely eleven now."

He glanced back at the still unparted curtains of the alcove, and reiterated firmly: "I really think it's a good time to go."

He felt that she, in silence, was searching for his motive. All at once she arose and gave him her arm.

"If you insist," she said. Her voice had dropped to an intimate whisper.

Sinclair Mallet, reëntering the studio a moment later, saw them leaving, Lawrence gravely holding open the hallway door for her. "He's decent," Mallet swore; "by heaven, he's decent through and through."

Then, in an orange flood of light that shifted uncertainly, quivered, and at last settled on its prey, the Malayan girl hurled herself into the room; hovered like an alighting bird before commencing her dance; arms outstretched toward some figurative lover—an incarnate and vivid symbol of Aphrodite that at once absorbed Mallet's wandering attention.

## III

"I'll of course see you home," Lawrence declared, assisting her into her wrap. She gave a quick glance about her, observing that both the stairs and sombre hallway were deserted; then regarded him demurely.

"If we were seen——" she said tentatively.

"But you can't go alone in a public hack, and we can't stand here till midnight," he told her, and, donning his own coat, escorted her downstairs to the street. A closed landau had just drawn up before the door, and was disgorging an astonishing number of people. Lawrence instantly recognized old Belknap Moorlander and his two tall, weedy sons. There were with them two other men whom he did not know. Probably they were not aware of Borzel's sudden social fall, he reflected swiftly, and decided that to inform them of it was no affair of his. Against his hopes old Moorlander recognized them and, doffing his opera hat, hurried up to them wheezing delightedly.

"Well, well, well! As I live! Janet Craig and young Dulac. Gay, gay creatures!" He shook a fat, admonishing finger at Janet. "You're discovered, my dear, but I promise not to breathe a word. I will, though," he chuckled congestedly, "draw my own conclusions."

Lawrence said nothing; stood hat in hand, smiling with a fixed, mechanical intensity. But Janet, he observed, was brightly flushed. As soon as the Moorlanders had released them he hailed a coupé; told the driver the Craig address; and climbed in after Janet. His mind was revolving in an insensate whirl. Moorlander, the precious old fool, had, he considered, capped the climax. Again the sense of an obscure yet gigantic conspiracy of whispering tongues pervaded him. Only after they had progressed perhaps two blocks did he become aware that in his agitation he was polishing his silk hat with the sleeve of his coat in a methodical yet wholly nonsensical manner. And then, to his considerable surprise, a gurgle of delighted laughter escaped Janet.

"What *will* they think?" she whispered; and ended her question in an odd little jerk, breathlessly.

At that moment the power of resistance, the spirit of opposition toward the curious twistings of destiny, seemed completely to desert him. The events of life, after all, shaped themselves automatically into a perfect mosaic, a relentless pattern which no human artifice could actually disarrange. Wasn't each unit in the vast scheme of humanity selected for some particular motif in that pattern—a motif utterly easy to follow, and supremely difficult to depart from? . . . The coupé jogged onward, unhurried and secure in its purpose; and a thin, sifting drizzle was beginning to fall obliquely upon the deserted streets. Glancing at Janet, he was aware suddenly of the certain tenuous attraction that she possessed—a kind of confiding helplessness that was peculiarly her own. She sat now, huddled in the corner of the cab, her ermine cloak swathed about her, reduced to a thoughtful silence. He could see the white oval of her young face dimly in the light of passing street lamps. A lurch of the vehicle as they turned up

Fifth Avenue brought her fragile shoulder unexpectedly into contact with his, producing no sensible emotion within him beyond a warm and comfortable conviction of mutual friendliness—yes, even affection. With a slight effort he commenced a polite attempt at conversation.

"Mallet was inflicting his usual European point of view on me to-night. Now if only the fellow could forget his two years in Paris he wouldn't be such bad company."

"But you can't blame him, can you?" she asked him. "I long so to go to Europe, to see the world, but Mother's deathly afraid of the sea. Even the sight of a ferryboat terrifies her. She won't leave New York anyway, except for two blessed months each summer at Ridgefield. Oh, Lawrence, if you knew how miserable it was to be tied down with nothing, nothing, to look forward to!"

In this mood he found her compellingly pathetic. Here was a new and amazing aspect to her, which he had not before even suspected. Her eyes, immensely wide, seemed to be searching his. He saw the white streak of her hand resting upon the dark plush of the carriage rug, and his own fingers—almost involuntarily—closed upon it, cool but unresisting.

"We must go abroad—you and I," he heard himself informing her from some vast distance, "as soon as we are married."

So the moment had, at last arrived—exactly as he had really all along forseen that it would. And, strangely enough, he was just then more conscious of his mother, of Ellen Dulac, than of any other single predominating factor in his own existence; conscious of her quiet but definite personality, of her rarely expressed but none the less manifest wishes. . . . The tenderest of feelings had by now seized him, and were plucking at his heart. Presently, without conscious preliminaries, Janet's lips were poised for the briefest moment impassively against his. And even in that instant he was given to understand that she was irrevocably prejudiced against any considerable display of emotion. But she went so far as to state, tremulously: "I'm very, very happy, Lawrence."

## IV

His mother shed a few happy and conventional tears the following morning and Perry received the news in a noncommittal silence that was almost but not completely satisfactory. After Ellen Dulac had left the breakfast table Perry said, with an air of gravity foreign to him:

"I think you've done well, Lawrence. Just what everyone would have expected of you. She will make you an excellent wife. And an excellent

hostess too, by the way. That is born in the Craigs." He smiled, his irrepressible humour surging to the surface. "Already I'm looking forward to being royally entertained, as your inescapable brother-in-law."

"You're incorrigible," Lawrence said good-naturedly. But in his heart he was conscious of an inexplicable sense of pain. It seemed to him that Perry was just then very remote; that they had come to a parting of their ways. Perry's attitude was, analyzed, the polite acceptance of the act of a human being differently constituted from himself. It was just as if Perry were saying: "You could be satisfied with Janet as a wife. I, never."

"Have you kissed her yet?" Perry teased him. "And, if so, did you experience that heavenly moment lovers are alleged to experience? Positively, I feel a decrepit old bachelor beside you."

"You're ridiculous," Lawrence declared. "Must you always be thinking of the senses?"

It seemed to Perry, secure in his own worldly experience, that Lawrence was never younger than when trying to appear old.

"Marriage is an affair of the passions only in cheap novels," Lawrence added drily.

"Perhaps you're right." Perry rose; extended his hand. "I can't argue the abstract at this hour of the morning. Anyway, you're so totally different from me——" He paused; studied his brother gravely for a moment; said: "I'm glad you're happy, dear old man"; patted his shoulder, and left the room.

"I am happy," Lawrence assured himself all that morning. His conception of married life, on those rare occasions when he had given it thought, had been dim and unfocussed. He was able now to entertain a picture more sharply defined, specific, with Janet Craig as his wife. It would be, he decided, an altogether pleasant and unexciting existence that they would lead, dominated slightly perhaps by his own stronger personality. As for Janet, she would undoubtedly prove herself as good a wife as any man could find. She would keep up her position and his; would appear well as a young hostess. He had, in fact, every reason to congratulate himself.

When a certain insidious doubt persisted in assailing his mind after Perry's departure he told himself that, as regards the much talked of phase of life called love, he cared for Janet fully as much as any of his immediate circle had cared when they had become engaged. As for that other thing, that headlong, desperate passion for a woman one occasionally read about—well, it belonged in warm-blooded volumes of imported literature. . . . His thoughts continuing on a more abstract yet more finely analytical trend, he

came to the conclusion that love was a fragile, flowery emotion, its power and sway somewhat exaggerated by the world for sundry reasons. It was, after all, a pleasant prelude and accompaniment to the early years of marriage. Aside from this, one's partner in life had to be selected with a level head (as he had done), and with due regard to her character, her connections. Her physical attributes were subordinate. That love was sometimes a crying urge, a mainstay of existence, a craving, empowered to sweep aside all convictions, conventions, and restraints, he refused to believe—at least concerning himself and his own particular stratum of civilization. Passion he preferred to consider as the peculiar privilege of the more uncontrolled Latin races. And in reaching these conclusions he felt that he was eminently sensible; proving himself to be a steady, wise young man.

# CHAPTER V
## Career

### I

Events had followed one another with a remarkable rapidity after the night of his proposal to Janet Craig. His mother, really, had been responsible for this acceleration of affairs. Actually more worried concerning the dire results of her husband's financial experiment than she had allowed her sons to believe, she had gathered sudden courage and had written to that renowned cousin-in-law of hers, Frederick Dulac, the most omnipotent and elusive member of the family. An elderly, self-centred bachelor with a reputation for being unapproachable, he was known to devote his entire time to the problems of Wall Street, to financial matters of surprising magnitude. Unlike his kin, he cared nothing for the amenities of a social life, the mere cultivation of friendships, the arts. He rarely appeared on any of the family thresholds except when summoned to the formalities of a wedding or a funeral. Indeed, Perry had once horrified, and secretly amused, his mother by remarking that the rest of the Dulacs would display a far keener interest in the success of Frederick's career as soon as his death was announced than they ever had evinced during his lifetime.

Frederick had the decency, though, to answer Ellen Dulac's letter, and called promptly at her bidding late one January afternoon. Lawrence heard about the visit at dinner later that night. Frederick had arrived at six, a huge apparition in a fur overcoat and silk hat, rubbing his bulbous, blue-veined nose as he entered the drawing room, and had succeeded in completely disconcerting Ellen at the outset by remarking:

"Well, Ellen. Some trouble about money—eh? Whenever my relatives send for me I know that there's something gone wrong with their finances."

She made polite manœuvres to dissimulate; offered tea, which he curtly refused; and then admitted: "Yes, Frederick. Benjamin left things in a pretty bad way. I wanted your advice."

He sat down; blew his nose with a scarlet bandanna; placed his hat on the polished floor beside him, and uttered a short, unpleasant sound that was a compromise between a laugh and a snort.

“Gad, I knew it! I warned him about that paper mill, but he wouldn’t listen. Now, Ellen, I’m a very busy man——” He consulted a heavy gold hunter. “Let’s get down to facts. Do you want me to return those Midland bonds your Benjamin sold to me at par? They’re worth about a hundred and twenty now. I’ll give ’em to you. It wasn’t altogether fair, I guess——”

At this demonstration of generosity she was both overwhelmed and injured. Admirably dignified, she shook her head.

“No, Frederick, not charity. We are by no means destitute, as you appear to think. What I want you to do is only to see my son Lawrence started in some business suited to his position.”

“Ha!” said Cousin Frederick, and again snorted. “Is that the pretty lad whom the newspapers say cuts such a fine caper leading cotillions? Because if so, I’d rather have you take the bonds; it would be letting me off easier.”

She saw then that she was destined for one of the most difficult half hours she had ever spent. Still outwardly unperturbed she corrected him.

“No. I suppose you’re referring to Perry. I want you to take Lawrence in hand, the elder. He is a fine, steady boy.”

“What does he know? Anything?”

“He has been at the Law School for two years,” she informed him, controlling a ripple of annoyance.

“Bah!” said Frederick. “That’s no good for him. No Dulac ever had a legal head. Does the lad speak French?”

“Excellently,” she said with some pride.

He proceeded then to fire questions at her with an astonishing rapidity, questions concerning Lawrence so consecutive and concisely worded that she gained an impression of his mind as being equivalent to some perfectly tabulated notebook.

“Tell you what I’ll do,” he announced presently. A pause while he once more blew his nose with astonishing violence. “Tell you what I’ll do for the boy. Some years ago I started, as a side venture, the Franco-American Bank of Commerce—one of the first American banking concerns in Paris. It was a great success, and by now we’ve established pretty close connections with all the French provincial and colonial banks. I could find a vacancy for the lad in one of the smaller French concerns so’s he could learn the business, on the understanding that he’d eventually come to us in Paris—and later, possibly, in our Foreign Department in New York. By then he’d know the French end of it thoroughly and he’d be making good money. How does that sound?”

She gave a little sigh; playing for time; trying to temporize with him.

"I suppose it would do, though I'd hate to have him go away. You see, he's engaged to a New York girl. Couldn't you arrange for him to begin somewhere on this side?"

He stood up and, offering his hand, proclaimed the interview at an end. "That's my offer, Ellen. It's got a big future. Let the boy write me personally, if he's interested. Otherwise we'll just drop it."

He went oscillating ponderously out of the room. Her sense of indignity surged to a culminating point within her. The pursuit of gold, it seemed to her just then, coarsened men and atrophied their ordinary sense of refinement. Yet she remained, nevertheless, completely in his hands. To Lawrence, at dinner, she admitted that Frederick, whatever his faults, would stick to his word; would certainly treat them fairly.

"But what about Janet?" he protested.

"My dear," she said. "You may have to wait two or three years before you are in a position to marry her. But she, of all girls, will remain faithful to you."

"I'm sure of it," he agreed. And added, in a drastic impulse of decision, "I'll write this evening and accept his offer."

His tone conveyed resignation; as if he realized that his part in the cosmic pattern of destiny was inexorably being woven, and that he was no longer able to offer an appreciable resistance to it.

## II

The whole affair was arranged so rapidly, so easily, by the power of his cousin's word that Lawrence found himself aboard a French liner, Mediterranean bound, two weeks later with the sensation of being an unimportant cog in some huge machine. It had been a busy two weeks. There had been innumerable, ghastly calls upon relatives with Janet; and even in the Craig house her mother, in her complete, overflowing joy at the engagement, had hovered garrulously at his side. He had undergone several taut, uneasy interviews with his cousin Frederick, and was now presumed to be thoroughly equipped for the European venture. There were letters in his suitcase to foreign banking potentates; and several forbidding textbooks on finance which he must read during the voyage.

His mother and Janet had come aboard the steamer to see him off and now sat nervously, side by side, in the stuffy little white-and-gold salon, wearing that curious expatriated look habitual to temporary visitors aboard a

ship. Lawrence, too, displayed a certain tension; almost wished that they would go ashore, especially as his mother kept harping on the treacheries of a foreign climate and made specific and embarrassing references to his woollen underwear. Perry, gay and flippant as usual, whirled aboard at the last moment, accompanied by a messenger boy carrying a mysterious wooden box, and proceeded to caution Lawrence facetiously regarding the allurements of young French females. Janet, listening, blushed quite prettily at some of his more risqué remarks.

There was, of course, no opportunity in all the confusion of departure for him to talk with Janet alone. But at noon a white-coated steward went about the ship beating a gong, and when Perry and his mother had turned their backs he was able to kiss her good-bye, while her eyes brightened with tears and she displayed a visible emotion that set him nearer to loving her than ever before.

"And we'll come to France in July," she said, "if I can only persuade Mother to take the trip. Oh, Lawrence, do take care of yourself and—and—think always of me." With a swift pressure of her well-gloved little hand and an audaciously whispered, "I love you, Lawrence," she turned away; was swallowed up in the chattering throng.

The ship veered out into the North River a few minutes later, and as he stood on the deck watching the low, straggling line of docks and warehouses, the tangled forest of shipping, drop astern to merge into a compact, reddish mass upon the silver horizon, he realized that he was embarking on an altogether novel phase in his life, a phase which might conceivably lead in unguessed directions. He was aware at the same time of a novel serenity, a calmness and definiteness of purpose. There was consolation in the fact that he was at last a man with full responsibilities, about to make his own way in the world—and with a woman waiting, who presumably cared for him. In this rather sombre mood he descended the stairs to his cabin, began to unpack his portmanteau, and all of a sudden lost his gravity when he discovered Perry's gift of champagne, neatly crated, lying on his bunk. Symbolic, he thought, of his brother's ever cheerful attitude toward the problems of life.

He sat down to reread a portion of his cousin's pompous farewell letter:

> Moreover, I have confidence in you. With your knowledge of French and your steadiness of character you should go far. I am sending you to a small bank in the south of France where the business is mainly agricultural—with olive-growers, I understand. It should prove interesting and easy. Toulon is a quiet, old-

fashioned naval town less likely to offer temptations to a young man than Paris. You will reside in Toulon with Claude Fleurot, the head of the bank, a hard-working man who in his younger days was under my employ. His wife, a Scandinavian whom he married while in Christiania doing some business for me, is an excellent woman who will see to your wants. Write me once every two or three months, and inform me of your progress. In two years I will consider giving you a good position in Paris, if all goes well. I remain, faithfully your cousin,

FREDERICK DULAC.

He put the letter away, and proceeded along the narrow passage to the dining saloon. Here he found a score of passengers assembled at a long table; heavily bearded Frenchmen for the most part, rubbing their hands in ecstatic contemplation of an assortment of *hors d'œuvres*. There was, at each plate, a half-bottle of claret, a crisp long roll shaped like a policeman's truncheon. Already New York, his native soil, seemed remote; banished to some past era of his existence.

## III

He went ashore at Marseilles ten days later. The afternoon was slate-coloured, inauspicious, and an Alpine mistral sweeping across the cobbled quays chilled him to the bone as he exercised his French with a polite customs official. A rickety fiacre conveyed him along the Cannebière through whirling clouds of dust to the station. By the time his train appeared night had fallen, so that there remained nothing but a wall of blackness to be seen from the carriage window. The second-class compartment—he had already begun to economize—was filled with Parisians bound for the coast resorts of Hyères and Saint Raphael who appeared to resent his intrusion, and a young man who had placed bags and overcoat on the one unoccupied seat removed these, at his request, with a considerable show of sulkiness. It was, in fact, with an intense relief that at eleven o'clock he raised the window curtain, as the train came at last to a jolting halt, and read the word "Toulon" in transparent blue letters on the glass of a lantern above the desolate platform. At the station gate where he surrendered his ticket a little knot of shivering humanity had gathered: hotel porters, cabmen, a few threadbare nondescripts; and from this group a single compact figure detached itself to approach him.

"Mr. Dulac, I believe. I am Claude Fleurot."

He was aware of a pale little man standing before him, hat in hand, his hair rising in a stiff white brush from his forehead, his gray eyes swiftly appraising. He spoke in faultless English. They shook hands; proceeded to a waiting fiacre behind a tired, drooping horse. The vehicle rolled away from the station down a cobbled ramp, into a narrow street lighted only at spasmodic intervals by the pallid, feeble rays of corner lamp-posts. The night air was penetrating, the sky now a clear electric blue, and in the distance Lawrence could detect the subdued roar of breaking surf. His companion, after making a polite enquiry concerning his voyage, relapsed into silence.

The carriage at last came to a halt before a house no different from its neighbours, a plain, narrow structure of darkened stone, its windows closely shuttered. A door swung open, emitting a sharp flood of light, and a maid servant appeared. The carriage clattered away; vanished in the all-embracing gloom of the street. Lawrence, following Fleurot into the house, felt all at once immeasurably weary, depressed by an arrival in a foreign land that had been singularly banal, far different from the colourful adventure his mind had in advance pictured.

# CHAPTER VI
## Rue Alézard

### I

Lawrence, musing over his after-supper cigar, a thin and pungent cylinder of Bizerta tobacco which a month previously he would have rejected with some scorn, gave consideration to the amazing adaptability of the average human being. Although but three weeks had elapsed since his transplantation to an alien soil, to become the immediate member of a foreigner's small and intimate household, he now discovered himself to be entirely at his ease, as accustomed to the new routine of life as if he had been a son of Claude Fleurot, born and bred on Mediterranean shores. The Fleurots, on their part, it seemed to him, had accepted his arrival with a fine and easy philosophy that was perhaps a characteristic of the Gallic race. At any rate, he was no longer a stranger. The little house on the Rue Alézard had already adjusted itself to his presence and was now admittedly his home.

The Fleurot's drawing room, snug in its bourgeois correctness of crimson, slightly faded plush furniture, its gilded mirrors and carved marble mantelpiece bearing bronze figurines, was stuffily comfortable that evening. It was a room that was perpetually stuffy. Its atmosphere throughout the four seasons was unchanging—a faint, fusty warmth tinged with the odour of dust and heavy woodwork. Ponderous, tasselled curtains were drawn across the windows, which rattled from a mistral sprung up with the setting sun, and a eucalyptus log crackled out its fragrance in the fireplace. Fleurot, his feet encased in morocco slippers, was as usual hidden behind the evening edition of the *Petit Marseillais*, and near him his wife Eva bent her head over an intricate pattern of filet work. A handsome woman, Lawrence concluded, appraising the strong, firmly moulded figure, the high-crowned mass of fair, almost colourless hair. Only a certain gentle fullness about the cheeks was the visible suggestion of her forty-odd years. A placid woman, a conscientious wife, as her well-ordered household constantly testified. Her expression, ever since he had known her, had been one of unvarying tranquillity, and offered no clue to the swift resourcefulness of mind, the firmness of decision, which he knew belonged to her. At her feet, on a plump saffron cushion, sat Christine, legs crossed, one hand cupping her

chin, in an attitude of consciousless grace. Christine in a demure, schoolgirl dress of the palest mauve, reading with a slight air of bewilderment the Thackeray novel he had that morning purchased for her at Payot's library. Once she glanced up at him absently, her thoughts immersed in the story, and he realized for perhaps the hundredth time, yet still with a tiny shock of surprise, the almost acute beauty of her. It was a beauty that was vivid, sharply defined. Her eyes particularly had the power of arousing a strange kind of emotional astonishment within him. Eyes that were a clear, glacial blue, like—he thought swiftly—a suddenly revealed glimpse of her own motherland; of a fjord's cool, unstirred depths, a mirrored vision of water reflecting June skies. The silvery blondness, too, that encircled her small head made him sometimes think of warm sunlight flickering on white birch. Possibly aware of his scrutiny, her glance wavered from the printed page. She put aside the volume; yawned delicately, and glanced at the onyx-and-gold Versailles clock above the mantel.

"Hector Durandel is calling at nine," she reminded her mother, and made a furtive, sweet grimace for Lawrence's sole benefit. She added in a purely mischievous tone: "So I told Armand Marécotte's sister in class to-day that I wanted him to come to see us also. In that case we might manage to survive the evening."

"You're a disrespectful child," Eva Fleurot laughingly asserted. Growing graver, she voiced her opinion that it was absurd for an infant of Christine's age—barely eighteen—to have two bachelors calling regularly upon her. Here Fleurot emerged from his newspaper and, folding it carefully, remarked with that soft, paternal indulgence for an only child, a daughter: "Really, Eva. You worry yourself for nothing. Armand Marécotte is an entertaining young man, and it will do Christine no harm if she sees him once in a while."

"But Hector Durandel, you see, has serious intentions," Eva said with startling directness. There was a gentle mockery in her smile as she turned again to her sewing. Christine flushed; studied the pattern of the carpet, while Fleurot himself exhibited a mild surprise.

"If he has such intentions he has made no mention of them to me."

"You're blind, you men," Eva chuckled, femininely secure in her prediction. "Hector Durandel doesn't walk three kilometres across the town in this cold weather merely for the privilege of agreeing with you about the infamies of Prussian statesmen. He may talk to you politely enough, but his mind is elsewhere."

Lawrence, amused, listened to the interplay. To him the most remarkable feature of the conversation was that Christine herself took no part in it. She listened, though, with an admirable detachment while the assets and defects of both Durandel and young Marécotte were threshed out by her parents. Claude Fleurot mumbled something about not being prepared to lose his little daughter so soon. At last, a trifle disdainfully, she crossed the room to Lawrence's chair and asked, smiling down at him:

"What do you think of these darling parents so earnestly discussing a husband for me?"

He laughed at that, and wondered at the same time at her fraternal casualness toward him. Certainly she did not speak to other young men—Frenchmen—in that way. It was as if she regarded him as apart from the average run of men—or, perhaps, as an elderly brother. The attitude was not necessarily complimentary. Every evening she played games with him, backgammon or checkers; joked with him; cheerfully teased him. He felt that her parents' rigorous bourgeois code would never have permitted this had not they classed him as a sort of harmless foreign anomaly, not at all in the same category as a young man of volatile temperament like Armand Marécotte. And yet he was not a patriarch, he told himself with slightly wounded pride. There was but six or seven years' difference in their ages. He wondered if the Fleurots could believe him altogether insensible to her slender perfection, to the charm of her oddly deep contralto voice which so often aroused within him a novel and inexplicable tremor of emotion.

"I hope," he told her, smiling, "that you don't want to draw me into this discussion about your—your future husband?"

"I shall most certainly consult you when the time comes," she assured him. He fancied that he could detect just a faint trace of irony in her tone. "I've known you about three weeks, but I feel as if I had known you for years. You are like a big, comfortable brother, Lawrence Dulac."

"Christine!" her mother admonished, in a mock and indulgent horror. "You are altogether too much at ease with Monsieur Dulac.—Send her away, I beg you, if she bothers you. Her head has been quite turned lately."

"They treat her like a young child," he thought. And exactly how much of a child was she? There were moments when, in quick perception, she was essentially beyond childhood. A difficult thing to determine in a creature so alternately frivolous and grave.

His thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of Armand Marécotte, a dark and lean young man with sharp, intelligent features, a smudge of a black moustache, humorous eyes. His entrance into the drawing room was,

like all his actions, precipitous, claiming their combined attentions. Claude Fleurot was wont to remark that he had seen Marécotte dash across the Boulevard de Strasbourg under the heads of horses, in an amazing hurry, and then fritter away the next quarter of an hour gazing at the foulard cravats in the gorgeous windows of the Nouvelle Galerie.

Marécotte bowed low over Christine's hand, touched Eva's to his lips, and hurled himself into an armchair.

"I have run all the way from the Lycée," he panted, "to tell you the astonishing news. I have at last earned my baccalaureat, and—for what do you think?" A gust of mirth seized him. "For my work in Egyptology! For my treatise on ancient civilizations! Those absurd hieroglyphics always had a fascination for me, but I never thought that I would so distinguish myself. My career is now plainly indicated. Some day I shall be the world's most famous Egyptologist, admired by all men, yet going about in rags. That is ever the path of genius. And then—and then, when I am utterly lonely——" He paused; directed a significant, humorous glance at Christine, who lowered her gaze in a manner so instinctive and conventional that Lawrence felt it must be a part of her daily routine. The evening comedy had begun. From previous and similar occasions he, Lawrence, had grown to know the procedure by heart. Marécotte would remain for an hour; would converse agreeably with Claude Fleurot on political matters about which he knew nothing; would always agree with him; would now and then utter polite little gallantries to Eva Fleurot; would cast a sheepish and adoring glance toward Christine at appropriate intervals, while she would pretend not to notice the symptoms.

So this, then, was courtship. He could not comprehend how results were ever achieved. The process, it appeared, was indefinite. Looking at Christine he came to the conclusion that she was pleasantly disposed toward the young man, amused by him, but assuredly not in love with him. And to-night Armand Marécotte was in one of his absurdest moods, oblivious of the maxim that a lover should never permit himself to appear ridiculous in the presence of his beloved. He had attended that morning, he stated, the funeral of a well-known personage in Toulon.

"Her name was Mademoiselle Kiki," he rattled on. "You have never heard of her? Old Hennichon, the grocer, buried her in his garden and invited all the *haute monde* to be there. Hence my presence. She was the most renowned, the most popular cat in all Toulon, and by reputation the most virtuous. She never went out at night, they say. We wept as the casket was lowered into the grave. It was most pathetic."

At nine o'clock precisely Hector Durandel arrived; came wheezing into the drawing room, palpable irritation on his round, strawberry-coloured face as he caught sight of Armand Marécotte. A rotund, pompous little man of about forty-five, he suffered from chronic asthma. His elaborate watch chain formed a spectacular golden arc upon a protruding waistcoat of patterned silk. An unattractive creature, Lawrence instantly thought; but he saw that the Fleurots did not apparently share his opinion. Claude Fleurot pushed the best chair toward him; Eva Fleurot awarded him her most attractive smile. Only Christine remained stiff and upright in her chair, her mirth banished. As for Marécotte, he twirled his little black moustache and stared fixedly at his own square-toed patent-leather shoes. Durandel sat down; placed fat hands upon his knees; nodded curtly to the young man; and proceeded to ignore his presence.

"Six hundred cases of my wine ordered by the syndicate of *hôteliers* at Saint Raphael," he announced. "We shall show a good profit this year, a superb profit." Then, to Claude Fleurot: "You have read the evening paper? Bismarck is to preside over the next State Council. Austria is—*whee!*—becoming afraid of his increasing influence with the Russians. What parlous times—*whee!*—we live in!"

He embarked on a monotonous recital of recent political events, never addressing a word to Christine, except once to enquire in honeyed tone regarding her progress at school. As he droned on he alternately blinked and wheezed; and his right eyebrow, Lawrence noticed, now and then twitched upward, lending him a puzzled, pathetic appearance.

"Your house is charming, Madame Fleurot. Truly charming. A man, like myself, destined to live in Toulon with all its benefits and attractions—*whee!*—is truly lucky. How fortunate that we are not under the iron heel—*whee!*—of Prussian domination. . . ."

Armand Marécotte was suddenly on his feet, as if impelled by a catapult; bowed in several directions, and shot from the room. In the darkened hallway Lawrence, following him to open the front door, the bolts of which were a source of bewilderment to every visitor, found him clutching his forehead in a theatrical gesture of exhaustion.

"He shall not marry her," he whispered, seizing Lawrence's arm. "That hideous old vendor of wines, that pompous, pot-bellied old fool! I am now going up to the Tavern to have cognac and coffee, in an attempt to brush his vile image from my memory. You must come with me, Dulac. We will be gay and forget our troubles."

His persuasion was, as ever, effective. A moment later, arm in arm, they strolled out into the night, headed toward the distant arc lights of the Boulevard de Strasbourg.

## II

"She is the most perfect creature on the face of the earth," Marécotte sighed, staring into the amber pellucidity of a benedictine the waiter had placed before him. "She is my ideal, and just because of that I know she will never marry me, since my ideal would have more common sense than to squander herself on a wretched creature like me! The thought is logical, you must agree, but crushing. As for you, Dulac, I would give all I possessed to be in your privileged position; to be able to gaze in rapture upon her, to speak to her, morning and night every day. You are a lucky devil but too dull to realize it!"

"There's no need to be jealous," Lawrence assured him. "It seems to be a symptom of all lovers to imagine every other man a rival. She is very lovely, I admit, and has beautiful poise and character. But she looks on me as nothing more than a harmless old fossil. There! I hope you are satisfied."

They were seated at one of a hundred marble-topped tables in the wide mirrored hall of the Grande Taverne. Every man in Toulon who had the price of a *café noir*, Lawrence imagined, must have found his way that evening to its crowded, animated confines. He noted the praiseworthy thrift of a shabby student at the next table, who had contrived to make a fifty-centime beer last for over an hour while he called in turn for pens and ink, stationery, and a heap of Paris newspapers; the two elderly merchants playing backgammon as if their lives depended on the result; the fat lady beyond them who offered surreptitious lumps of expensive café sugar to a whining poodle chained beneath her chair, and then looked up frightened to see if the waiters had by chance observed her. The air was hazy with curling blue tobacco smoke; filled with a constant, confused uproar of voices, the crash of trays on marble table-tops, the clatter of cups and saucers, the click of backgammon counters and dominoes. Sipping his coffee, he went on to say:

"You love Christine, I'm sure. And I don't see why you shouldn't win her, with a little persistence. She doesn't dislike you and is obviously bored by that old Durandel."

"But Madame, her mother, favours him," Marécotte groaned.

"Look here," Lawrence began impatiently. "If Durandel does make an offer of marriage her parents will consult Christine. She will reject him, and

then you will have a clearer field than ever. Heavens, but you need an amount of bolstering."

The other shook his head protestingly.

"You do not understand our ways at all. Durandel happens to be an extremely rich man—the most prosperous wine merchant in the region. He has also, unfortunately, a fairly amiable character. With such assets it matters not at all in this practical universe of ours whether one resembles a chimpanzee. If the Fleurots think the match suitable Christine will have no word to say."

"But that," stammered Lawrence—"that is—why, it's impossible, man; it's impossible. You can't *sell* a creature like Christine!"

"What would you?" Marécotte shrugged his shoulders. "The same thing is done all over the world. In your native New York I understand the fond parents have a penchant for English milords, instead of our more modest requirement of a wine merchant. The theory is the same." He asked abruptly: "Have you ever been engaged yourself?"

Lawrence flushed; and after a moment's hesitation said quietly: "I am engaged now, to a lady in New York."

"You do not act like a man in love," Marécotte declared. But his relief at the information was so patent that Lawrence could not resist smiling.

"There is Durandel now," he added, "talking with that woman in a green hat near the door."

Lawrence, glancing across the crowded room, saw Durandel at the table of a graphic brunette whose carmine lips were, at the moment, parted in artless laughter. Marécotte became informative.

"She was, some years ago, one of his many mistresses. He always had good taste, although one would never suspect it from his ugly old face."

He summoned the waiter; ordered another round of liqueurs. And Lawrence, watching Durandel as he exchanged *bon mots* with the woman, involuntarily contrasted her corrupt beauty with Christine Fleurot's cool and immaculate perfection. A sense of disgust seized him; a heightening realization of mankind's contemptible frailty.

## III

At noon on a cobalt March day two weeks later Lawrence emerged from the bank to the sudden sunshine of the Quai de Cronstadt, and headed toward Pasti's convenient Italian restaurant. The harbour of Toulon was vivid that morning; the tinted seafront houses with their apple-green shutters

bathed in a warm, bright glare. The surface of the inner harbour, ruffled from its accustomed calm to an opaque froth, slapped monotonously against the breakwater where an untidy string of dories rose and fell and creaked, tugging at rusty moorings. Outside in the Petite Rade, beyond the protecting angle of the breakwater, a dozen cruisers of the Mediterranean squadron, with bizarre little funnels like the silk hats of well-dressed Parisian gentlemen, rode at taut anchor chains on a heaving olive sea.

The quay itself was packed with a drifting mass of humanity; red-tasselled sailors and soberly uniformed officers, pedlars with groaning carts laden with early fruit from Algiers; shopkeepers lowering their heavy shutters for the luncheon hour, gathering at street corners, lighting cigarettes, hands cupped against the gusty harbour breeze. A ferry bound for Tamaris down the bay, emitting acrid clouds of mustard smoke from its twin funnels, swished past the breakwater loaded to the rails with homebound marketfolk.

At the corner of the Rue Méridienne, Lawrence came suddenly upon a pale and wretched Armand Marécotte. He had, he announced at once, an astonishing and terrible piece of news. He had met Claude Fleurot on the Boulevard ten minutes before; and Fleurot had told him coolly, impersonally, that Hector Durandel had formally demanded Christine's hand in marriage; that after a talk with his wife he had agreed with her on the entire suitability of such an alliance.

Lawrence was at first stunned—incredulous. And then, convinced at last by Marécotte that the possibility they had both secretly feared had become fact, it seemed to him as if the shadowy vision of Durandel hovering over Christine had all at once been transformed from a harmless, grotesque caricature to a personage now menacing and hateful.

"The old reprobate!" Armand cried, as they reached the restaurant; found a table. "You, Lawrence, see the wickedness of it. How I detest him! Tell me, did ever a single human being suffer as I now am suffering?"

"You think too much of yourself," Lawrence told him angrily. "You've got to forget your own misery, and plan some—some campaign to prevent this."

"But what? But what?" Marécotte was wild-eyed. His jet hair fell in a ridiculous sweep over his brow. He seized Lawrence's hand feverishly. "Will you help? You will not desert me, will you, Lawrence Dulac?"

"No," Lawrence pledged himself. "I will do whatever I can."

It was an unhappy, an awkward meal that followed. As soon as feasible, Lawrence excused himself and hastened to the Rue Alézard. The day was faintly warm, touched with the first definite prelude to spring. In the Fleurot

drawing room, fragrant with hyacinths, lace curtains billowing at the open windows, he found Eva Fleurot placidly sewing. She looked up brightly at his entrance; made some inconsequential comment concerning the weather.

"I have heard the news," he interrupted.

She must have detected the note of disapproval in his tone; her gaze dropped again to her work.

"And you have come to congratulate us?"

He sensed the sarcasm in her voice, and knew that in her alert mind she had already divined his attitude. With an effort he said: "Honestly, I cannot."

He saw, with some triumph, that she was taken unawares by the directness of his attack. But with a frankness which he was compelled to admire she said to him:

"You have been with us only a short time, Lawrence, but you have managed to make us all your friends. I would really like to hear in all candour why you disapprove of Christine's engagement."

He wavered—especially at the first friendly use of his Christian name; it distracted him from his purpose; confused him. He ended by asserting lamely:

"It isn't, of course, any of my business. But—oh, confound it—Christine is a lovely girl, Madame Fleurot, and surely you must see something tragic in her marrying an unattractive creature like Durandel? Any one can guess that she doesn't care for him."

"Pouf!" she murmured, with an absurd little inflation of her cheeks, and disconcerted him by continuing her sewing in silence for a full minute. Her voice surprisingly tender, she remarked:

"All young people are alike in their views. It is sad, but rather lovely. When I was a girl I took an insane prejudice to Claude Fleurot's stiff, wiry hair. I used to dream about it while he was courting me. . . . I thought I could never bring myself to marry him. (You see how you have a way of inspiring confidences, Lawrence; how I confess to you!) Although in my case the instance was trivial, the point is that as a woman grows older the physical aspect of her man becomes of decreasing importance. And, strangely enough, the really good-looking men very often turn out to be cads. Now, Durandel, even if by no means handsome, has a good character——"

"The whole town knows of at least one of his unsavoury affairs," he could not help putting in.

She surveyed him in a puzzled fashion; shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't understand you. It is not my business, is it, to rake up a man's past indiscretions? All men are the same, if they are in possession of their normal faculties. I am not blind to their faults, but I really believe Durandel adores Christine and will make her an excellent husband. Therefore Claude and I are satisfied."

She smiled up at him quizzically, as if to say: "Have I acquitted myself, or have you more questions to hurl at me? If so, I am quite prepared to humour your whims."

"Armand Marécotte loves her," he suggested vaguely.

She laughed outright.

"My dear boy, that is nonsense. Armand is a lovable, temperamental dreamer. He will never amount to anything. Always remember that there are two distinct classes of men in every young woman's life: those who amuse her, and those who are potential husbands. And no sensible woman confuses the two."

"If you could see Armand now you would not think him such a joke."

"Young men are bound to be tragic on these occasions," she retorted. "They feel that it would be bad form if they were not. He will recover. Watch him when the next little blonde captures his eye."

With a conviction of the completest failure he left her; ascended the steep stairway to his bedroom. It would be good, he planned, to sit for a while on his balcony before returning to the bank; and, fanned by the soft afternoon breezes, to enjoy the restful vista of the Faron's wooded slopes beyond the brightly crimson roofs, the distant, coruscating sweep of the harbour; and here to ponder over the whole diabolical affair. On his dressing table he discovered a letter in Janet Craig's concise handwriting, but this he placed in his pocket unopened, although obscurely aware that he had never done such a thing before and that it was not exactly the proper attitude of an engaged man toward his betrothed's letters.

He strolled out to the balcony, a flimsy contrivance of tiles and filigree ironwork set far above the neighbouring roofs; sat down in a wicker chair and speculated as to his own extreme interest in Christine Fleurot's predicament, an interest which he had to acknowledge went beyond the bounds of any commonplace sympathy. He decided that her constantly evinced friendliness and kindness toward him might perhaps be the cause, admitting that he had his own due share of male egoism.

He was aware of her suddenly on the balcony next to his, a pale but untearfully stoic figure in summery white. She was bending over a bowl of pink hyacinths, a small watering can in her hand, and nodded to him with a

valiant attempt at a conventional smile. He was at a loss for an appropriate remark, determining then and there not to assume a hypocritical attitude. To offer her congratulations, good wishes, would be farcical; a slap at the unspoken comprehension that he believed existed between them. She herself then surprisingly ended the awkward moment by leaning over the balcony toward him and whispering:

"Somehow I know that to you, of all people, I don't have to pretend. It is such a relief . . ." There was a little catch in her voice as she added: "I wonder why life can be so—so unfair to people who have tried to be at least moderately good?"

"I'll see what I can do," he promised her. "Indeed I will. Armand is nearly crazy about it all."

"He is a dear boy," she said in a thoughtful, musing tone. "I'm—I'm not altogether sure that I care for him; but he's a dear boy." She averted her gaze from him; became inordinately interested in the condition of the hyacinth buds. Just once she looked back at him and said, a little unsteadily:

"Lawrence Dulac, you're truly good. I think I would trust you, in anything—as long as I lived."

Later in the afternoon he returned to the bank. The clock on the whitewashed, bare wall back of his desk indicated the hour of five when he recalled Janet's letter, and opened it to peruse a series of statements concerning her daily life: a party or two, a performance of Sardou's "Tosca" at the Star Theatre which she had at last been allowed to attend, the pleasure that Fanny Davenport's acting had given her. The letter terminated with the inevitable "I am yours, with love, Janet."

Neither knowing nor seeking the cause, he was slowly invaded by a disturbing sensation of unrest, an intolerable discontent. . . . He wanted to flee from the bank, the town; to seek some pine-clad slope remote from all evidences of humanity; there to sit by himself—and think. . . . He eyed with a growing distaste the long wooden counter across the room, with its grilled windows framing the heads of incarcerated slaves stooping over ledgers, the crude enamelled signs, *Titres*, *Rentes*, *Caissier*, above each little cell. At the door of the bank stood the familiar, square bulk of old Gizac from the Gapeau valley, twirling his black felt hat; scowling; waiting for Claude Fleurot so that he might resume his weekly quarrel regarding the interest on the mortgage of his violet farm. Futile, stupid trivialities! The minds of men revolved in perpetual circles, each thinking only of his immediate benefit. Petty details monopolized their attention, their very existence, while actual

tragedies involving their contemporaries were enacted before their unseeing eyes.

How in heaven's name could he help Christine? An argument, a discussion with the Fleurots was at present out of the question. It would serve no good; would turn them against him when he most needed to gain their confidence. He must proceed warily in his own way, maybe advancing Marécotte's cause by an occasional well-timed word of eulogy. Perhaps, too, Durandel would show some evidence of an unholy greed when the matter of Christine's marriage *dot* came to be discussed. Yes. There remained a rift of hope. . . . He turned again to his work, a badly printed list of municipal bonds, a column of purple-inked, quirly French figures in a heavy ledger, but these had by now lost all significance. He could not concentrate. He then decided to answer Janet's letter, and to give her news of himself and his work. He took up a pen and paper. But on rereading his effort he was dissatisfied; it was uninspired—a dull, priggish document. It was as if he had suddenly lost the ability to write to her, and—almost—the desire to do so. . . . He tore up the letter; lighted a cigarette; hastened from the stifling, unbearable confines of the bank.

# CHAPTER VII
## Idyll

### I

An eventless six weeks drifted by. He worked hard, his tasks at the bank increasing daily. On the rarest occasions he saw Christine. She went about the house in silence now, divested of gaiety, and retired every night to her room as soon as supper was over. Lawrence detected an atmosphere of perpetual strain in the Fleurot household, a subdued friction that her parents affected to ignore. Hector Durandel called often, but—according to the strict custom of their class—was never alone with Christine. This Lawrence perceived with some relief. Durandel appeared content to continue his political discussions with Claude Fleurot, and although Christine was usually present he did not attempt to stir her out of the chilling silence she preserved on these occasions. He behaved, rather, as a man sure of his ground and willing to bide his time. Lawrence's carefully planned little effort to reinstate Armand Marécotte as a caller, in the slender hope that the young man's enthusiasm contrasted with Durandel's drab unattractiveness might cause the Fleurots to reconsider their decision, was cut short by the news that Marécotte had vanished from Toulon and was rumoured to have obtained a position in some Paris museum of antiquities. Obtaining the address, he wrote to him; and, receiving no reply, angrily came to the conclusion that Marécotte was chicken-hearted—to put it vulgarly, a quitter.

On Easter Day at the breakfast table Eva Fleurot announced her plans for a picnic at the Iles d'Hyères. She had invited Durandel. Something must be done, she vowed, to keep the dear young people amused. At the same time she directed a defiant glance toward Lawrence, and urged him to join in the festivities. There would be no strangers—just themselves. For lack of an appropriate excuse he was obliged to accept; to play his minor rôle in the farce.

They went down to the Tamaris dock in time for the ten o'clock steamboat, laden with many packages, and there met Durandel clad in a disastrous attempt at spring levity of attire: white duck trousers, a shiny alpaca coat, a cheap imitation panama. To Lawrence he appeared a trifle more grotesque than ever, yet sleekly complacent. The day was almost oppressively warm, the harbour waters scarcely rippled as the steamer

paddled its way past the forts of Vauban crumbling to a reddish decay, past the light-house and scarped rocks of Cap Cépet that jutted out into a shimmering sea, a molten mirror of sunshine.

Claude Fleurot was buried in the pages of a newspaper; but his wife was gay, making herself agreeable to Durandel, who had forgotten his accustomed pomp and was indulging in anecdotes about his youthful days at the Lycée—days which, according to him, had been fraught with numerous witty exploits engineered by himself. Christine had wandered to the after part of the ship and there sat in silence as Tamaris dropped astern, its white villas staring seaward from a dark mass of forest pines. Her manifest unhappiness, the inconsequent and trivial chatter of Durandel, so played on Lawrence's sensibilities that he had a transitory and wild desire to heave the man's shapeless bulk overboard; and to announce loudly the conspiracy to the other assembled passengers.

They reached Porquerolles, the largest of three wooded islands off the Hyères peninsula, at noon; hurried through a dormant village into pinewoods that were suddenly cool and fragrant, where sunlight slanted in dusty bars through a green roof to the sandy pathway at their feet. And here, on a convenient mossy slope, Eva spread the tablecloth, lighted her alcohol lamp, and commenced the picnicker's inevitable search for the bottle-opener that had been left behind.

"But this is paradise!" Durandel exclaimed, and placed a clumsy arm about Christine's waist; drew her, wordlessly protesting, to him, until the curve of her cheek rested against his—the first visible demonstration of affection he had ventured upon. "But this is—*whee!*—Paradise! What is it, Dulac, that your English poet says about Spring and a young man's fancy? —*whee!*"

He winked. Eva Fleurot smiled her indulgence, and Claude remained unperturbed. Lawrence, catching sight of Christine's expression, turned away abruptly, biting his lip.

When luncheon was over Durandel stretched himself luxuriously on his back; placed his hat over his crimson face to frustrate an irritating gleam of sunlight that penetrated the branches above him. His stomach, a white hemisphere against the dark background of foliage began to rise and fall gently. His eyes closed. A sound not unlike the preliminary simmer of a kettle rose from his lips. Claude and Eva commenced an intricate game of double patience which Lawrence watched for a while but could not comprehend.

With Christine at his side he wandered off through the woods. In two minutes they came unexpectedly to the shore, to the gentian expanse of sea sweeping to a silver-edged horizon. To the east, inland, a column of smoke spiralled lazily into a flawless sky above the clustered roofs of Costabelle, and they could detect the yellow glimmer of villa walls through a fretwork of umbrella pines that margined the shore. Only the slapping of little waves on the red rocks below them broke the stillness. Away off to the south a tramp steamer was sauntering leisurely toward Corsica, her smoke a palpable mustard streak above the quivering division of sea and sky.

When they had sat down Christine said, as if she had made a discovery:

"Life is almost terrifying. It is so much more complicated than I had thought."

He turned toward her, idly splitting a blade of grass.

"It's only complicated for those who are unwilling to accept things as they come."

She flared up amazingly at this, her cheeks imbued with two hectic little spots of anger.

"You suggest that I should accept things as they are?"

"No," he assured her. "I admire your spirit." And concluded pointlessly: "It's very hard. There must be some way out."

"There isn't any," she mused, "without disgrace, on my part. After all, my parents are only following time-worn customs. I believe other girls accept them. I don't know why God put into me so much—" she paused, choosing her word—"so much *esprit* of my own. One's not supposed to have that before thirty. Some women never have it—and they are the happy ones. I must have been made different. I can't sit still and accept things just because other people presume to know what is good for me——" Her thoughts flew off at a tangent. "Someday, maybe years and years from now, girls will awaken; learn how to act for themselves. Perhaps they will even choose their own husbands. To think of living with Hector Durandel!"

He winced at the note of sheer horror in her voice, and found himself wondering whether she actually realized the more definite significance of marriage. He was inclined to believe that even in her guarded existence she must have gathered fundamentals—as girls will, contrary to the occasional sentimentalist's belief in a complete and wholly idiotic innocence; that she had divined these through instinct aided by, perhaps, a few judicious and delicate conversations with her most trusted schoolgirl friend. And at the trend of his own thoughts he became disgusted to the verge of nausea, picturing Durandel and aware of her unavoidable destiny.

"In America," she demanded thoughtfully, allowing a handful of reddish sand to sift through her fingers, "haven't girls much more liberty than here?"

"A girl in your position," he told her, "would certainly have a voice in the selection of her husband—in fact, any girl would."

She pondered a moment over this; then informed him:

"The wedding has been fixed for the first week in July. They decided upon it this morning. I overheard them on the steamer."

A self-contempt at his own inability to aid her seized him. Never, he thought, with a bewildering little headiness, a sense of intoxication, had she appeared so flawless, so desirable. Her beauty was in completest harmony with the vividness of the April day. The white dress, the silvery blonde hair wound tightly about her head, her skin the pallor of rich, pure milk, blended into a picture which he now knew would be irrevocably committed to his memory. She was, indeed, Spring itself. Spring with a lingering touch of glacial, unthawed beauty; her eyes wide like the bloom of some early and unafraid violet. All at once he discovered that she was crying softly—a thing which he had never, never seen her do, and which he had in some obscure way considered her incapable of. And in this new, helpless mood, lips quivering, eyes lustrous with tears, his confirmed impression of her as an aloof, unattainable being of perfectly controlled emotions, vanished. She had become a wholly lovable, fallible human creature. And then—how do such things happen? As an unpresaged flash of lightning in a summer evening's tranquil sky—miracle of miracles, the most unplanned, unexpected, the most incredible moment in his life; she was in his arms, yielding, her face upturned to his, eyes closed, lids faintly mauve-tinted. So very near; so very close. . . . He, motionless, head awhirl, momentarily fascinated by a tiny blue vein throbbing on the whiteness of her temple; her small mouth trembling with a vainly suppressed grief that youth was too proud to reveal, too young to conquer. His mind grasped stumblingly at thought upon thought; rejected each as swiftly as it occurred. The Fleurots; Durandel; chaos! Armand Marécotte. Ah, at last! Here would be a way out—something he might go upon. And through the whole, seething confusion of ideas, of speculations, of contingencies, that surged through his brain he was supremely, superbly conscious that she, Christine Fleurot, was in his arms, close to him, exactly where she should be if only a topsy-turvy and nonsensical world had pursued its correct course; where he had wanted her, longed for her to be—for days, and days, and days.

"I'll write to Armand," he murmured. And something inside his head, impish and derisive, hammered: *You fool! You fool! You colossal fool of*

*fools!*

Her eyes opened; she looked at him dreamily.

"Armand?" (Just as if she had never heard the name.) "Armand? Oh, yes." With a queer little laugh: "Of course, I had forgotten. . . ."

Amazingly he found that he was kissing her; that her lips were crushed tenderly against his; eyes closed once more; one white arm flung about his shoulder. So young, and warm, and yielding. So utterly happy. So conclusively meant to be his. That was the height, the pinnacle, of Lawrence Dulac's life—that moment on the brick-red rocks of Porquerolles beside the gentian sea. The single imperishable moment that lingers through the years, like some pressed flower hidden in the locked pages of memory. A moment sharpened to an almost unbearable ecstasy in the knowledge that he had never before known what it was just to live.

"I love you," he was telling her in someone else's uneven, uncontrollable voice. "I love you, Christine. Do you hear me? I love you. I love you!"

In the forest behind them Eva Fleurot chose this instant to inflate an empty paper bag, in the frivolous habit of al fresco diners; to detonate it with a ludicrous impact on the still air. They were instantly on their feet, her hand still in his.

"It may be all wrong and wicked," she declared. "But I only feel that something has happened which was bound to happen all along; just as the sun rises; or the spring comes after a long, black winter. And I'm not afraid, Lawrence. I'm always, always going to love you."

Her voice had dropped to a low, almost incoherent murmur. She stood on tiptoe before him, smiling through tears, radiant, and lifted her face to his.

"Kiss me once more. It may never happen again. I want to have really lived—just once. Here are my lips, Lawrence. Kiss them, please. They are yours."

Durandel was yawning when they got back; rubbing sleepy eyes. He looked at them shrewdly, and appeared satisfied.

"Give me a cigarette, Dulac," he demanded. Lawrence fumbled, hands trembling, in his coat; found his case and proffered it. At the same time something fluttered from his pocket and lay starkly on the grass at his feet—Janet Craig's last letter to him.

## II

On the returning steamboat he made an attempt to consider the situation soberly; but soon discovered that he was incapable of this, his mind, his

whole being, still aflame with the lyric wonder of the fact that he was in love —in love with Christine Fleurot; and the knowledge that she, in her turn, cared, left him a trifle bewildered, atremble, incredulous. An impalpable magic hovered over the steamboat's grimy deck; tinted the evening sea to a stippled gold; rendered poignantly sweet a mimosa-laden breeze from the wooded shores.

He tried indeed just once to look into the future but shrank therefrom, and in the manner of lovers since the world began told himself that the illogical tangle of affairs would somehow straighten itself out, miraculously, for the eventual happiness of all concerned. Such a love as his and Christine's would be imperishable, would unerringly survive the mundane hindrances of the moment. People—other people—could not insist on carrying out the impossible. Looking across the deck he received from Christine a radiant, reassuring smile that accelerated the beating of his heart.

It was clear that Durandel would be the first stumbling block. Yet how could the trivial schemings of a single bourgeois household possibly be of any import when he and she so completely loved each other? How nonsensical were the customs of communities; how infallible human nature in its selection, and how transcendent to its own narrowly conceived ideas! Granted that Christine had been pledged to Durandel through an archaic social system, this would be no more than a challenge to any high-spirited young man. . . . It was only then that, with pain suddenly gripping his heart, he recalled the vision of Janet Craig bidding him farewell in the salon of the Mediterranean-bound liner; Janet Craig, helpless, implicitly trusting. . . . Three months ago that scene had been enacted; but it must have been really years and years ago—part of the existence of another man, or of an earlier incarnation of himself. With an effort he swept the picture from his mind; arose; lighted his pipe; and strolled forward to see the waterfront of Toulon looming, rose-tinted in a lingering sun, off the starboard bow. Everything could be adjusted in the end, judiciously and honourably, he whispered to himself; and turned his attention to the assistance of Eva Fleurot, who was already gathering her numerous belongings in her systematic, practical way.

As they moved with the rest of the passengers in a compact mass toward the gangway amidships, past the torrid vibrations of the engine room, Christine's shoulder was pressed against him and he felt her small hand close furtively on his, confirming her eternal pledge.

## III

He knew that he was standing on the doorstep of the Fleurots' home in the Rue Alézard. At least his, Lawrence Dulac's, body was there. He knew that the house was behind him, the deserted street before him; and that the sun had disappeared behind the maze of roofs in the west, leaving the sky a soft, pastel violet. Of these facts, and of his own corporate existence, he was certain. Queer, he thought. Queer. He was Lawrence Dulac. But what, actually, had just occurred? Something tremendous; shattering . . . something he could not quite remember.

There at the corner of the Boulevard de Strasbourg, by the Bureau de Tabac, was the slouching old postman who had just delivered to him the blue envelope which was still in his hand. The telegram! Of course; that was it. The telegram. . . . And now here was Claude Fleurot, hurrying home from evening mass—a brisk, stalwart figure in the twilight. A devout man, for he had gone direct to the cathedral of St. Louis from the steamboat. (What steamboat? Why, the craft that had taken them all to Porquerolles; to the picnic. Ah, God, the picnic! . . .) Come. He must brace up; must greet Fleurot; must act normally. But before Fleurot reaches the steps he must read the telegram once again only to make sure; only in case he had read it wrong.

> Great surprise Janet and I landed Marseilles this morning meet us to-night eight fifteen express Toulon station longing to see you to tell wonderful plans all our love.
>
> CRAIG.

Clear and unequivocal. A clever, capable woman. The mother of Janet Craig. Janet Craig of New York, to whom he was engaged to be married. (Come! This won't do at all!) His forehead was moist. (Where's my handkerchief? In my coat. In the Fleurots' home. Christine's home!)

"Hullo!" said Fleurot, mounting the steps. "Hullo! You look ill. Better come in. The miasma at dusk is dangerous. Come in now."

Someone laughed; but it was his, Lawrence's, laugh.

"Oh, yes. The spring chill is dangerous. You're perfectly right. Thanks. I'll come in. . . . No. Wait a minute. What time is it?"

"Nearly eight o'clock," Fleurot said, and gave him a sharp glance. "You haven't been drinking, have you, Dulac? Not my affair, but I must remind you that to-morrow's the first of the month, always a busy day with us."

Again someone else laughed.

"Now that's really amusing, Monsieur Fleurot. You think I've been drinking—eh?" Then, stiffening: "No, sir. I haven't been drinking at all. Maybe—maybe it was the sun on the boat's deck. It was pretty strong. I am sort of light-headed. . . . But, you see, I've just had a surprise. Quite a surprise. I've got to go down to the station to meet friends, immediately."

"Put on your overcoat then," Fleurot advised. "And send your friends to the Grand. It is the only decent place for strangers. Americans, are they?"

"Yes, sir, Americans. I've known them for years."

"Very nice for you, indeed," said Fleurot politely, and hurried into the house.

At the foot of the stairs, in the deepening twilight of the hall, Lawrence found Christine. She, seeing him, paused irresolutely in the act of taking off her cloak; of smoothing her windblown hair before a cheval mirror.

"Lawrence!" Her whisper had the quality of a sharp, terrified cry; her smile vanished. "Lawrence. What is the matter?"

He stared at her, broodingly, finding her at once more lovable, more lovely than ever before. (Dear God, please help me! Tell me what to say to her!) And words presently came from his lips without effort, without volition, on his part.

"Christine. A few weeks ago you said that the world was sometimes unfair, cruel to—to good people. I think you were right. I can't—I don't know how to make things clear, But something's happened. . . . See, I've got a telegram here. I think you had better read it. You're entitled to, God knows. It ought to explain. . . ."

Yes. He would let her read the telegram. It didn't really matter now what happened. The sooner it was all over the better. Cowardly, perhaps, but the swiftest, the kindest way in the end. It would also spare him the agony of choosing stupid words; of pretending; of giving hope for each of them where there was none. . . . She took the blue slip of paper from his trembling fingers.

"I am engaged to this lady's daughter," he told her dazedly.

After an age she looked up at him, very white, her lower lip caught by her teeth; gave her shoulders a curious, proud little shrug; and said in a voice that was perfectly steady but devoid of all colour, mechanical in its evenness.

"I understand. I suppose that we both—forgot things, this afternoon." She smiled crookedly. "And now we had better try and forget that we forgot; hadn't we? Yes. I think that will be the best, the only thing to do."

He seized her hand. She averted her head swiftly, but not before he saw that her eyes were closed, her lips arched in a sudden twist of surpassing pain. She freed herself; fled up the stairs.

Down near the harbour the Saint Louis bells chimed the hour of eight; reverberated against the stony walls of the Vieille Cité; lingered in a rolling echo upon the tranquil sky.

## IV

The Chef de Gare on the platform had informed him that the Marseilles express was twenty minutes late. He slumped down upon a bench; cupped his hands about his face, and stared unseeingly at the silver network of ribbons, the multicoloured splash of signal lights in the gathering dusk beyond the arch of the station. A fussy little shunting engine clanked by; and halted at the end of the platform, its safety valve emitting a prolonged throbbing that hammered into his brain; and made it difficult—so very difficult—to think. . . .

Ten minutes passed. A quarter of an hour. A porter with a long pole came down the platform, lighting the lamps one by one; and each lamp, flaring up, revealed the word "Toulon" in sharp, transparent blue letters. Toulon. Toulon. Toulon. As far as the eye could see. The night deepened.

A state of resignation gradually enveloped him. He found, presently, that his habitual sense of balance had returned. A transitory, mad determination to smash through everything to obtain freedom had gone. He wasn't free, after all. Not free to follow his convictions blindly; no matter how strong these might be. He had duties to perform, hadn't he? And a code to which he must adhere. Throughout his whole existence he'd never be completely free. Life was like that. . . . But how hard, how terribly hard, to make a decision against yourself; against those very things which you most loved in the world. Yes. The momentary madness had gone, now. But in his heart there lingered an ache which he believed would for ever remain.

A little boy in a sailor suit, shuffling behind a tired mother, remarked shrilly: "Mamma. There's a funny man who looks as if he wanted to laugh and cry at the same time. Isn't he a funny man, Mamma?"

At last the express came screaming into the station, headed by a lean, aggressive locomotive. A swift shaft of flame passed him; a whirlwind of choking, nauseous smoke; a blurred, swaying line of lighted windows framing anxious faces. And then the prolonged sigh of air-brakes, like a great sigh of relief after some fine accomplishment.

He stood up, and almost immediately saw Janet Craig descending the steps of a plum-coloured first-class carriage, immaculate in a neat gray travelling costume, a jewel case in her gloved hand. He recognized, too, her mother's ample features beaming expectantly over her shoulder.

He lifted his hat; went forward steadily to greet them; at the same time summoning to his lips a smile which—he felt sure—would permit of no suspicion in their dear, unperceptive minds.

# CHAPTER VIII

## 1923—AND AMY

### I

And here, at that brusque destruction of his young hopes, the mirror of the past became dimmed for Lawrence Dulac; the vision lost its sharpness. He was, once again, thoroughly aware of the present. The peremptory clang and roar of a fire engine, hurtling through the abyss of a side street below the apartment windows, recalled to him the fact that he was in his armchair, ten stories above a corner of Park Avenue; that his cigar had burned down to its last inch; and that the clock above the empty, modern apology for a fireplace was pointing to the hour of ten.

Beryl was, of course, still out; and would not return until the dim hours of the morning. Spending whole nights in public resorts of amusement appeared to have become with her a business, a career—of what possible benefit he could not imagine. As long as her health and her good spirits were not impaired, however, he considered that objections on his part would be unjustified; might even tend to drive a wedge of misunderstanding between them—a state of affairs which he particularly dreaded.

He chose a fresh cigar and, resuming his chair, attempted again to relive the past. But the panorama had lost its easy flow, and had disintegrated to a mere series of pictures, blurred and disconnected, each representing some major event of the intervening years. He recalled clearly enough an intolerable fortnight at Toulon, following the Craigs' arrival and installation at the local hotel; the varied and tedious excursions in the vicinity, undertaken to satisfy their craze for sight-seeing—to the forts of Vauban, to the French fleet in the harbour, to the coastal resorts of Hyères and Saint Raphael. He recollected one or two agonizing encounters with Christine in the Fleurots' home, the painfulness of which her parents seemed to be completely unaware. They had not, to his surprise, suspected anything. He remembered Durandel's obscene ardour when the date for the wedding was at last publicly announced; the house full of chattering, congratulating towns-folk; Christine pale and silent, a travesty of her former self. An unbearable house from which he had escaped at every possible opportunity, only to suffer Mrs. Craig's corresponding enthusiasm in her own myopic plans to hasten his and Janet's wedding. Bitter days. . . . Days in which he

had grown irrevocably older and graver in spirit, and—ultimately—resigned. Three months later his marriage to Janet had taken place at the American Church in Paris on a leafy, showery June afternoon. The wedding had been attended by numerous ladies of the American colony whom he had never seen before, but who lent the function that cachet of social distinction which made Mrs. Craig positively flutter with pleasure. There had followed a quiet honeymoon in Touraine, marked principally in his mind by Janet's being so sincerely and complacently happy that he found himself thanking God at the realization that she had not divined, and would never divine, the secret processes of his heart. Provided that he performed his duty she would remain, as always, trusting and confident in him—an unselfish and contented wife. She was, he comprehended, one of those women completely tranquil in spirit, living within themselves, not at all interested in externals, possessed of minds that are neither enquiring nor finely analytical.

The years had rolled on, surprisingly without incident, harmonious in every aspect. A daughter, Amy, had been born a year after the marriage; and then Beryl—his favourite—nearly half a decade later. Frederick Dulac had offered to transfer him to the bank in Paris; but convinced at last of an inherent inability for business and a vague dislike for the wiles and acumen it seemed to require, he had severed himself from the ponderous patronage of his cousin. After prolonged efforts he had secured a subordinate post in the American Embassy in Rome—a position that gave him, together with a negligible salary, that mild halo of respectable consequence so suitable to a Dulac. And there, varying the summer months at the Lido or St. Moritz, he and Janet had passed a number of quiet, pleasant years; had made friends amidst a cosmopolitan segment of fashion; had dutifully brought up their children. In 1910 a Balkan position had followed Rome; and then a dull three years at Berne. His memory at this point became clouded, sharpening again only at the death of Janet from pneumonia during the first year of the war, an event startling and violent that left him primarily with a sense of personal injury; of having been deprived of an indispensable factor in his daily life.

On a wartime unlighted liner he had returned to America with his young daughters: Amy, now a cryptic, gawky schoolgirl; Beryl, exuberant and excited with the novelty of the voyage, still a child. He had placed them in appropriate New England schools, and having resigned from the diplomatic service, had taken up his residence in New York and had valiantly attempted to resume the thread of his former Knickerbocker existence. But times had changed. His mother had long since died. Only Perry, of his immediate relatives, survived; and he, now a bachelor of confirmed habits with an

impressively large circle of acquaintances, was leading a life that seemed both selfish and aimless, and appeared almost in the guise of a stranger. There was no *rapport*, no mutual ground between them, Lawrence quickly discovered. The old brownstone house on Murray Hill had, to his dismay, given place to a loft building, the windows of which glittered brightly with the golden Hebraic names of silk merchants.

During his first month in New York he embarked on a punctilious round of calls, but was astonished to discover that the power, the importance, of a visiting card had vanished. He was at the same time startled to find himself occasionally summoned to dine at the most ceremonious and majestic of old-fashioned establishments by means of an impromptu telephone call. He regretted the departure of formality, seeing in it a growing disintegration of the little social world he had known and respected, a cheapening of the mode of living that he could only regard as a concession to the rising influence of an inferior element of humanity.

One thing, one fact, occasioned within him a fine ironical flare of humour. Purely out of an inborn sense of duty he had, on landing in America, gone to call on Frederick, his cousin; and had found him bedridden, caustic, surrounded by trembling servants whom he constantly damned. They had indulged in a brief and formal but not unpleasant conversation, at the end of which the old despot had summarily dismissed him. Two weeks later Frederick had died, and with a whimsical, devastating irony had left Lawrence, through a codicil, a considerable share of his fortune "because" (as the codicil stated) "he happens to be the only one of my relatives, near or remote, who had the decency to pay me a visit during the past fifteen years."

This somewhat alleviated the matter of financial worries in a city which he found fabulously expensive. He took the Park Avenue apartment; extended Amy's and Beryl's education to include such various accomplishments as hunting and a knowledge of medieval literature. And when Amy attained the dignity of nineteen he was able to hire half the main floor of an enormous hotel, and to invite six hundred young people to dance and have supper in her honour. (Of the six hundred, three spoke to him during the affair, one of them to ask him what the hostess looked like.) This, he had understood from Amy, was necessary to insure her social success. And eventually she had married a pleasant, uninteresting young man; had settled down in a Long Island frame house, to combat Balkan servants, furnace men, and periodically frozen plumbing. Beryl, now eighteen, was meanwhile having her fling, as she gaily expressed it.

An even, unremarkable life, he concluded. A life most certainly not romantic. On rare occasions a vision of Christine Fleurot, young as early April, just as he had last seen her, recurred to him—only to be hurriedly banished with a mixed sense of self-ridicule and impatience. And a sense of tragedy, too, because he had never brought himself to admit that it was not the actual fact of a love never consummated, but rather the longings and speculations concerning what might have been, which left the residue of bitter-sweet memory.

That, then, had been the story of his life, precious to linger over. He recalled, with a smile, that Beryl often accused him of living in the past. With an effort he dismissed his memories; rose from his chair to discover that it was now nearly half past ten. At the same moment the glass door of the drawing room swung open and his daughter Amy was visible on the threshold.

## II

Amy entered the room and flung herself into an armchair in a mood of palpable despair. She had, apparently, come straight from Long Island; was dressed in rough grayish tweeds, a jaunty tan felt hat with a single pheasant's quill set at an angle upon her canary-coloured head. She looked, Lawrence thought, leaner than ever—almost hard, as he observed the chiselled contour of her chin, the angle of her straight, capable shoulders, and the sheer curveless line of her young body. Her eyes were unduly bright, their china-blueness accentuated by a mood of anger, and her extraordinarily neat blonde hair shone, under the electric lights, with a metallic lustre. She merely nodded to him; took from her pocket an octagonal silver case, balanced it on her crossed knees, and extracted a crimson cylinder with which she proceeded to define her small, straight mouth until it became a startling vermilion line. A slight antagonism captured him at the confident, almost wilful assurance of her, a feeling which he had never experienced toward Beryl. But then Beryl had always been comprehensible, sympathetic; had never exhibited Amy's self-sufficiency. Her temper had, somehow, been aroused. He awaited resignedly the outburst which was bound to come, at the same time glad that Beryl had rarely if ever created a disturbing atmosphere.

"I've done with Burton," she announced loudly. "Father, he is *ab-so-lutely* impossible. If I live with that man any longer I think I'll go mad."

He looked pained; placed the tips of his fingers together and, clearing his throat nervously, said in a judicious tone that was intended to be soothing:

"I've heard something of the kind two or three times—lately. What has happened now?" He secretly determined not to satisfy her with the protest, a paternal reprimand, which he felt she was seeking. Yes. Amy was in one of her belligerent moods and ready—to put it crudely—for a row. She had inherited the most acrimonious tendencies of the Dulacs, he forced himself to admit.

"I thought," he added, "that you had decided two weeks ago on a temporary separation. You consulted me at the time, and I agreed with you that it was necessary. Burton's had a hard winter. Business is not at all good yet. Every working young man is going through a difficult period."

"No. I've decided to get a divorce," she said, with a sudden air of challenging defiance.

Even then he continued to preserve his habitual mask of imperturbability although the word coming from her—his own daughter—caused him an acute distress, a sense of violent physical shock.

"Divorce?" His voice was both incredulous and pleading. "But my dear—my dear—there's no ground; no reason. . . . You're just two very young people, trying to get along together. You're not serious. You can't be. . . . There's your child, remember."

He conjured up a mental picture of Burton Mayford, his son-in-law, a lanky ineffectual youth with enormous shell spectacles and always untidy brown hair; a ramshackling, stooping young fellow in tweeds, who had large hands and a loose, amiable smile that was directed indiscriminately to all who came within the range of his vision. He had loomed up astonishingly on the golfing horizon of America four years ago, just when Amy herself had completed a triumphant summer, winning no less than three women's golfing championships. (Amy had, since fifteen, lived for sport.) She had promptly become infatuated, and Lawrence recollected with some amusement their three weeks' tour from one golf club to another, following the prowess of the new champion. This had constituted an indulgence on his part toward Amy which had met with caustic comments from sixteen-year-old Beryl. He recalled the end of the tour, a flaming, crisp autumn evening at a country club near Boston when Burton, having captured his final championship of the season, came walking into the clubhouse arm in arm with Amy to announce publicly their engagement. He, Lawrence, had been dumbfounded; had called her aside later that evening and had begged her to wait—to think the matter over in a saner and cooler mood, after the glamour of the young man's tremendous popularity had somewhat subsided. He had implored her to be sure, and to wait perhaps six months, a year. But she, like

all her kind, had patted his cheek and chided him for being a cautious old conservative, remarking that young people nowadays knew their own minds and could act for themselves in a far more unerring way than their elders had been capable of doing.

And now—already—the helter-skelter alliance was tottering; a marriage, he reflected acidly, founded on nothing more substantial than their youth and an ability to whack a gutta-percha ball farther than their contemporaries. The critical aspect of it was that she now spoke unhesitatingly of divorce. That, of course, was the sheerest nonsense—unless Burton had done something beyond the pale. But he remained still convinced that Burton was a most harmless, if callow, youth.

"What has he done?" he persisted softly.

Her foot commenced a tattoo on the floor.

"Good heavens, Father, there's no single thing you can actually lay your finger on. It's just everything. He's totally irresponsible—childish. To tell you the truth, there's nothing to him except his golf. (I don't know why I tell you all this, but I'd burst if I didn't let off steam somewhere.) He's a perfect fool—and how can I possibly stick through life with a man when I've once realized that he's a fool? It would be cheating myself——"

Her egotism seemed to him just then incredible. He told her bluntly: "You should have found that out before you married him."

"I didn't know," she faltered. "He seemed so wonderful—then." She added impatiently: "There's no use rehashing my mistakes."

He was at last aroused to anger.

"Amy, you're talking balderdash! Listen to me. Before divorce came to be as common as—as vice itself, people managed to stand by each other, and to stand each other—if you care to put it cynically. If you knew that you had either to stick loyally to your husband, or your wife, for life, you took damn good care to get on with whomever you married. You kept yourself from thinking mean thoughts, from becoming too acutely critical. That made character, Amy, on both sides. People had backbone, in those days; they weren't always looking for an easy way out of everything."

She was now, cleverly enough, dabbing her eyes, verging on tears, perhaps aware that this above all things placed him at a disadvantage.

"I—I can't think nice things about him. I just have to face facts. He's always playing the fool and he fills the house with his ridiculous friends and their banjos, and saxophones, and cocktail shakers. What do you think he did last night? Why, after dinner he and that ass, Tommy Thatcher, and all

the rest of his crowd, were drinking liqueurs, and someone spilled the black coffee on the new carpet. Do you think Burton cared? Oh, no! I found him with a basin full of coffee pouring it over the rest of the carpet so that it would match! Of course he'd had too much; but I'd forgive that if he'd only be sensible. Good Lord! What a man!"

Her fingers now, as well as her foot, were beating a nerve-racking tattoo. He had a passing fear that she was on the verge of hysterics.

"And then," she added, "he got up at the crack of dawn this morning, without a word to me, and drove off to Piping Rock in my car. I had to beg a lift from the Hambrills next door. It's humiliating."

"My car!" he repeated to himself. In his day a wife, or a husband, would have referred not to "my carriage" but "the carriage." Truly they were living in an age of exaggerated ego.

"He's only a boy," he declared. "Both of you have been spoilt, and have had your own way too much as children. You've no tolerance. You follow your own devices without a thought for the other. That's the crux of the trouble. Mind you, I'm not blaming you entirely, but I think you should make an attempt, a sincere attempt, at some kind of mutual consideration. How do you suppose the child will feel when she's older?"

She rose from her chair with an elaborate, almost insolent assumption of fatigue.

"Oh, Ellen. I'll take care of her all right. I'm afraid you'll never, never understand, because you don't want to. It's a case of utter incompatibility."

He stood up and seized her abruptly by the shoulders, more vehement with her than he had perhaps ever been before. With difficulty he controlled himself from shaking her, as he would a precocious child.

"That's a phrase, Amy. You repeat it because you've heard it and read it, and because it sounds well. It's one of the vices of this age, this damnable repetition of stereotyped phrases." Then, using the tender tone he had adopted toward her when she had been a little girl: "I think you had better send Burton to me. We'll have a talk. Maybe I can instill some sense into him. Meanwhile you ought to talk to him seriously yourself and try to smooth out your petty squabbles."

She drew herself away from him. At the door she paused; called back to him over her shoulder in a voice artificially gay:

"I'll probably sail for Paris next week, and get my divorce there. It's too late now to reconsider. And then, after that, I can live a free life and have a good time."

The curtained glass door closed behind her.

A good time! The words lingered, hung on the air, derisively. In them she had epitomized the goal, the *raison d'être*, of her generation. He thought all at once of her child, a fastidious, brown-eyed creature growing up amidst imported toys and imported nurses, and on terms of the most casual acquaintance with her own mother. They're self-sufficient to the point of cruelty, these young moderns, he told himself—cruel to the future generation as well as to the past; to all but their own kind who understand them.

Divorce! His daughter, his Amy, deliberately setting out to gain her freedom. . . . He wondered how his mother would have entertained the news and the subtle implications it entailed. True, times had changed, and the world had grown more lenient. There would be, nowadays, no ostracism whatever attached as a penalty. But he hoped and prayed that the thing could be avoided. It was unbearable to think that she, a Dulac, might be accused by outsiders of a lack of stamina, and censured by her elders as a light-hearted and frivolous young woman. Dwelling on such possibilities he surrendered himself to an ungovernably bitter mood, simultaneously conscious that the interview with his daughter had left him a reaction akin to a very bad taste in his mouth.

# CHAPTER IX

## Broadway—and Beryl

### I

His sensation of loneliness intensified as the evening wore on. He decided at length to go to his club, an institution which he had lately neglected; had, in fact, almost forgotten. There, he reflected, was yet another aspect of New York life that had all but disappeared.

Outside, a sharp, breath-capturing wind swept down from the west and there was a glimmer of frozen, ragged ice in the gutters of the street. He bent his head resolutely; and went plodding toward Fifth Avenue. Reaching the club, he passed through the ornate hall of marble, and entered a series of formal rococo rooms. These he found deserted but for the presence of a somnolent servant, and a retired admiral, an octogenarian, nodding in a capacious armchair. A glass of ice water stood on a table beside him. To Lawrence it was as if he had come upon some abandoned and legendary palace of the past. He was struck by a faintly macabre suggestion of irony in the spectacle of many empty chairs, the long vista of silent rooms. Here there should have been evident a group of men, young and old, spontaneously gay; the clink of glasses; the hum of easy, witty conversation.

The old and gouty English waiter, who had been in the club some thirty years, bowed to him, managing to convey both respect and a certain comprehending sympathy in the movement.

"Is my brother here to-night?" Lawrence asked him.

"No, sir. He rarely comes in these days."

"Mr. Mallet? Or Mr. Bramwell?"

"I haven't seen either of the gentlemen for over two years, sir. Very few of the gentlemen do turn up nowadays." He added, with the polite melancholy of the well-trained English servant: "Most of the gentlemen of your time, sir, have either disappeared or died. Times are changed indeed, Mr. Dulac, sir. I don't know what we're coming to, I'm sure."

Lawrence nodded, and hastened from surroundings that made him feel a positive anachronism. In a mood of impulse he crossed Fifth Avenue; strode on westward toward a pale flare in the night sky that indicated Broadway. Just then he craved company, the cheering influence of some kindred spirit;

but concluded that of the few surviving friends he could count upon in a completely changed city not one would be likely to be at home at so late an hour, or would regard with equanimity so antiquated a proceeding as an evening visit. Unlike Perry, he had not cultivated the friendship of many women in his youth, and did not boast of a long list of matrons any one of whom would receive him with a little twinkle in her eye, femininely unforgetful of some romantic youthful episode which kept her heart for ever softened toward him. At the corner of Broadway an icy wind penetrated the thickness of his overcoat and chilled his body while he waited an opportunity to thread the maze of pumpkin-coloured taxicabs, dark limousines, and clanging street cars. A mail truck missed him by scarcely a foot, and a young woman behind him commented shrilly to her companion: "That old man almost got bumped off." The icy blast from the west seemed to him mild after the chilling candour of her classification.

Rather for the refuge it offered than for any other conscious purpose he found himself purchasing a ticket at one of the newer and more pretentious motion picture theatres, and entered its Grecian foyer with a distinct sensation of adventure. The place was tremendous; dimly illuminated by rose-coloured lamps. Away off in the distance, beyond row after row of indistinguishable humanity, a massive orchestra under a golden proscenium was interpreting a delicate phase of Rubinstein. The melody died away as he sat down, amidst a scattered burst of applause. The theatre darkened to an impenetrable blackness. After the topics of the week had been shown—the arrival of a foreign diplomat; a flood in Oregon; the complicated process of launching airplanes from a battle-ship—the feature picture was presented. Lawrence found himself following, rather grimly, the adventures of a rich man's son, a "clubman" and "scion of a Knickerbocker family that had too much blue blood and not enough red." Headed straight for perdition via road houses and gambling rooms, the young man was ultimately rescued by a blue-eyed little Irish girl who was employed in the cloak room of a New York hotel. Her smile, "like the laughing skies of Killarney," lifted him swiftly from the depths to which he had fallen. He became a good, a noble man. In the row behind Lawrence a tired-looking woman, stirred by the angelic qualities of the heroine, murmured in a quavering voice: "Oh, she's cute. . . . Oh, she's the *priddiest* thing. . . ."

At eleven o'clock he left; went out into the night. Near Fiftieth Street a theatre was disgorging its shivering, confused audience. Whistles were shrilling frantically for taxis. In the middle of Broadway a policeman employed picturesque language upon a disgruntled lad who had stalled his motor truck in the pandemonium of traffic. Lawrence suddenly found

himself face to face with Perry, slender as ever, slightly gray about the temples, an exotic cape thrown about his young-looking shoulders. He was accompanied by a Junoesque young woman known about New York for the efficiency she evinced in obtaining divorces. She immediately informed Lawrence that she was embarking on her fourth, and Perry put in cheerfully: "She seems to have a charge account up at the court." The gaiety of their welcome and the obvious sincerity with which they in turn clasped his hand at once warmed Lawrence's heart and dispelled his sense of isolation. And, yielding to their persuasion, he followed them to a waiting limousine.

## II

From a flashing electric sign over the entrance he gathered that the resort was called the Samoa. After a brief transaction with the head waiter Perry managed to secure an inadequate table in a corner of the crowded room. The whole procedure was, to Lawrence, novel and humorous as he sat surveying the packed dancing floor, the assemblage of raw college youths, their flushed and immature companions, the stoutly middle-aged tourists with their whiskbroom-shaped spouses, all of them shuffling like so many dazed bears to the loud wail of saxophones. Perry, secure in the correct procedure of these occasions, produced a flat silver flask; ordered ginger ale and club sandwiches from a hovering waiter. Later, sipping the heady and unrecognizable fluid that Perry had poured out, Lawrence wondered where men's taste had vanished, recalling sadly the sparkling froth of Pommery and Clicquot under the clustered lights of Delmonico's. . . . And yet, he found himself envying his brother's adaptability, his success at keeping abreast with a changing universe.

For a while the dancers continued to edge past their table, hot and entranced, here and there a young girl crooning the words of the orchestra's syncopated melody, head thrust back, eyes closed in a frankly sensual ecstasy. And then, at midnight, when the floor had been cleared and the lights lowered, an oblique spotlight illuminated a young woman in a skirt of straw who proceeded to indulge in muscular exercises of her stomach which he considered neither amusing, artistic, nor even piquantly shocking. Nevertheless, the applause was tremendous.

A gathering particularly cheerful and noisy at a table near by attracted his attention. He turned, to discover Beryl—his Beryl, with a nervous, vivacious young blonde and three or four grinning young men in dinner coats and soft, undulating shirt-fronts. Beryl's chin was cupped in her hands as she listened with a complete absorption to a sleek, voluble young man

who was emphasizing his statements with pounding of his fist upon the table. His black hair was lustrous, plastered upon his head, his complexion ruddy, his features—the jaw, particularly—sharply contoured, incisive. Something about the boy's vehemence, the aggressive mould of his countenance, was to Lawrence singularly familiar. He was well dressed, better than his companions, Lawrence thought; but later he amended this, realizing that his appearance was a shade too fastidious—as if he had carefully followed some species of fashion plate.

Remembering his conversation with Beryl at dinner that night, it dawned on Lawrence that this was, of course, Frank Hauben's son. Fragments of the boy's conversation presently reached him, above the whine of the saxophone.

"Beryl, I tell you a fellow can't really make good until he cuts clear loose of family influence . . . discovered that for myself two years ago . . . with Father's old-fashioned ideas I'd still be dragging out eighty a month . . . beginning to see I was justified . . . disappointed, though, that I didn't stick to the family business . . . good fellow, Father. . . ."

A twang of sympathy for Hauben shot through him, not unmingled with a saturnine humour. Frank Hauben old-fashioned. Good God!

He saw that the young people were leaving. They came trooping by his table, single file. Perry, gazing rapturously at his Long Island *divorcée* with his renowned dark eyes, had become oblivious to all externals. For a moment Lawrence feared that Beryl was going to pass him without a word, but suddenly she sheered aside from the group, stopped, and kissed his forehead unabashed.

"Why, Dad! What are you doing in this wild place? I'm surprised at you!"

Her gaiety was instantly contagious. Perry looked up to appraise her admiringly; the *divorcée* extended a slender hand, and Lawrence, surprised that the two knew each other, found himself listening to a facile exchange of badinage.

"Heavens, Evelyn, you're not trying to break Uncle Perry's heart? He's immune; he's been at the game twenty years. You'd better tackle something easier."

"Better than robbing the cradle," the young woman promptly retorted, and glanced toward the youngest of Beryl's collegiate companions.

His daughter, Lawrence saw, was delightfully at ease as she continued to tease him about his presence at the resort. Their positions seemed to be oddly reversed. It was as if she were indulgently reprimanding a delinquent

child. She then dragged the dark young man, lingering at her elbow, to the table.

"This is Frank Hauben, Dad."

"Glad to meet *you*," said young Hauben, and the grip of his large hand made Lawrence wince.

"We're moving on to the Shelter," Beryl stated. "Tired of here. This place is no good any more. It's becoming dull. . . ." Her voice drifted away; became submerged in the babble of her companions. "Buck, you shoot ahead and get a taxi. We can't all fit in your bus." "Darn it. Where's my hat check got to?" "Some day the poor bunny'll actually forget who he is . . . memory like a piece of Swiss cheese. . . ." "What's the time, Beano?" "Lord! And I have to be at the office at eight-thirty. It's a tough universe. . . ." "Don't tell us you're actually working, Johnny? The shock is *too* great. . . ." "Yes ma'am, I'm doing what they call settlement work, I guess—collecting bills." And so on, in a continuous volley, until they had disappeared through swinging doors, a jostling, compact mass.

"Beryl's lovely," Perry remarked, and once more turned his attention to his companion. Presently Lawrence decided to go; to leave them to an uninterrupted flirtation. He rose.

"I'm sorry, Perry. I'm a little tired. Going home, I think."

They expressed the politest regrets, but as he walked away he felt rather than saw that they were relieved, and all at once more animated. He recovered his hat and cloak; and his walking stick after a determined insistence that he possessed one; made his way down the curving staircase to Broadway. It was past one o'clock. The wind had abated, and a light sheen of snow covered the streets. He turned southward; passed a cheap, glass-fronted restaurant placarded with impressive notices: "Our Food Selected for Its Vitamine Properties." "Let Us Help You Get Your Required Amount of Calories." "We Serve Balanced Diet Meals for Health Preservation." And, observing the pale, undernourished and underclad beings that emerged from the establishment's steaming interior, his momentary contempt changed to a warming sympathy. A public, he concluded, that was gullible to the point of pathos; victimized by quackery and humbug, yet greedy for it; consuming it avidly . . . hypnotized by phrases; by smug advertising. Advertising! He looked up to an immense electric sign, the depiction in coloured lights of a young man of athletic torso clad in underclothes, a young man twenty feet high who announced to the world:

Two stalwart lads with dark curling hair and curving profiles met in front of him; shook hands, barring his way, oblivious of his presence. Their mutual greetings were interspersed with frequent and cheerful mention of the Christian deity. A slight shudder passed through Lawrence's body; he fled; hailed a taxi and leapt into it with unwonted agility, directing the chauffeur to his home.

At Forty-fifth Street he had a fleeting vision from the cab of a gaping crowd before the broken plate-glass window of a cigar store; a gathering of policemen; a crumpled figure in a dark pool on the snowy sidewalk.

"Just a holdup," the driver replied to his enquiry. "They got the poor guy."

He was once more sad at heart, summoning to his mind the memory of a different metropolis; of quiet streets and a contented, well-mannered populace; of a community wherein everyone had known everyone else; and where it had been the natural interest of all to maintain law, order, and respectability.

## III

On her way home at three o'clock that morning Beryl, pale, a trifle tired yet still exhilarated, said: "It's been glorious, Frank. Don't you love it all? The lights and gaiety and fun. . . . Something to do every moment. I wouldn't live anywhere else for anything in the world. I just want to stay here and be eighteen for ever!"

"I never saw such energy," he commented, pondering obscurely over the superior endurance of the young female over the male from midnight onward. "I'm tired myself . . . but it's a treat to be with you, to see any one enjoy life so much in an age of universal boredom."

She gave his hand a warm, friendly pressure.

"Thank you, Frank. I do think you understand me a little. Besides, I discovered that blasé girls were going out of fashion; they began to go about the time long skirts came in."

She was at the crest of her young egotism. It had been, she considered, a perfect evening. Frank had been entertaining, and devoted to her. In the hall

of the apartment, waiting for the elevator, she bade him good night; extended her hand. Swiftly she guessed that he was going to try to kiss her—a thing which he had never done before in their three-months' acquaintance. Her predominant feeling was one of disappointment; that he was, after all, subject to the same impulsive whimsies as other young men. She decided, though, that it was no occasion for a false anger on her part.

"Don't be a fool, Frank," she said a little breathlessly. "Don't spoil it all. I told you ages ago that kissing didn't amuse me."

He remained singularly unabashed.

"Oh, all right," he told her cheerfully. "We'll let it go at that. Only you looked sort of cold. . . ."

"That's my privilege," she replied, and darted him a reassuring smile. The elevator appeared, manipulated by a sleepy watchman. "Ta-ta!" she said. "Call me up soon. And thanks, loads, for the party." She added, in a gentle undertone: "You're a dear, Frank." The doors clanged together. She was shot skyward. With her last words, she felt sure, she had sent him home in the proper spirit of elation. Men were easy to understand; the whole game was, in fact, simple. At the sometimes adoring look in his eyes during the evening she had wondered how a man so unremittingly keen in business, so dangerous to his male competitors, could be wound about her finger with a few judicious phrases and provocative glances. He was very likable—whether lovable she had not allowed herself to think, as yet. He was so sure of himself. She admired that in men. Not domination, but sureness. He liked her. She liked him. Everybody had been good to her. Life, she felt, was a very, very delightful affair.

To her surprise she found her father sitting in the drawing room, reading. He looked up, infinitely relieved, at her appearance.

"Had a good time, dear?"

"Gorgeous," she said. "Gorgeous." And, because she could not help it, since he occupied all her thoughts: "Frank's such a splendid boy."

"So you really like him." His tone was grave, thoughtful, yet impartial. "By the way, what business is he in? He appeared to scorn his father's—from what I overheard."

"Electric advertising," she told him. "He's already assistant manager of Nammick's—at twenty-five. Isn't that simply marvellous? And they've just landed, through his efforts, a million-dollar contract for—for some kind of men's underwear. Mentz, I think he said. Something that does for all seasons."

“Good God!” Lawrence muttered. Then: “What is this young man’s particular attraction?”

After a moment’s consideration she said, her voice rather low:

“I suppose it’s because he’s so strong, and determined, and sure—such a relief after the whining, silly, uncertain ones. And so American.” She added, thoughtfully: “After all, he’s really much more typically American—modern American—than we are; isn’t he, Dad?”

“That’s true,” he replied. “That’s true, indeed.” His lips were curled to the slightest perceptible degree. He rose to turn out the drawing room lights one by one, his pale and serious countenance marred by a visible evidence of distress. Beryl suddenly thought that his expression was not unlike that of a puzzled, weary little boy; and in one of her warm impulses flung her arms about him; kissed him; clung to him, trying both to soothe him and at the same time to understand.

# CHAPTER X
## Week End

### I

They were lounging, fatigued and glowing after many hours on skates, about the glass-enclosed veranda of the Haubens' house in Westchester. There were half a dozen of them, all young, assembled casually and hurriedly for the week end. Outside on the snow-laden driveway their cars waited, deserted, in the lingering wash of gold of a wintry sun. The air in the enclosure was pungent, blue with the smoke of many cheap cigarettes, and from the interior of the house there emanated, through wide-flung glass doors, the gay and thumping cadence of a fox-trot on the victrola. Beryl tried to read but found her attention wandering, a headache imminent. She was, as she expressed it, "wonderfully tired." They had just completed a more than usually frank and terrifying game of "Truth," during which the young men had tried to conceal their boredom, while the girls had shown themselves alert, needle-witted. The men had hesitated in their questions; had asked harmless and foolish things; but the girls had revealed a capability for putting each other, with sweet smiles, under the cruellest kind of cross-examination concerning matters most intimate and close to the heart. The male mind had, in fact, shown itself to be less vindictive and less strategic than the female. Gallantry still lived, to a mild degree.

Beryl considered that she had acquitted herself well, having survived without a single forfeit. And forfeits, which were intended to humble those who refused to be candid, were often fiendishly ingenious affairs. Even now Ella Willems was lying flat on the floor, her long, lean body progressing across the veranda in a series of convulsive wriggles as she propelled a coin, with the tip of her nose, toward some indicated goal. The others watched her with a certain barbaric satisfaction.

When Ella had completed her penance a silence descended upon them, a pause to summon inspiration for further entertainment. Then Tommy Thatcher, a youth with straw-coloured hair and a brick-red complexion, whose fate it was during the week to peddle life-insurance policies to long lists of perfectly healthy and usually irate business men, and who wanted speedily to forget the fact, proposed a trip to a well-known roadhouse near by. They did not pay much attention to him. No one ever did.

“Hullo, the Tank’s awake again.”

“Only wants to show off his new car.”

“Lie down, Fido!”

A moment later Beryl caused a diversion by flinging down the book she had been reading, and asserting with some vehemence:

“It makes me sick!”

“What does?” they chorused. “Beryl’s all hot and bothered about something. Tell us, Beryl, old scream, what’s wrong with the world now?”

Beryl, they knew gloatingly, was always teasable. She was beginning to take life too seriously, they feared. She read too much. Even thought too much. They were determined to crush this hideous tendency in her lest she become an insufferable companion.

She indicated the book at her feet, a newly published novel of contemporary New York by an eminent American writer, a novel with a strong physiological aspect, and with an original and surprising plot.

“The story is curious and interesting,” she told Ella Willems. “But there’s the worst, drunkenest little flapper in it you could imagine. Man-crazy. Passes whole nights in bachelors’ apartments. And after reading all that we’re to understand that she’s typical of the young girl to-day, the girl of decent family too. My, but I’m tired of hearing young people slammed!”

The majority remained silent, surprised at her outburst. “Nothing to get excited about,” Tommy Thatcher commented. But Everett Gail, a tall boy in gray golfing tweeds said: “Beryl’s right, Tommy. We’ve been getting too much of this kind of thing. Just because one particular element of girls in this country doesn’t give a whoop about anything is really no reason to damn them all. You and I know that there’s a pretty big crowd of attractive girls around who can still act with restraint and decency and self-pride, and they’re not prudes by any means.”

Everyone was suddenly and self-consciously serious. Some drew their chairs closer for the impending discussion. Beryl, a little nervous because she had created more éclat than she had expected, said:

“I daresay in our parents’ time there were plenty of giddy ones, just as there are now, but you didn’t hear so much about them. They weren’t self-advertisers. Discretion was the better part of the ’eighties. Of course we do more. We’re much less chaperoned—if at all. We want our way, and we usually get it. But you can’t call that viciousness. Perhaps we do think less of a kiss. . . .”

Here was tinder for a salvo of badinage.

“Oh, Beryl thinks less of a kiss!”

“When are we going out together, Beryl, sweetness?”

“Well. If she isn’t the naughty little girl!”

She flushed, and smiled, but went on.

“You know what I mean. I hate hypocrites. But to read some of these novels you’d think that every girl nowadays kissed every man she met and drank every cocktail in sight.”

She sat down, amidst exaggerated and hilarious applause. And then Bernard Rountree, who was tall and pale and short-sighted, and who read proofs for a famous New York publishing house, awoke from one of his prolonged reveries and took the floor. Everyone sighed, having hoped that the discussion was at an end. Ella Willems crept indoors furtively, to rewind the victrola. But Rountree was determined to be heard. He knew the tendencies of modern literature, and here was the chance of a lifetime.

“Beryl is, I am inclined to think, justified,” he began. His hands were in his pockets. He peered at his listeners gravely over the tops of his shell spectacles. “However, we should remember that the phase of American fiction that enlarged upon the peculiarities of the post-war period is now dying a natural death. It was a momentary sensation, an abnormality. I think that its most evil effect was to widen the chasm between youth and age. Parents read these books and became convinced that their children were moving, one and all, under the same vicious influences, thereby presupposing a great many things which did not, actually, occur. It has always been difficult to distinguish between outward manifestations and inward character. Frankness is daily taken for immodesty and——”

“Whew!” cried the less intellectual units of the gathering, and mopped their brows. “All right, Bernard. We aren’t arguing. Shall we let it go at that?”

They rose from their chairs; trooped into the house; kicked the drawing room rugs into a corner; and began to dance.

## II

After the dance at the country club that night Beryl rode back to the house in Frank Hauben’s roadster. When they had gone several miles it occurred to her that he was driving very slowly—just why, she could not understand—as if he were pondering over something. He had allowed a dozen cars to pass them, a rare thing for him to do. Then, too, the roads were fairly good. Although white with snow they were well packed—hard as

glass. The night was still and cold and clear. Breathless. Slowly they trundled on. Black trees slipped by them, their sharp bare limbs etched across the white disk of an enormous moon. They came at last to the house, to the driveway entrance with its twin granite lions, and in the distance the serried golden panels of many lighted windows. But Frank Hauben kept to the road. And somehow neither of them dared to speak.

Presently, under the shadow of the elm, gaunt with age yet protecting as wise old trees always are, he stopped the car with a sudden jerk, an unskilful movement that for a moment astonished Beryl. And then—she knew.

Her heart seemed to stop beating. A tiny light on the dashboard dimly outlined his dark, heavy profile as he turned toward her. Strangely she knew exactly what to expect; what he was about to say. She had even secretly and elaborately prepared—oh, ages and ages ago—her answer. But now, at the crucial moment, all her thoughts, all her calmness, vanished. Panic seized her heart. She wanted to run away and yet not to. She heard his voice, as from a great distance. "Beryl, I've put this off as long as I could. But I've got to know. I——" And here, for the first time during the months she had known him, his voice lost its firm, deep evenness, grew queerly husky, and, finally, deserted him.

She was silent, her head turned away. She wanted the moment to last. So that she might live it, absorb it, until it was stamped indelibly upon her memory. It was all so tremendously grave. So much more so than she had imagined it would be. And she turned to him, almost frightened, pleading.

"Frank, dearest, I'm pretty young still. But I hope, I hope——" (She was in his arms now; and it was easier to talk there.) "—I'll make you a good wife."

He was kissing her, not roughly, but in a musing, gentle way at first. And then his mouth became hard and masculine and possessive. For a moment she fought against the physical awareness of it; then surrendered; allowed herself to be swept away upon unseen, beating wings. Far into space. . . .

Fluttering, she released herself. It was all so terribly real. So close and intimate. One or two other kisses before that night came back to her. Why, they had been just nothing. She asked gravely:

"Are you sure—very sure, that you love me, Frank?"

He laughed hoarsely; seized her arm in a tight, hurting grip.

"Dear, foolish little Beryl. Of course. Why? What made you ask that?"

She hesitated. Then told him.

"Because—we may have to fight a little. It won't be altogether easy. . . ."

He frowned, and began to toy with the steering wheel.

"Oh, you mean your father? Yes. I understand that he's old-fashioned." And, abruptly: "But he can't have anything against me."

As she made no reply—because she could think of nothing to say—he went on:

"I guess you're worrying for nothing, dearest. The first requisite in a young man these days is success. And I'm going to get that. I'm well on the way already."

"What is success, Frank? Money?"

"Um—not exactly. But it's everything that money brings. You've got to have it. Family, character, appearance—they're important in their way. But none of them can do much without money."

"Is that your creed, Frank?"

A trifle frightened at her tone, he explained:

"What I mean is that love goes better on ball-bearings than on a springless wagon——"

"Then," she interrupted shakily, "if you had proposed to me without your —your present income, you don't believe we could have been happy?"

"I wouldn't have done it," he said promptly. "Any man who wants a wife to slave for him has the wrong point of view. Love in a frame house! Bah! Gas ranges and radio and instalment furniture, and wading through seas of mud for the seven-fifteen to New York. Babies with croup from bad plumbing, and neighbours who borrow everything. No, darling. You were born for good things.

"We'll begin comfortably enough," he went on musing, "in a small but modern apartment. I've planned it all out. And each year things'll improve. We'll be happy. Bound to. We understand each other. Sail close to the wind for a while. And then—maybe——"

"There would be the children," she said softly. (When young people decided to be frank, wasn't it always the girl who was the franker?)

"You're wonderful," he told her. "You're so—modern."

She moved closer into the curve of his big, raccoon-coated arm; looked up at him; and said earnestly: "I don't think I want to be called that, just now. That talk this afternoon. Remember? Why do people make us out so new and different? People in love have always been the same, always will be, Frank. At least the women will be. The all-important things in life don't ever change."

Wistfully she realized that he did not altogether understand. Especially the part about women. But then it was an essentially feminine thought—and men did not often understand those. After all, he was very, very young—like most men. She reached up and kissed him, with a queer little bold feeling that was quite new to her.

## III

She returned to New York elated the following Monday afternoon, but on reaching the apartment found her father in a sombre and depressed state. She wondered why circumstances so stubbornly refused to harmonize with one's moods. His attempted smile of welcome at once conveyed to her an anxiety and preoccupation that was unfortunate, considering what she had to reveal.

"Amy sailed for France this morning," he informed her. His voice was utterly weary. "Burton had gone, as usual, to business. She left him a short note." And then, with an uncontrolled indignation, a thoughtless injustice which he had never exhibited—at least toward her—he cried out: "Oh, Beryl. Will you heartless young ones always insist on your own way? Will nothing stop you? Not even a sense of position, or public comment, or the very feelings of your own family?"

"I'm sorry," she replied, a shade coolly, "about Amy. But I really don't see where I come in for any blame. I never could influence her. She was always absorbed in herself and disgustingly selfish."

"I don't think you should speak of your sister in that way."

She smiled at him.

"Good heavens, Dad. If you can, why can't I? I'm able to face the facts, too. She never cared a hang about us. That's the truth. Remember her in Florence, in school? How she used to pass the summer holidays with any odd people she could persuade to invite her? She never thought of coming home as I did. Why, at fourteen I knew she was impossible. You and Mother always accepted everything placidly—never even remonstrated. It's cruel to think of, but you've got to admit it. But, Dad, as long as I live, and no matter what I do, you will always know that I love you."

She moved closer to him. But he, with a swift, uncanny perception, seized upon her words.

"What do you mean, child—no matter what you do? You're—you're planning something. I can see it. I know you so well."

There was a quality of despair in his voice that frightened her. Pale now, but determined to end a suspense that was intolerable, she took her stand before him.

"Yes. There is something. I couldn't keep it from you. Funny—but I've always just had to tell you everything. Well—I promised Frank Hauben on Saturday night that I'd marry him. We're gloriously happy——Why, Dad! What's the matter? What's the matter?"

He had risen from his chair. He was towering over her, his features—somehow—incredibly altered. He was gray; he was trembling. He looked, suddenly, an old, old man. For a moment she thought that he was very, very ill.

"So that," he whispered, "is what you've come home to tell me, after being away for days. Good God!"

His hands were clasped about his temples. He took several uncertain steps across the room, his head bowed. Then, halting, he turned and said to her in a voice that was surprisingly calm: "Listen to me, Beryl, child. Listen to me. You've done a mad, impulsive thing. I'm responsible, I suppose—partly. I should have guessed. But it won't be too late to change, when common sense returns to you, as it surely will. Eventually you will realize that young Hauben as a husband would be unthinkable."

"Good gracious!" Her genuine astonishment left no room for other crowding emotions. "You're talking to me as if I didn't know my own mind."

"No one does at your age."

"But can't you see?" she pleaded. "I love him, I tell you, I *love* him." Then, anger rising: "What have you got against him, anyhow? You've only seen him about two minutes in your whole life."

His reply wounded her; promptly tore her young pride to shreds. His tone verged on a sneer, and even at the moment she was aware that he had never before been so antagonistic. It was just as if she were listening to a complete stranger.

"He isn't your kind. I never thought that I would be compelled to explain such a thing to you. That's what hurts me. You should be able to see it, with your upbringing—with your own instincts, if you prefer to put it that way. He shows—well, his surroundings—all over. I suppose he has his good points: ambitious; hard working; honest, perhaps, as the tenets of modern 'big business' will permit. But he doesn't belong at all to your level."

"His own father was your friend," she interposed.

“God forbid! I knew him; but we were never intimate. In fact, our acquaintance ended because he managed to offend me. He was—how shall I put it?—an entertaining upstart.”

“I didn’t think he was vulgar,” she declared; and instantly bit her lip as he demanded:

“Where in heaven’s name did you meet Frank Hauben senior?”

“I spent the week end at their house,” she told him. And added, with some defiance: “I had a gorgeous time.”

“And how did your young friend’s mother impress you?” he asked corrosively.

“I didn’t see her. She was away—visiting. What about her?”

“She was a manicure girl. That’s all. Hauben picked her up for her good looks. I believe she happens to have made him a good wife.”

“Well. As long as she behaves herself,” Beryl said, “that’s all one requires. She’s lived that down long ago. Dad, your ideas are positively archaic. Nowadays people take you for just what you are.”

“Nonsense!” He began to pace the floor identically as his father had done when agitated. “Where do you hear all this rubbish? The motion pictures, or cheap literature? You come from as fine a family as exists in this country—descendants of the Marquis Dulac, who helped to found the nation. Pray don’t forget that.”

“I never have a chance to,” she cried. “Oh, I’m tired of hearing about it! Old ladies send me notices to attend horrible association meetings, while they drink tea and talk about what their ancestors did. Nobody outside their tiny circle cares a jot. Anyway, the Marquis Dulac’s been dead over a hundred years, and I don’t see why his ghost should prevent me from——”

He stood, rigid, before her, his cheeks darkly crimson.

“If you are going to talk to me in that wild fashion I must order you to your room.”

“But, Dad. You’re positively obsessed about it! Can’t you see what I mean? Everybody knows Frank. All my friends. They all like him. There’s hardly a girl I know who wouldn’t give anything——”

“We will close the discussion,” he interrupted her, and his compelling tone caused her formulated thoughts to vanish. With an exaggerated, lofty pride she walked to the door of the room; turned and faced him.

“I’m sorry to have had this—spat with you. It’s our very first. But if you won’t see things reasonably——”

"Leave me," he begged her. "Leave me. Give me a chance to think. Let me be alone. I feel as if the world were toppling about my head."

She ran to her room; threw herself on her bed. Hannah, passing by, peered in at the door.

"Oh, Hannah," she said. "Dad and I have just had such a hell of a row—and it hurts so. . . ."

Lawrence, left alone in the drawing room, recalled that only two days ago he had happened to encounter Frank Hauben—for the first time in many years. Hauben had been seated in an elongated Italian limousine drawn up by the curb before an art dealer's window on Fifth Avenue. He wore a raccoon coat, a silk hat at a perilous angle, and had been smoking a cigar as proportionately exaggerated in length as the sumptuous vehicle that contained him. The years had not dealt too kindly. The flesh under his eyes was baggy, and the eyes themselves were dormantly cynical, like the eyes of some century-old carp. He had immediately spied Lawrence; had waved a yellow glove.

"By God, if isn't Larry Dulac!"

He coughed rumblingly; cleared his throat. "So the old buck's still going. Well, well, well!"

Lawrence had murmured a polite "How are you, Hauben?" And had, out of sheer politeness, sustained a perfunctory conversation with him. Hauben's wife had then come hurrying out of the art dealer's, a shrewd-looking little woman with henna hair, white-spatted shoes, a small toque that appeared to be entirely constructed of artificial violets.

"My wife," Hauben stated, with a wave of his arm. "Belle, this is old Larry Dulac. We used to consume magnums together at Del's."

The lady had bowed; had scrutinized Lawrence with narrow, calculating black eyes; had uttered a few conventional and stiff phrases.

"Look us up some time," she concluded. "We're moving into town to a new house. You'll find the address in the Social Register."

He, Lawrence, had bidden them good-bye; had hurried on up the Avenue. And quite suddenly he had begun to laugh. But now, sitting in his armchair, the encounter appeared devoid of all humour.

## IV

Young Frank Hauben approached the Dulac's apartment several days later, at five o'clock, with confidence—his usual and predominant emotion. The old man might be hard to handle, of course, he reflected. Beryl had

hinted at something of the kind. He'd have to watch his step. In the end, though, he'd swing old Dulac around to his side. He knew the psychology of men—of older men. He'd studied it for business purposes. A little tact, a little diplomacy, and all the Knickerbocker prejudices would be banished. . . . "He's a back number, a last year's calendar," Hauben told himself, "but then he'll be my father-in-law one of these days, so I'll have to humour him a little. However, when he hears that I can support Beryl comfortably and that I don't want any share of his fixed income, he'll come around all right. . . . Support her in the way she has been accustomed . . . that's the term; he'll like that. And when I tell him that I'll be earning twenty thousand in two years from now he'll probably leap for joy. Money is every man's god, no matter what they pretend. . . . Wonder why these old Knickerbockers are so stuck up, anyway? Dutch nonconformists or renegade French soldiers. All of them kicked out of their own countries! Absurd! . . ." So thinking he reached the apartment; gave his name to the stiff English butler, who soon returned with the information that Mr. Dulac would see him in the library.

Hauben aimed his hat carefully, and threw it. The rack caught it neatly, but the butler was disappointingly unimpressed. With an immense, manly confidence and resolution he strode into the library. Lawrence Dulac was standing before the Adam mantelpiece, hands clasped behind his back, apparently studying the shape of his own shoes. He wore a morning coat, a high stiff collar with unbent corners that made Hauben wonder why he so needlessly tortured himself. He glanced up as Hauben entered, almost absent-mindedly, and said with a little embarrassed hesitancy in his speech:

"Oh—eh—yes. It's you, Mr. Hauben. Eh—sit down over there, will you, please? No. Not there. That's broken. One of Beryl's friends, I think, sat on the arm of it. Yes. There. Thanks."

Hauben began evenly, as if embarking on a prepared recitation:

"Mr. Dulac, I don't believe in beating about the bush. Never did. It's a bad principle. I've come to say that I intend to marry Beryl."

When Lawrence answered his voice was calm, unhurried.

"You do not surprise me. My daughter led me to expect this—only perhaps not quite so soon. We are all in a great hurry these days." He paused. Then added with a surprising swiftness: "Only isn't it customary to ask permission rather than to announce one's intentions so definitely?"

His smile was outwardly innocuous; yet Hauben was uncomfortable. It was, he felt, just as if he were stroking a cat that was beginning to bristle while it still purred. He instantly recognized his tactical error, and in a burst of generosity that he felt he could well afford, conceded:

"Yes, sir. I guess you're right there. At least, so the old formula goes. I forgot. Very well, Mr. Dulac. I ask you for the hand"—he could not resist smiling—"of your daughter, Beryl. I can support her—in the way she's accustomed. I'm already earning with commissions over fifteen thousand dollars a year. In two years from now——"

"Please," Lawrence interrupted. "You can spare us both these personal matters. I might as well tell you now, Hauben, with due respect to your intelligence and ambitious qualities that I would not think of consenting."

Hauben, astonished, found himself reiterating:

"But why? I don't see—— But why?"

Something of the hardness of Lawrence's expression departed. He appeared agitated; lighted a cigarette; turned to gaze out of the window at the distant geometrical pattern of Queensborough Bridge, sharply black against an evening, copper-washed sky. A subdued but perpetual roar of traffic permeated the room, a touch of spring in the gentle breeze that billowed the lace window curtains.

"I would greatly prefer not to discuss my reasons and I think that you, too, would prefer it."

Young Hauben's cheeks grew hot. (His temper—his worst point. He must control it; he must placate this rigid old fool.) He replied with an unconscious mimicry of Lawrence's formal tone:

"I'm afraid, sir, I don't understand you. And I'm surely entitled to know your reasons for a refusal."

"You insist?" Lawrence said, gazing at the long ash of his cigarette.

"I do."

Lawrence surveyed him with a peculiar, almost sympathetic expression.

"Please don't. You are a young man. I like young people. It's hard, I know, but I have my reasons."

Hauben said hotly:

"I don't want sympathy, sir. I want facts. I ask to marry your daughter. I'm refused, but without reason. That's clearly unfair."

"I never permit any one to call me unfair," Lawrence said. "I may be hard, but I have my precepts to go by. One of them is always to be above board. You insist on hearing my reasons. Well and good; you shall have them, although your father, had you consulted him, would probably have spared you this. These matters are subtle, Hauben, and difficult for young people to comprehend——"

"Go ahead!" said Hauben. "I'm ready." His dark young face was bitter.

Lawrence continued slowly:

"The Haubens and the Dulacs are not of the same kind. They are fundamentally antagonistic. They represent opposing ideas and ideals. Don't misunderstand me, I beg you. It is not a question of snobbery on my part, or any claim to superiority, as you will probably choose to think. It is, as I said, a difference in ideals—in our whole outlook on life. We—our kind—like to look back on the past, on an honourable lineage that served the country faithfully. We like to preserve those traditions. We like to remember"—he smiled—"if you will forgive the apparent triviality of it, that we helped to found the country, and that a very small part of it is still ours, unchanged. We realize that we're dying out, but I do not think we will ever surrender or modify our principles—to the last one of us."

"Beryl's not living in the past," Hauben interrupted. "Everybody who knows her says she's a live wire."

Lawrence winced slightly.

"Oh, she's young. When she's older she will feel identically as I do. It's born in us. But I'm digressing. You, on the other hand—not you particularly, but your element—believe wholly in such things as constant changes of manners, modes of living, standards; in the growth of prodigious industries. Your very lives are set in the future. You young men become members of great concerns instead of following quiet professions; you earn three or four times as much as we did—or those following in our footsteps. Anything, in fact, is suitable as a career as long as it earns you money. I don't altogether blame you. It costs you four times as much to live as it costs me, and I venture to claim that you live about one fourth as well. Such things as good taste and ethics are neglected——"

"But Beryl has a future. She's young. You can't hold her down to those ideas! None of us share them."

Lawrence sighed.

"Can't you see? Can't you understand? She's been brought up in a spirit of gentleness, in a quiet atmosphere of home. Even now this crazy life she's leading is undermining her. She's an *old* American, Hauben. And when she realizes that, her point of view will change completely."

Hauben stood up.

"All I've got to say is: I'm afraid you don't understand your own daughter if you think you've coloured her with your opinions to that extent. Why, she's—" he flushed, and was suddenly very youthful—"she's proud as

the deuce of the business progress I've made since she's known me. She ____"

Lawrence walked to the door; opened it.

"Forgive me," he said. "I loathe discussions, especially futile ones. You have heard my views. Perhaps I express myself inadequately and vaguely. If so I am sorry. Anyhow, I don't want you to entertain any false hopes."

"Hopes?" cried Hauben, pausing at the door. "Hopes? My dear sir, nothing that you've said affects my hopes in the slightest. My feelings toward Beryl and my intentions are exactly the same as when I entered this room. In these days, Mr. Dulac, young women act for themselves; don't give a hang for opinion."

"Young women," Lawrence repeated aloud. "Yes. Perhaps young *women* do."

He gently closed the door.

# CHAPTER XI
## Points of View

### I

Perry came to dine with him that night. Beryl had not yet returned. Characteristically Lawrence made no reference to what was in his mind until dinner was over and they were in the library, coffee before them. Throughout the meal Perry had chatted easily of his friends, the theatres, the opera. To Lawrence he appeared as moving in a different world, a gauzy existence, a perpetual round of amusements, without worries or responsibility.

"You lead an easy life, Perry," he remarked. Perry, chuckling, admitted:

"My greatest worry is thinking up excuses for a refusal over the telephone. I've found the solution, though. To an urgent lady, I say: 'Excuse me a moment; I must close a window; the draught is frightful.' Then I walk very slowly once across the room and back again. It gives a fellow a chance. . . ." Then, seriously: "Look here, Lawrence. What's on your mind? You look like the devil."

"My children," Lawrence said. "What a curious age we move in, Perry. Standards and values all out of proportion. . . ." He sighed; added with some abruptness: "Amy has sailed for France—to get a divorce from Burton Mayford."

Perry's eyebrows were raised.

"I am sorry," he said; and with tact awaited further details.

"She is getting a divorce," Lawrence went on, with his twisted smile, "because, she alleges, she has discovered that her husband is a fool. Can you comprehend that, Perry? I can't keep up with the trend of the times."

"Women nowadays have an exaggerated sense of individuality," Perry mused. "And Amy was always self-willed. I remember when as a little girl she took a violent aversion to some vegetable—cauliflower I think it was. Nothing could induce her. It was a daily tragedy in your Roman household. But I confess I can see her point of view. Burton Mayford is tolerable company only when he has a brassie in his hand; and mutual respect is the foundation-stone of marriage. It is a fallible institution anyway."

“If it’s fallible it’s because human beings are too weak to live up to its requirements,” Lawrence retorted.

Perry nodded gravely several times.

“But I think you expect too much from humanity in general, Larry. Intolerance is always a fault of the nearly perfect.”

Lawrence evinced a vague resentment at this.

“I am no more perfect than any man who chooses to live up to a certain decent code.”

“Tradition,” said Perry, and made a vague gesture with his slender, pale hand. “It’s been effaced and plays no part. When will you learn that?”

“Never.”

A silence; until Lawrence, with an unwitting pathos that stirred Perry’s heart, told him:

“Amy goes her own way. I could stand that. But now it’s Beryl. We were always so much together, and so easily understood each other’s thoughts. She wants to marry”—he hesitated—“Frank Hauben’s son.”

Perry frowned.

“Yes. I can see that would be pretty upsetting. The Haubens are not so desirable. I remember the boy the other night at that cabaret. Cocksure little devil.”

“I can’t stand him,” Lawrence said vehemently. “Aggressive. Full of his damned dollar-making schemes. I tried to explain to him. He was not impolite, exactly. He merely refused to comprehend.”

“Why not talk to Beryl?”

“Oh, I have. She’s infatuated. Flounced off in a fury.”

Perry smiled.

“She would, of course. An old Arabian poet once said that advice to those in love was so much water in a sieve. But there is the usual New York remedy for such a case. Take her away to Europe, to new surroundings, in the hope that she’ll forget him. Our impulsive young virgins are always taken to Europe. Medieval castles and picture galleries are apparently considered a certain cure for love-sickness.”

“If you would only be serious, Perry.”

“I assure you I am. But we needn’t weep, need we? Lohengrin hasn’t been played yet. Take my advice. There’s a boat sailing for Italy and Egypt on the 28th of the month. I’m already booked. You and Beryl could come along too. Every family west of the Alleghanies seeking the broadening

culture of travel will be aboard. Earnest young girls will talk to you of the Græco-Roman fusion of civilization. There will be one or two embarrassing moments before the mural decorations at Pompeii. But it will all be very diverting."

For a time Lawrence was silent.

"It isn't a bad idea," he admitted presently. He took up an evening newspaper. "And you want us to be ready to sail on the 28th? Yes—I think we could go. I need the change myself. Amy, I'll have to relinquish. But for Beryl's ultimate happiness I'll always fight."

"Are you sure," Perry asked, "that you are fighting for her ultimate happiness? Parents, for all their experience and perception, sometimes make grave errors."

"But," Lawrence expostulated, "there's nothing in common between them except youth."

"And youth's point of view," Perry amended. "A strong bond, if it survives the first few years. How can we tell? My same Arabian poet asserts that it is easier to find the imprint of fishes' feet than to understand the workings of a young woman's heart. A wise fellow, indeed." He rose, consulting his watch, as thin as a gold coin; drew on his gloves. "I must be going. To-night is 'Faust' at the Metropolitan, and by now the scene in the alchemist's laboratory must be over. I wonder how many opera goers have ever arrived in time for it? I claim that as one of my distinctions; I once saw it—by mistake—in Aix-les-Bains! And to-night Chamlee is singing . . . The Garden Scene. Romance still survives in my heart, you see, in spite of certain ominous aches in my bones." He became suddenly serious. "Don't let this depress you, Lawrence. Try the cure; she'll kick; but make her go. And remember that she isn't altogether to blame. It's the trend of the times . . . Gradual decay of parental control. You slipped into it as much as the others, as soon as her mother died. If she hadn't been out all night six nights out of seven she could never have become so intimate with the boy. Nor am I blaming you for spoiling her—anybody would. I know how you love her."

His handclasp was more than usually warm; more than usually lengthy. At the door he paused; waved his silk hat; a sprightly and immaculate figure, symbolic of an unconquerably youthful soul. . . . He did not wait for the elevator, but ran down the stairs. His mind was possessed already by the glowing image of the lady he was to meet. A new discovery. Her complexion, her figure, were marvellous; her conversation like the thrusts of a rapier. Heavens! Would he ever cease to be in love with some woman or other?

## II

The Haubens had moved to their new house in town for the spring months. They were dining for the first time—*en famille*, as Mrs. Hauben put it—in the narrow and frigid Gothic sepulchre known as the main dining room. It was an austere chamber, the groined ceiling lofty and dim, the stone walls relieved by an elaborate strip of carved oaken wainscoting. Frank Hauben sat at one end of the long refectory table—illuminated by six tapering yellow candles—his wife at the other, a great distance from him; their son, curiously isolated, sat halfway between them. When Mrs. Hauben protested at this distribution Frank was compelled to explain, with a smiling tolerance, that refectory tables were the product of an age that had not yet devised removable leaves. She flushed at the explanation, praying that the English domestics had not overheard. It was altogether a solemn function, that dinner, served by liveried automatons. A faint chill permeated the room, an odour of damp stone, tempered only by the crackling warmth of logs in the wide marble fireplace, an occasional red gleam of century-old andirons. A silence captured them as they dissected recalcitrant partridges, while one of the footmen filled their Venetian chalices with excellent wine. Belle Hauben, attired in jade *crêpe-de-chine* contrasted by a single perfect string of amber, evincing that peculiarly good taste in dress which in a woman does not necessarily imply good taste in other matters, gazed into her frothing glass and said—more to break the silence than for any other purpose:

"I'm not so crazy about your friend Dulac, Frankie. To tell the truth, I thought him stiff."

Although ill at ease under the furtive scrutiny of an imported British tribe she managed to preserve an adequate dignity, an impersonal and modulated tone scrupulously cultivated. Her husband, to her dismay, seemed to find humour in her remark.

"Dulac was always like that," he chuckled. "But I somehow liked him, as a boy. He was so superbly typical of his kind. There were no concessions about him, if you get what I mean. He stuck to his code. I made him properly mad once, I remember." He exploded into an unexpected, violent laughter, then recovered himself, resumed his dinner. Young Frank, hitherto brooding, evinced a sudden, shrewd interest.

"What's all this? You mean to say you knew Lawrence Dulac when he was a young man?"

His father surveyed him with mild surprise.

"And why not? Will sons always be astonished that their fathers knew *anybody* in their young days? Surely I knew him, Boysie. Fact is I liked him so much that I asked him to come into the clothing trade with me."

Young Frank dropped his knife and fork noisily.

"Good Lord!"

"Yes, Boysie, I did. And got him furious. If he had put his prejudices aside and joined me he'd have been about six times as well off now. Think of how the little business has expanded since those days. Hauben's Big Chain wasn't dreamed of. We had one tiny store away downtown. Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis hadn't heard of me." There was pride in the poise of his dark, massive head. "But Dulac wouldn't consider retail trade at all." He sighed; gulped down the remainder of his wine. "You can't change that kind. They're differently made."

Mrs. Hauben glanced at her son.

"Your new girl, Beryl—isn't she his daughter?"

Young Frank's self-possession was no longer intact. He avoided her eyes; sought refuge in the pattern of lace under candelabra of burnished brass.

"That's so, Belle. But she's wide awake; doesn't share any of his fossilized ideas."

"Just what do you mean by that, Boysie?"

He looked with an air of helplessness at his father, who promptly explained:

"My dear Belle, Lawrence Dulac is what you and I call a snob. Long, long ago a Dulac held a soft, staff job under Lafayette or something of the kind, and none of his descendants have ever been able to forget it."

"They have a wonderful social position," she mused with the utmost gravity.

"Of a kind. But God knows what use it is to him. If you consider a round of Sunday afternoon calls on elderly women of Dutch ancestry as the social life, I agree with you. But, Belle, that's no fun. Sunday evening dinners south of Fourteenth Street. . . . Maybe his daughters are gayer. Boysie'll tell you all about that." He winked. Boysie said, a slight tremor in his voice:

"She's a perfect wonder, Father." And, unable to prevent himself, added clumsily: "Someday I hope——" He seized his champagne, leaving the sentence incompleted.

His father and mother exchanged a swift glance.

"Oh," she said. "If *that* happened. . . ." Her hands were clasped. "You'd like it, wouldn't you, Frank?" Pleadingly.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Boysie's on his own hook. He'll choose the right girl. Got his father's common sense. But I hope she isn't a little snob——"

"She isn't," his son asserted with some vehemence. "Oh, she isn't. She's the best little mixer in all the world. Every traffic cop on Fifth Avenue adores her."

"Um," said his father. "I don't just see that. How can the children be so different?"

"Environment, Father. Live friends, and living in live times. You can't keep a good girl down. Lawrence Dulac's influence ceased when Beryl went to school in America."

"Well, whatever you do," his mother interposed, "don't ever humble yourself in her eyes. You're every bit as good as she is. I know something about women's minds——" Aware of the reëntrance of two footmen she became silent. Young Frank was visibly distressed.

"Let's forget it for a while."

His father, however, clung tenaciously to the subject as a cone of multicoloured ice-cream was displayed at his elbow for his approval.

"Society in New York—or what people call 'society' for want of a more explicit term—expands year by year, and as it expands it becomes more tolerant and broad-minded. It realizes that tolerance is a basis of friendly intercourse. It realizes, too, that amusement of the intellect is even more gained by going with people of varying ideas than by mingling with folk of identical manners and prejudices."

"Dulac wouldn't agree with that at all, Father."

"I know. I know. Don't interrupt me. That's just what the Dulac type won't recognize or admit. A man of Dulac's mental equipment is like an ostrich wilfully hiding its head, blinding itself to external facts, and even thinking that it is thereby blinding others. You see, he's really ruining some of the best years of his life by his—his confounded orthodoxy, but he doesn't know it. I suppose, though, he's happy in his own way. Now as you point out, Boysie, the younger generation—the Beryls—are different. They've cut loose; they're going to save themselves from oblivion. They've had their eyes opened by the War, by the rising tide of democracy, the impotency of the old school in a world of new ideas. They know the new standard of values, and they mean to get their money's worth."

Wife and son listened in enraptured silence. Frank, they were both thinking, could be clever and interesting when he wanted to be; when he wasn't talking about quotations on "woollens."

"Briefly," he went on, "the new code is this. One: a man's what he himself is; not what his family was. Two: frankness is better than circumlocution. (Nobody appreciates delicacy nowadays. Don't know that I agree with that entirely, but it's their way.) Three: the outcome justifies the means. Our young people are the Jesuits among generations. Effects don't matter so long as the result is attained."

"I guess you understand us pretty well," young Frank conceded.

"Excuse me," his father amended. "I don't like that 'us.' I'm one of you. I'm not going to be relegated to a musty past. I'm as live as you are any day, Boysie, and don't you forget it. How about it, Belle?"

Polite laughter ensued at this traditional paternal joke. Mrs. Hauben rose. She turned to the head butler.

"Coffee in the Little Trianon, Dawlish," she said with dignity.

## III

Beryl, warm and comfortable and sleepy under the patchwork quilt that Hannah had made—and with her inevitably Biblical mind had christened "Jacob's Coat"—lay in bed considering fathers in general and her own in particular. Lawrence Dulac, she whispered to herself, Lawrence Dulac. She had just made the startling discovery, by a process of analysis, that Lawrence Dulac was in reality two persons. It puzzled her—so much so, that she continued to lie in bed although Hannah was uttering dire threats outside her door, ominous prognostications as to what happened to young girls who lie abed on God's glorious mornings.

First, then, there was Dad—to continue speculating upon this fascinating subject of dual personality. Dad was not only a conventional deity of the household, but also a very near, lovable, understandable person; someone to be alternately obeyed, remonstrated with, petted, coaxed, wheedled, conversed with, flattered—but always lovable. And—one must admit cold facts—the source of all good things. She recalled, smiling to herself, an ancient French proverb: A father is a banker provided by nature. Still, entirely apart from that horrid thought, there was no question whatever of her sincere love for the Lawrence Dulac who was called Dad.

Secondly, there was Lawrence Dulac, a grave man many years older than herself, who was hard to understand. He appeared in Dad's place only on

certain rare occasions when she was very angry, or when her critical faculties had been unpleasantly aroused. Lawrence Dulac, unlike Dad, was a chilling creature who was prone to exhibit exasperating prejudices, a despairing narrowness of outlook; who censured one's best friends for trivial breaches of etiquette; who attempted to revive antiquated rules about the behaviour of young girls; who surveyed the world in an embittered frame of mind; who was altogether an unmovable, antagonistic personage. Lately, and unfortunately, she had seen more of Lawrence Dulac than of Dad. She again consulted the note she had found that morning under her door:

> I am going downtown to get our steamer tickets, but will be back for luncheon. Meanwhile you had better start buying a few of your travelling things, and some light clothes for Egypt.
>
> DAD.

Although it was signed by Dad she knew that the note had been written by Lawrence Dulac.

"If that's his attempt at a solution of my infatuation, as he calls it," she told Hannah, who had entered the room to draw apart the blue brocade curtains, "I must say I'm disappointed in him. It's so absolutely unoriginal."

She yawned delicately; thrust a pair of long white legs to the floor; inserted feet in slippers; sat up. "Still," another yawn; arms flung upward, "I suppose all fathers are unoriginal. It's in their nature. Frank and I decided yesterday that our children were going to be highly individual offspring—we'd let their individualities develop, even if they eventually turned into gunmen."

Hannah, with her hands on gaunt hips, stared at her.

"Beryl! If that's the way young ladies talk nowadays!" Her lips were compressed. "There are certain Facts about Life which are supposed to remain unmentioned—at least before marriage."

"If Amy'd had a little more interchange of views with her precious Burton before she married him she wouldn't be in the soup now," Beryl retorted, swinging her legs. "She'd have found out what he was worth. Size up your man before the fatal bells begin to chime, Hannah. Lord! That man Burton—solid ivory from the neck up. Oh, well"—she jumped out of bed; stood blinking in the sunlight—"Amy as a girl was Victorian at heart anyway. Afraid to talk; blinded by the radiance of young love. Oh, sweet mush! A Victorian like you, Hannah." She flung her arms about the bony shoulders; kissed the immobile, stern face. Hannah attempted to look grateful, without complete success.

Beryl critically surveyed herself, in pyjamas, in the mirror.

"I'm mostly legs, Hannah," she remarked. "I wonder why?"

Hannah said:

"You're a queer mixture, Beryl. Sometimes you're a perfect infant; sometimes you talk like a worldly woman. Your bark's worse than your bite anyway, dearie. Now stop babbling. Your bath will be 'most cold by now."

Beryl flew from the room. A moment later Hannah heard splashings; and snatches of a cheerful, discordant song:

"*I'm a little wild rose,*
*Not a mild and prim rose. . . .*"

Then: "Oh, Hannah! Father'll be in for lunch. I'm lunching with Frank. Better tell him. I'd hate to have him think I was doing it on the sly."

# CHAPTER XII

## Encounters in Egypt

### I

Fully dressed long before seven o'clock, because he had never managed to acquire the art of sleeping comfortably on trains, Lawrence found that during the night the southward progress of the express had dropped to a mere crawl. Only the gentle click of intersecting rails and a constant creaking of the sleeping car's elaborate woodwork indicated that the train was moving. A thin film of sand lay on the window sill, he discovered, and also powdered the collection of luggage on the rack above his berth. In the compartment next door he heard Perry splashing in a tin basin and humming *La Donna è mobile* in a voice that was astonishingly youthful and gay. . . . He restored his pyjamas and shaving material carefully to their respective niches in his kit bag, switched off the electric light, and raised the window curtains beside his berth. And, simultaneously with the upward movement of the curtains, all the sunlight in the world burst upon him.

The window revealed an immediate expanse of undulating sand, a wide, billowing sea of ivory, and in the distant west a pallid strip of green maize bordering a lazy river that was colourless in the sun's glare. A feathery silhouette of clustered palms flitted across the window and the huddled cubes and domes of a mud-brick village. The early morning air, drifting into the compartment, possessed a buoyant and tender freshness that at once dispelled the sensation of heaviness in his head.

Presently he left the compartment, and in the narrow, swaying corridor squeezed his way past a group of tanned and wiry British subalterns smoking early pipes—keen young men in serviceable field uniforms, the chain insignia of a smart cavalry regiment gleaming on their shoulders. He knocked at the compartment next to Perry's, and Beryl, in a plaid sports skirt, a grass-green sweater, immediately opened the door. A shaft of sunlight from the window behind her framed her russet head in a sudden, luminous aura.

"My dear," he protested, smiling. "You anticipate a little, don't you? That garb for travelling. . . ."

"We'll be at Luxor in an hour or so," she reminded him. "Besides, one ought to look cheerful and informal in this perfect country. Stodgy old

travelling clothes wouldn't seem right in a blue comic-opera train like this."

She came out into the corridor; took his arm.

"Let's have breakfast. I'm famished. We needn't wait for Uncle Perry. He's probably having a terrible time deciding on his necktie and socks."

They made their way forward to the dining-car, already crowded; and eventually obtained a table. A Nubian with a permanent grin on his flat, indigo countenance took their order; padded away in carpet slippers. Lawrence looked at Beryl gazing pensively at the stark panorama beyond the windows; wondered how far he had succeeded; how much she had forgotten. And she, as if divining his thoughts, remarked wistfully: "Of all places in the world, I suppose you've chosen the one most likely to—to help your experiment. There's so much here to distract one; such a beautiful blending of old and new. What a perfect time we did have in Cairo. Remember the Gezireh ball—the moonlight. Those English subalterns were all darlings, and all exactly alike. And the ride to the Fayoum . . . Heavens! One could live here for years and never see it all."

"I'm glad you enjoy it so." He answered her warmly, affectionately. "As for what you call my 'experiment'—couldn't you manage to forget that aspect of it?"

"Asking a good deal there, aren't you, Dad?" She sighed and became graver; began to toy with the dark blue china before her, embroidered with the International Sleeping Car Company's intricate monogram. "Oh, well. I'll honestly try, but I can't promise."

Perry at this moment joined them, beaming, attired from head to foot in tropical white, a brilliant flower at his lapel.

"Younger than ever," Beryl cheerfully greeted him. And he, promptly pinching her cheek, said: "It's the effect of having you around. If a man wants to know how old he really is, Beryl, he has only to look into a young girl's eyes. I looked in yours. And the answer was satisfactory. Gad! Look at the old *roué* staring at you across the aisle!"

She turned her head to discover a hirsute middle-aged Frenchman appraising her with an unflinching and expressionless gaze.

"It's a form of compliment, after all," Perry added.

She flushed slightly.

"I suppose so. A month ago I might have been annoyed. But travel does alter your point of view, doesn't it? As a nation I think we need our sense of subtlety polished up a bit."

Lawrence smiled reminiscently.

“Remember the crowd on the steamer. And your friends from Apex, Kansas—or was it Nebraska?”

“They were nice,” she reproved him. “You know they were. Genuine, if people ever were. And how they enjoyed themselves! Coming from New York one’s astounded to find men and women constantly like that. Cynicism wasn’t fashionable where they came from.”

Lawrence gave her a quick look of surprise.

“You’re becoming rather thoughtful lately, child. I wonder why?”

He found himself pondering over the recent expansion of her individuality. Once free from her accustomed surroundings, her standardized acquaintances, the routine of amusement never varying, she appeared to have acquired a more definite personal quality than he had before observed. He was, he realized, growing daily more proud of her.

“Love, I suppose, is the answer,” she told him directly. He instantly avoided her eyes; preferred to ignore her reply.

The train had come to a halt opposite an unpretentious wooden station. A swarm of natives rushed, clamouring, to assemble beneath the dining-car windows; to offer turquoise beads, scarabees, fly-whiskers of split palmetto, and Assiut shawls weighted with gleaming fragments of silver. A black arm, bolder than the rest, penetrated the half-open window and dropped a tawdry necklace on the table before Beryl. A plaintive voice chanted: “Take it, lady. Take it, lady. Only fifty piastres, lovely lady. A very fine bargain from a very honest gentleman.”

“*Imshi!*” she cried, taking recourse to the alpha and omega of the tourist in Egypt. “*Imshi!* Go away! I don’t want it.”

The voice became reproachful.

“Good lady, you will be very sorry . . .”

And here Perry saved the situation by flinging a handful of small coins from the window, and the necklace after it.

A northbound train slid alongside; stopped. The curtained windows of a sleeping car obscured their view. Two minutes elapsed. A conductor blew violently upon a childish tin horn; the native merchants screamed out astonishing decreases on their original quotations; two locomotives whistled; and the northbound train started. In one of the passing sleepers a curtain was raised, and for the briefest instant a woman peered out, sunlight playing on her corn-coloured hair. . . . Lawrence leaned quickly forward; gripped the edges of the table.

“Hullo,” said Perry. “What’s the matter?”

Already the window, the car, had vanished. Their own train had started. The monotonous white desert was again drifting by. In an old and characteristic gesture he passed a hand over his brow, his expression one of bewilderment and of sharp, transitory pain.

"Nothing," he assured his brother. "Nothing at all. I believe I imagined something for a moment—something quite impossible and foolish."

## II

They went, of course, to the Winter Palace, that compact alabaster block of European luxury overlooking the Nile, and there found sunny bedrooms above a formal garden of palms and giant cactus, and pathways of reddish sand. Beyond the garden, beyond white walls nearly drowned in cascades of claret bougainvillea, there was a field of wavering sugar cane, a distant glimpse of Luxor's ivory houses with their dark, arabesqued windows. A solitary minaret, slender as the forefinger of a young girl, hovered in the turquoise sky, tranquil and beneficent above the squalid village.

Luncheon over, the three of them sat drinking syrupy coffee in the cool shadows of the Moorish hall while a stream of cosmopolitan humanity poured from the dining room; eddied in groups toward the Nile terraces. British officers, lean and hawk-eyed, in khaki drill; eccentric European playwrights and composers with white manes, red ribbons of the Legion of Honour in their lapels; slender blonde Englishwomen in sporting tweeds and capable, thick-soled brogues; determined American spinsters with shell spectacles, Baedekers, and floating blue veils; inscrutable young Egyptian aristocrats in fine English clothes oddly contrasted by the red, native tarbooshes on their dark heads; stout, placid ladies scanning mail and newspapers from Bangor, Tulsa, and Seattle, followed by bald, beaming husbands in palm beach suits and vast expanses of silk shirting; alert little American boys furtively shadow-boxing the terrified native servants as they passed by them; precocious and lovely little French girls with elaborate curls and white dresses so abbreviated that they exposed nut-brown legs above the knees and a frill of intimate garments; worried English interpreters with long, fair moustaches, carrying typewritten lists of their flocks which must be herded at the sound of a gong; flaxen Swiss concierges answering a barrage of questions about donkey-boys, camel-boys, cab-drivers, Nile steamers, trains, telegrams, and Thomas Cook. . . .

A little man in light, summery clothing who had been for some time staring at Lawrence suddenly detached himself from the crowd and shot

across the hall. Lawrence found his hands captured; found an eager, tanned countenance beaming down into his.

"You are Lawrence Dulac. I swear it! And I—I am Armand Marécotte!" Words came tumbling from his lips. He gesticulated. He danced. "But this is a miracle, after all these years!"

He was, as he sat down between Lawrence and Beryl, the same vivacious, absurd little Marécotte of old Toulon days. His bright, earnest features betrayed scant evidence of the years that had passed. Only a faint powdering of the sleek black hair above the narrow temples indicated a definite maturity. Athletic in body, exuberant in mind, he remained to all intents and purposes a young man. He was attired in straw-coloured tussore, a flaring scarlet tie. There were wrinkles about his eyes, but they were the wrinkles caused by an indomitable, perpetual sense of humour rather than the toll of care and unhappiness.

"And this young lady?" he enquired, turning to Beryl after Lawrence had introduced him to Perry.

"My daughter, Armand."

"Dear me! My old friend an august papa. Time flies."

He seated himself between them; lighted a gold-tipped Maspéro.

"And what, *mon vieux*, brings you here?"

"Pleasure," Lawrence replied hurriedly. "And you the same, I suppose?"

Marécotte appeared to find cause for laughter in this.

"Truly, no man is as famous as he fondly and secretly believes, just as no man is quite as insignificant as he thinks. So America has not yet heard of me? Well, well. Some day I shall be given the freedom of your illustrious New York, which I hear is almost a daily form of homage over there. Perhaps I am suffering from an inflated ego, but I assure you, Lawrence, I am renowned, quite renowned, in Egypt."

He paused; winked at Beryl, as if to say: "See what fun I can have with your father!" She was thoroughly familiar with that species of wink—a trick of parental contemporaries when in a facetious mood.

"I will tell you the cause of my fame. Do you remember once years ago in Toulon I said that I was probably destined to become an archæologist since it was the only study in which I evinced the slightest ability? I never knew why, but it was so—a theosophist suggested that in a former incarnation I must have been a court jester of Rameses . . . that the fascination of Egyptology was a mere desire to return to my native haunts. The man was perfectly serious about it! Be that as it may, my prophecy

came strangely true. Egypt lured me. I am now out here as the distinguished representative of a dozen European archæological societies. I hobnob with earls, heavy Teutonic professors, and American millionaires with private dahabiahs on the Nile. I am, I repeat, renowned!" He slapped his thin knees and roared delightedly. "Is it not absurd? The *polichinelle* Marécotte gravely consulted by eminent and venerable historians? But I am still, I promise you, the *polichinelle*. These gray-heads from universities bore me; I have locked more than one of them in a damp, subterranean tomb as a punishment for not laughing at my jokes." He paused; sighed. "But seriously. I must tell you what I have been doing. From that window you see the Libyan hills, yonder, across the Nile—that wall of fantastic, rose-tinted rock? At its base, on this the eastern side, are the tombs of the ancient civilization of Thebes—the burial places of splendid kings and queens. Amenophis, Hatshepsut—all the rest. Now I, a year ago, detected what I believe to be traces of a subterranean extension of these tombs beneath the hills, as far as the other side of the range. I have established a camp there; like heaven, it is a devil of a place to reach, but delightful when you attain it."

He turned impetuously to Beryl.

"Charming Mademoiselle, you would adore it. You and your father and uncle must come out to pass a few days with me at the camp. You will enjoy all the novelty of desert life; and all the comforts of a good hotel. Sunset and moonlight are magic in their effects. A middle-aged spinster, an *anglaise*, who was out here writing articles for the *English Churchman*, stayed with us last month and became so amorous that I had grave fears for my virtue. . . . I have an excellent *chef* there and six most comfortable tents. What more, I ask you?"

She was at once captivated by the suggestion.

"I'd love it! We could easily do that, couldn't we, Dad?"

Lawrence hesitated; and tugged at his close-clipped white moustache.

"A little bit rough for a young girl, isn't it, Armand?"

Marécotte feigned a wounded dignity.

"Rough? It is luxurious as a favourite Pekinese's basket. My wife lives there—at least she happens to be away in Cairo for a shopping expedition for a few days—but she has spent many happy weeks in the camp."

"Your wife? I didn't know——"

"Oh, my dear fellow!" Marécotte exclaimed. "Didn't you know of my joy! Did you never receive my letters? About two years after you left Toulon I married Christine Fleurot. We are the happiest of mortals."

There was a long, tremendous silence, until Lawrence asked, in a curiously restrained voice:

"But what happened to Durandel?"

Marécotte shrugged his shoulders.

"What would you? The old cad commenced some nasty bickering about Christine's *dot* at the last moment. Claude Fleurot was indignant and they had a violent quarrel on the Quai de Cronstadt at the noon hour. They were both purple in the face shouting. The excitement was tremendous. Some idiot turned in a fire alarm, I recollect. Thanks be to the *bon dieu* the wedding plans were revoked. To make a long story short, I renewed my suit and eventually managed to convince the Fleurots that I was not a complete imbecile. I remember," he chuckled, "that at the critical moment I had an article on the pre-Ptolemaic period published in the *Revue de Paris*. They were greatly impressed, and from then on considered me a worthy creature. Of such peculiar stuff are parents made."

He glanced at his watch; leapt up from his chair.

"I must cease gabbling. I must go. My work begins again at five, when the heat of the day is over. There is a damnably dull Amsterdam banker who insists upon being shown round the excavations—but he reeks lucre, so I must propitiate him. (All life is a series of propitiations if one is ambitious.) And now promise me that you will both come out to my camp. I shall make preparations, and I shall expect you—to-day is Friday—on Monday next. Get your donkeys from Hassan's stable; his boys have been trained not to utter obscenities in English when they are weary, and his animals are fairly good—at least, they are young, so that their gait will not disorganize one's liver. . . . It is about four hours' ride and you will be able to do it comfortably in the cool of the morning if you leave here by half past six. Is it agreed? My heart ceases to beat until you reply."

"It is somewhat of an adventure," Lawrence began cautiously.

Marécotte flung his arms upward in despair.

"*Ciel!* He speaks like the inmate of an old man's home." Then to Beryl: "What can we do with him?"

"We'll be there," she said, smiling, and gave Lawrence's arm a tiny squeeze. "I think I can persuade him."

When Marécotte had hurried away Perry enquired lazily:

"Lawrence, who was Christine Fleurot, anyway? Did you know her?"

He replied vaguely, as if from the depths of a reverie: "A very lovely girl. . . . Yes, Perry. I happened to know her—quite well."

He sighed, and in one of his rare surrenders to impulse, captured Beryl's hand; held it for a moment.

"Come. Let's go out for a stroll. I feel as if I need—well—plenty of sunshine."

# CHAPTER XIII
## Discoveries

### I

The evening sky, viewed from the triangular aperture of Lawrence's tent, was a peacock blend of blue and green. Already a star or two had appeared, remote and trembling, above the Libyan hills. A servant, a lean ebony bishari, glided into the tent, lighted the Turkish lanterns of studded gold, and withdrew, bowing. With a sense of approval Lawrence observed that the man—even in a world of sand and sky—had contrived to maintain an immaculate appearance; that his white galabeah and scarlet sash were spotless . . . insignificant details, perhaps, but pleasing evidences of Marécotte's complete capability. Marécotte had not returned from his work; was still, probably, pottering about his subterranean vaults, and eagerly examining the mural decorations that surrounded the mummy of some long-dead royalty. Nor had Beryl yet returned from her day's visit to Amy at Luxor; he frowned, wishing that Amy, after making a complete fool of herself in Paris, had not pursued them. He feared her unstabilizing influence over Beryl. He himself was determined not to see her; had sent a message by Beryl to this effect. Amy had gone deliberately against his expressed will to Paris to attempt a divorce; had written him a rude and intolerable letter in answer to his last plea that she change her mind. He had, he decided, washed his hands of her, and would from now on allow her to pursue her own course. With a little sigh of disgust he picked up, for perhaps the tenth time that day, the Paris edition of the New York *Herald*, three weeks old, and reread the obnoxious account:

DULAC'S DAUGHTER FAILS TO
GET DIVORCE FROM EX-GOLF CHAMPION

Grounds Were Absurd French
Court Asserts; Mayford Will
Bring Counter Action

The whole affair was detestable; like seeing Amy's person exposed to a gaping, curious world. Worst of all was the terminating paragraph stating that Burton Mayford, who had arrived in Paris, intended himself to bring

suit, on grounds which he refused at present to reveal to the press. Ominous. . . . And yet, oddly enough, he was conscious of no strong resentment against Mayford. If Amy had not done this mad, impulsive thing, he reflected, there would have been no publicity, no airing of purely private matters. Bitterly he tossed aside the newspaper, and took Amy's last hurried scrawl from his pocket:

> The darn fools wouldn't grant the decree. I hear now that Burton intends to sue. Well, he can go ahead. I wish him luck—for the sake of both of us. It would be just like him, though, to imagine infidelity because I dined a couple of times with young Raspanelli at the Ritz last winter. Did you ever hear of anything so perfectly crazy? I'm staying at Luxor a week longer. Beryl tells me you don't want to see me. Tragedy of a young daughter turned from the doors of her home! . . . You've got your ideas, and I mine. If we can't agree perhaps it's wiser to stay apart, but I wish you were more human.

Her whole attitude was clear in that letter. A wave of hardness, born of his own sense of integrity and duty, surged over him. He dissected Amy's character in a cold, critical mood of analysis, and decided that she was found wanting in the very elements of stability, in the very standards to which the Dulacs owed a perpetual allegiance. With misery in his heart he left the tent; stepped out into the cool evening to absorb the view which, although he had known it for two weeks now, he would never grow tired of: the undulating sea of sand and shingle, purple-shadowed in the swiftly falling darkness, and the hills to the west a pale violet etched against an unreal green sky, their ragged summits still faintly stippled with a lingering gold. The air was suddenly and sharply chilly. He discovered, all at once, Christine standing beside him in a fragile black evening gown, a cloak thrown lightly about her shoulders. For some moments she did not speak, as if realizing that there was no necessity for a banal and forced exchange of words.

## II

Only two weeks before they had re-met, here, on this very spot. Armand had brought them together, capering about them like a small and enthusiastic schoolboy. It had been a hot, glaring morning, and she had been in white, a soft-brimmed panama shielding her face, still so youthful. She was, he saw at once, lovely, with a definite but gentle maturity. That same unconsciously proud poise of her head swept him back to Toulon days; to the Rue Alézard;

to an Easter day off the jade coastline of Hyères. . . . Her expression as she talked to him had lost, however, something of its youthful eagerness, its searching, and had given way to a philosophic calm. But her eyes preserved their wide candour.

She had clasped his hand with a perfection of naturalness, had looked straight into his eyes, and had promptly established an admirable basis of friendship between them. That Armand did not intend to exhibit any symptoms of jealousy became apparent when, after luncheon that day, he had left them; had rushed off to his underground tombs. Later Perry had come out from Luxor and, on being presented to her, had very clearly demonstrated his admiration.

"How long," he asked her, "have you been in this wilderness?" and his tone delicately inferred that there was something unfair to the rest of the world in her protracted isolation.

"This is the third winter," she had replied. Lawrence, looking on, detected a slight flush mounting to her cheeks. Perry, he admitted to himself, was remarkable—in his way. An inevitable tonic. Already Christine was becoming more animated and vivacious.

Toward evening they had all ridden over to the excavations. Armand took them down a flight of rudely carved steps and over heaps of rubble to the depths of the earth where a score of sweating and half-naked Nubian workmen stood aside deferentially, leaning on their pickaxes as they passed. Armand preceded them with a tubular electric lamp, and in the damp darkness directed a conical beam toward the various mural decorations, the stiff-legged figures of strange deities: Horus with his hawk's head, Anubis—symbol of death—with the sinister profile of a wolf. . . . Glancing at Christine only once while Armand was expounding his latest theories, Lawrence noticed what he thought could only be a spirit of disdain on her lips, a downward droop that worried him. And at the same moment he observed that Perry, too, was watching her intently.

While they were riding back to the camp in the hot red dust of sunset she had turned to Lawrence with a little sigh, and had said: "Dear Armand. . . . You can't imagine how this hobby has seized hold of him. He has almost forgotten about the living world." She had smiled, almost sadly; had then quickly changed the subject by calling his and Perry's attention to the beauty of the evening shadows that were like pools of indigo at the base of the Libyan hills.

In the days that followed, Armand was away from morning to night, absorbed in his work. Even during the dinner hour, on his return to camp, he

read books propped up against a decanter. He was excitable and sensitive. On one occasion when Christine had remonstrated that he was wearing himself to the bone, he had burst out: “It’s got to be done, I tell you! At least fifty yards more before the summer heat comes. The French Government relies on me. My dear, I’m afraid sometimes that you don’t realize my responsibilities.”

Then, penitent at his sharpness, he had patted her hand. It occurred to Lawrence that it was Armand himself, rather, who did not understand his obligations.

Alone with Christine he talked with her on many subjects—except, of course, that of Armand. Here a natural reticence, a sense of what constituted good taste, rendered him silent. But her avoidance of mentioning Marécotte was, he thought, a trifle overdone. She was a woman whose innermost thoughts would never, never be revealed unless she wished them so. It seemed to him that she had matured with that perfection of poise which, he had always considered, was a particular characteristic of the Frenchwoman. An intangible thing. A serenity, a sureness about life. And with it a deep understanding of the human heart. Perry had been quick to recognize this. To put it mildly, he had been entranced by her, and made no attempt to conceal the fact. Lawrence, watching him converse with her, smiled at the bend of his handsome head close to hers and the hint of a ripening intimacy he managed to convey at their every meeting. That was Perry’s way. Christine took it calmly, admirably, and brightened to his tributes. And just before he left the camp to return to Luxor and Cairo, after his three-days’ stay, he confided to Lawrence that she was without doubt the most captivating human being he had met in years.

“That,” Lawrence stated, laughing, “is something I seem to have heard you say before now. Only perhaps the adjective was a different one.”

“But I mean it,” Perry insisted. “She is—all that a woman should be. She is wonderful. But she isn’t happy, Lawrie. Her husband is an ass. He doesn’t see things . . . at all. There is a stage, you know, in most women’s lives—to my mind the most attractive stage of all—when they need to live—well—vividly. But Marécotte doesn’t see that. . . .”

Lawrence, lighting a cigar, did not reply. And when he again spoke it was of other matters, of their plans for the rest of the winter.

That evening, after Perry’s departure, he had outlined to Christine, briefly, his life; had told her of his marriage. He had avoided touching upon the emotional aspect of it. But she had understood, and had perceived his

underlying perplexity at the vast confusion of results which mankind, for want of a better term, calls destiny.

"My dear Lawrence," she had said, "there is no solution. One takes life as it is dealt out. That is the only possible way. To go back, in fact, to Confucius for one's religion, and there to stop. To cease wondering why. That is what makes life unhappy—to wonder why."

"A selfish sort of creed," he had asserted. "Nothing would be accomplished if it were followed."

"You were grasping at personal happiness," she reminded him. "It depends what your aim is—self or others. Perhaps I have grown selfish. You see, I have had no one to help."

"But Armand?" It slipped out involuntarily from him.

She had shrugged her shoulders.

"He is of the kind that helps himself. If I fussed over him and tried to make him happy he couldn't stand it. Years ago I failed at that. One struggles in life, often successfully, for one's own happiness—never for the happiness of others."

"But he finds his happiness in you just the same," he had insisted.

"You are kind. But that is a different thing. A man seeks out, unaided, the aspects of a woman which please him. I do not believe that any single voluntary act of hers brings the same satisfaction as his own mental image of her. That is in the nature of man, isn't it?"

"It is probably true," he had replied. "But your other statement: that one can fight successfully for one's own happiness only. With that I can't agree. How about those people who can't help themselves?"

She had smiled, tenderly, at that.

"You are a good man—as ever. But there are so few like that nowadays as to be negligible."

"Young people," he had suggested.

"Ah—they! They help themselves best of all. Far better than we, Lawrence. Your brother, Perry, he is young in that way."

And so he had found her, rather gentle, rather wistful, across the abyss of years.

## III

Achmed, the head servant, here broke in on his thoughts with a monotonous beating upon a bronze gong. Christine gave him a hurried smile

and, still silent, led the way to the large tent where the dining table, with its heavy damask, gleaming silver, and a rose bowl filled with Nile lotus, awaited them. He remarked casually, seeing that only two places were set:

"Armand not back yet?"

She frowned quickly.

"He's a little later every day. He's working much too hard. Scarcely sleeps. What a curious thing, isn't it, that a man should be so fascinated by the records of a dead civilization? You would never get any woman to devote her time to that kind of thing. She would be too occupied in just living."

He had never heard her refer to Marécotte in so aloof and objective a manner. He laughed, perhaps a trifle nervously, and as they sat down complimented her upon the appearance of the table.

"Armand and I make an effort to maintain some sort of standard of living. Without that we would go downhill rapidly enough. . . ." She smiled; then, suddenly, covered her face with her hands. "The sand and sky, for ever and ever! . . . *Diable!* If you knew how it played on one's nerves, Lawrence. It is quite true, although you laugh. There is a kind of desert madness that seizes you, if you're not careful. I've seen it in others——"

She broke off abruptly; added almost in a whisper:

"I'm sorry. Something came over me—— By the way, where is your little daughter? She should be back by now."

"Her sister is in Luxor," he informed her. "She'll probably spend the night there and come out in the morning."

"Already tired of desert life? It did not take her long."

Her tone was once more that of the conventional hostess.

"Just restlessness. They must always be moving on, these young people. You know how they are."

"We had no children, as you know." She again gave a little sigh. "But I should think their mere presence would be compensation for any of their adorable defects. Yet I suppose you have your worries, Lawrence. I have noticed you lately—not at all happy."

How unerringly she comprehended him! As she always had, and always would. He leaned toward her, his heart warmed, craving a sympathy and understanding which he had lately come to regard as a thing he would never again encounter on the face of earth—until he had re-met her.

"My other daughter, Amy——" He paused; flushed. "I think I told you of her ideas on the subject of divorce. Public opinion and the fact that she had a child never touched her in her determination. Some aspect of her husband's character—foolish, perhaps—annoyed her, so she left him. Well—she failed in Paris, and merely succeeded in putting herself in the wrong before the whole world. She's in Luxor now, but I am not going to see her—at present, anyway."

"The new generation is headstrong," she admitted. "But I refuse to believe them altogether in the wrong. After all, how can one expect youth to be complacent, contented, when brought up in a world where whole standards are tottering, where the very fabric threatens to disintegrate? They are seeking new ideas to supplant all the old, useless illusions, now that they have been shown the utter futility of everything *we* tried to do. Groping, inarticulate youth!"

"Inarticulate!" He laughed. "Youth is the loudest, most heard-from thing in the world to-day."

She rejoined softly:

"You seem to think that there's something novel in this struggle between the ideas of young and old. And yet I remember Armand once pointing out to me a paragraph in Ovid deploring the young men of his time, and comparing their manners with those of his own youth. It is always hard to grow old tolerantly and gracefully."

"But they have no sense of good taste," he averred. "They're crass. They miss all the joys of subtlety. There is no guesswork, no reading of meanings. In two minutes you can size up any modern young woman, and her attitude toward any particular young man. If she likes him she'll probably throw her arms about his neck; if she doesn't like him she'll cheerfully consign him to Hades. There's nothing left, don't you see? No art in concealing thought. No idylls. No momentary beauty of waltzes . . . fleeting glimpses of romance. . . . Just a continuous jazz band and hot senses."

"Isn't there a little bit of jealousy in that remark, Lawrence?" She asked. "Don't you ever wish, for instance—" she hesitated; then continued, with a slightly palpable effort "—that you and I could have enjoyed some of this splendid modern freedom together; that we could have ridden on horses together; dined at little inns *à deux* and returned home as late as we liked? If those conditions had existed in our time I believe that young men and women would have understood one another better, and that fewer mistakes would have been made."

Astonished, he speculated upon the implication of her words. For a time he remained silent. Then asked her directly:

"Forgive me, Christine. But are you actually—happy?"

She rose; strolled over to the tent opening, and stood there looking at the twilight. Her head was turned from him, so that he was unable to see her expression. Her voice reached him, very low, not altogether steady.

"As happy as the average married woman, I suppose. In marriage one learns, gradually." She faced him. "If you want to know—Armand lives on the very surface of life, except as regards his work. He skims over existence lightly. That is all, Lawrence."

She resumed her place at the table; dismissed the topic. Achmed came in with the tall coffee percolator, the rosebud cups in filigree frames set upon an immense tray of wrought Ottoman gold. To Christine he handed a slip of paper, which she read; frowned at; and tore up.

"Armand thinks that his work may detain him all night," she said evenly. "This is something that has not happened before."

Lighting his cigar, Lawrence realized that her answer to his question concerning her happiness had been an abrupt negative, as unequivocal as circumstances would permit. He decided that Armand must be light-headed, a fool, to neglect her for the sake of the shrivelled corpses of Pharaohs, the painted evidences of an obscure and nonsensical religion. And with Christine at the fullness of her existence, too. A short-sighted little fool!

A sudden gust of wind swept through the aperture of the tent, causing the blue flame at the percolator to waver, the canvas wall behind him to flap dully. At the same moment Achmed, inscrutable in the shadows, appeared to stiffen throughout his body, and remarked in his remote, impersonal manner:

"A sandstorm is coming, I think, Madame."

"Then," she suggested, "you had better run down to the excavation and warn Monsieur Marécotte."

But Achmed, gazing into the night sky and rubbing his hands softly, told her:

"That has been already done, Madame. But Monsieur was not prepared to listen to me."

# CHAPTER XIV
## STORM

### I

The night crept on, wearily, as Lawrence, alone again and in his tent, reviewed his conversation with Christine. Of one fact he was supremely aware: that in her presence he had gradually acquired a new happiness, a sense of no longer being misunderstood. Beyond this realization he dared not drift; and, controlling his thoughts, he began slowly to pace the narrow confines of his tent. It seemed to him that the night was all at once desperately, dangerously still. Breathless. As if the pulse of the world had fluttered out. Deciding that sleep was out of the question he turned his attention to the pages of a Tauchnitz volume Christine had lent him to while away the hours.

Abruptly, at half past three by his watch, the intolerable tension snapped. A burning blast of wind assailed the tent. The canvas walls quivered and, flattened on their frail framework, tautened, and suddenly emitted a volley of whip-like reports, at once deafening and maddening. The Turkish lantern above him swayed on its chains, the flame dying low, then leaping to a wild flare. He ran to the tent flap; attempted to tighten its thong fastenings. A cyclonic blow tore the canvas from his hands; hurled him bodily backward, and a whirling curtain of yellow mist enveloped him. Blindly he groped for familiar objects, his bed, his chair. A dull roar penetrated his brain; his vision was all at once obscured and darkened by the flying sand. . . . Sand! He tasted it; breathed it; was engulfed in it. At the same time a furious, dry heat spread consumingly through his veins; racked his very being, and tortured him.

In his rocking mind one thought lingered tenaciously, sharp and clear: Christine. What had happened to her? Christine. . . . He heard himself calling out her name; but his own voice was feeble and remote, lost in the uproar. . . . He plunged out of the tent into a mad, blinding world of sand and blackness.

"Christine! Christine!"

Someone else, from an unbelievable distance, was shouting her name with his voice. His feet sank into a soft, yielding mass, a bank of sand piled high by the furious south wind. He staggered; swayed, his eyes closed by an

unbearable, searing pain. All at once a hot, dry hand clasped his and he heard, obscurely, Achmed's calm voice:

"Madame's tent fell, sir, but I took her to the kitchen. It is the strongest and safest. Come with me, sir. I will take you there."

Body bent, strong arm grasping his, he went resolutely forward into chaos.

## II

He found her sitting, calm and fully dressed, amidst the gleaming pots and pans of the kitchen tent. Exhausted, he slumped into a chair. She at once rose and, obtaining cold water from Achmed, tenderly bathed his eyes, his head and wrists.

"I'm sorry," he managed to say. "How absurd of me to give you all this trouble when I had come to help you!" His laugh was apologetic.

He looked about him. The kitchen tent, built on military lines, less pretentious than its neighbours but firmer in structure, was admirably resisting the prolonged assault of the storm. Presently Achmed, with a grave bow, departed, burnoose wrapped over his dark face, on some quixotic errand concerning the native servants quartered on the outskirts of the camp.

"He is really marvellous," Christine remarked, "but then I suppose he is used to these spring storms. We should not have stayed out here so late in the season." She added, in a facetious spirit: "Like the end of the world, with just you and I together. Rather curious, that; isn't it?"

"I wonder," he mused, "if Armand is perfectly safe?"

He was surprised at the unconcealed irritation in her reply.

"Of course he is. One need never worry on Armand's account. He is underground, probably absorbed in the translation of some ridiculous *cartouche* and totally unaware of all this. To-morrow morning you must be prepared for jokes, at our expense."

By now the thundering of the south wind had subsided to a melancholy moan. Already he was inclined to make light of the whole occurrence. But a silence had come upon Christine from which he could not arouse her.

Of a sudden she stood up, her fists clenched, her features drawn, weary, pale.

"Oh, this evil, evil place!" she cried. "This perpetual, awful sand and sky. If I have to endure it much longer I shall go mad. Mad!"

She began to walk up and down the tent, clasping and unclasping her hands, her head thrust back, eyes closed, lips drawn down in acute suffering. All her accustomed poise, her serenity, had vanished. He tried at once to soothe her with gentle and conventional phrases, but she appeared to be unaware of his voice, and even of his presence. The next thing he knew was that she had knelt to the floor beside a chair, had thrown her arms across her face, and was sobbing. Sobbing as if her heart would break.

He went toward her, his vision of her blurred, a great tenderness in his heart. After all, it had been she—hadn't it?—whose image he had inevitably pictured in just such moments as these, the unhappy, lonely moments of his life? Her grief was his; her happiness his.

She looked up at him, her face wet with tears.

"Oh, *mon cher*, is all life so illogical?"

For an instant, manlike and obtuse, he did not understand. And then, with the candid gaze of her eyes searching his and her lips quivering, the whole significance of her actions, her words, sharply reached his heart. His arms went about her. He bent forward and kissed her. But his kiss was upon the curve of her cheek; and not upon her lips.

She looked up at him with an expression in which tenderness and surprise were mingled, and he knew instantly that in that critical moment, in his very embrace of her, he had somehow confessed failure in her eyes; that something inherent, over which he had no control, had attained its victory; something stronger, perhaps, than life itself. . . . And he heard her voice, tinged with that faintest of irony which only a woman's voice can suggest, a mockery that cut deeper than any bitter words:

"It is no use, of course, to have learned now. You, and perhaps I, Lawrence, were born of an age that never sanctioned the madness of obeying instinct."

He moved again, mechanically, toward her. But with a quick and surprising access of strength she thrust him away; went to the tent opening, and drew back the flap.

"There's a glimmer of light—over there in the east," she said unsteadily. "I think you had better leave me now, Lawrence. No. Don't wait, please. I couldn't—quite—stand that. . . ."

# CHAPTER XV
## Morning

### I

At the edge of the tableland, before descending to the Nile valley, Lawrence reined up to contemplate the view. Below him the trail wound its way intricately between fantastic, conical peaks of red Nubian sandstone, dipping out of view now and then into some cauldron-shaped depression, its floor a glittering carpet of mica and transparent, many-coloured pebbles. Pyramidal piles of stone indicated, in the native fashion, its elusive course, since otherwise there was no outstanding object by which a traveller's bearings might be taken. Nothing but sand, and stone, and sky. An uncompromising, sterile scene. The morning sun throbbed down upon it all pitilessly; the sky was high and bright, with a few faint cirrus clouds. There was no shade; there were no birds; in the air no insects; no manifestation of life in any form. Only himself, his horse, and eternity.

Once he looked back, and could see, in the midst of the desert, three minute black patches. Armand's excavations. Armand, the fool, who saw things more clearly underground than in daylight, who understood the civilization of three thousand years ago better than his own immediate times.

He urged his horse on; threaded his way down the narrow pass, and at a turn in the trail the Nile Valley leapt into view, the durra fields jade-green in the sunlight; the gaunt, motionless stone figures of the Colossi; beyond them the pale silvery gleam of the river, and Luxor not yet awake, a white and sleeping village.

His mind was now clear and active; his body refreshed by an early morning breeze suddenly sprung up from the valley. But a dull ache in his heart remained to remind him.

At last he attained the fringe of the durra fields, which the trail traversed on a high and narrow embankment. The desert was behind him, the surface under his horse's hoofs now a pleasant, yielding loam. A native officer of the police corps mounted on a lean camel, a long Bedouin gun slung over his shoulder, swayed past him and saluted with a cheerful: "Good morning, my gentleman." He shook his horse to a canter, heading for a clump of date palms on the horizon that marked, he knew, the Nile ferry's landing place.

# II

Luxor was hardly awake as he disembarked from the felucca and rode under leafy lebbek trees toward the hotel. A boy outside Cook's office was hauling up heavy steel shutters with a rasping sound on the still morning air. In the Winter Palace gardens, as he swung through the gates, the old gardener, white-bearded and with a face like a dried brown berry, was clipping roses for the breakfast room.

"May thy days be long," he mumbled toothlessly in Arabic, "and thy path always strewn with honour." He thrust forward a yellow bud wet with dew and eagerly clawed at the coin Lawrence flung to him.

He reined up at the hotel door and dismounted. A small figure in white flew out to meet him. Arms were about his neck; lips pressing against his cheek.

"Beryl, dear. You up at this hour!"

She was atremble with some suppressed excitement.

"Oh, I'm so glad you're back. I've got such news to tell you. Only I'm not going to—unless you promise, promise, to be nice."

He left his horse in charge of a native; ascended the steps with her, into the cool dark hall.

"Is Amy here?" he asked as they sat down.

"She is. And dying to see you."

He smiled at the extravagant phrase. Then, his voice all at once gentle, told her: "I'll see her as soon as she comes down. There's no use making things miserable for us both."

"Frank Hauben arrives here this afternoon," Beryl said, after a pause.

His face darkened. A wave of suspicion, of blinding anger, assailed him.

"Is this some doing of Amy's? A trick against me?"

"No, no, Dad! It was a complete surprise for us all. Frank took a sudden vacation. Landed at Alexandria yesterday and then wired me." She was standing before him, pleading, eyes bright now with tears. "Dad, you believe me, don't you? You must! You don't think I'd do anything underhand to you —like that?"

A silence. Until he said, capturing her hands:

"Naturally, I believe you. It's one of the few things left for me, you see —a faith in you."

"And, Dad. You're not terribly angry?"

He shook his head and, taking her arm, walked to the elevator. The dull pain had returned to his heart. All his old pride, his resolution, seemed to flow through him, to mould him rigid, to capture him. Pride. Pride—and Beryl. . . . Christine had said that one struggled successfully for one's own happiness, but not for other people's. . . . A young man and a girl were in the elevator with them. A pretty, fair English girl. She was looking up into the face of the young man, who was in white flannels—a neat, sunburned, pleasant-looking fellow. She was laughing at everything he had to say to her. Not that he was a brilliant wit by any means, but just because she was completely happy being with him. Such moments were for the very young. One had been like that once. . . .

Outside the door of Beryl's room he demanded:

"Beryl, are you absolutely sure of yourself?"

She did not fully understand. Her heart must have skipped a beat as she whispered:

"About—about what, Dad?"

"I mean about this boy, Frank." His arms were about her. He held her close, very close to him, terrifiedly aware how precious she was to him. As if someone were lurking there, behind some pillar in the hall, ready to snatch her away from him. "If you're sure that your instinct is right—well, I'm not going to interfere. There's a good deal of unhappiness, already, in the world."

She hugged him; clung to him. He submitted himself to her overwhelming, grateful embrace. And paradoxically it seemed to him that his consent, costing a sacrifice which he alone could know throughout the years, had brought to her a happiness that was in itself the true consummation of his own life.

THE END

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## Transcriber's Notes:

A few obvious punctuation and typesetting errors have been corrected without note. When multiple spellings occurred, majority use has been employed.

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[The end of *Galloping Dawns* by Arthur Tuckerman]