

**ONCE AGAIN
TO
ZELDA**

Then wear the gold hat, if that will move her;
If you can bounce high, bounce for her too,
Till she cry 'Lover, gold-hatted, high-bouncing lover,
I must have you!'¹

Thomas Parke d'Invilliers²

Chapter 1

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.

'Whenever you feel like criticising anyone,' he told me, 'just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had.'

He didn't say anymore, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores. The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought — frequently I have feigned sleep, preoccupation, or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon; for the intimate revelations of young men, or at least the terms in

which they express them, are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions. Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth.

And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit. Conduct maybe founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don't care what it's founded on. When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt³ from my reaction — Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the 'creative temperament' — it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. No — Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.

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My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations. The Carraways are

something of a clan, and we have a tradition that we're descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my line was my grandfather's brother, who came here in fifty-one, sent a substitute to the Civil War, and started the wholesale hardware business that my father carries on today.

I never saw this great-uncle, but I'm supposed to look like him — with special reference to the rather hard-boiled painting that hangs in father's office. I graduated from New Haven in 1915, just a quarter of a century after my father, and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid⁴ so thoroughly that I came back restless. Instead of being the warm centre of the world, the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe — so I decided to go East and learn the bond business. Everybody I knew was in the bond business, so I supposed it could support one more single man. All my aunts and uncles talked it over as if they were choosing a prep school for me, and finally said, 'Why — ye — es,' with very grave, hesitant faces. Father agreed to finance me for a year, and after various delays I came East, permanently, I thought, in the spring of twenty-two.

The practical thing was to find rooms in the city, but it was a warm season, and I had just left a country of wide lawns and friendly trees, so when a young man at the office suggested that we take a house together in a commuting town, it sounded like a great idea. He found the house, a weather-beaten cardboard bungalow at eighty a month, but at the last minute the firm ordered him to Washington, and I went out to the country alone. I had a dog — at least I had him for a few days until he ran away — and an old Dodge and a Finnish woman, who made my bed and cooked

breakfast and muttered Finnish wisdom to herself over the electric stove.

It was lonely for a day or so until one morning some man, more recently arrived than I, stopped me on the road.

‘How do you get to West Egg village?’ he asked helplessly.

I told him. And as I walked on I was lonely no longer. I was a guide, a pathfinder, an original settler. He had casually conferred on me the freedom of the neighbourhood.

And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer.

There was so much to read, for one thing, and so much fine health to be pulled down out of the young breath-giving air. I bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from the mint, promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas and Morgan and Maecenas knew. And I had the high intention of reading many other books besides. I was rather literary in college — one year I wrote a series of very solemn and obvious editorials for the Yale News — and now I was going to bring back all such things into my life and become again that most limited of all specialists, the ‘well-rounded man.’ This isn’t just an epigram — life is much more successfully looked at from a single window, after all.

It was a matter of chance that I should have rented a house in one of the strangest communities in North America. It was on that slender riotous island which extends itself due east of New York — and where there are, among other natural curiosities, two unusual

formations of land. Twenty miles from the city a pair of enormous eggs, identical in contour and separated only by a courtesy bay, jut out into the most domesticated body of salt water in the Western hemisphere, the great wet barnyard of Long Island Sound. They are not perfect ovals — like the egg in the Columbus story, they are both crushed flat at the contact end — but their physical resemblance must be a source of perpetual wonder to the gulls that fly overhead. To the wingless a more arresting phenomenon is their dissimilarity in every particular except shape and size.

I lived at West Egg, the — well, the less fashionable of the two, though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them. My house was at the very tip of the egg, only fifty yards from the Sound, and squeezed between two huge places that rented for twelve or fifteen thousand a season. The one on my right was a colossal affair by any standard — it was a factual imitation of some Hôtel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden. It was Gatsby's mansion. Or, rather, as I didn't know Mr Gatsby, it was a mansion inhabited by a gentleman of that name. My own house was an eyesore, but it was a small eyesore, and it had been overlooked, so I had a view of the water, a partial view of my neighbour's lawn, and the consoling proximity of millionaires — all for eighty dollars a month.

Across the courtesy bay the white palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered along the water, and the history of the summer really begins on the evening I drove over there to have dinner with the Tom Buchanans. Daisy was my second cousin once removed, and I'd known Tom in college. And just after the war I spent two days

with them in Chicago.

Her husband, among various physical accomplishments, had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Haven — a national figure in a way, one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterward savors of anti-climax⁵. His family were enormously wealthy — even in college his freedom with money was a matter for reproach — but now he'd left Chicago and come East in a fashion that rather took your breath away: for instance, he'd brought down a string of polo ponies from Lake Forest. It was hard to realize that a man in my own generation was wealthy enough to do that.

Why they came East I don't know. They had spent a year in France for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together. This was a permanent move, said Daisy over the telephone, but I didn't believe it — I had no sight into Daisy's heart, but I felt that Tom would drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game.



And so it happened that on a warm windy evening I drove over to East Egg to see two old friends whom I scarcely knew at all. Their house was even more elaborate than I expected, a cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion, overlooking the bay. The lawn started at the beach and ran toward the front door for a quarter of a mile, jumping over sun-dials⁶ and brick walks and burning gardens — finally when it reached the house drifting up the side in bright vines as though from the momentum of its run. The front was broken by a line of French windows, glowing now with reflected gold and wide open to the warm windy afternoon, and Tom Buchanan in riding clothes was standing with his legs apart on the front porch.

He had changed since his New Haven years. Now he was a sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body — he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage — a cruel body.



His speaking voice, a gruff husky tenor, added to the impression of fractiousness he conveyed. There was a touch of paternal

contempt in it, even toward people he liked — and there were men at New Haven who had hated his guts.

‘Now, don’t think my opinion on these matters is final,’ he seemed to say, ‘just because I’m stronger and more of a man than you are.’ We were in the same senior society, and while we were never intimate I always had the impression that he approved of me and wanted me to like him with some harsh, defiant wistfulness of his own.

We talked for a few minutes on the sunny porch.

‘I’ve got a nice place here,’ he said, his eyes flashing about restlessly.

Turning me around by one arm, he moved a broad flat hand along the front vista, including in its sweep a sunken Italian garden, a half acre of deep, pungent roses, and a snub-nosed motor-boat⁷ that bumped the tide offshore.

‘It belonged to Demaine, the oil man.’ He turned me around again, politely and abruptly. ‘We’ll go inside.’

We walked through a high hallway into a bright rosy-coloured space, fragily bound into the house by French windows at either end. The windows were ajar and gleaming white against the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into the house. A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling, and then rippled over the wine-coloured rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea.

The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been

blown back in after a short flight around the house. I must have stood for a few moments listening to the whip and snap of the curtains and the groan of a picture on the wall. Then there was a boom as Tom Buchanan shut the rear windows and the caught wind died out about the room, and the curtains and the rugs and the two young women ballooned slowly to the floor.

The younger of the two was a stranger to me. She was extended full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless, and with her chin raised a little, as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of it — indeed, I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her by coming in.

The other girl, Daisy, made an attempt to rise — she leaned slightly forward with a conscientious expression — then she laughed, an absurd, charming little laugh, and I laughed too and came forward into the room.

‘I’m p-paralyzed with happiness.’

She laughed again, as if she said something very witty, and held my hand for a moment, looking up into my face, promising that there was no one in the world she so much wanted to see. That was a way she had. She hinted in a murmur that the surname of the balancing girl was Baker. (I’ve heard it said that Daisy’s murmur was only to make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming.)



At any rate, Miss Baker's lips fluttered, she nodded at me almost imperceptibly, and then quickly tipped her head back again — the object she was balancing had obviously tottered a little and given her something of a fright. Again a sort of apology arose to my lips. Almost any exhibition of complete self-sufficiency draws a stunned tribute from me.

I looked back at my cousin, who began to ask me questions in her low, thrilling voice. It was the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down, as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again. Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth, but there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered 'Listen,' a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour.

I told her how I had stopped off in Chicago for a day on my way East, and how a dozen people had sent their love through me.

'Do they miss me?' she cried ecstatically.

'The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath, and there's a persistent wail all night along the north shore.'

'How gorgeous! Let's go back, Tom. Tomorrow!' Then she added irrelevantly: 'You ought to see the baby.'

'I'd like to.'

'She's asleep. She's three years old. Haven't you ever seen her?'

'Never.'

'Well, you ought to see her. She's —'

Tom Buchanan, who had been hovering restlessly about the room, stopped and rested his hand on my shoulder.

獻給塞爾妲

那就戴頂金帽，如果能打動她；

如果你能躍高，就請為她高高躍起，
跳到她高呼“愛人，戴金帽、跳得高的愛人，
讓我擁有你！”²

托馬斯·帕克·丹維里埃³

第一章

我年紀還輕，閱歷不深的時候，我父親教導過我一句話，我至今還念念不忘。

“每逢你想要批評任何人的時候，”他對我說，“你就記住，這個世界上所有的人，並不是個個都有過你那些優越條件。”

他沒再說別的。但是，我們父子之間總是不必說透就能理解彼此，因此我明白他的意思遠遠不止那一句話。久而久之，我就慣於對所有的人都保留判斷，這個習慣既使得許多怪僻的人肯跟我說心裏話，也使我成為不少愛嘮叨的惹人厭煩的人的受害者。這個特點在正常的人身上出現的時候，心理不正常的人很快就會察覺並且抓住不放。由於這個緣故，我上大學的時候就被不公正地指責為小政客，因為我與聞一些放蕩的、不知名的人的秘密的傷心事。絕大多數的隱私都不是我打聽來的——每逢我根據某種準確無誤的跡象，看出又有一次內心剖白在地平線上噴薄欲出的時候，我往往假裝睡覺，假裝心不在焉，或者假裝出不懷好意的輕佻態度；因為青年人的內心剖白，或者至少他們表達這些感

情所用的語言，往往是雷同的，而且還帶有明顯的遮遮掩掩。不輕易評論他人，是一個無止盡的願望。雖然父親曾經自豪向我暗示，我也一直引以為傲、重重複複強調：每個人最根本的格調是天生注定的。但我仍然唯恐自己會忘記那句忠告，怕因此錯失甚麼。

在這樣誇耀我的寬容之後，我必須承認寬容也有個限度。人的行為可能建立在堅固的岩石上面，也可能建立在潮濕的沼澤之中，但是一過某種程度，我就不管它是建立在甚麼上面的了。去年秋天我從東部回來的時候，我覺得我希望全世界的人都穿上軍裝，並且永遠在道德上保持一種立正姿勢；我不再要參與放浪形骸的遊樂，也不再要偶爾窺見人內心深處的榮幸了。唯有蓋茨比——就是把名字賦予本書的那個人——除外，不屬於我這種反應的範圍——蓋茨比，他代表我所真心鄙夷的一切。如果人的品格是一系列連續不斷的成功姿態，那麼這個人身上就有一種瑰麗的異彩，他對於未來具有極高的敏感度，類似一部精密的儀器，而這部儀器能夠記錄萬里以外的地震。這種敏銳和通常美其名為“創造性氣質”的多愁善感毫不相干——它是一種異乎尋常永葆希望的天賦，一種富於浪漫色彩的敏捷，這是在別人身上從未發現過的，也是我今後不大可能會再發現的。不——蓋茨比本人到頭來倒是無可厚非的；使我對人們短暫的悲哀和片刻的歡欣暫時喪失興趣的，卻是那些吞噬蓋茨比心靈的東西，是在他的幻夢消逝後緊隨而來的污穢塵埃。

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我家三代以來都是這個中西部城市家境富裕的頭面人物。

姓卡羅威的也可算是個世家，據家裏傳說我們是巴克魯公爵⁴的後裔，但是我們家系的創始人卻是我祖父的哥哥。他在一八五一年來到這裏，買了個替身去參加南北戰爭，開始做起五金批發生意，也就是我父親今天還在經營的買賣。

我從未見過這位伯祖父，但是據說我長得像他，特別有掛在父親辦公室裏的那幅鐵板面孔的畫像為證。我在一九一五年從紐黑文耶魯大學所在地畢業。我畢業的日子，剛好比我父親晚四份之一個世紀，不久以後我就參加了那個稱之為世界大戰的遲來的條頓民族大遷徙。我在反攻中感到其樂無窮，回來以後就覺得百無聊賴了。中西部不再是世界溫暖的中心，而倒像是宇宙的荒涼邊緣——於是我決定到東部去學債券生意。我所認識的人個個都是做債券生意的，因此我認為它多養活一個單身漢總不成問題。我的叔伯阿姨們商量了一番，儼然是在為我挑選一間預備學校⁵，最後才說：“呃……那就……這樣吧。”面容都很嚴肅而猶疑。父親答應為我提供一年的費用，然後又幾經耽擱，我才在一九二二年春天到東部去，自以為是一去不返的了。

切合實際的辦法是在城裏找一套房間寄宿，但那時已是溫暖季節，而我又是剛剛離開了一個有寬闊草坪和宜人樹木的地方，因此辦公室裏一個年輕人提議我們兩個到近郊合租一間屋的時候，我覺得那是個很妙的主意。他找到了一間屋，那是一座風雨剝蝕的木板平房，月租八十美元，可是在最後一分鐘公司把他調到華盛頓去，我也就只好一個人搬到郊外去住了。我有一隻狗——至少在牠跑掉以前我養了牠兩三天、一輛舊道吉汽車和一個芬蘭女傭人，她替我收拾牀鋪，弄早餐，在電爐上一面做飯，一

面嘴裏咕噥着芬蘭的格言。

頭數天我感到孤單，直到一天早上有個人，比我更是新來乍到的，在路上攔住了我。

“到西卯村去怎麼走？”他無奈地問我。

我告訴了他方向。我再繼續往前走的時候，我不再感到孤單了。我成了領路人：一個能找路的人，一個最初的定居者。他無意之中授予了我榮譽市民的身份。

眼看陽光明媚，樹木忽然間長滿了葉，就像電影裏的東西生長得那麼快，我又產生了那個熟悉的信念，隨着夏天的來臨，新生活開始了。

有那麼多書要讀，這是一點，同時郊外的空氣對身體那麼有益。我買了十多本有關銀行業、信貸和投資證券的書籍，一本本紅皮燙金立在書架上，好像造幣廠新鑄的錢幣一樣，準備揭示麥達斯⁶、摩根⁷和梅賽納斯⁸的秘訣。除此之外，我還對其他書有很大興趣。我在大學的時候是喜歡舞文弄墨的，——有一年我給《耶魯新聞》寫過一連串一本正經而又平淡無奇的社論——現在我準備把諸如此類的東西重新納入我的生活，重新成為“通才”，也就是那種最淺薄的專家。這並不只是一個俏皮的警句——從一個窗口去觀察人生畢竟要成功得多。

純粹出於偶然，我租的這間屋在北美最離奇的一個村鎮。這個村鎮位於紐約市正東，那奇形怪狀細長的小島上——那裏除了其他天然奇觀以外，還有兩個地方形狀異乎尋常：離城二十英里路，有兩個其大無比的雞蛋般的半島，外形一模一樣，中間隔着一個小灣，一直伸進西半球那片環繞長島海峽、西半球最廣大的

海洋之中。它們並不是正橢圓形，——而是像哥倫布故事裏的雞蛋一樣，在碰過的那頭都是壓碎了的——但是它們外貌的相似一定使從頭上飛過的海鷗驚異不已。對於沒有翅膀的人類來說，一個更加饒有趣味的現象，卻是這兩個地方除了形狀大小之外，在每一個方面都截然不同。

我住在西卵，這是兩個地方中比較不那麼時髦的一個，不過這是一個非常膚淺的標籤，不足以表示兩者之間離奇的落差。我住的屋緊靠在雞蛋的頂端，離海灣只有五十碼，擠在兩座每季租金要一萬二到一萬五的大別墅中間。我右邊的那一幢，不管按甚麼標準來說，都是一個龐然大物——甚似諾曼第⁹的市政廳，一邊是一座簇新的塔樓，上面疏疏落落覆蓋着一層常春藤，還有一個大理石游泳池，以及四十多英畝的草坪和花園。這是蓋茨比的大宅，或者更確切地說這是一位姓蓋茨比的紳士所住的大宅，因為我還不認識蓋茨比先生。我自己的屋實在難看，幸而很小，沒有人注意，因此我才有緣欣賞一片海景，欣賞我鄰居草坪的一部份，並且能以與百萬富翁為鄰而引以自慰——這一切每月只需八十美元。

小灣對岸，東卵豪華住宅區潔白的宮殿式大宅，沿着水邊發出奪目的光芒。那個夏天的故事在我開車去到湯·布沙南夫婦家吃飯的晚上才真正開始。黛西是我遠房表妹，湯是我在大學裏就認識的。大戰剛結束之後，我在芝加哥時還在他們家住過兩天。

她的丈夫，除了擅長其他各種運動之外，曾經是紐黑文有史以來最偉大的欖球運動員之一——也可說是個全國聞名的人物，這種人二十一歲就在有限範圍內取得登峰造極的成就，從此以後

一切都不免有走下坡路的味道了。他家裏非常有錢，還在大學時他那樣任意花錢已經遭人非議，但現在他離開了芝加哥搬到東部來，搬家的那個排場可真要使人驚訝不已。比方說，他從森林湖運來整整一群打馬球用的馬匹。在我這一輩子中竟然還有人有錢得能夠做這種事，實在令人難以置信。

他們為甚麼到東部來，我並不知道。他們並沒有甚麼特殊的理由，在法國留了一年，後來又不安定地東飄西蕩，所去的地方都有人打馬球，而且大家都有錢。這次是定居了，黛西在電話裏說。可是我並不相信——我看不透黛西的心思，不過我覺得湯會為追尋某場球賽那種無法取代的狂喜自滿與激情，就這樣略有點悵惘地永遠飄蕩下去。

於是，在一個溫暖有風的晚上，我開車到東卵去探望兩個我幾乎完全不了解的老朋友。他們的屋比我料想的還要豪華，一座鮮明悅目，紅白兩色的喬治王殖民時代式的大宅，面臨海灣。草坪從海灘起步，直奔大門，足足有四份之一英里，一路跨過日晷、磚徑和火紅的花園——最後跑到屋跟前，彷彿借助於奔跑的力量，綠油油的常春藤沿着牆往上爬。屋正面有一扇法國式的落地長窗，此刻在夕照中金光閃閃，迎着午後的暖風敞開着。湯·布沙南身穿騎裝，兩腿叉開，站在前門陽台上。

從紐黑文時代以來，他樣子已經變了。現在他是三十多歲的人了，身體健壯，頭髮稻草色，嘴邊略帶狠相，舉止高傲。兩隻炯炯有神的傲慢眼睛已經在他臉上佔了支配地位，給人一種永遠盛氣凌人的印象。即使他那套像女人穿的優雅騎裝也掩藏不住他魁梧壯實的身軀——他彷彿填滿了那雙雪亮的皮靴，把上面的帶

繃得緊緊的；他轉動肩膀時，你可以看到一大片肌肉在他薄薄的上衣下面起伏。這是一個力大無比的身軀，一個殘忍的身軀。

他說話的聲音，又粗又大的男高音，增添了他給人性情暴戾的印象。他說起話來還帶着一種長輩教訓人的口吻，即使對他喜歡的人也一樣。因此在紐黑文的時候對他恨之入骨的大有人在。

“我說，你可別認為我在這些問題上的意見是說了算的，”他彷彿在說，“僅僅因為我力氣比你大，比你更有男子漢氣概。”我們兩個屬於同一個高年級學生聯誼會；雖然我們的關係並不密切，我總覺得他很看重我，而且帶着他那特有的粗野、蠻橫的悵惘神氣，希望我也喜歡他。

我們在陽光和煦的陽台上談了數分鐘。

“我這地方很不錯，”他說，他的眼睛不停地轉來轉去。

他抓住我的一隻手臂把我轉過身來，伸出一隻巨大手掌指點眼前的景色，在一揮手之中包括了一座意大利式的凹型花園，半英畝滿佈深色濃郁的玫瑰花，以及一艘在岸邊隨着浪潮起伏的獅鼻汽船。

“這地方原來屬於石油大王德梅因。”他又把我推轉過身來，客客氣氣但是不容分說，“我們到裏面去吧。”

我們穿過一條高高的走廊，走進一間寬敞明亮玫瑰色的房。兩頭都是落地長窗，把這間房輕巧地嵌在這間屋當中。這些長窗都半開着，在外面嫩綠草地的映襯下，顯得晶瑩耀眼，那片草彷彿要長到室內來似的。一陣輕風吹過屋裏，把窗簾從一頭吹進來，又從另一頭吹出去，好像一面面白旗，吹向天花板上糖花結婚蛋糕似的裝飾，然後輕輕拂過酒紅色地毯，留下一陣陰影有如

風吹海面。

房裏唯一完全靜止的東西是一張龐大的長沙發椅，上面有兩個年輕的女人，活像浮在一個停泊在地面的大氣球上。她們兩個都身穿白衣，衣裙在風中飄盪，好像她們乘氣球繞着屋飛了一圈剛被風吹回來似的。我準是站了好一會，傾聽窗簾颯動的劈啪聲和牆上一幅掛像嘎吱嘎吱的響聲。忽然砰然一聲，湯·布沙南關上了後面的落地窗，室內的餘風才漸漸平息，窗簾、地毯和兩位少婦也都慢慢地降落地面。

兩個之中比較年輕的那個，我不認識。她平躺在長沙發的一頭，身體一動也不動，下巴稍微向上仰起，彷彿她在上面平衡着一件甚麼東西，生怕它掉下來似的。如果她從眼角中看到了我，她可毫無表示——其實我倒吃了一驚，差一點要張口向她道歉，因為我進來驚動了她。

另外那個少婦，黛西，想要站起身來，——她身體微微向前傾，一臉誠心誠意的表情——接着她噗嗤一笑，又滑稽又可愛地輕輕一笑，我也跟着笑了，接着就走上前去進了房間。

“我高興得癱……癱掉了。”

她又笑了一次，好像她說了一句非常俏皮的話，接着就拉住我的手，仰起臉看着我，表示世界上沒有第二個人她更高興見到的了。那是她特有的一種表情。她低聲告訴我那個在做平衡動作的女孩姓貝克（我聽人說過，黛西喃喃低語只是為了讓別人把身體靠近她，這是不相干的微言，絲毫無損於這種表情的魅力）。

不管怎樣，貝克小姐的嘴唇微微一動，她稍微向我點了點頭，幾乎是看不出來的，接着趕忙把頭又仰回去——她在保持平

衡的那件東西顯然歪了一下，讓她吃了一驚。道歉的話又一次冒到了我的嘴邊。這種幾乎是完全我行我素的神情總是使我感到目瞪口呆、滿心讚賞佩服。

我掉過頭去看我的表妹，她開始用她那低低的、令人激動的聲音向我問問題。這是那種叫人側耳傾聽的聲音，彷彿每句話都是永遠不會重新演奏的一組音符。她的臉龐憂鬱而美麗，臉上有明媚的神采，有兩隻明媚的眼睛，有一張明媚而熱情的嘴，但是她聲音裏有一種激動人心的特質，那是為她傾倒過的男人都覺得難以忘懷的：一種抑揚動聽的魅力，一聲喃喃的“聽着”，一種暗示，說她片刻以前剛剛做完一些賞心樂事，而且下一個小時裏還有賞心樂事。

我告訴了她我到東部來的途中，曾在芝加哥逗留一天，有十幾個朋友都託我向她問好。

“他們想念我嗎？”她大喜若狂似的喊道。

“整個城市都想你想瘋了！所有汽車都把左後輪漆上了黑漆，彷彿是葬禮上的花圈。他們還在城北的湖邊傷心欲絕地哭了數晚。”

“太美了！湯，我們回去吧。明天！”隨即她又毫不相干地說，“你應該看看寶寶。”

“我很想看。”

“她睡着了。她三歲。你從沒見過她嗎？”

“從來沒有。”

“那麼你應該看看她。她是……”

湯·布沙南本來坐立不安地在房裏來回走動，現在停了下來

把一隻手放在我肩上。

“你在做甚麼買賣，尼克？”

“我在做債券生意。”

“在哪間公司？”

我告訴了他。

“沒聽說過，”他斷然地說。

這使我感到不痛快。

“你會聽到的，”我簡單地慢慢答道，“你在東部住久了就會聽到的。”

“噢，我一定會在東部留下來的，你放心吧。”他先望望黛西又望望我，彷彿他在提防還有別的甚麼名堂。“我要是個天大的傻瓜才會到任何別的地方去住。”

這時貝克小姐說：“絕對如此！”來得那麼突然，使我吃了一驚——這是我進了房之後她說的第一句話。顯然她的話也使她自己同樣吃驚，因為她打了個呵欠，隨即做了一連串迅速而靈巧的動作就站了起來。

“我都坐僵了，”她抱怨道，“我在那張沙發上躺了不知多久了。”

“別盯着我看，”黛西回嘴說，“我整個下午都在勸你去紐約呢。”

“不要，謝謝，”貝克小姐對着剛從食品間端來的四杯雞尾酒說，“我正一板一眼地在進行鍛煉呢。”

她的男主人難以置信地看着她。

“是嗎！”他把自己的酒喝了下去，彷彿那是杯底的一滴。“我