VINTAGE

THE BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

CONTENTS

Cover
About the Book
About the Author
Also By F. Scott Fitzgerald
Dedication
Title Page

BOOK ONE

I. Anthony Patch
II. Portrait of a Siren
III. The Connoisseur of Kisses

BOOK TWO

I. The Radiant Hour
II. Symposium
III. The Broken Lute

BOOK THREE

I. A Matter of Civilization
II. A Matter of Aesthetics
III. No Matter!

Copyright

About the Book

Anthony Patch and Gloria Gibson are the golden children of the Jazz Age. They marry and embark on a life of glittering parties, lavish expenditure and scandalous revelry. When the money dries up their marriage founders. In this wistful novel Fitzgerald portrays the decline of youthful promise with devastating clarity.

About the Author

F. Scott Fitzgerald was born in 1896. He was educated at Princeton and joined the army in 1917. While stationed in Alabama he met Zelda Sayre and later married her in New York. The couple's youth, beauty and notorious lifestyle made them famous during the era that Fitzgerald dubbed 'the Jazz Age.' Fitzgerald's first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, was published in 1920 and was a tremendous critical and commercial success. He wrote *The Beautiful and Damned, The Great Gatsby, Tender is the Night* as well as volumes of short stories and *The Crack-Up*, a selection of autobiographical pieces. Fitzgerald was working on *The Last Tycoon* when he died in 1940, aged 44.

Raymond Chandler said of Fitzgerald, 'he had one of the rarest qualities in all literature – charm … It's not a matter of pretty writing or clear style. It's a kind of subdued magic, controlled and exquisite, the sort of thing you get from good string quartets.'

ALSO BY F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Novels

This Side of Paradise

The Great Gatsby

Tender is the Night

The Last Tycoon

Short Stories

Flappers and Philosophers

Tales of the Jazz Age

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Babylon Revisited

The Pat Hobby Stories

The Basil and Josephine Stories

Autobiography

The Crack-Up

Praise

‘If Fitzgerald had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent him. Seldom has there been a character who personified, as well as chronicled, an age with such dexterity and verisimilitude’ *Sunday Times*

To
Shane Leslie
George Jean Nathan
and Maxwell Perkins
In Appreciation of Much
Literary Help and Encouragement

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

The Beautiful and Damned

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

BOOK ONE

I. ANTHONY PATCH

IN 1913, WHEN Anthony Patch was twenty-five, two years were already gone since irony, the Holy Ghost of this later day, had, theoretically at least, descended upon him. Irony was the final polish of the shoe, the ultimate dab of the clothes-brush, a sort of intellectual ‘There!’—yet at the brink of this story he has as yet gone no further than the conscious stage. As you first see him he wonders frequently whether he is not without honour and slightly mad, a shameful and obscene thinness glistening on the surface of the world like oil on a clean pond, these occasions being varied, of course, with those in which he thinks himself rather an exceptional young man, thoroughly sophisticated, well adjusted to his environment, and somewhat more significant than any one else he knows.

This was his healthy state and it made him cheerful, pleasant, and very attractive to intelligent men and to all women. In this state he considered that he would one day accomplish some quiet subtle thing that the elect would deem worthy and, passing on, would join the dimmer stars in a nebulous, indeterminate heaven half-way between death and immortality. Until the time came for this effort he would be Anthony Patch—not a portrait of a man but a distinct and dynamic personality, opinionated, contemptuous, functioning from within outward—a man who was aware that there could be no honour and yet had honour, who knew the sophistry of courage and yet was brave.

A Worthy Man and His Gifted Son

Anthony drew as much consciousness of social security from being the grandson of Adam J. Patch as he would have had from tracing his line over the sea to the crusaders. This is inevitable; Virginians and Bostonians to the contrary notwithstanding, an aristocracy founded sheerly on money postulates wealth in the particular.

Now Adam J. Patch, more familiarly known as ‘Cross Patch,’ left his father’s farm in Tarrytown early in sixty-one to join a New York cavalry regiment. He came home from the war a major, charged into Wall Street, and amid much fuss, fume, applause, and ill will he gathered to himself some seventy-five million dollars.

This occupied his energies until he was fifty-seven years old. It was then that he determined, after a severe attack of sclerosis, to consecrate the remainder of his life to the moral regeneration of the world. He became a reformer among reformers. Emulating the magnificent efforts of Anthony Comstock, after whom his grandson was named, he levelled a varied assortment of uppercuts and body-blows at liquor, literature, vice, art, patent medicines, and Sunday theatres. His mind, under the influence of that insidious mildew which eventually forms on all but the few, gave itself up furiously to every indignation of the age. From an armchair in the office of his Tarrytown estate he directed against the enormous hypothetical enemy, unrighteousness, a campaign which went on through fifteen years, during which he displayed himself a rabid monomaniac, an unqualified nuisance, and an intolerable bore. The year in which this story opens found him wearying; his campaign had grown desultory; 1861 was creeping up slowly on 1895; his thoughts ran a great deal on the Civil War, somewhat on his dead wife and son, almost infinitesimally on his grandson Anthony.

Early in his career Adam Patch had married an anæmic lady of thirty, Alicia Withers, who brought him one hundred thousand dollars and an impeccable entré into the banking

circles of New York. Immediately and rather spunkily she had borne him a son and, as if completely devitalized by the magnificence of this performance, she had thenceforth effaced herself within the shadowy dimensions of the nursery. The boy, Adam Ulysses Patch, became an inveterate joiner of clubs, connoisseur of good form, and driver of tandems—at the astonishing age of twenty-six he began his memoirs under the title *New York Society as I Have Seen It*. On the rumour of its conception this work was eagerly bid for among publishers, but as it proved after his death to be immoderately verbose and overpoweringly dull, it never obtained even a private printing.

This Fifth Avenue Chesterfield married at twenty-two. His wife was Henrietta Lebrune, the Boston 'Society Contralto,' and the single child of the union was, at the request of his grandfather, christened Anthony Comstock Patch. When he went to Harvard, the Comstock dropped out of his name to a nether hell of oblivion and was never heard of thereafter.

Young Anthony had one picture of his father and mother together—so often had it faced his eyes in childhood that it had acquired the impersonality of furniture, but every one who came into his bedroom regarded it with interest. It showed a dandy of the nineties, spare and handsome, standing beside a tall dark lady with a muff and the suggestion of a bustle. Between them was a little boy with long brown curls, dressed in a velvet Lord Fauntleroy suit. This was Anthony at five, the year of his mother's death.

His memories of the Boston Society Contralto were nebulous and musical. She was a lady who sang, sang, sang, in the music-room of their house on Washington Square—sometimes with guests scattered all about her, the men with their arms folded, balanced breathlessly on the edges of sofas, the women with their hands in their laps, occasionally making little whispers to the men and always clapping very briskly and uttering cooing cries after each

song—and often she sang to Anthony alone, in Italian or French or in a strange and terrible dialect which she imagined to be the speech of the Southern negro.

His recollections of the gallant Ulysses, the first man in America to roll the lapels of his coat, were much more vivid. After Henrietta Lebrune Patch had ‘joined another choir,’ as her widower huskily remarked from time to time, father and son lived up at grampa’s in Tarrytown, and Ulysses came daily to Anthony’s nursery and expelled pleasant, thick-smelling words for sometimes as much as an hour. He was continually promising Anthony hunting trips and fishing trips and excursions to Atlantic City, ‘oh, some time soon now’; but none of them ever materialized. One trip they did take; when Anthony was eleven they went abroad, to England and Switzerland, and there in the best hotel in Lucerne his father died with much sweating and grunting and crying aloud for air. In a panic of despair and terror Anthony was brought back to America, wedded to a vague melancholy that was to stay beside him through the rest of his life.

Past and Person of the Hero

At eleven he had a horror of death. Within six impressionable years his parents had died and his grandmother had faded off almost imperceptibly, until, for the first time since her marriage, her person held for one day an unquestioned supremacy over her own drawing-room. So to Anthony life was a struggle against death, that waited at every corner. It was as a concession to his hypochondriacal imagination that he formed the habit of reading in bed—it soothed him. He read until he was tired and often fell asleep with the lights still on.

His favourite diversion until he was fourteen was his stamp collection; enormous, as nearly exhaustive as a boy’s could be—his grandfather considered fatuously that it was

teaching him geography. So Anthony kept up a correspondence with a half-dozen ‘Stamp and Coin’ companies and it was rare that the mail failed to bring him new stamp-books or packages of glittering approval sheets—there was a mysterious fascination in transferring his acquisitions interminably from one book to another. His stamps were his greatest happiness and he bestowed impatient frowns on any one who interrupted him at play with them; they devoured his allowance every month, and he lay awake at night musing untiringly on their variety and many-coloured splendour.

At sixteen he had lived almost entirely within himself, an inarticulate boy, thoroughly un-American, and politely bewildered by his contemporaries. The two preceding years had been spent in Europe with a private tutor, who persuaded him that Harvard was the thing; it would ‘open doors,’ it would be a tremendous tonic, it would give him innumerable self-sacrificing and devoted friends. So he went to Harvard—there was no other logical thing to be done with him.

Oblivious to the social system, he lived for a while alone and unsought in a high room in Beck Hall—a slim dark boy of medium height with a shy sensitive mouth. His allowance was more than liberal. He laid the foundations for a library by purchasing from a wandering bibliophile first editions of Swinburne, Meredith, and Hardy, and a yellowed illegible autograph letter of Keats’s, finding later that he had been amazingly overcharged. He became an exquisite dandy, amassed a rather pathetic collection of silk pyjamas, brocaded dressing-gowns, and neckties too flamboyant to wear; in this secret finery he would parade before a mirror in his room or lie stretched in satin along his window-seat looking down on the yard and realizing dimly this clamour, breathless and immediate, in which it seemed he was never to have a part.

Curiously enough he found in senior year that he had acquired a position in his class. He learned that he was looked upon as a rather romantic figure, a scholar, a recluse, a tower of erudition. This amused him but secretly pleased him—he began going out, at first a little and then a great deal. He made the Pudding. He drank—quietly and in the proper tradition. It was said of him that had he not come to college so young he might have ‘done extremely well.’ In 1909, when he graduated, he was only twenty years old.

Then abroad again—to Rome this time, where he dallied with architecture and painting in turn, took up the violin, and wrote some ghastly Italian sonnets, supposedly the ruminations of a thirteenth-century monk on the joys of the contemplative life. It became established among his Harvard intimates that he was in Rome, and those of them who were abroad that year looked him up and discovered with him, on many moonlight excursions, much in the city that was older than the Renaissance or indeed than the republic. Maury Noble, from Philadelphia, for instance, remained two months, and together they realized the peculiar charm of Latin women and had a delightful sense of being very young and free in a civilization that was very old and free. Not a few acquaintances of his grandfather’s called on him, and had he so desired he might have been *persona grata* with the diplomatic set—indeed, he found that his inclinations tended more and more toward conviviality, but that long adolescent aloofness and consequent shyness still dictated to his conduct.

He returned to America in 1912 because of one of his grandfather’s sudden illnesses, and after an excessively tiresome talk with the perpetually convalescent old man he decided to put off until his grandfather’s death the idea of living permanently abroad. After a prolonged search he took an apartment on Fifty-second Street and to all appearances settled down.

In 1913 Anthony Patch’s adjustment of himself to the universe was in process of consummation. Physically, he had improved since his undergraduate days—he was still too thin but his shoulders had widened and his brunette face had lost the frightened look of his freshman year. He was secretly orderly and in person spick and span—his friends declared that they had never seen his hair rumpled. His nose was too sharp; his mouth was one of those unfortunate mirrors of mood inclined to droop perceptibly in moments of unhappiness, but his blue eyes were charming, whether alert with intelligence or half closed in an expression of melancholy humour.

One of those men devoid of the symmetry of feature essential to the Aryan ideal, he was yet, here and there, considered handsome—moreover, he was very clean, in appearance and in reality, with that especial cleanness borrowed from beauty.

The Reproachless Apartment

Fifth and Sixth Avenues, it seemed to Anthony, were the uprights of a gigantic ladder stretching from Washington Square to Central Park. Coming up-town on top of a bus toward Fifty-second Street invariably gave him the sensation of hoisting himself hand by hand on a series of treacherous rungs, and when the bus jolted to a stop at his own rung he found something akin to relief as he descended the reckless metal steps to the sidewalk.

After that, he had but to walk down Fifty-second Street half a block, pass a stodgy family of brownstone houses—and then in a jiffy he was under the high ceilings of his great front room. This was entirely satisfactory. Here, after all, life began. Here he slept, breakfasted, read, and entertained.

The house itself was of murky material, built in the late nineties; in response to the steadily growing need of small

apartments each floor had been thoroughly remodelled and rented individually. Of the four apartments Anthony's, on the second floor, was the most desirable.

The front room had fine high ceilings and three large windows that loomed down pleasantly upon Fifty-second Street. In its appointments it escaped by a safe margin being of any particular period; it escaped stiffness, stuffiness, bareness, and decadence. It smelt neither of smoke nor of incense—it was tall and faintly blue. There was a deep lounge of the softest brown leather with somnolence drifting about it like a haze. There was a high screen of Chinese lacquer chiefly concerned with geometrical fishermen and huntsmen in black and gold; this made a corner alcove for a voluminous chair guarded by an orange-coloured standing lamp. Deep in the fireplace a quartered shield was burned to a murky black.

Passing through the dining-room, which, as Anthony took only breakfast at home, was merely a magnificent potentiality, and down a comparatively long hall, one came to the heart and core of the apartment–Anthony's bedroom and bath.

Both of them were immense. Under the ceilings of the former even the great canopied bed seemed of only average size. On the floor an exotic rug of crimson velvet was soft as fleece on his bare feet. His bathroom, in contrast to the rather portentous character of his bedroom, was gay, bright, extremely habitable and even faintly facetious. Framed around the walls were photographs of four celebrated thespian beauties of the day: Julia Sanderson as 'The Sunshine Girl,' Ina Claire as 'The Quaker Girl,' Billie Burke as 'The Mind-the-Paint Girl,' and Hazel Dawn as 'The Pink Lady.' Between Billie Burke and Hazel Dawn hung a print representing a great stretch of snow presided over by a cold and formidable sun—this, claimed Anthony, symbolized the cold shower.

The bathtub, equipped with an ingenious bookholder, was low and large. Beside it a wall wardrobe bulged with sufficient linen for three men and with a generation of neckties. There was no skimpy glorified towel of a carpet—instead, a rich rug, like the one in his bedroom a miracle of softness, that seemed almost to massage the wet foot emerging from the tub….

All in all a room to conjure with—it was easy to see that Anthony dressed there, arranged his immaculate hair there, in fact did everything but sleep and eat there. It was his pride, this bathroom. He felt that if he had a love he would have hung her picture just facing the tub so that, lost in the soothing steamings of the hot water, he might lie and look up at her and muse warmly and sensuously on her beauty.

Nor Does He Spin

The apartment was kept clean by an English servant with the singularly, almost theatrically, appropriate name of Bounds, whose technic was marred only by the fact that he wore a soft collar. Had he been entirely Anthony's Bounds this defect would have been summarily remedied, but he was also the Bounds of two other gentlemen in the neighbourhood. From eight until eleven in the morning he was entirely Anthony's. He arrived with the mail and cooked breakfast. At nine-thirty he pulled the edge of Anthony's blanket and spoke a few terse words—Anthony never remembered clearly what they were and rather suspected they were deprecative; then he served breakfast on a card-table in the front room, made the bed and, after asking with some hostility if there was anything else, withdrew.

In the mornings, at least once a week, Anthony went to see his broker. His income was slightly under seven thousand a year, the interest on money inherited from his

mother. His grandfather, who had never allowed his own son to graduate from a very liberal allowance, judged that this sum was sufficient for young Anthony's needs. Every Christmas he sent him a five-hundred-dollar bond, which Anthony usually sold, if possible, as he was always a little, not very, hard up.

The visits to his broker varied from semi-social chats to discussions of the safety of eight per cent investments, and Anthony always enjoyed them. The big trust company building seemed to link him definitely to the great fortunes whose solidarity he respected and to assure him that he was adequately chaperoned by the hierarchy of finance. From these hurried men he derived the same sense of safety that he had in contemplating his grandfather's money—even more, for the latter appeared, vaguely, a demand loan made by the world to Adam Patch's own moral righteousness, while this money down-town seemed rather to have been grasped and held by sheer indomitable strengths and tremendous feats of will; in addition, it seemed more definitely and explicitly—money.

Closely as Anthony trod on the heels of his income, he considered it to be enough. Some golden day, of course, he would have many millions; meanwhile he possessed a *raison d'être* in the theoretical creation of essays on the popes of the Renaissance. This flashes back to the conversation with his grandfather immediately upon his return from Rome.

He had hoped to find his grandfather dead, but had learned by telephoning from the pier that Adam Patch was comparatively well again—the next day he had concealed his disappointment and gone out to Tarrytown. Five miles from the station his taxicab entered an elaborately groomed drive that threaded a veritable maze of walls and wire fences guarding the estate—this, said the public, was because it was definitely known that if the Socialists had

their way, one of the first men they'd assassinate would be old Cross Patch.

Anthony was late and the venerable philanthropist was awaiting him in a glass-walled sun-parlour, where he was glancing through the morning papers for the second time. His secretary, Edward Shuttleworth—who before his regeneration had been gambler, saloon-keeper, and general reprobate—ushered Anthony into the room, exhibiting his redeemer and benefactor as though he were displaying a treasure of immense value.

They shook hands gravely. 'I'm awfully glad to hear you're better,' Anthony said.

The senior Patch, with an air of having seen his grandson only last week, pulled out his watch.

'Train late?' he asked mildly.

It had irritated him to wait for Anthony. He was under the delusion not only that in his youth he had handled his practical affairs with the utmost scrupulousness, even to keeping every engagement on the dot, but also that this was the direct and primary cause of his success.

'It's been late a good deal this month,' he remarked with a shade of meek accusation in his voice—and then after a long sigh, 'Sit down.'

Anthony surveyed his grandfather with that tacit amazement which always attended the sight. That this feeble, unintelligent old man was possessed of such power that, yellow journals to the contrary, the men in the republic whose souls he could not have bought directly or indirectly would scarcely have populated White Plains, seemed as impossible to believe as that he had once been a pink-and-white baby.

The span of his seventy-five years had acted as a magic bellows—the first quarter-century had blown him full with life, and the last had sucked it all back. It had sucked in the cheeks and the chest and the girth of arm and leg. It had tyrannously demanded his teeth, one by one, suspended his

small eyes in dark-bluish sacks, tweeked out his hairs, changed him from grey to white in some places, from pink to yellow in others—callously transposing his colours like a child trying over a paintbox. Then through his body and his soul it had attacked his brain. It had sent him night-sweats and tears and unfounded dreads. It had split his intense normality into credulity and suspicion. Out of the coarse material of his enthusiasm it had cut dozens of meek but petulant obsessions; his energy was shrunk to the bad temper of a spoiled child, and for his will to power was substituted a fatuous puerile desire for a land of harps and canticles on earth.

The amenities having been gingerly touched upon, Anthony felt that he was expected to outline his intentions—and simultaneously a glimmer in the old man's eye warned him against broaching, for the present, his desire to live abroad. He wished that Shuttleworth would have tact enough to leave the room—he detested Shuttleworth—but the secretary had settled blandly in a rocker and was dividing between the two Patches the glances of his faded eyes.

'Now that you're here you ought to *do* something,' said his grandfather softly, 'accomplish something.'

Anthony waited for him to speak of 'leaving something done when you pass on.' Then he made a suggestion:

'I thought—it seemed to me that perhaps I'm best qualified to write——'

Adam Patch winced, visualizing a family poet with long hair and three mistresses.

'—history,' finished Anthony.

'History? History of what? The Civil War? The Revolution?'

'Why—no, sir. A history of the Middle Ages.' Simultaneously an idea was born for a history of the Renaissance popes, written from some novel angle. Still, he was glad he had said 'Middle Ages.'

‘Middle Ages? Why not your own country? Something you know about?’

‘Well, you see I’ve lived so much abroad——’

‘Why you should write about the Middle Ages, I don’t know. Dark Ages, we used to call ’em. Nobody knows what happened, and nobody cares, except that they’re over now.’ He continued for some minutes on the uselessness of such information, touching, naturally, on the Spanish Inquisition and the ‘corruption of the monasteries.’ Then:

‘Do you think you’ll be able to do any work in New York—or do you really intend to work at all?’ This last with soft, almost imperceptible, cynicism.

‘Why, yes, I do, sir.’

‘When’ll you be done?’

‘Well, there’ll be an outline, you see—and a lot of preliminary reading.’

‘I should think you’d have done enough of that already.’

The conversation worked itself jerkily toward a rather abrupt conclusion, when Anthony rose, looked at his watch, and remarked that he had an engagement with his broker that afternoon. He had intended to stay a few days with his grandfather, but he was tired and irritated from a rough crossing, and quite unwilling to stand a subtle and sanctimonious browbeating. He would come out again in a few days, he said.

Nevertheless, it was due to this encounter that work had come into his life as a permanent idea. During the year that had passed since then, he had made several lists of authorities, he had even experimented with chapter titles and the division of his work into periods, but not one line of actual writing existed at present, or seemed likely ever to exist. He did nothing—and contrary to the most accredited copybook logic, he managed to divert himself with more than average content.

Afternoon

It was October in 1913, midway in a week of pleasant days, with the sunshine loitering in the cross-streets and the atmosphere so languid as to seem weighted with ghostly falling leaves. It was pleasant to sit lazily by the open window finishing a chapter of *Erewhon*. It was pleasant to yawn about five, toss the book on a table, and saunter humming along the hall to his bath.

‘*To … you … beaut-if-ul lady*,’

he was singing as he turned on the tap.

‘*I raise … my … eyes;*
To … you … beaut-if-ul la-a-dy
My … heart … cries——.’

He raised his voice to compete with the flood of water pouring into the tub, and as he looked at the picture of Hazel Dawn upon the wall he put an imaginary violin to his shoulder and softly caressed it with a phantom bow. Through his closed lips he made a humming noise, which he vaguely imagined resembled the sound of a violin. After a moment his hands ceased their gyrations and wandered to his shirt, which he began to unfasten. Stripped, and adopting an athletic posture like the tiger-skin man in the advertisement, he regarded himself with some satisfaction in the mirror, breaking off to dabble a tentative foot in the tub. Readjusting a faucet and indulging in a few preliminary grunts, he slid in.

Once accustomed to the temperature of the water he relaxed into a state of drowsy content. When he finished his bath he would dress leisurely and walk down Fifth Avenue to the Ritz, where he had an appointment for dinner with his two most frequent companions, Dick Caramel and Maury Noble. Afterward he and Maury were going to the

theatre—Caramel would probably trot home and work on his book, which ought to be finished pretty soon.

Anthony was glad *he* wasn't going to work on *his* book. The notion of sitting down and conjuring up, not only words in which to clothe thoughts but thoughts worthy of being clothed—the whole thing was absurdly beyond his desires.

Emerging from his bath he polished himself with the meticulous attention of a bootblack. Then he wandered into the bedroom, and whistling the while a weird, uncertain melody, strolled here and there buttoning, adjusting, and enjoying the warmth of the thick carpet on his feet.

He lit a cigarette, tossed the match out the open top of the window, then paused in his tracks with the cigarette two inches from his mouth—which fell faintly ajar. His eyes were focussed upon a spot of brilliant colour on the roof of a house farther down the alley.

It was a girl in a red negligé, silk surely, drying her hair by the still hot sun of late afternoon. His whistle died upon the stiff air of the room; he walked cautiously another step nearer the window with a sudden impression that she was beautiful. Sitting on the stone parapet beside her was a cushion the same colour as her garment and she was leaning both arms upon it as she looked down into the sunny area-way, where Anthony could hear children playing.

He watched her for several minutes. Something was stirred in him, something not accounted for by the warm smell of the afternoon or the triumphant vividness of red. He felt persistently that the girl was beautiful—then of a sudden he understood: it was her distance, not a rare and precious distance of soul but still distance, if only in terrestial yards. The autumn air was between them, and the roofs and the blurred voices. Yet for a not altogether explained second, posing perversely in time, his emotion had been nearer to adoration than in the deepest kiss he had ever known.

He finished his dressing, found a black bow tie and adjusted it carefully by the three-sided mirror in the bathroom. Then yielding to an impulse he walked quickly into the bedroom and again looked out the window. The woman was standing up now; she had tossed her hair back and he had a full view of her. She was fat, full thirty-five, utterly undistinguished. Making a clicking noise with his mouth he returned to the bathroom and reparted his hair.

'*To … you … beaut-if-ul lady*,'

he sang lightly,

'*I raise … my … eyes——*'

Then with a last soothing brush that left an iridescent surface of sheer gloss he left his bathroom and his apartment and walked down Fifth Avenue to the Ritz-Carlton.

Three Men

At seven Anthony and his friend Maury Noble are sitting at a corner table on the cool roof. Maury Noble is like nothing so much as a large slender and imposing cat. His eyes are narrow and full of incessant, protracted blinks. His hair is smooth and flat, as though it had been licked by a possible—and, if so, Herculean—mother-cat. During Anthony's time at Harvard he had been considered the most unique figure in his class, the most brilliant, the most original—smart, quiet and among the saved.

This is the man whom Anthony considers his best friend. This is the only man of all his acquaintance whom he admires and, to a bigger extent than he likes to admit to himself, envies.

They are glad to see each other now—their eyes are full of kindness as each feels the full effect of novelty after a

short separation. They are drawing a relaxation from each other's presence, a new serenity; Maury Noble behind that fine and absurdly catlike face is all but purring. And Anthony, nervous as a will-o'-the-wisp, restless—he is at rest now.

They are engaged in one of those easy short-speech conversations that only men under thirty or men under great stress indulge in.

ANTHONY: Seven o'clock. Where's the Caramel? (*Impatiently*.) I wish he'd finish that interminable novel. I've spent more time hungry——

MAURY: He's got a new name for it. *The Demon Lover*—not bad, eh?

ANTHONY: (*Interested*.) *The Demon Lover?* Oh 'woman wailing'—No—not a bit bad! Not bad at all—d'you think?

MAURY: Rather good. What time did you say?

ANTHONY: Seven.

MAURY: (*His eyes narrowing—not unpleasantly, but to express a faint disapproval*.) Drove me crazy the other day.

ANTHONY: HOW?

MAURY: That habit of taking notes.

ANTHONY: Me, too. Seems I'd said something night before that he considered material but he'd forgotten it—so he had at me. He'd say 'Can't you try to concentrate?' And I'd say 'You bore me to tears. How do I remember?'

(MAURY *laughs noiselessly, by a sort of bland and appreciative widening of his features*.)

MAURY: Dick doesn't necessarily see more than any one else. He merely can put down a larger proportion of what he sees.

ANTHONY: That rather impressive talent——

MAURY: Oh, yes. Impressive!

ANTHONY: And energy—ambitious, well-directed energy. He's so entertaining—he's so tremendously stimulating and exciting. Often there's something breathless in being with him.

MAURY: Oh, yes.

(*Silence, and then*)*:*

ANTHONY: (*With his thin, somewhat uncertain face at its most convinced*.) But not indomitable energy. Some day, bit by bit, it'll blow away, and his rather impressive talent with it, and leave only a wisp of a man, fretful and egotistic and garrulous.

MAURY: (*With laughter*.) Here we sit vowing to each other that little Dick sees less deeply into things than we do. And I'll bet he feels a measure of superiority on his side—creative mind over merely critical mind and all that.

ANTHONY: Oh, yes. But he's wrong. He's inclined to fall for a million silly enthusiasms. If it wasn't that he's absorbed in realism and therefore has to adopt the garments of the cynic he'd be—he'd be credulous as a college religious leader. He's an idealist. Oh, yes. He thinks he's not, because he's rejected Christianity. Remember him in college? Just swallow every writer whole, one after another, ideas, technic, and characters, Chesterton, Shaw, Wells, each one as easily as the last.

MAURY: (*Still considering his own last observation*.) I remember.

ANTHONY: It's true. Natural born fetish-worshipper. Take art ——

MAURY: Let's order. He'll be——

ANTHONY: Sure. Let's order. I told him——

MAURY: Here he comes. Look—he's going to bump that waiter. (*He lifts his finger as a signal—lifts it as though it were a soft and friendly claw*.) Here y'are, Caramel.

A NEW VOICE: (*Fiercely*) Hello, Maury. Hello, Anthony Comstock Patch. How is old Adam's grandson? Débutantes still after you, eh?

In person RICHARD CARAMEL *is short and fair—he is to be bald at thirty-five. He has yellowish eyes—one of them startlingly clear, the other opaque as a muddy pool—and a bulging brow like a funny-paper baby. He bulges in other*

places—his paunch bulges, prophetically, his words have an air of bulging from his mouth, even his dinner-coat pockets bulge, as though from contamination, with a dog-eared collection of time-tables, programmes, and miscellaneous scraps—on these he takes his notes with great screwings up of his unmatched yellow eyes and motions of silence with his disengaged left hand.

When he reaches the table he shakes hands with ANTHONY *and* MAURY. *He is one of those men who invariably shake hands, even with people whom they have seen an hour before.*

ANTHONY: Hello, Caramel. Glad you're here. We needed a comic relief.

MAURY: You're late. Been racing the postman down the block? We've been clawing over your character.

DICK: (*Fixing* ANTHONY *eagerly with the bright eye.*) What'd you say? Tell me and I'll write it down. Cut three thousand words out of Part One this afternoon.

MAURY: Noble æsthete. And I poured alcohol into my stomach.

DICK: I don't doubt it. I bet you two have been sitting here for an hour talking about liquor.

ANTHONY: We never pass out, my beardless boy.

MAURY: We never go home with ladies we meet when we're lit.

ANTHONY: All in all our parties are characterized by a certain haughty distinction.

DICK: The particularly silly sort who boast about being 'tanks!' Trouble is you're both in the eighteenth-century School of the Old English Squire. Drink quietly until you roll under the table. Never have a good time. Oh, no, that isn't done at all.

ANTHONY: This from Chapter Six, I'll bet.

DICK: Going to the theatre?

MAURY: Yes. We intend to spend the evening doing some deep thinking over of life's problems. The thing is tersely

called ‘The Woman.’ I presume that she will ‘pay.’

ANTHONY: My God! Is that what it is? Let’s go to the Follies again.

MAURY: I’m tired of it. I’ve seen it three times. (*To* DICK.) The first time, we went out after Act One and found a most amazing bar. When we came back we entered the wrong theatre.

ANTHONY: Had a protracted dispute with a scared young couple we thought were in our seats.

DICK: (*As though talking to himself.*) I think—that when I’ve done another novel and a play, and maybe a book of short stories, I’ll do a musical comedy.

MAURY: I know—with intellectual lyrics that no one will listen to. And all the critics will groan and grunt about ‘Dear old Pinafore.’ And I shall go on shining as a brilliantly meaningless figure in a meaningless world.

DICK: (*Pompously.*) Art isn’t meaningless.

MAURY: It is in itself. It isn’t in that it tries to make life less so.

ANTHONY: In other words, Dick, you’re playing before a grand stand peopled with ghosts.

MAURY: Give a good show anyhow.

ANTHONY: (*To* MAURY.) On the contrary, I’d feel that it being a meaningless world, why write? The very attempt to give it purpose is purposeless.

DICK: Well, even admitting all that, be a decent pragmatist and grant a poor man the instinct to live. Would you want every one to accept that sophistic rot?

ANTHONY: Yeah, I suppose so.

MAURY: No, sir! I believe that every one in America but a selected thousand should be compelled to accept a very rigid system of morals—Roman Catholicism, for instance. I don’t complain of conventional morality. I complain rather of the mediocre heretics who seize upon the findings of sophistication and adopt the pose of a moral freedom to which they are by no means entitled by their intelligences.

(*Here the soup arrives and what* MAURY *might have gone on to say is lost for all time.*)

Night

Afterward they visited a ticket speculator and, at a price, obtained seats for a new musical comedy called *High Jinks*. In the foyer of the theatre they waited a few moments to see the first-night crowd come in. There were opera-cloaks stitched of myriad, many-coloured silks and furs; there were jewels dripping from arms and throats and ear-tips of white and rose; there were innumerable broad shimmers down the middles of innumerable silk hats; there were shoes of gold and bronze and red and shining black; there were the high-piled, tight-packed coiffures of many women and the slick, watered hair of well-kept men—most of all there was the ebbing, flowing, chattering, chuckling, foaming, slow-rolling wave effect of this cheerful sea of people as to-night it poured its glittering torrent into the artificial lake of laughter….

After the play they parted—Maury was going to a dance at Sherry’s, Anthony homeward and to bed.

He found his way slowly over the jostled evening mass of Times Square, which the chariot-race and its thousand satellites made rarely beautiful and bright and intimate with carnival. Faces swirled about him, a kaleidoscope of girls, ugly, ugly as sin—too fat, too lean, yet floating upon this autumn air as upon their own warm and passionate breaths poured out into the night. Here, for all their vulgarity, he thought, they were faintly and subtly mysterious. He inhaled carefully, swallowing into his lungs perfume and the not unpleasant scent of many cigarettes. He caught the glance of a dark young beauty sitting alone in a closed taxicab. Her eyes in the half-light suggested night and violets, and for a moment he stirred again to that half-forgotten remoteness of the afternoon.